

**From Silence to Sound: Amplifying the lived experience of Black Educational
Psychologists**

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Submitted in part requirement for the Doctorate in Educational Psychology (EdPsyD),
University of East Anglia, School of Education and Lifelong Learning

May 2026

Word Count: (Excluding Contents Page, Acknowledgements, References and
Appendices): 42,935

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Summary

This thesis is structured across three key chapters: a literature review, an empirical chapter and a critically reflexive account. The first chapter presents a narrative review of the roles of race, culture and ethnicity within the Educational Psychology profession, including a detailed exploration of the key terminology and consideration of the wider socio-political context. The empirical chapter presents a qualitative study, drawing on semi-structured interviews to explore the views and experiences of ten Black Educational Psychologists who have trained and practice in the UK. Following analysis of the data using Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA), the analysis findings are discussed in relation to the broader literature, alongside implications for practice and future research, including the proposal of a tentative framework. Finally, the reflective chapter offers a critical account of the researcher's journey, incorporating extracts of spoken word poetry that capture the process of designing, conducting and analysing the current study. This chapter also outlines plans for dissemination.

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List of acronyms

AEP: Association of Educational Psychologists

APA: American Psychological Association

ARCC: Acknowledge, Reflect, Centre and Challenge

BAME: Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic

BERA: British Educational Research Association

BFE: Black Feminist Epistemology

BIPOC: Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour

BLS: Bureau of Labor Statistics

BME: Black and Minority Ethnic

BPS: British Psychological Society

CPD: Continued Professional Development

CRT: Critical Race Theory

CRP: Culturally Responsive Practice

CYP: Children and Young People

DECP: Division of Educational and Child Psychology

DfE: Department for Education

FROM SILENCE TO SOUND

EdS: Education Specialist Degree

FROM SILENCE TO SOUND

EP: Educational Psychologist

EPS: Educational Psychology Service

GDPR: General Data Protection Regulation

HCPC: Health and Care Professions Council

LA: Local Authority

NASP: National Association of School Psychologists

NCSP: National Certified School Psychologist

ONS: Office for National Statistics

POC: People of Colour

RTA: Reflexive Thematic Analysis

SENCO: Special Educational Needs Coordinator

SoPs: Standards of Proficiency

SP: School Psychologist

UK: United Kingdom

U.S.: United States

UNHCR: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Acknowledgments

Firstly, and most importantly, I would like to thank the incredible professionals who took part in this research project. Thank you for trusting me with your vulnerability, your pain and your success. This project would not have been possible without your involvement. I will forever be eternally grateful for the significant role you all played in my research journey. The parts of you that you shared with me that I believe are golden contributions to the profession. Your fire inspired me, and I look forward to sharing this research with you all.

Secondly, I would like to thank my incredible research supervisor, Ryan Cullen, for his continued support and encouragement. For being an ear that held my thoughts, a space where reflection felt safe, and a critical friend who continually invited me to think more deeply. I would like to thank all of my university tutors and placement supervisors for your wisdom and for helping me to become a better professional. I would also like to thank the Department for Education for funding this doctoral qualification.

I would like to thank my wonderful friends and family for their continued love and support. Thank you for your prayers and for the many moments you sat and listened as I spoke through the highs and lows of this doctoral journey. Your presence has carried me more than you know.

To my late Dad, **Rudolph**, though you passed just before I began this course, you have remained a constant source of motivation throughout. Thank you for instilling in me the resilience, courage, and determination that have sustained me to this point. I am the woman I am today because of the father you were to me. I know how proud you would be.

Finally, I give thanks to my Jesus. Without Him, and without my faith, I would not have made it through some of the most challenging seasons of my life. Thank you for the love and compassion you continue to place within my heart, qualities that make this work not only possible, but purposeful

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." -

Philippians 4:13

1 Chapter 1: Literature Review

1.1 Introduction

Across recent decades, increasing attention has been directed toward understanding how race, culture and ethnicity shape knowledge production, professional practice and institutional structures within psychology and education (DeCuir-Gunby & Schutz, 2014; Kumar & DeCuir-Gunby, 2023; Rollock, 2021). Rather than functioning solely as demographic descriptors, these constructs operate as sociohistorical and political factors that influence whose knowledge is legitimised, whose experiences are centred, and how professional systems are organised (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Crenshaw, 1995). Within Educational Psychology, this has prompted growing interrogation of the epistemological foundations that the discipline is built upon, particularly regarding the extent to which dominant psychological frameworks have historically reflected Eurocentric assumptions and normative White experiences (Mngaza, 2021; Henrich et al., 2010).

The profession of Educational Psychology is situated in a distinct position at the intersection of psychology, education and social systems, with practitioners working to promote the well-being, inclusion and development of children and young people across diverse communities (Kelly et al., 2016; AEP, 2022). As the profession has evolved, increasing emphasis has been placed on understanding broader social, cultural and structural contexts shaping educational experiences (Nastasi, 2020; Sakata, 2024; HCPC, 2023). However, literature consistently indicates the roles of race, culture and ethnicity have not been fully integrated within the discipline (Ratherham & Kelly, 2023; Kumar & DeCuir-Gunby, 2023). Instead, these constructs have often been treated as additional variables rather than significant factors that shape professional knowledge, practice and training (DeCuir-Gunby & Schutz, 2014; Matthews & Lopez, 2020).

As a result, recent literature has increasingly turned towards examining how systemic inequities, racialised structures and historical legacies influence both the profession and the communities it serves (Miller et al., 2021; Escott & Abraham, 2021). Within this context, Critical Race Theory (CRT) (Crenshaw, 1995) provides a theoretical framework for interrogating the relationships between race, power and knowledge, foregrounding racism as an ordinary and embedded feature of social systems rather than an exceptional occurrence (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; DeCuir-

Gunby & Schutz, 2024). Applying CRT within Educational Psychology enables examination not only of individual experiences, but of the structural and epistemic conditions shaping how race is understood, enacted and reproduced within professional contexts (Taylor et al., 2023; Sakata, 2024).

Adopting a narrative approach, this literature review aims to synthesise knowledge concerning the roles of race, culture and ethnicity within Educational Psychology in the English context, and School Psychology in the international context. In contrast to a systematic review, which typically draws together findings from studies that are treated as comparable in how they measure and define key variables, a narrative synthesis allows for a more interpretive and holistic engagement with the literature. This approach is particularly suited to complex and socially constructed phenomena as it enables the integration of diverse forms of evidence while identifying patterns, tensions and gaps across the literature (Baumeister & Leary, 1997; Green et al., 2006; Snyder, 2019). Given that race, culture and ethnicity are fluid, context-dependent constructs, a narrative approach ensures that the nuanced, qualitative insights within the literature are preserved, rather than reduced to fixed or decontextualised variables. Through a thematic and CRT-informed lens, the review examines the historical formation of the Educational Psychology discipline, current examples of systemic inequity, and emerging shifts towards race-conscious, culturally responsive and socially just practice (Harrison & Atkinson, 2025; Ratheram & Kelly, 2023). In doing so, the review aims to contribute to a more critical and reflexive understanding of how race, culture and ethnicity shape Educational Psychology, while identifying key directions for future research and professional development.

Using CRT as the analytic lens of this review ensures that race, culture and ethnicity are not viewed as margins in EP practice, but as forces that have real-life implications for how professionals practice and how individual experiences are interpreted within the systems and structures of the profession (Collins, 2000; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 1998). Professional knowledge does not emerge in isolation but rather is a product of the social and historical context and can privilege certain worldviews while marginalising others (Fricker, 2007; Gillborn, 2005). Within psychology and education, these dynamics are often obscured through colourblind frameworks, where inequity may be acknowledged but detached from the

structural realities that sustain racialised disparities (Bonilla-Silva, 2018; Gillborn, 2005).

1.2 A Critical Engagement with Terminology

This section moves beyond simply defining key terms to more critically engage with the core terminology used throughout this narrative review, establishing the theoretical lens through which race, culture and ethnicity are understood. It aims to provide clarity around what is, and is not, being explored while recognising that within the literature these terms are often conflated or used interchangeably. In response, this review adopts a deliberate position that attends to the distinct socio-political implications of each construct. By making these conceptual boundaries explicit, the review seeks to avoid misinterpretation and support a more rigorous and nuanced analysis of the literature.

Furthermore, while Educational Psychology (England) and School Psychology (Internationally) represent distinct professional contexts, they share overlapping approaches and value systems. As such, they are drawn on comparatively within this review to highlight both local nuances and broader patterns across the field.

1.2.1 Educational Psychologist

Upon completing a three-year doctoral training course, Educational Psychologists (EPs) typically begin their careers employed by Local Authorities (LAs) within the UK. According to the Association of Educational Psychologists (AEP), the role of the EP involves applying psychological principles to promote the social and emotional wellbeing of children and young people (CYP) and assisting them in reaching their full potential (AEP, 2022). EPs draw upon their specialist knowledge of psychological models and frameworks (Kelly et al., 2016) and strive to make a positive impact on the lives of CYP from an early age, both during their educational journey and in preparation for adulthood (Beaver, 2011).

Historically, the focus of EPs has centred on understanding the child through an individual lens; however, there has been a notable shift towards considering the broader systems surrounding the child (Beaver, 2011; Kelly et al., 2016). Furthermore, the conceptual model has evolved from a child-deficit approach to a solution-oriented perspective (Beaver, 2011). This transformation has primarily arisen in response to changing educational and societal needs, alongside a growing emphasis on Social Constructionism (Kelly et al., 2016), which views knowledge and meaning as socially and culturally constructed through interactions and relationships (Burr & Dick, 2025). Within Educational Psychology, this perspective

has encouraged greater consideration of how children and young people's experiences are shaped by their social, cultural and relational contexts. Due to the multifaceted nature of their role, EPs must remain flexible and adaptive in their practice, adjusting their approaches to align with both individual circumstances and the socio-political context (Kelly et al., 2016).

EPs engage with CYP aged 0-25, operating at individual, group, or community levels (Birch et al., 2015). This is illustrated through Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), which highlights the interconnectedness between various systems which may be interacting around the child. Influencing their development. Consequently, EPs may implement their work directly with individuals or indirectly through collaboration with others within the system.

1.2.2 School Psychologist

Whilst the term School Psychologist (SPs) is used internationally (Jimerson et al., 2000), this review will focus primarily on the definition commonly used in the United States (U.S.) as much of the published literature referenced is from the U.S. To become an SP in the U.S., individuals must complete a bachelor's degree followed by a graduate-level specialist degree (EdS) or a doctorate in School Psychology. This is accompanied by a 1,200-hour supervised internship, with at least half of the hours in a school setting. Afterwards, state licensure or certification is required, often involving passing the Praxis exam and obtaining the National Certified School Psychologist (NCSP) credential (National Association of School Psychologists (NASP), 2024).

As outlined by the NASP (2024), SPs are essential members of school teams, specialising in mental health, learning, and behavioural support to help students thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. They typically work in kindergarten up to grade 12 in public schools, offering direct interventions to students, consulting with teachers and families, and collaborating with other mental health professionals like school counsellors and social workers (Merrell et al., 2011). Additionally, they assist school administrators in developing policies and liaising with community providers to ensure a holistic approach to student wellbeing (American Psychological Association (APA), 2024).

Although the day-to-day activities of EPs in the UK and SPs in the U.S. may appear different, many of their accrediting and practitioner competencies are based on shared core principles. Both professions affirm a commitment to delivering services that are equitable, diverse, and inclusive. Additionally, they prioritise

consultation, alongside evidence-based psychological assessment and intervention, ensuring that their approaches are rooted in rigorous research and best practices (NASP, 2024; Health & Care Professions Council (HCPC), 2023). Currently, data indicates that there are 3,672 qualified EPs in the UK (Department for Education (DfE), 2023), compared to 62,790 SPs in the U.S. (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), 2024). To maintain conceptual consistency throughout this review, the term 'Educational Psychologist' (EP) is used as the primary descriptor for the profession. Where international literature refers to 'School Psychologists', this review retains the term EP, while making the relevant geographical and socio-political context (e.g. U.S. or international) explicit to ensure clarity.

1.2.3 Race

Due to the complexities surrounding the term "race," DeCuir-Gunby and Schutz (2014) argue that defining it is a multifaceted process. Historically, race has been weaponised as a tool of power, categorising individuals as "White" or "non-White" based on a false biological basis of intelligence superiority versus inferiority (Huxtable, 2009) and was used to reinforce social hierarchies and systems of oppression (DeCuir-Gunby & Schutz, 2014). However, understanding from CRT recognises race as a socially constructed classification system maintained through social processes, laws, and cultural narratives, used to categorise people based on perceived physical differences, such as skin colour, facial features, and hair type. DeCuir-Gunby and Schutz (2014) emphasise that race must be understood as a sociohistorical construct rather than a mere demographic label, especially in education, where racial identity significantly affects outcomes and experiences (Quintana & Mahgoub, 2016). CRT further highlights that racialised individuals often face exclusion in professional and academic contexts, perpetuating systemic inequalities (Wright, 2020). Race is not biologically determined, but rather shaped by social and political forces, as Paulraj (2016) discusses in relation to the intersection of race and power dynamics in psychology training. Consistent with the principles of CRT, this literature review will adopt the understanding that race is a sociohistorical and political construct, which has been used to establish hierarchies and is a key factor in shaping individual and group experiences within educational and professional contexts.

1.2.4 Racism

To better understand how race operates within professional structures, it is necessary to first clearly define racism. Rather than viewing racism as simply

individual prejudice or a personal moral failing, this thesis adopts Thomas' (2022) multidimensional taxonomy of racism alongside CRT perspectives (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Thomas (2022) conceptualises racism as operating across four interconnected levels: *structural/systemic racism*, which refers to the broader historical, political, legal and social systems that unevenly distribute power, resources, and opportunities along racial lines; institutional racism, which encompasses the policies, practices, organisational cultures and gatekeeping processes within institutions such as universities and local authorities that systematically disadvantage minoritised groups; *interpersonal racism*, which includes everyday racialised interactions, microaggressions, and biased behaviours between individuals; and *internalised racism*, which describes the process by which racialised individuals may absorb and accept dominant racial hierarchies and negative stereotypes about their own racial group.

Using this taxonomy provides greater conceptual clarity throughout the thesis by distinguishing the structural, institutional, and epistemological forms of racism that shape EP practice from racism that occurs at the interpersonal level.

1.2.5 Culture

Culture is defined as a set of beliefs, practices, rituals, and traditions shared by a group of people with at least one point of common identity, such as ethnicity, race, or nationality (Buchanan, 2018). Further, it is a learned behaviour that can vary across different races and even within ethnic groups (Kumar & Maehr, 2010). Williams et al., (2015) emphasise that culture is essential in shaping an individual's identity and influencing their educational experiences, particularly in diverse settings. MacFarlane and MacFarlane (2015) highlight that dominant cultural norms, especially those rooted in Western values, can marginalise non-Western perspectives, which can have significant implications for Educational Psychology. An individual's cultural background is therefore critical for effective assessment and intervention as it influences their learning styles, communication patterns, and motivation (Mantiri, 2013). Moreover, a professional's own cultural beliefs and potential biases can impact their practice, leading to misinterpretations of behaviour or ineffective interventions if not properly considered (Paniagua, 2014). Therefore, for Educational Psychology to be both truly inclusive and equitable, professionals must adopt culturally responsive practices that acknowledge and respect the unique cultural contexts of students, while also being critically aware of their own cultural competence (Nastasi, 2020; Sakata, 2024).

1.2.6 Ethnicity

As previously mentioned, culture encompasses the broader set of beliefs, values, customs, and practices that define a group's way of life, covering areas such as the arts, cuisine, and social behaviours (Schein, 2010). In contrast, ethnicity focuses specifically on cultural and social identity rather than physical characteristics. Ethnicity refers to a group of individuals united by common cultural features, such as language, religion, or ancestry, highlighting social identity anchored in these shared traits (Smedley & Smedley, 2005). Such traits can act as sources of both motivation and pride (Markus, 2008) and cultivate psychological attachment (Phinney, 2003). Meah (2022) highlights how ethnic identity has the ability to determine an individual's social experiences, particularly within educational contexts, where minoritised individuals often encounter systemic barriers and underrepresentation. Furthermore, Lopez and Bursztyn (2013) argue that recognising ethnic diversity in educational settings is crucial for fostering culturally competent practices. Ethnic identity plays a significant role in how individuals negotiate their place within both academic and social environments (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014), adding complexity to the experience of navigating multicultural spaces. Therefore, while culture provides a broad framework of shared practices, ethnicity adds depth by anchoring these practices in specific social identities and experiences.

1.2.7 Minoritised Individuals

The term 'ethnic minority' is often used to refer to groups distinguished from the wider population by their cultural, religious, linguistic, or ancestral characteristics (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 2024), and include White minoritised individuals such as Gypsy, Roma, and Irish Traveller communities (GOV.UK, 2024). However, for the purposes of this literature review, the term 'minoritised individuals' will be used to refer specifically to Black and Asian communities. This term is employed to highlight that these groups are socially and politically marginalised, even though they collectively represent the global majority (Mohamed, 2018). While acknowledging the inherent limitations of language in simultaneously attending to both particular and collective identities (DaCosta et al., 2021), this term aims to better reflect the power dynamics at play.

While acronyms such as Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME), Black and Minority Ethnic (BME), Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC), or People of Colour (POC), were used as keywords within the initial search strategy to ensure a comprehensive retrieval of literature, they are not adopted within the narrative of

this review. These collective terms are increasingly critiqued for their tendency to group together diverse communities in ways that can obscure important differences in lived experience (DaCosta et al., 2021).

For example, terms such as 'Black' may encompass individuals from a wide range of national, cultural and historical backgrounds, yet these distinctions are often flattened when such labels are used uncritically. As a result, differences within groups such as culture, country of origin, and community-specific experiences risk being overlooked.

In response, this review prioritises the use of more specific and contextually grounded descriptors, rather than relying on broad or reductive terminology.

While it is crucial to acknowledge the distinct nature of race, culture, and ethnicity, their intersection is a complex and dynamic process where different factors may hold varying significance for a single person. For example, a person's cultural identity might take precedence over their racial identity in a specific context. Minoritised individuals frequently face systemic challenges, particularly in educational settings, due to this intersectionality (Gaías et al., 2020). As highlighted by Wong et al., (2022), minoritised students in the UK frequently experience marginalisation and are subject to lower expectations, which can impact their academic self-esteem and lead them to adopt emotional detachment strategies in order to cope. Similarly, Wright et al. (2010) point out that these students often face institutional racism, which contributes to their underachievement and exclusion in schools.

In this context, race, culture, and ethnicity are intricately connected to how minoritised individuals navigate the education system. However, academic literature has often conflated these terms, treating them as though they refer to the same concept when they do not. For instance, a person may identify racially as Black, ethnically as Black British, yet culturally as Rastafarian, which is markedly different from someone who identifies as racially Black, ethnically Black British, and culturally Yoruba (a Nigerian ethnic group). Recognising these distinctions is essential for exploring the specific roles that race, culture, and ethnicity play within Educational Psychology. For this reason, this review considers all three areas, as these categories are not separate but interwoven, and their combined effect creates unique experiences of both privilege and oppression (Crenshaw, 1989; Cole, 2009).

When considered together, these definitions highlight that race, culture and ethnicity cannot be understood as fixed or independent categories. Rather, they

operate relationally and are shaped by broader social, historical and political contexts that influence how identities are experienced and interpreted (Hall, 1997; Crenshaw, 1991). Within Educational Psychology, this has important implications, as professionals do not engage with these constructs neutrally; interpretations of behaviour, development and need are all filtered through cultural assumptions, professional norms, and historically situated knowledge systems (Nastasi, 2020; Kumar & DeCuir-Gunby, 2023). Without critical attention to these dynamics, there is a risk that race, culture and ethnicity become reduced to descriptive labels, rather than understood as factors that shape access, belonging and opportunity within education and professional contexts (Gillborn, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1998). Clarifying these terms supports consistency in how the terminology is understood, while also establishing the conceptual foundation for examining how power, identity and systemic inequality intersect throughout the profession.

1.2.8 Critical Race Theory

Emerging in the U.S. as a response to the limitations of traditional legal and educational frameworks that often overlook the systemic nature of racism, CRT is a framework that studies the relationships between race, racism, and power, particularly in the context of education (Crenshaw, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). At its core, CRT is guided by several key principles: the recognition that racism is ingrained in the fabric of society, the importance of giving voice to experiential knowledge from racialised and marginalised individuals, the critique of colour-blind ideologies, the acknowledgement of intersectionality, and the commitment to social justice. Additionally, CRT emphasises that race is a socially constructed concept, shaped by historical and cultural contexts rather than biological determinism (DeCuir-Gunby & Schutz, 2014; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Taylor et al., 2023).

Also, CRT goes beyond just acknowledging but rather emphasises the necessity of examining the intersectionality of race with other social identities, such as gender and class, which further complicates the experiences of individuals within educational environments (Crenshaw, 1995; Pham et al., 2022). This intersectional lens is essential for understanding how various forms of oppression can converge to impact students differently. Furthermore, CRT goes that step further by daring to challenge the dominant ontology and epistemologies that underpin much of the law, policies and empirical research (Brow, 2003) that are often based on White and Eurocentric assumptions (Turpin & Coleman, 2010) and reject knowledge from

racialised groups. In Educational Psychology, these epistemologies significantly shape the actions that practitioners take in their research, practice, and training, as their interpretations of knowledge influence their approaches. CRT was adopted as the primary analytical lens for this literature review because it explicitly foregrounds race, power and systemic inequity, rather than treating them as peripheral or contextual variables. This aligns with the aims of the review, which seek to examine not only individual experiences but the structural conditions that shape how race is understood, experienced and enacted within Educational Psychology. While alternative theoretical orientations, such as Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 2001), offer valuable insights into processes of group membership, identity formation and intergroup relations, such frameworks tend to locate experiences of marginalisation primarily at the interpersonal or psychological level. In contrast, CRT enables critical examination of racism as an ordinary, systemic and institutionalised phenomenon, embedded within policies, professional practices and knowledge production itself. CRT was also selected due to its explicit challenge to dominant epistemologies and its validation of experiential knowledge, which is particularly pertinent in a profession where '*evidence*' has historically been shaped by White Eurocentric norms. Adopting a CRT lens therefore allows this review to critically interrogate not only what is known, but whose knowledge is legitimised within the field. Tomlinson (2023), highlights that recognising our assumptions about what constitutes 'real' knowledge is vital, as it profoundly affects how we decide to explore knowledge.

Additionally, using CRT as a guiding framework provides a foundation for considering how historical, social and institutional factors continue to influence Educational Psychology. This lens allows the review to move beyond describing inequalities, towards understanding how they are produced, maintained and experienced within professional contexts. It also spotlights the importance of examining whose experiences are prioritised and how professional systems respond to issues surrounding race, culture and ethnicity. The following thematic sections build on this foundation by first exploring the historical roots of the discipline, before examining how these legacies continue to influence present-day practice and the profession's emerging engagement with more critically reflective and socially responsive approaches.

Whilst CRT provides a valuable framework for examining institutional power, racism, and epistemic injustice, it has also been subject to several scholarly

critiques. One criticism, primarily raised by Marxist and class-based scholars, is that CRT can place greater emphasis on race than on the material and socioeconomic conditions that also shape inequality. From this perspective, focusing predominantly on race may overlook the ways in which capitalism and class intersect with processes of racialisation (Cole, 2017; Darder & Torres, 2004). A second critique relates to CRT's epistemological foundations, particularly its reliance on counter-storytelling and lived experiences as legitimate forms of knowledge. Critics argue that although these approaches offer rich insights into experiences of racism, they may not provide the level of empirical generalisability or objective falsifiability traditionally associated with evaluating policy and practice (Hammersley, 2008; Patai, 1994).

A further criticism concerns CRT's proposition that racism is a permanent feature of society. Some legal and social theorists argue that this perspective can appear overly deterministic, potentially underestimating the significance of historical progress and legislative reforms that have sought to address racial inequality (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

Acknowledging these critiques does not diminish the value of CRT within this thesis. Rather, it strengthens the rationale for combining CRT with BFE (Collins, 2000). Bringing these frameworks together allows participants lived experiences to be understood as situated, rigorous and intersectional forms of knowledge, rather than universal claims. This combined approach provides a more nuanced understanding of how racism operates across structural, institutional, and individual contexts while recognising the importance of lived experience in analysing systems of power.

1.3 Literature Search Strategy

The primary aim of this literature review is to address the question: How do the constructs of 'race', 'culture' and 'ethnicity' shape the training and professional practices of Educational and School Psychologists? This review is essential because, while the profession has increasingly committed to anti-racist action, the academic evidence base remains sparse and fragmented. A synthesis is required to address the gap between policy commitments and the lived, socio-historical experiences of practitioners.

1.3.1 A Thematic Approach

A thematic narrative approach was selected as the most appropriate methodology for this review. While formal systematic reviews often prioritise narrowly

defined questions and the synthesis of measurable outcomes, a thematic approach enables an interpretive exploration of complex, socially constructed phenomena shaped by power, context and experience (Snyder, 2019). This is particularly vital when applying a CRT analytic lens. CRT places the importance of experiential knowledge and “counter-storytelling”, drawing attention to perspectives that are often overlooked within more rigid review protocols. Approaches that rely heavily on standardised criteria and conventional notions of objectivity may therefore risk limiting the inclusion of such accounts (Popay et al., 2006; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Adopting a thematic approach allows this review to bring together a range of sources, including empirical studies, doctoral theses, and first-person accounts, in order to examine how power and systemic inequities operate within the profession (Grant & Booth, 2009).

1.3.2 Search Processes

To ensure a transparent and rigorous approach to identifying relevant literature, a comprehensive search was conducted using the EBSCOhost platform, drawing on key databases including APA PsycINFO, ERIC, Scopus, British Education Index, and Academic Search Ultimate. This was also supplemented by systematic citation tracking and snowballing from foundational texts (e.g. Mngaza, 2021; Soni et al., 2022; Wright, 2020). This involved reviewing the reference lists of key papers to identify relevant or influential work that may not have been captured through the initial search parameters. Rather than following a rigid systematic protocol, this dual iterative search approach ensured that conceptual dialogues, practitioner doctoral dissertations, and theoretical critiques not indexed under standard post-positivist keywords were fully captured and synthesised. Additionally, this process supported a more nuanced engagement with the literature, allowing the review to trace how ideas and conceptualisations around race, culture and ethnicity have developed across the field. This enabled a broader engagement with the field, using Boolean operators and truncation to capture a wide range of literature while maintaining a clear focus on the intersections of race and professional practice.

1.3.3 Keyword Search Strategy

The search strategy was organised around three main conceptual blocks. First, to ensure that race was positioned as a central focus rather than a peripheral demographic variable, terms such as *rac**, *cultur**, *ethnic**, and *anti-racis** were prioritised within article titles. Second, the professional context was defined within abstracts using “*educational psycholog**”, “*school psycholog**”, and “*trainee*

psychologist*”, capturing both the profession and the training pathway. Finally, in line with the epistemological positioning of CRT, the search was extended across all text fields to include terms such as “lived experience”, “doctoral”, and “profession*”. This was a deliberate choice to foreground experiential knowledge and qualitative accounts, which are often underrepresented within psychological research databases.

To build on the electronic search, a snowballing approach was also used. This involved reviewing the reference lists of key papers to identify relevant or influential work that may not have been captured through the initial search parameters. This iterative process supported a more nuanced engagement with the literature, allowing the review to trace how ideas and conceptualisations around race, culture and ethnicity have developed across the field.

While this approach was designed to be comprehensive, it acknowledges that no search strategy is exhaustive. Prioritising specific professional terminology and title-based racial constructs may have limited the inclusion of some interdisciplinary work using alternative language. However, this focused and multi-layered approach was considered the most appropriate for developing a coherent and relevant body of literature in relation to the identities and practices of EPs.

1.3.4 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The initial electronic search yielded a broad body of records, which were then subjected to a two-stage screening process. To maintain the focus on the specific professional context of EPs, a clear set of inclusion and exclusion criteria was applied.

Studies were included where they focused on the experiences, identities, or practices of qualified or trainee EPs, and their international equivalents, particularly in relation to race, culture and ethnicity. In line with this focus, literature exploring workforce development, such as doctoral training, supervision, recruitment and the broader professional journey, were prioritised. These areas were deemed important for offering insight into how the profession is shaped and experienced over time. Conversely, studies were excluded where the primary focus was on other areas of psychology (e.g. clinical or forensic contexts), or where the emphasis was solely on pupil outcomes, pedagogy or educational interventions without consideration of the EPs role. This distinction was important in maintaining a clear focus on the systemic and relational positioning of the EP, rather than shifting towards child-centred or

purely instructional perspectives.

In addition, studies were included where race, culture or ethnicity were meaningfully engaged with as areas of analysis, particularly where issues of systemic power, racism or cultural competence were explored. Papers that referred to race only as a demographic variable, without further critical engagement, were excluded, as they offered limited insight into the complexities this review seeks to examine. While no initial date restrictions were applied, the final body of literature was published predominantly from 2015 onwards. This reflects a broader shift within the profession towards more explicit engagement with issues surrounding race, culture and ethnicity, influenced by developments such as the introduction of doctoral-level training for EPs in the UK (AEP, 2022), alongside wider global social movements.

To ensure academic rigour, the review predominantly drew on peer-reviewed empirical and theoretical literature. Grey literature and non-peer-reviewed sources were generally excluded. However, key reports from professional bodies such as BPS and NASP were retained where they provided important contextual or statistical insight. It is also important to recognise that the application of these criteria reflects particular epistemological and methodological priorities, which may have shaped which forms of knowledge were privileged within the review. However, this structured approach was considered essential in developing a focused and critically informed understanding of how race, culture and ethnicity are experienced and constructed within the field of Educational Psychology.

Following full-text review, a core group of sources were selected for thematic synthesis. At this stage, papers were primarily excluded if they focused on general educational outcomes or did not directly examine the professional psychology workforce. The final set of sources provides a robust foundation for examining the systemic realities of race, culture and ethnicity in the field through a CRT-informed lens.

While the search strategy aimed to provide a transparent and rigorous approach, it is important to acknowledge the interpretive nature of narrative reviews (Green et al., 2006; Popay et al., 2006). Decisions regarding inclusion, thematic organisation and interpretation were shaped by the CRT. Consequently, the review does not seek to provide an exhaustive account of all literature related to race, culture and ethnicity within Educational Psychology, but rather to identify key patterns, tensions and developments that illuminate how these constructs are

understood within the profession. The relatively small body of relevant literature further reflects the limited attention given to race within the profession, reinforcing the rationale for this review. The following section presents the thematic synthesis of the literature, structured around key patterns that emerged across the evidence base.

In alignment with the principles of CRT, it is important to acknowledge the researcher's positionality and the lens through which this review was conducted. As a Black female trainee EP, my professional and personal identity is shaped by the same socio-political structures explored within this study. This positioning is not separate from the research process, but actively informs how literature is engaged with, interpreted and synthesised. Rather than adopting a position of neutrality, this review is underpinned by a commitment to social justice and a critical awareness of how power is embedded within constructions of race, culture and ethnicity and how these shape professional systems and practices. This influenced key methodological decisions, including the prioritisation of literature centred on lived experience, the inclusion of studies that engage critically with race rather than treated as a demographic variable, and the interpretation of findings in relation to systemic and relational dynamics within the profession. By making this positioning explicit, the review moves away from presenting knowledge as objective or detached and instead offers a transparent and situated account of how race, culture and ethnicity can be understood within Educational Psychology.

1.4 Findings

The principles of CRT will serve as the theoretical framework guiding this analysis by foregrounding the understanding that systemic racism is deeply entrenched in educational systems and practices (Crenshaw, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017), as the role of race, culture and ethnicity in Educational Psychology is examined. Rather than generating descriptive categories, the CRT principles functioned as an analytical heuristic to organise and synthesise the literature into four conceptual domains: *Historical Imprints*, informed by CRT's historical contextualisation of race and the social construction of racial hierarchies; *Echoes of Exclusion*, grounded in the tenet of the permanence and ordinariness of racism across educational and institutional structures; *Rising Voices*, structured around the centrality of counter-storytelling, experiential knowledge and the challenge to dominant Eurocentric epistemologies and finally; *A Call to Justice*, driven by CRT's

explicit commitment to social justice, interest convergence, and institutional transformation.

1.4.1 Historical Imprints: Psychology's Colonial Legacy

This theme examines the historical foundations of Educational Psychology, paying particular attention to how colonial ideologies and the eugenics movement shaped a profession rooted in Whiteness. By tracing the shift from explicit eugenics practices to more subtle, systemic forms of exclusion, this section highlights how the legacy of the profession continues to influence present-day power structures and the ongoing marginalisation of minoritised voices.

Examining psychology's colonial legacy is crucial for understanding how deeply ingrained ideologies shape current practices in the field. Central to this discussion is the principle of CRT, which asserts that race is a socially constructed concept used to establish and maintain power dynamics within society. Historical injustices stemming from colonisation have profoundly influenced both the development of psychological theories and the treatment of minoritised individuals within educational systems. These early theories established Western, white, middle-class norms as the 'objective' universal standard for human development (Henrich et al., 2010 & Kumar & DeCuir-Gunby, 2023). This framing structurally pathologised any racial, ethnic or cultural difference as a 'deficit' or developmental delay, ensuring that the White worldview became the standard against which all others were measured. By scrutinising these historical imprints, we can better understand their ongoing implications for Educational Psychology and the necessity for a paradigm shift towards championing diversity within the profession.

The literature suggests that the atrocities of colonisation have been 'silenced' within Educational Psychology and reveals how racial categories were manipulated to marginalise minoritised individuals for the benefit of the dominant Westernised, middle-class, White male voice (Yakushko, 2019). While much of the literature focuses on the U.S. context, the UK must also confront its obscured history of colonialism (Wright, 2020) and the slave trade (Olusoga, 2016). These historical factors have led to damaging effects on the educational outcomes of minoritised individuals (Wallace & Joseph-Salisbury, 2021) and are further evidenced by the development of Educational Psychology itself, which has been shaped by social and political contexts rooted in racist exclusionary practices (Mngaza, 2021) and a 'heritage of oppressive ideas' (Miller et al., 2021).

Cyril Burt, regarded as the first EP in the UK during the early 1900s, was

significantly influenced by the eugenics movement, promoting the idea of a 'pure' race (Saini, 2019). His development of intelligence testing eventually became a tool for separating minoritised individuals by framing socio-political disadvantages as innate cognitive deficiencies, deeming them to have low intelligence (Wallace & Joseph-Salisbury, 2022). By treating psychometric measurement as a 'neutral' tool, while embedding deep cultural biases, these practices provided a pseudo-scientific justification for the segregation of minoritised individuals into 'educationally subnormal' schools or lower academic tracks. This misuse of testing not only perpetuated stereotypes but also advanced a eugenic agenda that prioritised genetic determinism over the genuine educational needs of children (Chamarette, 2021). The ideology of the eugenics movement became deeply ingrained and prominent within UK policy by linking 'genetic fitness' to educational potential (Saini, 2019). Such 'fitness' logics appeared in educational discourse to justify gatekeeping access to high-quality resources, eventually embedding themselves in British political ideology, allowing racist beliefs to permeate our systems (Mngaza, 2021).

Consequently, Educational Psychology functioned as a 'racialised organisation' complicit in 'anti-blackness' by internalising these principles into its standard operating procedures, such as practice, recruitment and professional gatekeeping (Strunk & Andrzejewski, 2023). Such historical practices underscore the urgent need to critically re-evaluate the foundations upon which Educational Psychology has been built, especially considering the lingering impact of colonialism on present-day educational disparities.

Wright (2020) argues that EPs risk remaining complicit in upholding these ideologies by overlooking the racism embedded in Western psychology; a painful reality often easy to ignore for those not from minoritised backgrounds (Matthews & Lopez, 2020). This racism is further evidenced by a historical void in research, which has effectively silenced minoritised practitioners for decades (Williams et al., 2015), the pathologisation of non-Western communication styles in assessments (Slobodin & Ziv-Beiman, 2021), and the continued use of 'typical' development models that exclude the lived experiences of global majority children (Kumar & DeCuir-Gunby, 2023). Therefore, EPs remain susceptible to perpetuating racist practices if the training and practice continue to disregard the systemic and historical marginalisation associated with race, culture, and ethnicity within the profession. Consequently, current literature indicates that Educational Psychology is still largely premised on 'Whiteness' (Williams, 2020). Moving beyond a simple demographic

account of the workforce, 'Whiteness' is understood here as an orienting paradigm. That is, an underlying framework that positions White, Western, middle-class norms as the 'neutral' and taken-for-granted standard for development and 'normality'.

From a CRT perspective, this is particularly significant as it often operates under the guise of objectivity and colour-blindness. By presenting its theories and practices as 'universal', the profession can obscure Eurocentric foundations. In this sense, 'Whiteness' does not simply exclude racialised individuals. Rather, it shapes how they are seen, understood and positioned within the profession. Their identities and experiences are often interpreted in relation to a standard that was never designed to reflect their lived realities. As such, 'Whiteness' can be understood as an invisible baseline within Educational Psychology, one that racialised EPs and service users are required to navigate, negotiate and at times accommodate to be recognised within the system. Recognising this constructed nature of race and its reinforcement of systemic oppression is essential. For EPs, critically engaging with this history is not optional, but a necessary first step in dismantling barriers and the inequities embedded in the profession.

Understanding these historical roots is important because they continue to shape how knowledge, assessment and professional authority are understood within the profession today. These legacies are not confined to the past, but remain visible in the assumptions that inform normality, development and expertise within the profession. Recognising this continuity supports a deeper understanding of how inequities can become unintentionally embedded within everyday practices, often operating in ways that appear neutral or taken for granted. This provides a foundation for considering how these historical dynamics are experienced within current professional and academic contexts, explored in the following section.

1.4.2 Echoes of Exclusion: The Impact of Racism and Discrimination

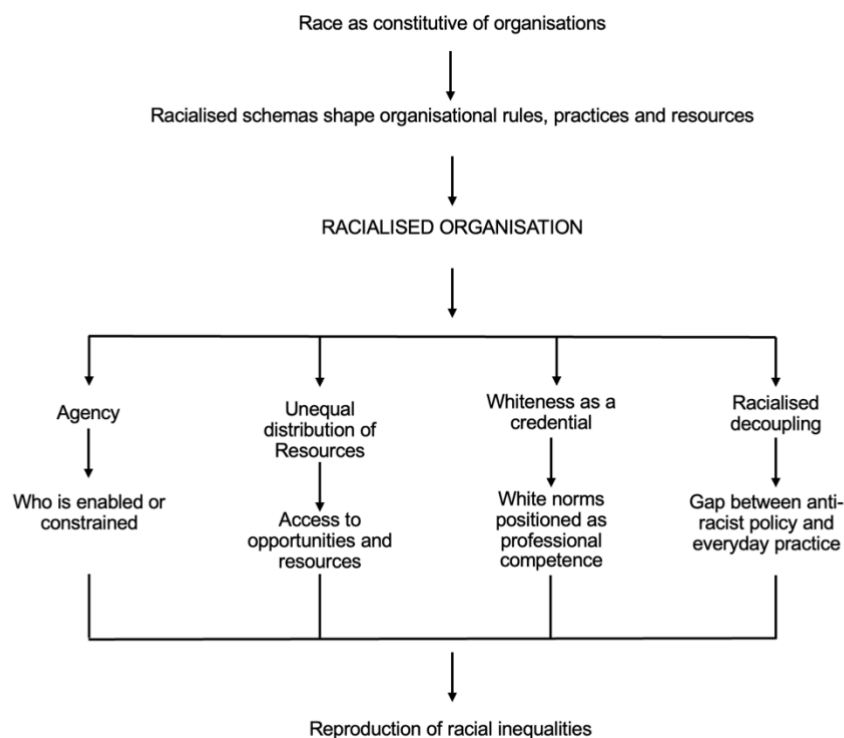
While the previous theme established the colonial foundations of the EP profession, this section examines how those historical roots manifest into present-day 'echoes' of exclusion. Drawing on the CRT tenet that racism operates as a normalised systemic occurrence rather than a series of isolated incidents (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017), this theme synthesises literature on racial trauma and discrimination, microaggressions, and institutional barriers. It critically evaluates how these systemic forces shape the professional journeys of the EP workforce and the educational experiences of minoritised children they serve.

CRT asserts that racism is not merely an isolated incident, but an everyday

occurrence woven into the very fabric of social systems (DeCuir-Gunby & Schutz, 2024). This principle highlights the pervasive and often subtle ways in which racism can manifest, influencing the experiences of minoritised individuals through institutionalised structures. Ray's (2019) theory of racialised organisations provides a useful framework for understanding how these processes operate within organisations. Ray argues that organisations are not race-neutral spaces but are shaped by racial structures that connect racialised assumptions and schemas to organisational rules, practices, and the distribution of social and material resources. He identifies four interconnected mechanisms through which racialised organisations can reproduce racial inequalities: they can enhance or diminish the agency of racial groups; legitimate the unequal distribution of resources; position Whiteness as a credential; and create a separation between formal organisational rules and their everyday implementation, whereby apparently race-neutral policies can produce racialised outcomes (Ray, 2019). Figure 1 provides a visual summary of this framework.

Figure 1

Adapted conceptualisation of Ray's (2019) Theory of Racialised Organisations.



Note. Adapted from Ray (2019) theory of racialised organisations. The figure illustrates how organisations can reproduce racial inequalities through four

interconnected mechanisms that influence professional practice and institutional outcomes.

Within Educational Psychology, this framework can be observed where Educational Psychology Services may formally commit to equality and anti-racist practice, yet everyday expectations of professionalism, communication, assessment, and decision-making continue to reflect predominantly White and Western norms. As a result, minoritised practitioners may experience pressure to adapt aspects of their identity or professional practice to align with dominant organisational expectations, whilst their own cultural knowledge, lived experiences, and ways of working may be afforded less legitimacy. This illustrates Ray's (2019) concept of racialised decoupling, whereby organisational commitments to racial equity become disconnected from everyday practice. Applied to Educational Psychology, this framework suggests that systemic racism can be reproduced through organisational processes and professional norms that appear race-neutral yet continue to privilege dominant forms of knowledge and practice whilst marginalising minoritised voices (Strunk & Andrzejewski, 2023). Consequently, racial inequalities are sustained not only through individual acts of discrimination, but also through the routine operation of organisational structures, policies and professional practices.

As previously mentioned, the dark history of colonialism in Western Psychology has been widely cited as contributing to the embedding of racist and discriminatory practices within the foundations of social systems (Saini, 2019; Mngaza, 2021). These practices are regularly experienced by minoritised individuals within our education, health, and government systems (Agyeman & Lichwa, 2020; Burns, 2022), a phenomenon commonly referred to as systemic racism. Systemic racism manifests through unjust institutional policies and societal norms (Nadal et al., 2019). Examples of this include the documented mistreatment of Black individuals by the police (GOV.UK, 2021), the disproportionate imprisonment of Black males (Warde, 2013), and the poorer educational outcomes of pupils from minoritised backgrounds compared to their White peers (DfE, 2022). A substantial body of literature indicates that racism permeates our Western schools, universities, workplaces, and government systems (Burns, 2022; Proctor, 2022). Several scholars have noted that explanations for educational disparities among CYP from minoritised backgrounds often fail to explicitly recognise systemic racism and discrimination as contributing factors, particularly in contexts where CRT is not applied (DeCuir-Gunby & Schutz, 2014). From a systems-focused perspective, the literature suggests that

racial, cultural, and ethnic factors interact within the current socio-political context in ways that shape CYP's outcomes.

Evidence examining the operation of systemic racism within education consistently documents patterned inequalities in outcomes for pupils from minoritised backgrounds. Large-scale quantitative data in the UK indicated that these pupils experience lower academic attainment, higher rates of school exclusion, and poorer average educational outcomes when compared to their White British peers (DfE, 2022). Such trends are echoed across qualitative and mixed-methods studies that seek to understand how these disparities are produced and sustained within school systems. For example, Demie (2021) explored the experiences of Black Caribbean pupils facing school exclusion in England through interviews and focus groups with a range of educational stakeholders, including headteachers, parents, pupils, school staff, governors and SENCOs. Within this study, professionals and parents alike identified institutional racism and persistently low expectations as contributing factors to the disproportionate exclusion of Black Caribbean males. Parents further described experiences of stereotyping and labelling, illustrating how everyday forms of racism operate within school contexts. Demie's findings align with a broader body of literature documenting similar processes across educational settings. Such studies foreground the lived experiences and counter-narratives of marginalised communities, aligning with CRT's emphasis on centring voices that have historically been silenced within dominant educational discourses.

Another way in which the impact of racism and discrimination can be experienced is through the presence of racial trauma and microaggressions. Racial trauma refers to race-related discrimination, whether direct or indirect, which can lead to adverse psychological outcomes (Agyeman & Lichwa, 2020). In a nation where debates surrounding immigration, national identity, and citizenship have shaped public perceptions and influenced the lived experiences of ethnic communities in Britain, these discussions also impact the educational outcomes and mental health of the minoritised individuals in question (Williams et al., 2015). Furthermore, the recent increase in exposure to anti-immigration sentiments, racist hate crimes, violence, and riots across the nation (Watkins & Specia, 2024; Nierenberg, 2024), broadcasted across the news and social media platforms is likely to be shaping the lived experiences of minoritised individuals in the UK today.

Microaggressions refer to subtle, often unintentional, discriminatory comments or actions that have become a regular, yet harmful, part of the working lives of

minoritised individuals (Sue et al., 2007). This further underscores the CRT principle that racism is an everyday, normalised occurrence within British society. Personal reflections from Black EPs (Agyeman & Lichwa, 2020) highlight how microaggressions, though subtle, are pervasive and often go unnoticed by non-minoritised individuals. For instance, one EP recalls a White male colleague curiously patting her hair (Agyeman & Lichwa, 2020), while over 50% of minoritised EPs in a doctoral thesis exploring the experiences of minoritised EPs throughout their career journeys reported experiencing microaggressions during their course training (Meah, 2022).

Further evidence examining the operation of racialised microaggressions within professional training contexts is provided by Yang et al. (2020). Focusing on a School Psychology programme in the U.S., the study documents how trainees experienced microaggressions from peers, faculty, and supervisors, including accent-based impatience and the dismissal of questions. These findings illustrate how racialised power dynamics operate within professional training contexts, shaping professional socialisation and experiences of belonging within School Psychology.

The evidence presented indicates that the consequences of Western psychology and colonialism are being felt by minoritised individuals in education still today. Such outcomes are associated with a detrimental impact on the mental health of minoritised individuals (Meah, 2022). Further, it demonstrates how racism, in both overt and subtle forms, permeates educational systems, affecting minoritised individuals in profound ways. Through the lens of CRT, which underscores that racism is an everyday occurrence, we see that racial trauma, microaggressions, and systemic discrimination are deeply embedded within the education system, and consequently, Educational Psychology. Taken together, the literature highlights how systemic inequalities have historically been neglected within Educational Psychology, with ongoing implications for both professional practice and the experiences of minoritised professionals and communities.

Further, the literature gives tangible examples of how experiences of racism and discrimination are not isolated events but shaped by broader structural and institutional conditions. These patterns influence not only the experiences of minoritised children and young people, but also those navigating training and professional practice within Educational Psychology. Making visible these ongoing realities is essential for understanding why increasing attention has been directed

toward centring marginalised voices and re-examining dominant knowledge frameworks within the field. The following theme aims to explore how the profession is beginning to engage more directly with race-conscious perspectives, giving voice and platform to marginalised knowledge and practice.

1.4.3 Rising Voices: The Thought of the Oppressed

This theme explores the profession's emerging shift toward re-centring race within knowledge production and practice. Drawing on CRT, this section examines how dominant psychological frameworks have historically positioned Eurocentric experience as universal, a phenomenon described by Mngaza (2021) as a '*White normative standard*' that fails to account for the unique epistemologies of racialised groups (Stefancic & Delgado, 2010; Durrheim, 2024). Current academic thinking increasingly seeks to challenge this through decolonising approaches, counter-storytelling (Nguyen et al., 2024), and culturally grounded epistemologies that reject the '*colour-blind*' or '*neutral*' post-positivist traditions often found in Western research (Kumar & DeCuir-Gunby, 2023; Sakata, 2024). This shift calls for a movement beyond race-neutral approaches towards race-conscious and race-reimagined perspectives, where established psychological constructs such as motivation, belonging and engagement are reconceptualised through socio-cultural and racialised lenses (DeCuir-Gunby & Schutz, 2024). Such a shift carries significant implications for the professional formation of Educational Psychologists, shaping doctoral training, supervision and recruitment processes (Soni et al., 2022; Miller et al., 2021). Rather than positioning diversity as a surface-level consideration, this perspective requires a deeper, systemic engagement with power, racism and structural inequality. As a result, the profession moves towards fostering a more reflexive and culturally responsive workforce, better equipped to understand and navigate the layered realities of intersectional identity within educational contexts (Harrison & Atkinson, 2025; Ratherham & Kelly).

Within this evolving body of literature, the influence of these theoretical developments is increasingly evident in discussions of professional practice and trainee development. Race-focused perspectives position racial identity, systemic discrimination and institutional power as central considerations for practitioners, rather than peripheral variables (DeCuir-Gunby & Schutz, 2024). Emerging literature highlights that, for EPs to support minoritised learners meaningfully, they must critically engage with the racialised nature of both their professional journey and the systems within which they operate. For example, Soni et al. (2022) emphasise the

importance of developing critical consciousness within EP training, supporting trainees to explore their own positionality and the power dynamics embedded within the profession to avoid reproducing White normative standards. Similarly, Dunsmuir et al. (2024) highlight the role of the practitioner in navigating these complexities, arguing that professional competence requires moving beyond abstract notions of diversity toward a grounded, race-conscious engagement with the structural barriers present within educational systems. Through this lens, the professional pathway, from recruitment into doctoral training through to qualified practice, is positioned as one that must be rooted in social justice and actively challenging institutional inequities (Miller et al., 2021; Soni et al., 202).

Alongside this, literature highlights the importance of '*re-imagining*', where familiar psychological constructs such as belonging, motivation and engagement are understood within wider socio-cultural and structural contexts (Matthew & Lopez, 2020). Without this shift, there is a risk that behaviour is interpreted through individualised or deficit-oriented frameworks that overlook the systemic realities shaping pupils' experiences (Noltemeyer & Grapin, 2021; Sakata, 2024). For EPs, this reinforces the importance of developing formulations that attend not only to individual presentation but also to the broader influence of structural power, racialisation and lived experience.

Work focusing specifically on EP practitioners and trainees further underscores the need to embed race-conscious perspectives within doctoral training programmes, supervision and ongoing professional development. Reflexive practice is positioned as essential for recognising how psychologists' own racial positioning and professional socialisation shape processes of assessment, interpretation and decision-making (Soni et al., 2022). This aligns with critiques of so-called '*colourblind*' approaches, which by failing to explicitly acknowledge race, risk sustaining inequities and obscuring the distinct barriers experienced by minoritised groups (Kumar & DeCuir-Gunby, 2023). Consequently, calls to decolonise EP training programmes have intensified, with literature advocating for structural change across recruitment, curriculum and professional gatekeeping in order to disrupt dominant power structures within the profession (Escott & Abraham, 2021; Miller et al., 2021).

While these developments indicate a growing engagement with race-conscious and decolonising perspectives (Mngaza, 2021), the literature also highlights tensions between emerging critical awareness and the realities of

professional practice (Miller et al., 2021). In particular, questions remain regarding how far these ideas are translated into consistent systemic change, rather than remaining at the level of discourse or individual reflection (Harrison & Atkinson, 2025). This tension draws attention to the importance of examining how commitments to equity, representation and anti-racist practice are operationalised in Educational Psychology (Ratheram & Kelly, 2023), considered in the following section.

1.4.4 A Call to Justice: Culturally Responsive Advocacy

This theme critically examines how these shifts are increasingly expressed through the lens of social justice within Educational Psychology. It considers how anti-racist practice, cultural humility and culturally responsive approaches are often framed as mechanisms for disrupting systemic inequalities within the profession.

Exploring the extent to which social justice has moved beyond an aspirational value, towards an embedded and operationalised dimension of EP practice, training and accountability.

Although social justice has been widely presented as a core professional commitment within EP guidance (BPS 2017; HCPC 2023), literature consistently highlights the disconnect between these stated principles and their enactment within everyday practice (Miller et al., 2021). Without clear structures for advocacy and systemic challenge, social justice risks remaining rhetorical rather than transformative, with some literature cautioning that these commitments may remain performative, offering limited challenge to already established systems of recruitment, power and professional gatekeeping (Strunk & Andrzejewski, 2023). In response, recent developments within School Psychology emphasise that advocacy should be central to training and professional development, rather than framed as an additional endeavour, with diversity and equity interwoven into all aspects of training and skill-building within School Psychology programmes (Ford et al., 2024).

A central mechanism underpinning this shift is the growing importance placed on cultural humility and the willingness to engage in anti-racist practice. Unlike traditional thoughts surrounding cultural competence, which can imply a fixed endpoint of knowledge, cultural humility is conceptualised as an ongoing, reflexive process requiring critical self-examination and a deliberate decentring of professional authority (Pham et al., 2022). Within Educational Psychology, this involves an explicit responsibility to recognise and challenge racism both within professional systems

and in the educational environments EPs support (Harrison & Atkinson, 2025). Literature highlights that anti-racist practice requires movement beyond awareness to active disruption of racialised narratives and inequitable practices, locating 'challenge' as a core dimension of ethical and socially just service delivery. Sakata (2024) suggests that this process operates at both interpersonal and intrapersonal levels, requiring EPs to develop reflexive capacities that enable them to navigate power, privilege and positionality within consultation, assessment and intervention processes. In this way, cultural humility facilitates a move beyond surface-level recognition of diversity towards a race-conscious engagement with the structural realities shaping educational experiences (Fisher, 2020; Kumar & DeCuir-Gunby, 2023).

The movement towards '*Culturally Responsive Practice (CRP)*' represents further progression of these developments, translating principles of equity into more explicit systemic and practice-based actions (Sakata, 2024). CRP requires EPs to embed culturally informed, evidence-based approaches within service delivery, rather than just acknowledging diversity. A key challenge identified within the literature is the stagnation of racial justice discourse when not supported by robust systemic monitoring (Harrison & Atkinson, 2025). In response, there is increasing emphasis on the use of service-level data as a mechanism for advancing equity. For example, monitoring referral patterns and access to EP services across ethnic groups has been identified as critical for identifying disparities such as under-representation, differential pathways, or over-pathologisation (Knights & Atkinson, 2025). Without such structural scrutiny, there is a risk that practitioners continue to interpret behaviour through deficit-oriented frameworks, overlooking the potential of racialised factors.

Research informed by Indigenous Psychology in a Māori context developed a culturally responsive framework to address the shortcomings of conventional Educational Psychology with Indigenous students (Macfarlane & Macfarlane, 2015). The study found that by integrating sociocultural expertise, represented by members of the Māori community, with psychological expertise provided by the EP, a culturally grounded epistemology was formed and applied to pedagogy. This approach enabled Māori students to feel more secure in their own identities within school settings. The framework encourages educational professionals to draw upon the culture of those they are working with, placing equal value on both sociocultural and psychological perspectives, without privileging one over the other. This research

offers unique insight into the role of Indigenous Psychology in Māori culture and its relevance to Educational Psychology. Moreover, it expands the discourse on how mainstream Educational Psychology often fails to account for cultures, races, and ethnicities beyond the dominant white 'normative'. Through the lens of CRT, this study highlights the importance of recognising and challenging these systemic inequities in educational practice. The introduction of a culturally based framework provides a practical tool for incorporating diverse cultural epistemologies into Educational Psychology, particularly when working with students from different cultural backgrounds.

Lopez and Bursztyn (2013) argue that for future practising psychologists to become culturally responsive practitioners, training programmes must adopt a comprehensive multicultural approach. This includes (a) integrating multicultural perspectives into the core philosophy of the programmes, (b) rethinking educational and psychological theories within training through a multicultural lens, (c) clearly defining the scope of multicultural education within the curriculum, and (d) establishing and implementing specific multicultural competencies. The literature provided underscores that a strong commitment to culturally responsive practice is vital for EPs to uphold social justice principles and practice ethically (Shriberg & Clinton, 2016; Ford et al., 2024).

While literature demonstrates an increased engagement with culturally responsive anti-racist practice, it also suggests that operationalising their commitments into consistent, real-life systemic change remains complex. This suggests that progression within the profession is uneven and highlights the importance of considering how such developments can be implemented across training, practice and professional structures.

Within the literature, *anti-racist practice* and *culturally responsive practice* are often used interchangeably. However, although the two approaches are closely related and often work hand-in-hand, they are underpinned by different theoretical traditions and require different responses in practice.

Anti-racist practice has its roots in civil rights movements, Black radical scholarship, and critical sociology, extending beyond the field of Educational Psychology (Joseph-Salisbury & Connelly, 2021; Sivanandan, 1990). It adopts a structural action-oriented approach by explicitly recognising and challenging racism, white supremacy, and unequal power relations within organisations and systems. Within Educational Psychology, this means moving beyond awareness of racial

inequalities to actively questioning and addressing exclusionary policies, biases within the statutory assessment process, and institutional gatekeeping practices that disadvantage minoritised communities (Joseph-Salisbury & Connelly, 2021).

In contrast, culturally responsive practice originates primarily from educational, pedagogical, and multicultural psychology literature (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Gay, 2002; Sakata, 2024). Rather than focusing directly on dismantling structural racism, culturally responsive practice emphasises the importance of developing culturally attuned relationships and practices. This includes recognising and valuing children and young people's cultural identities, validating linguistic diversity, and adopting culturally humble approaches to assessment, consultation, and intervention.

1.5 Summary of the Literature

This narrative literature review critically examines the complex roles that race, culture, and ethnicity play within Educational Psychology through the lens of CRT for analysis. CRT asserts that racism is not an anomaly but a deeply ingrained aspect of everyday life, which permeates educational systems and psychological practices (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). The review traces the colonial roots of psychology, highlighting how racial categories and exclusionary practices were established and reinforced by figures like Cyril Burt, whose eugenic beliefs shaped early intelligence testing and the marginalisation of minoritised individuals (Saini, 2019; Wallace & Joseph-Salisbury, 2021). Through the lens of CRT, the review explores systemic racism and its manifestations in both overt and subtle forms, such as racial trauma, microaggressions, and institutional exclusion both for minoritised individuals in the profession and pupils (Agyeman & Lichwa, 2020; Nadal et al., 2019). Recent statistics show that minoritised students in the UK continue to face significant disparities in academic outcomes compared to their White peers (DfE, 2022), reflecting the ongoing impact of systemic racism in education. These disparities are compounded by everyday experiences of racial discrimination and low expectations from educators, contributing to higher exclusion rates and diminished academic self-esteem among minoritised pupils (Demie, 2021).

This review also surfaces a wider tension in the evidence base. While race, culture and ethnicity are frequently named in professional standards and policy commitments, they are still inconsistently embedded within the discipline's core theories, training expectations and everyday decision-making (BPS, 2017; HCPC, 2023; Kumar & DeCuir-Gunby, 2023). Across the literature, racism is not simply described as interpersonal harm, but as something being upheld through 'neutral'

processes that shape what counts as valid knowledge, what is treated as normal development, and what becomes framed as an individual deficit rather than a structural pattern (Gillborn, 2005; Fricker, 2007; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). In that sense, the review highlights not only outcome disparities for children and young people, but also the epistemic conditions that allow those disparities to be explained away, minimised or relabelled in ways that protect the status quo (Bonilla-Silva, 2018; DeCuir-Gunby & Schutz, 2014).

A key pattern emerging from this review is the apparent limitation of traditional psychological constructs in fully capturing the nuanced, intersectional experiences of racialised individuals. As a result, this review highlights the need to revisit frameworks used within the profession through a more culturally situated and critically informed lens. Research emphasises the importance of race-focused constructs in understanding the educational experiences of ethnic minority students, suggesting that practitioners must centre race to truly address the challenges these groups face (DeCuir-Gunby & Schutz, 2014; Leath et al., 2019). Culturally responsive practices are identified as essential for disrupting the dominance of Eurocentric norms within Educational Psychology. Drawing on international and Indigenous examples, such as the Māori framework of integrating sociocultural expertise into pedagogy (Macfarlane & Macfarlane, 2015), the review argues that the profession must adopt new epistemological approaches that recognise and value diverse cultural perspectives. This requires a commitment to decolonising the discipline, ensuring that the voices of marginalised groups, including professionals, are not only heard but central to shaping the future of the field.

The literature points to a profession navigating a critical moment of change. While there is a growing recognition of anti-racism and culturally responsive practice, the structural mechanisms that shape training pathways, professional legitimacy and service delivery do not always reflect this shift (Miller et al., 2021; Strunk & Andrzejewski, 2023; Ratheram & Kelly, 2023). This distinction matters, as when race is treated as periphery rather than foundational to formulation, assessment and systems work, inequities will persist despite well-intentioned efforts (Sakata, 2024; Dunsmuir et al., 2024). What this review highlights is the continuity between the profession's historical foundations and present-day realities, demonstrating how colonial legacies, everyday racism and knowledge hierarchies continue to shape both workforce experience and outcomes within education (Mngaza, 2021; Williams et al., 2015; Wallace & Joseph-Salisbury, 2021).

In conclusion, the literature highlights an urgent need for the profession of Educational Psychology to engage more deeply with CRT principles, moving beyond token gestures of diversity towards meaningful systemic change. Such a change would not only impact the educational experiences and outcomes of children and young people from minoritised backgrounds but also minoritised individuals who are choosing to enter the Educational Psychology profession.

1.6 Implications for Future Research

The findings from this review highlight several crucial areas where future research could significantly advance the field of Educational Psychology, where matters of race, culture and ethnicity are concerned. First, future research should explore how training programmes can more effectively integrate critical historical perspectives, particularly those concerning the colonial and eugenic legacies within Psychology. Without this, there is a risk that EPs may continue to perpetuate practices rooted in racism, rather than being equipped to challenge them (Saini, 2019; Wright, 2020). A deeper understanding of this history is essential to ensure that practitioners adopt an informed, anti-racist approach.

Additionally, literature suggests that there is a growing need for research that investigates the long-term psychological effects of racism and discrimination within the profession. The existing literature shows that these experiences are widespread among minoritised EPs and students (Agyeman & Lichwa, 2020; Meah, 2022), yet little is known about their cumulative impacts on mental health or professional development. Future studies should focus on practical interventions to mitigate these effects, ensuring the well-being of both practitioners and students. Conducting research of this nature can yield insights from the literature that may help improve both the recruitment and retention of minoritised individuals in doctoral training programmes, an area that continues to present significant challenges (Proctor, 2022).

Future research would also benefit from examining how race, culture and ethnicity are operationalised within everyday EP practice, rather than remaining located primarily within policy or training discourse. There is currently limited empirical work exploring how practitioners translate race-conscious thinking into formulation, consultation and decision-making in applied contexts. Practice-based and longitudinal research may therefore provide important insights into how professional intentions are implemented in real-world settings, and where structural barriers continue to shape outcomes (Miller et al., 2021; Harrison & Atkinson, 2025). Understanding this relationship between professional commitment and everyday

practice is essential for identifying how inequities are either challenged or inadvertently reproduced within service delivery.

Moreover, research should prioritise the development of culturally responsive frameworks tailored to specific cultural groups within the UK. While existing models provide a foundation, a one-size-fits-all approach is insufficient to address the complex and varied cultural identities within the UK's diverse population. Drawing on Indigenous models, such as those used in Māori contexts (Macfarlane & Macfarlane, 2015), future research should work towards frameworks that reflect the cultural needs and experiences of different cultures in the UK's unique socio-political environment.

Further, CRT offers not only an analytical lens but a call to action. Future research should evaluate how EP training programmes can integrate CRT principles to better prepare practitioners to confront systemic racism in educational and professional settings (Williams et al., 2015; Meah, 2022; Sakata, 2024). Embedding CRT into training would ensure EPs are equipped to address the power dynamics and inequalities that affect minoritised students and professionals (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

In addition, future research should explore how equity within Educational Psychology can be meaningfully monitored and evaluated over time. While culturally responsive anti-racist practices are increasingly discussed within the profession, there remains limited clarity regarding how services assess progress, identify disparities, and embed accountability within organisational structures. Research examining service-level data, workforce representation and patterns of access to psychological support across ethnic groups may offer valuable insight into how systemic inequities can be more transparently identified and addressed (Knight & Atkinson, 2025; Ratheram & Kelly, 2023). Strengthening this evidence base would support the movement from stated commitment toward measurable systemic change.

Future research should continue to explore how multiple social identities, such as race, gender, and class intersect in both educational and professional contexts. Intersectionality, a core principle of CRT is essential for understanding how these overlapping identities shape the lived experiences and outcomes of minoritised individuals. By examining these intersections, researchers can amplify marginalised voices as embraced in CRT and develop comprehensive interventions that address the full range of discrimination and inequality these individuals face. A deeper

understanding of these complexities will ultimately lead to more effective and equitable practices within Educational Psychology; a supposed aim the UK profession is urgently seeking to fulfil (Division of Educational and Child Psychology (DECP), 2024).

Building on this, it is important to recognise that centring the lived experiences of minoritised EPs should not be viewed as a separate or additional area of research, but as a foundational approach through which many of the areas outlined above can be meaningfully explored. Much of the existing literature continues to privilege institutional or majority perspectives, despite increasing recognition that experiential knowledge offers critical insight into how professional systems operate in practice (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Wright, 2020).

As such, future research must move beyond traditional, top-down approaches and prioritise methodologies that centre the voices and lived experiences of minoritised EPs. It is through these accounts that the profession can begin to understand how race is navigated and experienced in everyday practice, and where systemic barriers continue to shape both training and professional trajectories. Positioning experiential knowledge as a legitimate and essential form of evidence enables a shift from surface-level commitments toward a more critically informed and action-oriented understanding of racial equity. In doing so, research can play a central role in supporting the profession to move beyond policy rhetoric and towards meaningful, systemic change.

2 Chapter 2: Empirical Chapter

2.1 Abstract

There is a notable lack of UK-based research that centres and amplifies the voices of Black Educational Psychologists (EPs) in relation to their training and practice experiences. The present study explored how Black EPs make sense of their professional journeys through the lenses of race, culture and ethnicity. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with ten EPs who identified as Black, representing a range of experience levels and geographical locations. Data were analysed using Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA). Whilst each participant shared a distinct and nuanced experience, seven themes were developed from the analysis: 'seen and not heard', 'white noise', 'in between worlds', 'the weight we carry', 'the colour in our practice', 'spaces that hold us' and 'the fire that won't go out'. The analysis suggests that, across their professional journeys, Black EPs are required to hold an ongoing tension between maintaining an authentic professional identity and working within systems and structures that often silence, overlook or misinterpret their experiences. Despite this, participants described how they continue to draw on their lived experiences as a source of strength, using these insights to meaningfully shape and enrich their practice, and in turn, the wider profession. These findings hold clear relevance to the Educational Psychology profession and contribute to ongoing efforts to becoming a culturally responsive anti-racist practice. Key implications and areas for future research are outlined.

2.2 Introduction

The 2020 Black Lives Matter movement brought global scrutiny to racial injustices within professional institutions (Williams, 2020), with Educational Psychology also falling under this critical examination (Tobin et al., 2023). In the current socio-political climate, racist attitudes continue to escalate, fuelled by political rhetoric such as anti-immigrant discourse. This has contributed to a rise in anti-immigration propaganda and an increase in violence across the UK and beyond (Watkins & Specia, 2024; Nierenberg, 2024). Evidence shows that racism continues to permeate Western schools, universities, workplaces, and government systems (Burns, 2022; Proctor, 2022), negatively impacting the experiences of children, families, and professionals alike.

The Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities (CRED) report (2021), also known as the Sewell Report, positioned education as an important vehicle for achieving greater racial equality within the UK. However, the report has been subject to significant criticism from anti-racist scholars, sociologists, and professional commentators, particularly in relation to its methodology, conclusions, and interpretation of systemic racism (Bhopal, 2021; Ogunrotifa, 2022; Joseph-Salisbury et al., 2021). Critics have argued that the report downplayed the extent to which institutional and systemic racism continues to shape the experiences of minoritised communities, instead placing greater emphasis on factors such as individual aspiration, socioeconomic circumstances, and family structures (Bhopal, 2021; Ogunrotifa, 2022). The report's characterisation of Britain as a "model for racial equality" has consequently been questioned, particularly given evidence of continuing racial inequalities across education and professional settings (Burns, 2022; Proctor, 2022). Therefore, whilst the CRED (2021) report represents an important socio-political contribution to discussions of race and equality within UK policy, its claims require critical and tentative engagement. In particular, its conclusions should be considered alongside research documenting the continued experiences of institutional and systemic racism reported by minoritised communities and professionals within the UK educational context (Demie, 2021; Wright, 2020). This wider social context underscores the importance of addressing racial inequalities within the field of Educational Psychology.

The role of the Educational Psychologist (EPs) is critical in supporting the educational, social, and emotional well-being of children and young people (CYP) (AEP, 2022). This responsibility includes recognising and addressing barriers to inclusion and goes beyond those which present within the educational system and individual lives of CYP, particularly those related to race, culture, and ethnicity, as outlined in the practitioner competencies (British Psychological Society (BPS), 2017; Health and Care Professionals Council (HCPC), 2023).

EPs are expected to work in a manner that is sensitive to the diverse cultural needs of the communities they serve, ensuring their approach is inclusive, equitable, and actively promotes racial equality within schools and wider communities (BPS: Division of Education and Child Psychology (DECP), 2006). However, research indicates that the field still faces challenges in better supporting minoritised individuals, particularly those entering the profession. Black EPs, for instance, often describe their training as an isolating and discriminatory experience (Wright, 2020;

Escott & Abraham, 2021; Apontua, 2024). In response to such concerns, the BPS established the DECP anti-racist working party in 2001 to examine institutional and systemic racism within the profession. The 2006 report highlighted that racism is pervasive throughout education, from nursery to teacher training, and that Educational Psychology is no exception. The report made several recommendations to dismantle insensitive practices in EP services, though current research highlights that progress remains slow (De-Cuir- Gunby & Schutz, 2024). The DECP's subsequent working group in 2021 reinforced the need for action and developed updated guidelines aimed at promoting anti-racist practices within the profession (Miller et al., 2023). Many Educational Psychology Services (EPS) have since claimed to prioritise racial equality, implementing changes at individual, team, and borough-wide levels (Tobin et al., 2023). This ongoing focus on racial equity reflects the profession's need to respond more effectively to the challenges outlined by the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities report.

The literature highlights that the roles of race, culture, and ethnicity remain insufficiently addressed within the field of Educational Psychology (Kumar & DeCuir-Gunby, 2023), suggesting that, despite perceived efforts for change, a gap still remains in understanding how these concepts impact and influence the profession. Research indicates that education and professional environments can often be a negative and harmful experience for minoritised individuals due to the racial discrimination they encounter (Demie 2021; Otaeye-Ebede, 2023). A study exploring the impact of race, culture, and ethnicity on White British EPs revealed several barriers to working effectively with minoritised individuals and communities, particularly regarding cultural differences and practices for which they felt unprepared (Ashraf, 2020). However, the study also found that greater exposure to diverse communities, alongside opportunities to train with a more diverse cohort of staff and services, was beneficial and highlighted the need for reforms in EP training curricula. Furthermore, the presence of minoritised trainees was reported to enhance the ability of White EPs to connect with minoritised communities and deliver more appropriate services. Whilst this is the case, Black EPs continue to represent a minority within the profession (AEP, 2022).

Recent studies amplifying the voices of minoritised groups reveal that Black EPs have reported both personal and observed experiences of racial discrimination within Educational Psychology (Apontua, 2024). Black trainee EPs have reflected on the challenges of navigating their 'Blackness' within a predominantly White system,

describing feelings of disconnection, emotional exhaustion, and a lack of understanding from non-Black colleagues and EPS (Wright, 2020). Similarly, insights from Indigenous Psychology in a Māori context illustrate how a minoritised EP felt compelled to conform to Eurocentric educational and workplace environments, which she described as a psychologically unhealthy experience and misaligned with her values (Escott & Abraham, 2021).

However, research suggests that representation within the profession plays a crucial role. Black EPs reported feeling positively impacted when able to connect with and work alongside other Black professionals and noted the importance of representation in fostering trust and support among minoritised families (Apontua, 2024). These findings emphasise the importance of listening to the experiences of minoritised individuals to better equity, inclusion and diversity efforts within the profession. An ongoing priority in the field of Educational Psychology.

2.3 Rationale Summary and Research Aims

Previous research has treated race merely as a demographic label rather than recognising it as a sociohistorical factor that profoundly shapes outcomes and experiences (DeCuir-Gunby & Schutz, 2014). The literature on the training and practice experiences of minoritised EPs is sparse, while CRT underscores the value of centring Black voices within research (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). It acknowledges that minoritised scholars bring unique perspectives often overlooked by their White counterparts (Stefancic & Delgado, 2010). A central tenet of CRT is intersectionality. This is a framework developed by Crenshaw (1989) and is crucial for understanding how overlapping social identities, such as race and gender, race and culture or race and perceived status, shape the lived experiences of minoritised individuals. These intersections influence how someone is treated, what opportunities they have, and how systems respond to them.

Building on this, the present study seeks to make a distinct contribution by bringing together these intersecting dimensions of race, culture and ethnicity within the context of Educational Psychology training and practice. In doing so, it moves beyond identifying gaps within the literature and instead offers an in-depth exploration of how these constructs are experienced and navigated within the profession. By centring the voices of Black EPs, this research provides an important counter-narrative to dominant professional discourses, spotlighting perspectives that have historically been marginalised (Robinson et al., 2011). It aims to generate a more nuanced understanding of how race, culture and ethnicity are lived and

negotiated across training and professional contexts. In this way, the study not only extends existing knowledge but also contributes experiential insight that can support more critically reflective and responsive approaches within EP training and practice.

This exploration will primarily consider the lens of race, i.e. Black EPs, while also considering the intersecting influence of individual culture and ethnic identity. For this research, 'Black' refers to individuals who identify as Black as an 'identity' descriptor, signifying their affiliation with and solidarity among groups that face oppression due to their skin colour (Patel et al., 2000), irrespective of their cultural or ethnic background. As discussed in the literature review, broad categorisations such as 'Black' can risk overlooking the diversity of experience within groups. However, within the context of recruitment, there was a practical need to use this shared identifier to ensure a viable sample. This tension was held reflexively throughout the research process, with care taken during interviews to create a space for participants to articulate their own culture and ethnic identities beyond this broader label. As a profession, little has been done to understand the experience of Black EPs from their perspective. This research hopes to provoke thought, promote dialogue and encourage training courses and Educational Psychology Specialist Services (EPSSs) to critically examine the privileged discourses they operate within and the institutional practices they engage in, which could equip them to better support Black EPs in their personal and professional development.

This study aims to explore how Black EPs make sense of their training and professional experiences through the lenses of race, culture, and ethnicity. In doing so, it seeks to:

- Centre the voices and experiences of Black EPs within Educational Psychology research
- Extend our understanding of how race, culture, and ethnicity shape professional identity, practice, and participation
- Contribute to critical reflection within training programmes and EPSSs regarding institutional practices and professional discourses

This thesis deliberately uses the terms *race*, *culture* and *ethnicity* throughout its conceptual framework and interview schedules. Although these concepts have distinct meanings within the literature, as defined in the literature review, they are often closely intertwined in peoples lived experiences. Race is understood as a socially and politically constructed system that shapes power and the categorisation of people based on perceived physical differences; ethnicity refers to shared

ancestry, heritage, nationality or language; and culture encompasses the shared beliefs, values, customs and practices that shape everyday life (Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1989). Whilst these definitions are conceptually distinct, separating them too rigidly within research risks oversimplifying how individuals understand and experience different parts of their identity.

Using all three terms allowed participants the flexibility to describe and discuss their identities in ways that felt meaningful to them, rather than being confined to researcher-defined categories. This approach also enabled participants to reflect on how race, culture and ethnicity intersect and how systems respond to these multiple overlapping aspects of identity.

However, it is important to acknowledge that there are both strengths and limitations to adopting this approach. One strength is that it better reflects the complexity and intersectionality of participants' experiences, avoiding assumptions that all members of racial groups share the same culture or ethnic identities. It also creates space for participants to discuss cultural assets and sources of belonging alongside experiences of structural racism. Conversely, using three concepts together also carries the risk of conceptual overlap. In particular, there is a danger that experiences of systemic racism could be reframed as issues of cultural difference, or that the structural and political dimensions of race become diluted within broader discussions of culture and diversity. Acknowledging this limitation is important, and throughout this thesis, race, culture and ethnicity are treated as related but distinct concepts to ensure that structural racism is not obscured by more general discussions of cultural difference.

2.4 Research Question

RQ1. How do Black EPs make sense of their training and practice experiences through the lenses of race, culture, and ethnicity?

2.5 Methodology

The following section outlines the methodological process undertaken by the researcher in conducting this study. It begins by detailing the researcher's ontological and epistemological positioning, establishing the assumptions that underpin how knowledge, experience and reality are understood within this work. Next, this section details the theoretical framework that informs the study, followed by an explanation of the analytical approach adopted. Finally, it addresses the ethical considerations that guided the researcher's process, ensuring the study was carried out with rigour,

transparency and integrity.

2.5.1 Ontological and epistemological stance

Ontology refers to the study of 'being' and explores the nature of reality and our understanding of the world (Ormston et al., 2014). Epistemology concerns the theory of knowledge, addressing how we acquire and interpret knowledge about the world (Al-Ababneh, 2020; Ormston et al., 2014). This research project adopts an interpretivist paradigm, specifically Black feminist epistemology (BFE). Interpretivism, often referred to as the 'Phenomenological' or 'Social Constructivist' paradigm, is concerned with understanding the social world through the subjective experiences and meanings of the people within it (Ryan, 2018). Interpretivism emerged in direct opposition to a positivist stance, arguing that human beings cannot be studied in the same way as the physical world (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). It contends that reality is not an objective fact but is created, internalised and sustained through social interaction, forming the foundation of its core relativist ontology (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Weber (2009) argues that the study of society must move beyond mere external observations, as in positivism, to understand the subjective meaning that individuals attach to their social actions. This establishes the subjective/interpretive epistemology of the paradigm. Additionally, interpretivist approaches also recognise that researchers cannot fully detach themselves from their own values and beliefs; these inevitably inform the way in which data are collected, interpreted and analysed (Ryan, 2018). For this reason, an interpretivist paradigm is well-suited to the present study, as it acknowledges the active role of the researcher and challenges the assumption that the dominant societal view constitutes a single objective reality. Instead, it supports the idea that multiple realities can only be understood through a holistic, contextually informed lens. Given that this research explores the lived experience of marginalised voices, an interpretivist stance affirms that such perspectives offer alternative and equally valid realities that are frequently overlooked or suppressed within mainstream discourse (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Schwandt, 1994).

The researcher's understanding of reality aligns with BFE, which holds that '*truth*' is constructed and shaped through the intersecting influences of race, gender and power (Hill Collins, 2000). For me, BFE is not simply a theoretical lens, but a necessary part of how I approached this research. As a Black woman navigating the doctoral journey in Educational Psychology, my own subjectivity is closely connected

to the 'outsider-within' position that Hill Collins (2000, p.11) describes. This shaped how I engaged with participants' narratives, not as a detached observer, but as someone who shares a similar socio-political positioning. In this sense, BFE provides a meaningful framework for understanding how systems of oppression are experienced and navigated by those whose voices have historically been marginalised.

A key component of BFE is intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989).

Intersectionality posits that systems of oppression (like racism, sexism and classism) are not mutually exclusive but intertwine to create unique compounded experiences of domination (Bauer et al., 2021). This interpretivist approach acknowledges the intricate intersectionality of being both Black and a woman (Nadar, 2014), offering a decolonising perspective within Psychology by embracing an Afrocentric worldview that places Black women at the centre (Thomas, 2004). It is further distinguished by four core principles outlined by Hill Collins (2000), which are detailed in Table 1.

Table 1
Four Core Principles of Black Feminist Epistemology

Core Principle	Application to the Current Research
Concrete experience as a criterion of meaning	This research centres the lived experiences of Black EPs as primary and valid sources of knowledge. Their narratives are treated as essential data for understanding how race, gender and professional identity (including perceived status/power) shape their experience in the EP profession.
Use of dialogue in assessing knowledge claims	This research supports the use of dialogue, relational methods such as semi-structured, reciprocal interviewing. Here, knowledge is co-constructed between researcher and participants rather than simply extracted from them, aligning with interpretivist meaning making.
Ethic of caring	This research informs a relational and reflexive approach to data collection, where empathy, emotional expressiveness and mutual respect are

acknowledged as valid and important within the research encounter. This reinforces the researcher's commitment to participant wellbeing and ethical sensitivity.

Ethic of personal accountability

The nature of this research requires a transparent and robust positionality statement. The researcher acknowledges how their identity as a Black female trainee EP shapes the research focus, interpretation and ethical commitments. This principle underpins reflexivity throughout the study.

Building on these principles, the application of BFE to the study of Black EPs experiences is particularly appropriate given the profession's historical links with racial oppression. BFE provides a framework through which the current research can challenge the longstanding myth of 'neutrality' within traditional EP practice (Mngaza, 2021). By adopting this stance, the current research rejects the assumption that psychological measurement and intervention are objective or value-free, thereby creating space to interrogate how professional practices may perpetuate systemic racism (Mngaza, 2021). Moreover, recognising that researchers often engage in such work because of their identity as Black women (Mngaza, 2021), BFE affirms the legitimacy of Black scholars' theorising, writing, and strategising from their own positional vantage point (Nadar, 2014). This also aligns with the CRT principle of counter-storytelling, which describes a method of amplifying the stories of those people whose experiences are often overlooked (Delgado, 1989). By centring the voices of Black EPs, this research legitimises the subjective, lived narratives of the participants as authoritative knowledge, directly challenging the '*majoritarian story*' of objectivity and neutrality pervasive in psychological practice (Hill Collins, 2000; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). This process of using personal narrative to expose systemic racism is fundamental to CRT's methodology, asserting that the concrete experiences valued by BFE serve as the most powerful evidence of racial oppression in the field (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

In adopting this epistemological stance, this research is also guided by an explicit axiology that recognises the value-laden nature of knowledge production (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The researcher's identity as a Black female trainee EP

inevitably shapes the research process, aligning with BFE's assertion that personal experience is inseparable from knowledge creation. This requires the researcher to adopt a stance of personal accountability and an ethic of care, as defined in the core principles of BFE (Hill Collins, 2000), and connects knowledge production to wider commitments to social change and empowerment (Lather, 1986). Semi-structured interviewing is therefore not only compatible but necessary for producing co-constructed meaning (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Although interpretivist paradigms have been critiqued for subjectivity or perceived generalisability (Williams, 2002), such critiques misunderstand the purpose of research centred on lived experience and social justice (Chilisa, 2012). Instead, the study is grounded in reflexivity, transparency and ethical responsibility, ensuring that participants' narratives are treated with care and dignity throughout the research process.

2.5.2 Theoretical Underpinnings

CRT provides the overarching theoretical lens for this study, shaping how the experiences of Black EPs are conceptualised, interpreted and situated within wider systems of power. While CRT has been defined within the literature review, its inclusion here establishes how the theoretical underpinnings inform how the researcher analyses and understands racism, structural inequality and dominant narratives (Ladson-Billings, 1998), from gaining insight into the experiences of Black EPs. Positioned alongside the study's interpretivist and BFE stance, CRT offers a critical framework through which participants' narratives can be understood not merely as individual accounts but as reflections of broader systemic patterns within Educational Psychology (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

Further, CRT shapes the analytical direction of this study by bringing into focus the structural and institutional dimensions of participants' accounts. While BFE informs whose knowledge is centred (Hill Collins, 2000) and how knowledge is co-constructed, CRT clarifies how those narratives are made sense of (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Additionally, CRT moves beyond understanding lived experiences as 'exceptional' and directs attention to the organisational, policy and cultural factors that normalise racial inequality. This enables the analysis to shift from description to considering the systemic mechanisms that sustain exclusion and marginalisation (Bell, 1980; Crenshaw, 1991). In this way, CRT provides the conceptual tools to

examine how professional practice and training structures may reproduce racial hierarchies.

2.5.3 Participants

To address the aim of exploring the racialised and intersectional experiences of Black EPs across the UK, careful consideration was given to the participant recruitment strategy. A purposive sampling approach was used to recruit Black EPs who had completed their training in the UK and were currently practising within UK services. Purposive sampling is recognised as an effective qualitative research method for aligning the participant sample with the research aims and objectives, focusing on enhancing depth, relevance and richness of insight rather than representativeness (Campbell et al., 2020).

Participants were recruited through publicly accessible social media platforms commonly used within the EP profession, including LinkedIn and X (formerly Twitter). Recruitment materials clearly detailed the purpose of the study and directed individuals to a participant information sheet and online consent form, ensuring ethical transparency, voluntary participation and clear rights to withdraw. The use of voluntary, open recruitment may have attracted participants who felt a particular motivation to share their experiences, which is a recognised feature of self-selection in qualitative research (Robinson, 2014). Within the context of this study, it is likely that participants who chose to take part held a heightened awareness of racial, cultural and ethnic dynamics within Educational Psychology. As such, this element of self-selection may have contributed to the depth of the data, with participants often bringing rich, critically informed accounts shaped by their experiences of navigating systemic tensions. Rather than viewing this as a limitation, it is recognised as a feature of the research that strengthened the 'counter-storytelling' element (Delgado, 1989; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002), providing space for participants to articulate perspectives that may not be typically heard within the profession.

A total of 10 participants were recruited (7 females, 3 males), representing a diverse range of professional experiences detailed in Table 2. Additionally, participants were drawn from a variety of EP training courses across the UK. This diversity was intentional, as EP training programmes differ in structure, institutional culture and placement contexts (AEP, 2023), and these variations can shape trainees' racialised and professional experiences (Eraut, 2004; Ozturk & Berber,

2022). Additionally, participants were drawn from different geographical regions, acknowledging that experiences of race and belonging are influenced by regional demographic diversity and sociocultural contexts (Hammond 2021; ONS, 2022; Palmer et al., 2025).

Table 2
Participant Information

Participant	Gender Identity	Years of Experience
Chyna	Female	11 months
Amanda	Female	12 years
Emerald	Male	5 years
Earl	Male	3 years
Danielle	Female	8 months
Desmond	Male	3 years
Saffron	Female	8 years
Peace	Female	36 years
Kammi	Female	3 years
Sasha	Female	3 years

As seen in Table 2, gender identity and years of experience were collected as key demographic variables, reflecting an understanding that racialised experiences can shift across sociopolitical eras and intersectionality. Conversely, age was not collected as it was not deemed theoretically meaningful for addressing the study aims. Although the training institution attended by each participant and current role were discussed during interviews for contextual understanding, this information is not reported in the participant information to protect anonymity.

Whilst the present study aimed to include participants across different regions and training pathways, the emphasis was on achieving sufficient information power (Malterud et al., 2016). That is, depth and relevance of the lived experience of Black EPs, rather than a large sample size aimed at achieving broad geographical coverage. The final sample offered this research substantial narrative depth and contextual variation, supporting a rich exploration of the racialised and intersectional dimensions of training and working as a Black EP in the UK.

2.5.4 Data Collection

Establishing a sensitive and conversational tone in interactions was crucial for this research, given the racialised and potentially emotive nature of participants' experiences. Semi-structured interviews were therefore selected as an appropriate and necessary method of data collection. This approach provided participants with the flexibility to speak openly and in depth while ensuring that the necessary data was gathered to address the research question (Willig, 2013). Semi-structured interviews also align closely with the study's interpretivist, BFE and CRT underpinnings, as they privilege lived experience, support shared meaning-making through dialogue, and create space for counter-narratives that challenge dominant assumptions within the EP profession (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022; Lawrence, 2022).

A semi-structured interview schedule containing 12 questions was developed to guide and prompt meaningful and nuanced discussion around the research aims (Bearman, 2019), while still allowing participants autonomy over what they felt was most meaningful to share.

The development of the interview questions was directly informed by the gaps identified within the literature review, particularly the limited empirical focus on how professional identity and racial identity intersect during EP training. For example, the initial questions (questions 2-3) were designed in response to the conceptual conflation of race and ethnicity noted in the literature, providing space for participants to define these constructs in their own terms. Subsequent questions (questions 4-9) focused on how race is experienced and navigated within everyday professional practice, an area identified as underexplored within the review.

The final phase of the interview (questions 10-12) was designed to move beyond reflection and towards change. Question 10, in particular, invited participants to consider what needs to shift within the profession in response to the forms of professional silence highlighted in the literature review. This allowed participants to articulate the systemic changes they felt were necessary, positioning the research not only as descriptive but as something that can contribute to ongoing dialogue and development within the field. Questions 11 and 12 also served as an important reflexive purpose. By asking what may have been left unsaid and how participants experienced the interview, this acknowledged them as active contributors to the research process. This was especially important given the historically dominant

narratives within psychological research, as it ensured the interview space remained one where participants had agency to shape, challenge and extend what was shared. In doing so, the approach supported the capture of rich, experience-based accounts in a way that not only plugged a research gap, but that felt authentic and participant-led.

Open-ended questions encouraged reflective depth and supported the emergence of experiences and interpretations that may not have been anticipated by the researcher (Braun & Clarke, 2022). The schedule was not provided to participants in advance. This decision was made to promote authentic reflection and responses, reduce rehearsed narratives, and support the generation of rich, in-the-moment meaning making, an approach commonly recommended when exploring lived experience through interviewing (Kallio et al, 2016).

Due to the geographical spread of participants and the practical demands of working within different local authority (LA) contexts, all interviews were conducted virtually via Microsoft Teams. Virtual interviews offered participants flexibility around scheduling and reduced barriers associated with travel or time constraints (Keen et al., 2022). Research suggests that virtual interviewing can enhance accessibility and comfort, particularly when discussing sensitive identity-related topics, as participants are able to remain in a familiar environment and retain greater personal control over the interaction (Braun et al., 2017).

Interviews ranged from approximately 45 to 90 minutes, allowing participants sufficient time to explore their experiences in depth. The researcher adopted a reflexive, attuned and culturally sensitive stance throughout, consistent with BFE's ethic of care, which recognised empathy, emotion and relational connection as integral to ethical knowledge production (Hill Collins, 2000). Given the racialised nature of the topic, participants were reminded that they could take their time, skip questions or withdraw at any point, ensuring psychological safety and continuous informed consent. All interviews were audio-recorded through Microsoft Teams software and transcribed verbatim. Data were stored securely in line with GDPR and UEA ethical guidelines. Reflexive field notes were completed during and after each interview to support transparency and to capture contextual impressions that might inform later interpretation.

While semi-structured interviews were considered the most effective method for gathering nuanced experiential data, their limitations were acknowledged.

Interviews rely on participants' ability to articulate their experiences verbally, and the co-constructed nature of the interview process means that data will inevitably be influenced by the interaction between the researcher and participant (Silverman, 2021). Rather than viewing this as a limitation, such reflexive awareness is foundational to interpretivist approaches and is embedded within BFE, which views the researcher's perspectives and experiences as part of the knowledge-building process. Overall, interviews generated rich, contextually grounded accounts that provided a strong foundation for analysing the racialised and intersectional experiences of Black EPs in the UK.

2.5.5 Data Analysis

The interview transcripts were analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2022) six-phase Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA). This method values the aware, situated and active role of researchers in generating themes, with researcher subjectivity understood not as bias to be minimised, but serving as a resource and the primary tool for interpretation. Further, RTA provides an accessible and robust method for developing, analysing and interpreting patterns across qualitative datasets. This approach aligns closely with the interpretivist foundations of the study and research paradigm of BFE, which positions the researcher's lived experience, standpoint and reflexive engagement as integral to knowledge production. Moreover, RTA offers a theoretically flexible approach that can be meaningfully applied within broader theoretical frameworks such as CRT, supporting the identification of both experiential and structural patterns across the dataset.

In line with Braun and Clarke's (2022) guidance, explicit analytic choices were made prior to engaging with the dataset and are presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3
Approaches to reflexive thematic analysis

RTA Variation	Chosen Approach	Rationale
Orientation to data	Predominantly inductive with theoretically informed interpretation	The analysis adopted a predominantly inductive approach, allowing patterns to form from participants' accounts. However, given the

		researcher's interpretivist stance and commitment to BFE and CRT, the later stages of theme development were also theoretically informed. This reflects the inductive-deductive interplay characteristic of RTA (Braun & Clarke, 2022), where data-driven coding coexists with conceptually grounded interpretation.
Focus of meaning	Semantic and latent	Semantic analysis captured participant explicit accounts, while latent analysis enabled exploration of the underlying meanings being made which shaped the experiences of Black EPs. This dual focus supports CRT's aim of interrogating racialised systems and the hidden operations of power.
Qualitative framework	Experiential	An experiential orientation aligned with the study's aim to foreground Black EPs' own meanings, emotions and interpretations. This reflects BFE's emphasis

		on lived experience as a valid and authoritative source of knowledge and fits with interpretivist epistemology.
Theoretical framework	Constructionist with essentialist elements	Essentialist elements treated participants 'narratives as real and meaningful, while a constructionist lens enabled examination of how broader sociopolitical and institutional structures shape those experiences. This balance is compatible with CRT's focus on the social construction of race and racism and BFE's recognition of situated knowledge.

To support a rigorous and meaningful engagement with the data, the analysis followed an iterative rather than linear process. This involved moving back and forth across the phases of RTA, allowing codes and themes to be continually refined as new insights developed. This approach was important in staying close to participants' accounts, while also supporting the development of more nuanced, underlying patterns of meaning.

The researcher's approach to the analysis was also shaped by a deliberate process of slowing down. As a Black woman analysing the narratives of Black EPs, the researcher was aware that subjectivity was not neutral, but actively shaped engagement and interpretation with the data. Throughout the coding process, the researcher kept a reflexive journal to explore personal responses, particularly where participants' experiences resonated with aspects of the researcher's own professional journey.

The researcher also made intentional shifts in physical and working environments during different stages of coding, as a way of disrupting familiarity and supporting deeper engagement with the data. Drawing on the BFE positionality (Hill Collins, 2000), this approach enabled the researcher to attend more closely to the tensions, latent meanings and forms of resistance within participants' accounts, rather than remaining at a purely semantic level. The specific procedural steps taken within each of the six phases are summarised in Table 4 below.

Table 4
The six-phases of RTA (Braun & Clarke, 2022)

Phases	Process in this study
Familiarisation	• Re-listened to audio-recordings. • Checked transcripts for accuracy, editing as the recording was listened back to. • Made reflexive notes capturing initial impressions and positional influences.
Coding	• Systematically coded the data manually, moving between hard and electronic copies which prompted new insights. • Initially, generated semantic codes and later latent codes underlying participants meanings. • Coding was iterative and reflexive, with several rounds of review and across different physical locations as to not get stuck in the same rhythm.
Generating initial themes	• Grouped related codes into clusters and formed early theme

	candidates reflecting shared meaning across the dataset. • Reported themes in an initial thematic map (see Appendix A).
Reviewing themes	• Evaluated initial themes against coded data and entire transcripts. • Merged or refined themes for coherence and analytic clarity.
Refining, defining and naming themes	• Clarified the central organising concept of each theme and distinguished boundaries between themes. • Final theme names were developed through a creative, narrative-oriented process, with the researcher intentionally crafting themes to unfold with a beginning, middle and end, allowing the dataset to be represented as a story rather than as isolated concepts, as encouraged by Braun and Clarke (2022) (see Figure 2).
Write-up	• Wove together coded data extracts and analytic narrative to construct a coherent story of the racialised and intersectional experiences of Black EPs.

2.5.6 Rigour and Quality of Research

Ensuring rigour in qualitative research requires attention to transparency, reflexivity and methodological coherence rather than adhering to traditional perceptions of objectivity or replicability (Yardley, 2000; Willig 2013). Within RTA,

Braun and Clarke (2022) emphasise that quality arises from the clarity of the analytic framework, the depth of engagement with the dataset and the demonstration of carefully reasoned interpretive work.

A core feature of qualitative rigour involves the researcher consistently critically examining how their position, assumptions and interpretative lenses influence analytic decisions (Tracy, 2010; Pillow 2003). This study incorporated reflexive journaling and iterative consideration of interpretive choices throughout the research process. Such practices support analytic transparency and align with calls for reflexivity as a marker of trustworthiness in qualitative inquiry (Berger, 2015).

To further strengthen rigour, the study drew on Lincoln and Guba's (1985) trustworthiness framework, recognising that criteria such as credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability can be adapted meaningfully within an RTA approach (Nowell et al., 2017). These principles were applied as guiding principles to ensure a coherent and well-documented analytic process that would enable readers to understand how interpretations were developed. Table 5 outlines how each aspect of trustworthiness was addressed in practice.

Table 5

Trustworthiness in the current study (adapted from Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Criterion	Application in this study
Credibility	• Achieved through prolonged engagement with the dataset. • Multiple rounds of coding and theme refinement ensured that interpretations were meaningfully connected to the data.
Dependability	• Supported by a clearly documented audit trail describing

	aligning with guidance that dependable qualitative research should demonstrate methodological transparency.
Confirmability	• Reflexive notes and journal entries captured throughout the research process allowed the researcher to critically examine how personal assumptions and theoretical commitments shaped interpretations.
Transferability	• Enabled by the provision of participant contextual detail about participants, recruitment and methodological process. This allows readers to evaluate the potential relevance of the findings in other settings, consistent with qualitative approaches where findings are not generalised but contextually situated.

Beyond these broader markers of quality, the analysis was also guided by the principles of RTA (Braun & Clarke, 2022, pg. 269). In practice, this meant ensuring the analysis was theoretically informed, with interpretations grounded in CRT and BFE, moving beyond surface-level description towards a more structural or critically engaged reading of the data. Researcher subjectivity was recognised as a central analytic resource rather than a limitation, and the reflexive journal was also used throughout this process to explore and interrogate the researchers' responses to data, supporting transparency and ongoing critical reflection. Engagement with the data was intentionally iterative, with transcripts read and re-read and coding approached as a recursive process of refinement rather than a one-off task.

Attention was also given to the coherence and consistency of the themes, with each of them considered in relation to the full dataset to ensure it reflected a shared pattern of meaning across participants' accounts. Finally, care was taken in how the analysis was presented, using participants' words to retain the depth and authenticity of their experiences to centre their voices within the analysis.

2.5.7 Ethical Considerations

Full ethical approval was granted for this study by the University of East Anglia's School of Education and Lifelong Learning Research Ethics Committee in April 2025 (see Appendix B). Ethical considerations informed the design and conduct of the study from its inception, with ongoing supervisory guidance supporting decision-making throughout the research process. The study was conducted in accordance with the British Psychological Society's (BPS) (2021) *Code of Human Research Ethics*, BERA's (2018) *Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research*, and the Health and Care Professions Council's (HCPC) (2023) *Standards of Proficiency for Practitioner Psychologists*. These frameworks emphasise respect, informed participation, protection from harm and the integrity of the research process, principles that were especially important given the study's focus on racialised experience within a small professional community.

Participants were provided with a clear and accessible online information sheet and consent form before taking part, outlining the aims of the study, what participation would involve, potential risks, their rights to withdraw, and how the data would be used (see Appendix C). Due to the nature of purposive sampling, the emphasis on participant autonomy was essential, given the sensitivity of discussing racialised experiences within the Education Psychology profession. Participants were reminded verbally at the outset that they were free to pause, skip questions, or withdraw at any point before data analysis without justification. The researcher also allowed participants to ask any questions before the interview formally began. This approach aligns with ethical guidance emphasising respect for autonomy and self-determination in research involving personal or potentially emotive experiences (Willig, 2013; BPS, 2021).

Given the relatively small size of the EP profession in the UK and the even smaller number of Black EPs, ensuring anonymity required heightened ethical attention. Demographic information, such as gender and years of experience, is

reported collectively (see Table 1). Other contextual features, such as specific training institutions or local authorities, were not included in the write-up to avoid unintentional identification. This decision reflects wider ethical literature recognising that in tightly connected professional networks, protecting anonymity is not simply a procedural step but a significant ethical consideration (Kaiser, 2009). All transcripts were anonymised using unique names chosen by the participants to promote epistemic justice and ensure the naming process honoured their agency as 'legitimate knowers' rather than objects of research (Lahman et al., 2024). Any identifiable information was redacted at transcription. Data were stored securely in line with GDPR and UEA data management policies. Audio and visual recordings were automatically deleted after 30 days in line with SharePoint's retention settings.

Discussing racialised experiences can evoke emotional strain, frustration or fatigue for participants (Franklin, 2016). Research exploring race and racism highlights that reflecting on experiences can generate feelings of vulnerability or re-trigger past distress (Nadal, 2011). To mitigate this, interviews were conducted with sensitivity and cultural attunement, consistent with the ethic of care embedded in BFE (Hill Collins, 2000). Participants were reminded throughout that they had control over the pace and depth of disclosure. The researcher also avoided pressing for detail where emotional discomfort was visible or implied, aligning with ethical interviewing recommendations that prioritise participant wellbeing (Dickson-Swift et al., 2007). Subsequently, a debrief form containing signposting information was provided following each interview.

As a Black female trainee EP, the researcher occupied an 'insider' positionality relative to participants. An insider researcher can offer unique and valuable ethical opportunities. These include increased rapport, trust, cultural resonance and reduced risk of misinterpretation. However, it also brings ethical responsibilities in relation to managing assumptions, avoiding over-identification, and navigating the emotional labour involved (Brayboy & Deyhle, 2000; Chavez, 2008). Reflexivity was therefore essential throughout the study. The researcher maintained reflexive field notes during and after the interviews throughout the entire research process, acknowledging how shared identity, personal experiences, and emotional responses shaped interactions and interpretations. The possibility of emotional labour arising from listening to racialised experiences was anticipated, and supervisory spaces were used to support researcher wellbeing and reflection.

Within the context of the study's racialised focus, ethical considerations extended beyond basic procedural compliance and required a relational, situated and culturally responsive approach. Relational ethics emphasises attentiveness, mutual respect and responsiveness to participants' needs in context (Ellis, 2007). This perspective aligns strongly with the epistemological foundations of the study. BFE asserts that knowledge is co-constructed and values emotional expressiveness, empathy and care as integral to ethical research practice (Hill Collins, 2000), while CRT emphasises the need for attentiveness to the power structures shaping racialised interactions. These principles informed the researcher's interviewing stance, centred on listening, co-creating meaning and avoiding the extraction of stories for academic gain without adequate care for the teller.

Although participation carried some risk of discomfort, involvement also had the potential to offer benefits, such as validation, reflection, and contributing to systemic change. Literature notes that qualitative interviews on sensitive issues can sometimes offer participants an experience that is cathartic or empowering when conducted respectfully (BPS, 2021; Conolly et al, 2023). The research was mindful not to overstate benefits but recognised that offering a platform for Black EPs to share their experiences aligned ethically with CRT's commitment to counter-storytelling and social justice (Delgado, 1989).

Overall, the current study adopted an ethical stance that balanced procedural requirements (BPS, 2021) with a relational and culturally responsive approach. Particular attention was given to protecting anonymity, participant autonomy and emotional well-being. Reflexivity and care shaped the researcher's conduct throughout, ensuring that the study was carried out with integrity and respect for participants' contributions.

2.6 Analysis and Discussion

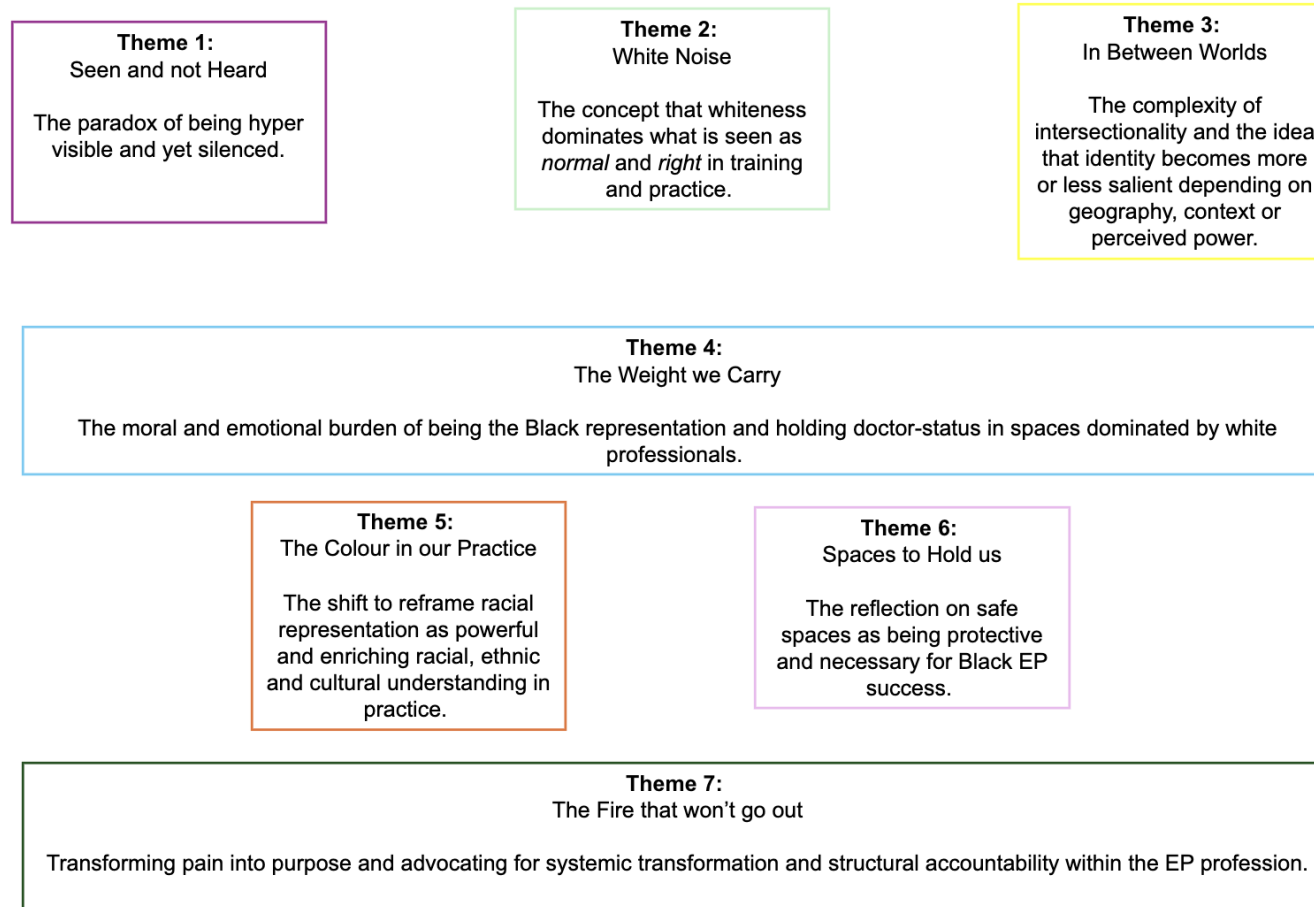
Through the RTA process, seven independent themes were fully developed. Together, these themes tell a powerful and nuanced story of how Black EPs make sense of their training and practice experiences through the lenses of race, culture and ethnicity. As illustrated in the thematic map presented in Figure 1, the analysis begins a story which foregrounds the harsh realities of being Black in predominantly white professional spaces, capturing experiences of silencing, racialised invisibility and the tension of belonging yet not truly belonging. The early themes build towards

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an exploration of the layered emotional and professional burden that Black EPs carry, particularly at the intersection of race, doctoral status and heightened expectations, both internally and externally realised. The narrative then shifts towards themes of agency, connection and endurance, illustrating how participants draw on their identities, relationships, and values to sustain themselves and to cast a vision for more hopeful futures for the profession. The final theme reflects not a resolve, but rather a resilience; a fire that continues to be ignited and burn despite structural inequity.

Figure 2

Thematic Map



Note. The figure illustrates the seven themes generated through Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) of interviews with Black Educational Psychologists.

2.6.1 Theme One: Seen and not Heard

The theme 'seen and not heard' reflects views expressed by participants regarding the conflicting reality in which visible aspects of their identity became hyper-visible due to the colour of their skin 'standing out' in predominantly white spaces, while they simultaneously experienced forms of invisibility. Within this context, participants described training and practice experiences marked by silencing, whether through the intentional suppression of their voice or as an unintended consequence of dominant White norms within Educational Psychology practice. The theme further captures how Black EPs often reported feelings of isolation, despite their heightened visibility as minoritised professionals. An idea that the researcher captured as 'you see me, but you do not see *me*'.

Participants highlighted various experiences that left them feeling insignificant and devalued within training contexts. One participant reflected on her experience as a minoritised individual within her training cohort:

Chyna: *"We were just in situations where we felt less than or we felt, we felt some of the discrimination or stereotypes that come through in society from just being ourselves."*

This account illustrates how broader societal discrimination were experienced within professional training spaces. The participant's recognition that these experiences reflected wider societal dynamics aligns with CRT, which conceptualises racism as an ordinary and enduring feature for minoritised individuals that is woven into society and deeply impacts career and training trajectories (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

Similar accounts emerged where another participant discussed her 'Blackness' being experienced as a 'barrier' due to how she and her professional credibility were perceived, which led her to consciously shrink back and remain quiet:

Amanda: *"My identity had to calm down. Be less black and just be quiet. Don't bring attention to myself. Just get on with the work..."*

This account demonstrates how self-monitoring and self-silencing functioned as a survival mechanism for Amanda, aimed at reducing unavoidable visibility within White professional spaces, which felt safer than speaking up. Existing research highlights the psychological and behavioural adaptations Black women often employ to navigate White normative cultures (Dickens et al., 2019). To mitigate heightened

scrutiny, Black women may be motivated to regulate their behaviour in ways that minimise their distinctiveness, thereby reducing their vulnerability to stereotypical expectations and discriminatory treatment (McCluney & Rabelo, 2018).

For some participants, however, these processes of self-monitoring extended beyond speech to encompass the regulation of physical appearance and professional presentation. One participant reflected on her effort and attempts to assimilate following qualification:

Peace: *"I think when I qualified, whether it was unconsciously or consciously, I was trying to assimilate, I was trying to be like everybody else, I didn't really want to stand out, particularly as a Black EP. I just wanted to be an EP, so I dressed the same as everybody else... It was a case of trying to blend in and not be seen as different. Of course, as soon as I step into a room, I'm already different because they see my face and they see the colour of my face and they see the style of my hair"*

This account deepens earlier descriptions of self-silencing by illustrating how assimilation was pursued not only through remaining quiet, but also through the management of how their '*Blackness*' is embodied and read in professional spaces. While participants attempted to minimise visible differences in response to racialised expectations of professionalism, such efforts were still constrained by the inescapability of racial visibility. The reflections from this participant demonstrate how assimilation felt more necessary than authenticity; an attempt at professional survival rather than development. This highlights the limits of assimilation within White professional spaces and underscores the emotional and psychological labour involved in attempting to sustain professional belonging.

These experiences resonate with research identifying '*identity shifting*' as a key coping mechanism for Black professionals, involving the changing of speech, suppression of emotion and deliberate shrinking of one's presence to avoid being perceived as threatening or problematic within White-dominated contexts (Dickens & Womack, 2021). Similarly, Ferguson and Dougherty (2022) described how Black professionals often experience pressure to work disproportionately harder while simultaneously toning down expressions of '*Blackness*' to avoid negative scrutiny or performance judgements. Such pressures are further situated within broader critiques of professional norms, which have been argued to be rooted in White supremacist standards of behaviour, communication and presentation, requiring

Black individuals to continually strip their individual cultural identity in ways that preserve the comfort of the dominant group (Gray, 2019).

Amongst experiences of feeling devalued, participants also described subtler forms of silencing that operated through social exclusion and lack of reciprocity. One participant reflected on his experiences within his training cohort as the only Black trainee:

Desmond: *“Sometimes, yeah, I would want to talk about the things I’d talk about, and you know, if they’re interested, they’re interested... But it wasn’t reciprocated.”*

This account reveals how being physically present and hyper-visible within professional and training spaces did not necessarily translate into mutual engagement or relational inclusion. The lack of social reciprocity contributed to a sense of being unseen and unheard, reinforcing feelings of marginalisation despite heightened visibility as the only Black trainee. Such experiences align with research highlighting how minoritised professionals often encounter isolation and exclusion through everyday interpersonal dynamics, where silence operated not necessarily through overt hostility but through indifference and disengagement (Essed 1991; Sue et al., 2007).

Other participants described how such racialised positioning was experienced immediately from the outset of their doctoral journey. For some participants, these experiences of being seen and not heard were embedded from the beginning of their doctoral training. One participant reflected on how her race, culture and ethnicity negatively shaped her experience from the moment she entered the programme:

Sasha: *“My race, culture and ethnicity has been the biggest barrier for me on the doctorate course. So, I’ll be really explicit...I went to a predominantly White university. I was the only Black trainee on the whole course in my cohort... I had to live there for a period of time. Which I absolutely didn’t enjoy, had a lot of stares. I think it’s the impact of my race, my culture and my ethnicity as an umbrella term, was a massive barrier for me. I couldn’t enjoy the course. So, there’s several things, perception from the first day that I started, I was perceived in a particular way...so within the first 48hrs of me arriving on this doctoral course that I’ve fought to get onto, I was approached and with perceptions, now that then come into that, as you probably will be well aware,*

are those definite unconscious bias and discriminations against me massively impacting my experience from the get-go”.

Sasha’s narrative highlights how racial isolation was experienced as immediate, pervasive and structurally embedded within her training contexts, rather than an isolated or exceptional incident. Such accounts align with CRT’s assertion that racism is an ordinary and enduring feature of social institutions, shaping access, belonging and professional trajectories for minoritised individuals (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). The cumulative impact of these early experiences contributed to her heightened social isolation, captured by her later account:

Sasha: *“So ultimately, I think I was impacted on the doctoral course from these three factors, which were a significant barrier because I didn’t have a sense of belonging”.*

While the previous accounts illustrate how participants perceived racialised silencing and engaged in self-monitoring as protective responses to racialised visibility, one participant described an instance in which silencing was enacted explicitly through supervisory authority. In this case, the participant was directly instructed not to include commentary relating to race within a professional report:

Danielle: *“Took it to my supervisor like tada! Here’s my report for the school. And she was like; you can’t name that in that report. And I was like, what are you saying? And she was like, I’m not willing to sign it off because I’m worried that the school are going to think that you’re calling them racist. And I said, but they’re not, because we’ve had a conversation. And this is actually really important, that I don’t want to write a colour-blind report, and she was like, it’s not going to be colour-blind. Let’s just make these changes. We made changes. The report now does not mention his race once. And it was like 2 weeks before I got my HCPC registration. And I was like; I can’t send it off without her signing it off. And she’s not signing off with this information within it. And I was like. What do you then?”*

This account captures how silencing extended beyond internalised self-regulation into formal professional structures, where the legitimacy of naming race was actively constrained. For this participant, the supervisory instruction functioned as a form of institutional gatekeeping, limiting what knowledge could be recorded, legitimised and shared within EP practice. This reinforces earlier processes of self-silencing by signalling that race-based interpretations are not only unwelcome but

seen as professionally risky. Research from DiAngelo (2011) discusses how the dominant group maintains control over conversations about race. When the 'professional' status quo is challenged, defensive reactions function to silence the critique and regain control of the narrative. At a theoretical level, this links to CRT, which reflects how dominant White norms shape the boundaries of acceptable professional knowledge, positioning race as inappropriate, excessive or 'out of scope' within apparently neutral practices (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

Taken together, these accounts illustrate how racialised visibility co-existed with systemic silencing, ultimately leading to professional contexts where Black EPs' voices were not only unheard but actively filtered out. Research reflects how navigating these spaces as a Black EP, where your voice seems insignificant and your experiences are overlooked, further contributes to feelings of isolation (Apontua, 2024).

2.6.2 Theme Two: White Noise

This theme shifts the focus from individual experiences of being unheard to the broader professional norms and practices within Educational Psychology that are shaped by Whiteness. As outlined in the literature review, Whiteness is conceptualised not as a fixed identity, but as a dominant cultural norm and structural force that shapes what is positioned as 'normal' and 'universal' within the field. It captures how considerations of race, culture and ethnicity in practice were frequently minimised or dismissed through apparently neutral frameworks, language, and expectations. Within this context, racialised knowledge was often filtered out through dominant professional practices that positioned Whiteness as the default lens for understanding children, families and schools. Here, Whiteness operates as a form of constant background noise, structuring what is heard, valued and acted upon, while racialised experiences and interpretations are marginalised and positioned as peripheral to 'proper' psychological practice.

Participants consistently reflected on the absence of engagement and content concerning race, culture and ethnicity within professional training, describing this lack of acknowledgement as a foundational limitation of their preparation for practice:

Amanda: *"Things like race, culture, ethnicity, they were never talked about."*

This account reveals how race was rendered invisible within training curricula, not through explicit exclusion, but rather through omission. Such absences

positioned Whiteness as the unmarked norm, shaping what was considered core psychological knowledge. This aligns with CRT's critique of colour-blindness, whereby failure to name race sustains racial inequalities while maintaining an appearance of neutrality (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

For other participants, race was not entirely absent, but was positioned as supplementary to 'core' training content:

Sasha: *"We had one lecture on race, culture and ethnicity, and this is a role that you are expected to support all children and young people who come from multiple different backgrounds and races, and it just wasn't there".*

The positioning of race within a single, standalone lecture, as described by Sasha reflects on how engagement with race, culture and ethnicity was treated as additional rather than integral to professional training. This form of curricula containment seemed to function to preserve Whiteness as the standard and dominant professional norm, allowing the core curriculum to remain largely unchallenged. Such practices align with Bhopal's (2018) conceptualisation of institutionalised White privilege, whereby inclusion is often performed through tokenistic or symbolic gestures that do little to disrupt established power structures. By isolating race, culture and ethnicity in this way, they are treated as an 'add-on', rather than core knowledge, unintentionally reinforcing Whiteness as the default of professional competence (Bhopal, 2018). In this way, factors in relation to race, culture and ethnicity become neglected in understanding the experiences of minoritised CYP and professionals, leaving significant avenues unexplored.

These early gaps in training did not remain confined to teaching sessions but shaped how EP practice was subsequently enacted, treating Whiteness as the assumed benchmark. Participants described how dominant frameworks and professional tools were treated as universally applicable, often at the expense of racial, cultural and ethnic nuance:

Emerald: *"It's just a footnote in our practice (EDI), and I feel like it's just not visible enough, it's not practical enough. We are treating or putting broad strokes and taking a colour-blind approach and saying, you know, all families are pretty much the same, but it's not that at all".*

Here, Emerald describes how equality, diversity and inclusion were positioned as marginal to everyday practice, rather than embedded as core principles. Emerald's description of working in '*broad strokes*' points to the operation of colour-

blind approaches that prioritise sameness over difference, masking how structural inequalities shape children and families' experiences. Within CRT, such colour-blindness functions to obscure racism by treating difference as irrelevant, while maintaining existing norms as neutral and unproblematic (Bonilla-Silva, 2021). In practice, this reinforces a White normative standard of professionalism, where the specific cultural, racial and contextual needs of minoritised families are overlooked under the guise of neutrality (Bhopal, 2018). As a result, what is framed as 'universal' practice risks centring White experiences as the default, while positioning racialised nuance to the margins (Gotanda, 1991).

Additionally, participants drew attention to the racialised distribution of power within educational and professional systems:

Amanda: *"The chief decision makers were mainly White people, the people in the schools who were doing the excluding were mainly White people". – A reflection on noticing a disproportionate number of Black males in the Pupil Referral Unit's (PRU's) following permanent exclusion.*

This observation demonstrates how Whiteness operated not only as a professional practice norm, but as an organising feature of structural authority. For Amanda, this concentration of power went on to create ethical tensions around advocacy and professional responsibility for these young boys:

Amanda: *"I couldn't fully advocate for them because I'm being paid by the Local Authority, so I have to hold a Local Authority position which is supposed to be neutral, but it's naturally not neutral, and be an observer of injustice".*

Her account exposes the conflict of professional neutrality, illustrating how institutional allegiance can constrain anti-racist advocacy and preserve the dominant interests. While EPs are not positioned as neutral within professional or statutory frameworks, evidenced by HCPC standards (2024), which require practitioners to actively challenge discrimination, and the Equality Act (2010), which places a legal duty on services to actively address inequality. However, Amanda's account suggests that within the everyday 'white noise' of the institution, these responsibilities can become overshadowed by a more dominant professional expectation of non-interference.

This reflects a dynamic consistent with CRT's analyses of interest convergence, which argues that institutional change or justice is often only endorsed when it does not disrupt the interests or power of the dominant group (Bell, 1980).

Within this context, the role of the EP becomes constrained by expectations of 'neutrality', which in practice functions to protect institutional priorities rather than support marginalised children and families (Milner, 2008).

When these norms and power structures were questioned, participants described encountering forms of professional resistance and containment, with responses that reframed such engagement as disruptive or inappropriate. One participant reflected on her experience following the submission of two essays in which she explicitly named race, during a period when the cohort was encouraged to explore areas of personal interest in their writing:

Saffron: *"And then when I was called in, he just said, well, you're not thinking about anything else, you just seem to be stuck on race".*

This tutor's response reframed exploration of racialised experiences as a personal fixation, delegitimising it as a valid line of professional inquiry. Similarly, a participant described the broader institutional messages that discouraged visible challenge:

Danielle: *"How do you go about challenging something and then naming that and having it as a recorded thing that everyone can see, when actually the system is saying please be quiet, please don't rub or ruffle any feathers".*

Such containment reflects defensive responses aimed at preserving White comfort, aligning with conceptualisations of White fragility that function to silence racialised critique (DiAngelo, 2011). The pressure to avoid '*ruffling feathers*', alongside the framing of racial inquiry as being '*stuck on race*', reflects processes that work to maintain the professional status quo. When considered together, these responses can be understood as defensive strategies that limit the extent to which race can be critically examined within training and professional spaces. DiAngelo's (2011) work on White fragility helps to explain the emotional discomfort that can arise when racial issues are raised, while Matias's (2016) analysis tells us how this discomfort may be managed by reframing structural critique as a personal or individual concern. In this way, attention is shifted away from systemic issues and redirected onto the person raising them. Consequently, racism continues to be positioned as a personal issue, experienced by those with a '*chip on their shoulder*', rather than understood as a systemic issue that requires intentional action to address (Bonilla-Silva, 2003).

Consequently, as seen for these participants, racialised experiences can remain marginal to the discipline, challenging their capacity to reach the 'core' of the discipline. When questioning race, culture or ethnicity factors is positioned as inappropriate or disruptive, the underlying Whiteness that forms the foundations of psychology is arguably left intact and unchallenged, allowing existing norms to be reproduced within professional and training practice. These accounts demonstrate how Whiteness may continue to operate as an organising force within Educational Psychology practice, shaping which forms of knowledge are legitimised, how practice is implemented and who holds the decision-making authority. Rather than functioning through overt exclusionary practice alone, the data suggests that '*White Noise*' operates through apparently neutral norms and professional expectations that can filter out race, culture and ethnicity from the centre of psychological thinking.

2.6.3 Theme Three: In Between Worlds

This theme explores how participants made sense of their identities as complex, intersecting and contextually contingent, rather than fixed or singular. Participants described how being Black was experienced differently when combined with other aspects of identity, such as gender, class and perceived status, and how the salience of these identities shifted depending on context. Experiences were shaped by intersecting expectations, stereotypes and power relations that operated differently across training spaces, professional settings and geographical locations. Within this theme, identity was not experienced as a stable position, but as something that became more or less visible and/or relevant, depending on who participants were interacting with, where they were situated and how much power they perceived to hold.

Participants often described how aspects of their identity were made salient through external perceptions, rather than through their own self-definition. One participant shared how her identity as a Black person was imposed through interactions with others, with her blackness rendered more pronounced through the ways it was foregrounded and interpreted, particularly on her training course:

Danielle: *"Wow, I didn't realise I was black until you decided that was the case."*

Her account captures how her blackness became salient not through personal identification but through the ways it was named and imposed by others throughout

her training journey. She further reflected on how this constant racialised focus became the only thing that people seemed to care about, and yet still did not act upon:

Danielle: *'But I think by time third year hit, it was like a frustration, right? So, like, I think it started off as like a oh, this is interesting. Exploratory, reflective. Wow. How lovely. Like, oh, I'm doing some work. Oh, what does this mean? And then by third year, you're like, OK. Can everyone catch up now because we've all made new realisations. So now that we realise something, can we act and kind of share the workload or like can you do the reflection'.*

Saffron's reflections further demonstrate how these external definitions were often tied to narrow and stereotypical expectations of how blackness should be performed.

Saffron: *"Why do I think that a Black person has to act a certain way? And why does speaking in a particular way, speaking articulately, why can't that be associated with blackness? Why am I only ever seeing the negative things associated with blackness as well? What is blackness? Why do we have to be one particular type of way, because White people aren't doing that, Asian people aren't doing that? And it goes back to what we've been seeing on TV, what we're exposed to, and how our blackness has been defined by whiteness."*

Here, Saffron makes explicit how dominant representations were shaped through Whiteness, narrowing the range of behaviours, identities and expressions that are seen as legitimate. She continued to reflect on why it was important for her to interrogate her own thinking as a Black woman in order to not reinforce expectations and stereotypes that she perceived to be 'Black':

Saffron: *"I had to battle with myself...I have to challenge a lot of my own prejudices, so it's that constant challenge yourself and constantly call myself out and constantly learn."*

These narratives reflected wider CRT and intersectional perspectives that understand race not as a fixed or self-chosen identity, but as something shaped and sustained through social interaction and dominant cultural narratives (Crenshaw, 1989; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). In Saffron's accounts, her blackness became most visible through how it was read and interpreted by others, rather than through

how she understood herself. Fanon (1952) describes this process as the moment when Black identity is fixed through the ‘*White-gaze*’, leaving little room for self-definition and requiring individuals to navigate spaces where meaning has already been assigned to them. This helps to explain why race often becomes most pronounced, as seen in Danielle’s reflections. Similarly, Roth’s (2016) distinction between racial identity and observed race is particularly useful in highlighting the ways individuals are seen and positioned by others, which often carry greater social and professional consequences than their own self-understandings.

For other participants, identity was understood as layered and shifting, with different aspects becoming more prominent depending on context. Earl articulated this shifting experience of identity, describing how different aspects of who he was became more or less significant depending on who else was present and the context he was working within:

Earl: *“I believe in intersectionality and the idea that we’ve got multiple different identities with different layers that become salient at different points in different environments...in terms of my culture and my race, I wear that everywhere I go and it’s prominent in every interaction that I have because, rightly or wrongly, people will make assumptions based on your physical appearance. I carry that with me, and I’m present to it all the time, but depending on certain environments I’m in, it’s perhaps more at the front of my mind than in other environments.”*

Taken together, Earl’s reflections suggest that identity for him did not operate as a fixed experience of self, but instead surfaces differently across contexts, shaping levels of self-awareness. While some aspects of identity may be selectively managed or downplayed, a process Yoshino (2006) describes as ‘*covering*’ to minimise the salience of stigmatised traits, Earl noted that his race and aspects of his culture were consistently visible and therefore unavoidable within social and professional interactions. This visibility meant that race could not be ‘set aside’ in the same way as less immediately apparent aspects of identity. As a result, identity became something that was not only lived but continually monitored, with its relevance shaped by who else was present.

Experiences of intersectionality were particularly pronounced when race intersected with gender. One participant reflected on his experience:

Emerald: *“The idea or the feeling of being a Black male in a now White female-dominated profession, I feel like there is an extra pressure to say the right thing or to act a certain way, but there’s also that additional pressure of bias that’s thrown at me.”*

Emerald’s account highlights how being both Black and male shaped heightened self-monitoring, shaped by gendered and racial expectations. He went on to share how these gendered assumptions also influenced how support and care were distributed:

Emerald: *“So it makes me think, is that what you see of me? Is that the bias you have towards me, that I should be one hundred per cent self-sufficient? Whereas it couldn’t possibly be the case that I might need support. As a Black male, as a big Black male, you know, I can just basically get on with it. But that’s not the case. I need as much support as a little frail White woman does.”*

His reflections highlight how assumptions about race and gender combined to shape how he was perceived within professional spaces, positioning him as capable, resilient and able to cope without support. His sense that others expected him to ‘*get on with it*’ reflects broader understandings of Black masculinity in which strength, emotional control and self-reliance are highly valued, often as adaptive responses to racism and marginalisation (Hammond & Mattis, 2005). Within institutional settings, however, these expectations can become distorted into assumptions that Black men do not require care and support. Emerald’s reference to being seen as a ‘*big Black male*’ is particularly significant, as it points to how physical appearance and racialised masculinity can intensify these perceptions. Research suggests that Black males are often perceived as more mature, tougher or less vulnerable than their White counterparts, contributing to the denial of care and support within professional contexts (Goff et al., 2014). As a result, the additional pressure Emerald described can be understood as the need to carefully manage how he presents himself while navigating an environment that both scrutinises and overlooks him. This reflects a form of gendered racism in which heightened visibility co-exists with reduced care, requiring ongoing careful self-presentation while rendering his genuine need for support as invisible (Wingfield, 2007).

Other participants reflected on how multiple identity markers intersected to shape both vulnerability and agency within her professional role:

Chyna: *“Just to not essentially see myself as just the Black EP, there’s so many strings to my bow. Gender, age, my socioeconomic status growing up, growing up poor, growing up with parents not together. I found out I was dyslexic, so being neurodivergent...so many elements and layers to my blackness that have helped me navigate the role...holding intersectionality as part of my practice is important. So, recognising there will be biases that I have in my blackness, whilst there will be some powers I have, there will always be limits to that power based on my identity.”*

Chyna’s reflection presents intersectionality as layered and wide-ranging, capturing how race sits alongside other aspects of her life, such as class, family circumstances and neurodivergence. Rather than viewing these experiences as limitations, Chyna described them as shaping her capacity to navigate the EP professional spaces, offering her multiple points of understanding and connection. This perspective aligns with Yosso’s (2005) argument that lived experiences of marginalisation can generate forms of knowledge and resourcefulness that are often overlooked within dominant frameworks. At the same time, she was clear that holding multiple identities did not translate into unlimited power within her practice. Her account reflected an awareness that agency is shaped by context and hierarchy, and that moments of influence coexist with clear constraints. This resonates with Hills-Collins’ (2017) understanding of intersectionality as revealing how power operates relationally, where EP’s may experience both access and limitation depending on how their identities are read within particular settings.

Additionally, one participant highlighted the limits of shared experience within common professional roles:

Saffron: *“I was on a course with all White women, amazing and I love them all, but you just don’t get it as much. You can empathise and stuff like that, but you just don’t get that experience unless you’re a Black woman.”*

Saffron’s account draws attention to how shared professional roles within EP practice do not necessarily translate into shared lived experience. Her comment highlights the limitations of assuming common understanding or empathy within EP spaces, particularly when practitioner identities differ in meaningful ways. This aligns with Crenshaw’s (1989) argument that claims universality often overlook the intersecting realities of Black women, whose experiences cannot be fully understood through race or gender alone. Her account illustrates how occupying the same

professional environment does not remove the impact of these intersections, instead it can mask them. In this way, her reflection challenges the assumption that proximity or collegiality automatically produces understanding, emphasising the need to recognise how intersecting identities shape experience in distinct and non-transferable ways. Further highlighting the importance of research into intersectionality within the profession.

This theme underscores how identity is actively being navigated within participants professional lives, rather than operating as a static background characteristic. Participants' experiences suggest that identity often shaped how they anticipated being received, supported or interpreted in particular spaces, sometimes requiring adjustments and heightened self-awareness in response. Here, identity did not exert its influence in consistent ways, instead it interacted with professional environments in shifting and sometimes contradictory forms, at times amplifying vulnerability and at others enabling connection or influence. In this sense, the theme foregrounds identity as a relational and situational process, embedded within everyday EP practice and shaped through various interactions.

2.6.4 Theme Four: The Weight We Carry

This theme focuses on the pressure and tension participants described carrying within their professional roles, shaped by those intersections of race previously discussed, representation and professional status. As Black EP's holding doctoral-level authority in predominantly White spaces, participants reflected on being positioned as representatives of Black experience, often expected to speak, respond or advocate on behalf of others. This included taking on the pain, anger or expectations of other Black individuals, including family members; even when these did not fully align with their own expectations or perspectives. Alongside this, some participants shared a persistent sense of needing to work harder or prove their place within the profession, shaped by imposter syndrome and concerns about how their competence and authority were perceived. This theme captures how these pressures acted as an added emotional or moral burden that sat alongside their professional responsibilities, accumulating over time and influencing how they approached practice, relationships and their own wellbeing.

Participants described how their racialised visibility within predominantly White professional spaces often translated into unspoken expectations to speak on behalf of Black people more broadly:

Danielle: *“I’d say like five or six of us probably were of ethnic minority status potentially, but you do then feel positioned as the voice that speaks on behalf of the Black people, do you know what I mean? And I think that has never been a part of my journey, like in high school and like I didn’t have to be the voice of every Black person in the profession or like practice.”*

Further, Desmond shared how this expectation was enacted through subtle yet consistent within professional discussions:

Desmond: *“When I think about the triad of race, culture and ethnicity, I think about the discussions that we had during training and practice and my goodness, just feeling the need to sort of spearhead those conversations around race, and they’ll say, yeah, you know what it’s like, or even the directional gaze towards me.”*

These accounts illustrate how participants were positioned as racial representatives through both explicit and implicit mechanisms. This dynamic closely aligns with Padilla’s (1994) concept of ‘*cultural taxation*’, whereby minoritised professionals are burdened (taxed) with additional, often unspoken responsibilities linked to their racial identity, including the expectation to speak on behalf of their group. Desmond’s description of the ‘*directional gaze*’ demonstrates how this responsibility was seen in practice, as attention and authority were implicitly directed towards him during conversations about race. Research supporting this comes from Settles et al., (2019), highlighting how the hypervisibility of racially minoritised individuals in predominantly White professional spaces often results in them being positioned as default experts on race-related issues. In this way, participants’ professional identities became entangled with representational demands, shifting their role from individual practitioners to symbolic stand-ins for broader racialised experience.

For some participants, being positioned as a representative created tension between professional contribution and resistance to constant advocacy:

Saffron: *“I’m very privileged to be in this position and what I can bring to the profession is a little bit different, yet I don’t want to be that person who is constantly championing”.*

Saffron's reflection conveys the strain of being valued for difference while resisting the pressure to continually lead or carry racial conversations. This indicates how advocacy, when assumed rather than chosen, can become emotionally burdensome for some.

Alongside these representational demands, participants described heightened pressure to perform and prove legitimacy within a profession experienced as historically white. This reflects how cultural taxation often interacted with experiences of imposter-syndrome and feeling the need to overwork:

Danielle: *"A Black woman in Britain operating with the title of Doctor as well and trying to navigate those things. For a long time, I think I had imposter syndrome. Sometimes I wonder whether people are taking me as seriously or would they have asked a White person that question."*

This reflection illustrates how formal professional authority did not insulate participants from racialised doubt, with credibility remaining something to be questioned and negotiated rather than assumed. Danielle went on to describe how these doubts translated into her experience of training, shaping the way she approached effort, responsibility and participation within the cohort:

Danielle: *"Oh gosh, we're really having to work double hard. Like, are we working double hard? Is that something that's been put on us or that we're feeling we have to do? Whereas actually some of our White counterparts are just breezing through... Our whole year three experience was around like, wow, who's carrying the weight of some of these discussions or the weight of the work or group tasks? And it actually does feel like a dual burden, the dual burden of being both Black and an EP. It's like the burden of family pressure being like, wow, you've made it, and then your own being like, yes, I'm here, I have to make a mark. There's just quite a lot of weight of responsibility, I feel, as somebody who enters the profession that has been very historically white".*

Danielle's reflection brings together the cumulative effects of representational responsibility and professional self-doubt. The sense of 'working double hard' was not framed as an individual disposition, but as a response to layered expectations to represent, to perform and to justify belonging. In this way, cultural taxation and imposter syndrome were experienced as intertwined pressures that shaped how effort and responsibility were negotiated throughout her training.

Beyond this, she also described absorbing emotional responses to racialised injustice that extended beyond her own experience:

Danielle: *“The fury takes over and you’re like, wow. And it’s interesting to think, psychologically, whose anger are you holding? Is this all mine? Is it kind of some of the feelings of the rest of the minoritised people in the group? Is it actually some of the children and families that we work with that are angry and have to be, and that you’re taking that kind of with you? And that’s quite a hard reflection as well, to think of how much of this is mine, but how much does it need to be mine because other people can’t have their voices heard, right? So, you end up like the rage drives you to do the work, which is hard.”*

Her account speaks to the emotional labour involved in working within a profession where you she felt responsible for holding others anger and the psychological cost of being one of the few Black professionals in spaces where racial inequity is visible but unevenly acknowledge. Her reflection raises important questions about whose emotions are being held, and why that responsibility so often falls with Black professionals in predominantly White spaces. This aligns with Evans and Moore’s (2015) work on the emotional demands placed on racialised professionals, where shared identity can lead to the absorption of distress linked to systemic injustice. Danielle’s narrative suggests that this emotional labour extends beyond empathy, becoming a sustained burden that accompanies professional practice. The need to carry and contain this anger, while working within spaces where racial inequalities are inconsistently recognised or addressed, reflects what Smith et al. (2011) described as racial battle fatigue. In this context, the ‘rage’ that fuels advocacy also becomes a source of exhaustion.

For other participants, this dual burden manifested as a motivator to work harder in order to justify their presence. Kammi described it this way:

Kammi: *“Put your head down and let’s get on with it... constantly practising and reading to just prove to yourself that I am worthy of this place... and it’s only at the end that I realised I’d been working much harder than I ought to have been.”*

Similarly, Sasha spoke about the effort required to establish professional legitimacy:

Sasha: *“I’ve really had to fight to kind of like prove myself.”*

Both accounts highlight how working harder became internalised as an adaptive response to perceived doubt rather than a deliberate choice. Kammi's reflection that she has been working harder than she believed she needed to suggest that overwork functioned as a way of securing legitimacy in spaces where competence could not be assumed. This aligns with Wingfield's (2019) discussion of the additional or 'excess' labour often expected of Black professionals within institutional contexts, where effort is required not only to perform the role, but to justify one's presence within it. Similarly, Sasha's description of having to '*fight*' to prove herself points to an ongoing need to establish credibility, reinforcing the idea that professional authority was something to continually be demonstrated rather than automatically granted, despite a doctoral-level journey. In this way, overwork operated as a self-preserving response within environments where racialised scepticism shaped expectations of capability and belonging.

These narratives illustrate how professional life was shaped by an ongoing accumulation of responsibility rather than isolated moments of pressure. The expectation to represent, to perform and to carry emotional weight operated alongside formal professional demands, producing a sustained burden that extended beyond individual competence. This theme captures how being present in the profession required not only competence for the role, but endurance within the role.

2.6.5 Theme Five: The Colour in our Practice

This theme shifts the focus from experiences of marginalisation and burden to the ways participants reframed and reimagined racial representation as a source of professional strength and depth. Rather than understanding representation solely through the challenges outlined in earlier themes, participants also described how their racial, cultural and ethnic identities enriched their psychological practice. Drawing on their lived experience as minoritised professionals, participants articulated how bringing their whole selves into practice enabled more attuned work with children, families and systems. Within this theme, representation was positioned not only as visibility, but as an epistemic and relational asset.

Several participants described how their lived experience as minoritised professionals shaped the way they approached consultations, particularly in relation to curiosity, time and relational depth. Peace reflected on how her understanding of

race and ethnicity had shifted her practice away from surface-level categories towards a more nuanced exploration of identity:

Peace: *“What does Black African mean? Like what part of Africa are you from? So, I’m much more likely to be asking questions about what it means for that family, and that’s been a big change for me.”*

She went on to describe how this curiosity translated into spending more time understanding families beyond the presenting difficulty:

Peace: *“I probably spend more time in the problem-free bit, being curious. I’m interested in you as a person, not just as a person that’s come here with a challenge or an issue.”*

These reflections illustrate that representation supported a move away from deficit-led assessment towards relational understanding. Peace described slowing down and creating space for families to be known as people, situated within racial, cultural and ethnic contexts. Something that Peace recognised as a strength in her practice, only afforded to her by reflection on her own experiences of a minoritised professional who was not always afforded the same consideration. This approach reflects principles of cultural humility, which Hook et al. (2013) define as an orientation that centres curiosity, openness and respect for others lived experience over clinician expertise. This practice moves away from an expert-led model of practice and instead creates space for families to define their own cultural meanings and experiences. As Hook et al. (2013) suggest, it is this relational stance that supports stronger, more authentic professional relationships over the mere possession of cultural facts. Whilst many EPs maintain to practice in a manner that fosters collaborative spaces, moving away from traditional expert-led models, participant reflections, alongside research suggest that this transition is not a universal feature and has not yet been fully realised across the profession (Ashton & Roberts, 2006; Kennedy et al., 2008).

A similar process was described by Kammi, who reflected on how her own background shaped anticipatory empathy in her work with families:

Kammi: *“I’m always feeling like I need to be a step ahead to think, why would this child feel this way? Why would this parent feel this way? I wonder whether I can relate it to something happening in my community.”*

Here, lived experience functioned as a reference point for sense-making, allowing Kammi to anticipate emotional responses and situate behaviour within wider

social and cultural realities, enabling more nuanced and empathetic interpretations of children's and families' experiences.

For other participants, representation was described as creating a sense of safety and containment for families who shared similar racialised experiences. Desmond reflected on the importance of shared cultural understanding in his work with Black families within predominantly White contexts:

Desmond: *"Working with Black families... West African families, that was really important. It felt like I could offer containment to them."*

He went on to describe how this cultural understanding allowed him to bridge the gap between a school and family, particularly by explaining what diagnoses meant within the different cultural context. In situations where schools perceived families as dismissive or disengaged, he was able to recognise and articulate how a diagnosis carried significant cultural implications for the family, shaping how it was understood, responded to and subsequently supported:

Desmond: *"They're not disregarding the diagnosis, but traditionally this means something. This impacts our children's trajectory. Having that understanding helps me better support them."*

Desmond's account highlights how cultural knowledge enabled him to hold families' concerns without dismissing or pathologising them. Rather than positioning cultural beliefs as barriers, he described them as essential context for meaningful support. This was particularly evident in his description of a consultation with a Jamaican mother:

Desmond: *"She switched from Standard English to Patois... speaking it with her chest. It didn't look like the polished consultation you're taught at university, but you get the best information, the best input, the best outcomes."*

This moment illustrates the move beyond performative professionalism into something more authentic and productive. Desmond's reflection challenges the dominant notions of what a 'good' consultation should look like, suggesting that culturally informed relational attunement can generate richer understanding and better outcomes than rigid adherence to professional norms. This shift away from 'polished' standards towards authentic engagement reflects principles of Relational Cultural Theory (RCT), which emphasises that meaningful psychological change is

fostered through mutual empathy and a shared understanding of the social and cultural context (Jordan, 2018)

Representation also shaped how participants interpreted children's behaviour and needs. Desmond reflected on how visible markers of identity influenced both how he was perceived and how he made sense of children's experiences, leaning on his personal knowledge and experience:

Desmond: *"They see my hair, they see my face, and think, actually, this guy will get me."*

This perceived shared cultural understanding informed his interpretation and formulation of a child described as disorganised and lazy:

Desmond: *"I got locks too... there's a lot in the upkeep. So, I actually wrote a recommendation that he could practise organisation skills by looking after his hair."*

Rather than accepting deficit-based descriptions, Desmond reframed the child's identity as a site of skill, responsibility and pride. This example illustrates how representation enabled alternative interpretations of behaviour that resisted deficit and centred cultural meaning.

Similarly, Earl positioned his identity as a significant asset within his professional role:

Earl: *"Being a Black male was an incredible strength in terms of the people and communities I'd be working with."*

These accounts demonstrate how representation contributed not only to rapport building, but to epistemic contribution (Fricker, 2007), shaping how psychology was understood, interpreted and applied, in a way that had meaningful impacts on the children and families they were working with. Further, they demonstrate what is already understood in the research, that representation is essential in fostering trust and support amongst minoritised children and families (Apontua, 2024). These practitioners demonstrated how lived experience informed more meaningful interpretations of children's needs. This aligns with CRT's emphasis on the value of experiential knowledge in challenging dominant, deficit-led assumptions (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Rather than imposing labels from the top down, Desmond and Earl's identities functioned as resources that supported more collaborative and culturally grounded understandings within consultation, intervention and formulation.

Participants described how their presence alone shifted how families engaged with psychological services. These accounts contrasted with earlier experiences of invisibility within professional spaces, highlighting how visibility operated differently depending on context. While participants often felt overlooked or marginalised within White-dominated systems, their visible presence, *the colour in their practice*, became meaningful and affirming for families, contributing to trust, openness and engagement. Emerald reflected on the impact of being a visibly Black professional within local authority systems:

Emerald: *“Just by being here, it helps certain families have more confidence in the system.”*

He continued to share a real-life example of how this became realised during an online consultation with a Nigerian parent and other school professionals:

Emerald: *“When it was just me and her, she was much more open... asking for clarification, asking questions. She felt more comfortable to speak.”*

This suggests that representation facilitated access to voices that might otherwise remain unheard, highlighting the role of trust in enabling meaningful participation. Sasha also reflected on how she perceived her authenticity to reduce families’ defensiveness:

Sasha: *“From the second I walk in, that hypervigilance just seems to be reduced. I’m just my authentic self.”*

Danielle described it this way:

Danielle: *“Meeting parents where they’re at and having a really frank conversation... being able to name what the trajectory is like for these Black boys.”*

Her account demonstrated how her presence and visible blackness created a sense of safety, which enabled vulnerability among other Black families.

Finally, Chyna explicitly reframed her identity as a professional resource:

Chyna: *“I lean on my Blackness sometimes as a superpower.”*

Across these narratives, representation is positioned as a significant mechanism through which trust, openness and engagement were enabled within systems that families often experienced as intimidating or alienating. By drawing on their racialised identities with intentionality, participants demonstrate how they were able to ease the heightened caution that many minoritised individuals and families bring into White-dominated professional spaces (Sue et al., 2019) due to their own

harmful experiences. In this way, representation operated as a form of relational safety, shifting psychological encounters away from guarded towards more honest conversations that supported meaningful understanding and intervention.

This theme shows that representation was not only sometimes experienced as a burden but also reclaimed as a source of professional strength and relational depth. Participants described how their racial, cultural and ethnic identities enriched their practice, enabling a deeper curiosity, interpretive nuance and meaningful connection. In reframing representation as an epistemic asset, these accounts challenge deficit-based narratives and foreground the value of lived experience in shaping psychologically attuned and culturally responsive practice. Consequently, the field of Educational Psychology must consider how to further diversify training courses and services. This ensures practitioners can effectively engage with the full breadth of the communities the profession serves. In this way, representation is not merely seen as a matter of diversity, but as a fundamental requirement for practitioner accuracy.

2.6.6 Theme Six: Spaces to Hold us

This theme centres on participants' reflections on the importance of safe, affirming spaces as protective and necessary for sustaining their wellbeing, confidence and professional functioning. Participants reflected on both the spaces that supported them and the absence of those spaces within training and practice, noting how this absence intensified feelings of isolation and vulnerability. Where safe spaces did exist, they were often informal, relational and located outside formal professional structures, including connections with other Black EPs, peers and trusted networks. Some participants also described supervision as a potential place of safety and containment, although this was experienced inconsistently.

Participants described how psychological safety was not created through general support alone, but through the explicit naming of race within supervision spaces, acknowledging its potential impact on professional experience:

Earl: *"And he just raised it... in supervision he was like, 'I just want this to always be a safe space if you ever feel that race or culture is having an impact on your ability to do your work. I want this to be a safe space to talk about that.'"*

Earl's account illustrates how psychological safety was fostered through recognition rather than neutrality. The supervisor's willingness to name race pre-empted silence and legitimised its relevance within professional reflection. This proactive approach reflects Watkins et al. (2019) understanding of cultural humility in supervision, which emphasises openness to cultural identity as central to building a secure supervisory relationship. Rather than relying on colour-blind 'neutrality', the supervisor's stance created permission for race to be spoken about without fear of judgement or dismissal. In doing so, it challenged the unspoken professional norms that frequently require minoritised practitioners to self-censor to remain 'safe' (Burkard et al., 2006). Here, safety is not treated as a neutral backdrop, but as something actively created through recognition, dialogue and shared responsibility for holding racialised experience within professional reflection.

Where supervision allowed identity to be explored relationally, participants described deeper engagement which strengthen the supervisor and trainee relationship, rather than assumed understanding:

Chyna: *"It took our supervisory relationship to a deeper level because we were able to recognise similarity and difference... we were learning as well as sharing."*

Chyna's reflection sits within the context of the Transcultural Supervision activity (Hawkins & Shohet, 2012), which explicitly structured opportunities for conversations about culture, identity and difference. Rather than relying on individual confidence or informal disclosure, the framework provided a safe shared focus and language that legitimised these discussions as a routine and expected part of supervision. In doing so, it made space for race and culture to be explored intentionally rather than incidentally. Her account highlights how safety did not rely on assumed sameness, but on the capacity to hold both connection and difference within a clearly structured supervisory relationship.

This suggests that, for minoritised professionals, safety is not incidental but requires deliberate structural support. By drawing on a formal framework to make space for conversations about identity, such as the Social GRRRAAACCEEESSS (Burnham, 2012), the responsibility for naming difference is shifted away from the supervisee. This created the conditions for a more culturally humble supervisory relationship (Watkins & Hook, 2006), where engagement can move beyond surface-level rapport towards a deeper, more meaningful connection.

However, not all participants experienced such containment. Several reflected on the absence of spaces where race could be acknowledged openly, particularly during training. Saffron described a lack of preparation and support around racialised experiences:

Saffron: *“But it’s like, knowing how aware of where I am, where was the supervision? where was the support? or even the space to be able to say, you know, you might come across some of these things? And being explicit. You know they will have known, they will have known that there’s not any Black people. So even just preparing somebody for something like that. But it’s almost like a hush hush thing, like nobody wants to address the elephant in the room. And I think there’s a couple of things there in terms of support and supervision. Especially if you are having diverse trainees, you need to make sure that you’re creating those spaces so they can talk about those things that are important to them. Not assuming everyone wants to talk about it but at least creating the forum.”*

Saffron’s account highlights how diversity without support can intensify isolation, particularly when racial difference is visible but unacknowledged. This account speaks less to overt silencing and more to the absence of safe and containing spaces within the training context. Without supervisors explicitly opening up these conversations, the responsibility to raise and hold them remained with the trainee herself, which contributed to her perceived lack of psychological safety. As Watkins and Hook (2006) suggest, when this kind of invitational stance is missing, spaces can feel uncontained, leaving individuals to navigate emotionally charged experiences alone. In this context, safety could not be assumed but required deliberate and intentional creation (Arao & Clemens, 2013). Where such containment was absent, reflection around race became something to manage cautiously rather than a source of support, limiting opportunities to process, integrate and sustain oneself within the role.

Where formal spaces failed to provide safety, participants described creating or relying on informal peer connections that functioned as protective support.

Emerald: *“There was only two other Black males on the course. It did give us an opportunity to connect and share our experiences. And I remember specifically thinking it wasn’t a case of, oh, we’re just sticking together. It was a case of a different level of peer supervision. It was informal, more relaxed,*

but we could actually speak truthfully about it, which we couldn't do with the rest of the white females in the cohort. And I remember that having a great impact because there were times where I felt like, ah, ... but having that connection meant I could. It was a safe space. Safe space is the best way to put it. I think having that safe space on the training course helped develop me personally and professionally."

Emerald's account highlights how informal peer spaces became places where he not only release emotion, feel validated and make sense of his experiences, but also developed as professional/ In contrast to formal provision, these spaces offered something different. In describing this as a "*different level of peer supervision*", Emerald emphasised that safety was created relationally, through mutual recognition, rather than provided institutionally. These informal connections functioned as what Case and Hunter (2012) describe as counter-spaces, offering protection from isolation and allowing experiences that felt difficult or unsayable elsewhere to be spoken, held and understood.

Finally, Emerald reflected on the emotional impact of being understood. He described this during the research interview itself:

Emerald: *"And having that opportunity to connect, I think, is validating and genuinely empowering. When I walk away from this interview thinking, I'm not alone... there's not much opportunity for that in our role. We're so alone, basically. So, thank you for allowing me to."*

This reflection captures the core function of safe spaces where experience could be acknowledged, rather than resolved. Being heard, believed and understood was described as protective, reinforcing a sense of belonging and legitimacy. Participants never made the spaces about solving problems, but rather a place where their experiences could be validated. Across these accounts, safe spaces were not described as optional supports but as necessary conditions that enabled participants to remain engaged, reflective and emotionally resourced within the profession.

2.6.7 Theme Seven: The Fire That Won't Go Out

This final theme captures how participants described transforming their experiences of pain and marginalisation into a sustained commitment to advocacy, accountability, and systemic change within the Educational Psychology profession.

Rather than disengaging in response to a lack of psychological safety, participants articulated a refusal to allow racialised experiences to dampen their professional purpose. Across accounts, pain was positioned as a catalyst for action, shaping how participants challenged practice, supported others and directed responsibility back towards professional structures rather than internalising it individually.

Participants reflected on moments where commitment to the profession felt threatened by frustration, fatigue, or perceived stagnation, yet described an active effort to sustain their sense of purpose rather than withdrawing:

Danielle: *"You do end up being a bit... dampened... like, oh, this is what I trained for all this time. Like oh, there's not going to be change... and you end up feeling a bit like what's the point. And it is helpful to then be back and be like, no, no, I really have a passion for change and being able to keep that fire alight."*

Further, Danielle's sense of persistence was closely tied to her growing clarity that responsibility for change could not rest solely with individuals:

Danielle: *"I think somewhere there needs to be an accountability structure that's actually an accountability structure."*

Danielle's description of feeling 'dampened' by slow or resistant systems, alongside her conscious effort to 'keep that fire alight', speaks to ongoing work required to sustain purpose within the profession. Rather than positioning resilience as something fixed or personal, her account suggests it was something she had to actively maintain in response to the conditions around her. In this sense, resilience appeared less as an internal trait and more as a process shaped by the environment in which she was working (Gu & Day, 2007). Danielle's reflections echo wider research suggesting that professional passion is not sustained automatically but requires continual re-negotiation of moral purpose in the face of institutional constraint (Day & Gu, 2007). Importantly, by naming the need for clearer accountability structures, she resisted locating this fatigue within herself, instead drawing the attention back to the organisational contexts that either support or erode sustained engagement. This aligns with Maslach and Leiter's (2016) argument that endurance at work is deeply connected to structural conditions, rather than individual stamina alone.

Amanda's account reflects a different relationship to purpose, where belief in potential to create change remained, but the pathway to enact it felt unclear or unavailable at the time:

Amanda: *"I will say that I was immensely proud to be an EP because I knew at some level that I could make change, but I couldn't see the trajectory that I eventually found myself on in order to be able to do that."*

While Amanda described a strong sense of pride and belief in the potential to make a difference, she also reflected on not being able to see a clear '*trajectory*' through which that change could be realised. This suggests a form of dislocated agency, where motivation remains present but lacks a viable route for expression. From an ecological perspective, agency is shaped not only by individual intent, but by the professional pathways and opportunities made available within a given context (Biesta & Tedder, 2007). Amanda's experience indicates that when such pathways are absent or unclear, purpose may not disappear but instead becomes redirected or deferred. In this way, her '*fire*' did not go out, but shifted. This reflects broader findings that participants often respond to structural misalignment by temporarily holding their values in tension with their immediate professional setting, preserving their sense of purpose until more supportive context emerges (Kira & Balkin, 2014).

For some participants, transforming pain into purpose involved directly challenging biased practice from within existing professional systems, using discomfort as a necessary mechanism for change. Sasha explained:

Sasha: *"It's using the systems in place professionally but challenging other practice to break down those unconscious bias... Have we got any hard evidence of this or is this just something you're assuming? Challenging is really important within my practice... because of my negative experiences, I'm now in a position where I'm quite comfortable to challenge... bit by bit over time break down those unconscious bias to help the children and young people we work with."*

Sasha positions challenge not as confrontation for its own sake, but as a strategic, gradual process, embedded within professional legitimacy. Her comfort with challenge is explicitly linked to her lived experience, suggesting that her previous harm has sharpened her awareness, rather than silenced it. She further

reflected on how negative experiences became instrumental in her professional identity, rather than paralysing:

Sasha: *“Even though that had a negative impact on me, it doesn’t always have to... I wouldn’t be where I am today and be so passionate about what I’m passionate about if I didn’t have those negative experiences.”*

Sasha’s framing of challenge reflects what Meyerson and Scully (1995) describe as *tempered radicalism*. Rather than positioning herself outside the system, she described using her professional credibility to question assumptions, ask for evidence and gently unsettle taken-for-granted practices. Consequently, change was not pursued through confrontation, but through steady, incremental disruption. Her reflection that her current passion was shaped by her earlier negative experience also points to a process of growth emerging from adversity. Rather than leaving her feeling stuck or defeated, these experiences appeared to be reworked into motivation for advocacy and change. This mirrors what Tedeschi and Calhoun (2004) described as post-traumatic growth, where difficulty becomes a catalyst for renewed purpose. Through this process, Sasha’s experiences were not only endured but transformed, becoming part of how she now understands her role in pushing for more equitable and reflective practice.

In a similar way, participants described ways in which they extended their advocacy beyond individual practice, seeking to support others navigating similar challenges and to influence wider professional cultures. Sasha described what this shift looked like for her:

Sasha: *“I set up a small group of other trainees who were having negative experiences so we could all support each other... even though that had a negative impact on me, it was able to have a positive impact for everyone else.”*

Here, advocacy moves from personal survival to collective support. Sasha’s actions reflect an understanding that structural issues require shared safe spaces, and collective responses, particularly in environments where formal support might be limited or absent. Consistently, Desmond also reflected:

Desmond: *“I’ve had some quite rich experiences, and I think it’s really helpful to share them in order for them to inform the practice of universities as well as local authority services.”*

What began as a personal struggle for Sasha appeared to be reshaped into a commitment to create support for colleagues encountering similar barriers. This reflects Maitlis' (2020) concept of *prosocial sensemaking*, where difficult experiences are reworked into motivations to act in a way that benefits others, through forming informal networks, Sasha demonstrated how shared peer spaces can function as important sources of connection where institutional support is experienced or limited (Wegner-Trayner & Wegner Trayner, 2015), a dynamic also echoed in theme 6. These spaces enabled experience to be shared and understood collectively, allowing participants to respond to structural challenges through mutual rather than individual effort (Vähäsantanen, 2015).

Related to this, Desmond described an intention to use his experiences to influence both training and professional systems. His emphasis on sharing learning across universities and services reflects what Lawrence and Suddaby (2006) describe as *institutional work*, which is the deliberate effort to shape and improve the systems one inhabits. A way in which EPs intend to work. Here, his lived experience was positioned not only as something to navigate, but as knowledge capable of informing professional change. These narratives also resonate with counter-storytelling and professional activism, where lived experience is mobilised to challenge dominant narratives and inform institutional learning (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

Taken together, these narratives signalled a shift from navigating systems to calling them into account. Participants were explicit that meaningful change required the EP profession to recognise and address their role in reproducing racial inequity, rather than relying on individual practitioners to compensate. Peace stated:

Peace: *"We're in a unique position to influence what happens in education, but we're not using our power".*

Peace's account foregrounds how existing structures tend to maintain the status quo, highlighting a disconnect between professional influence and collective action. Her reflection once again redirects the attention from individual competence towards systemic responsibility. Earl similarly commented on the limited racial diversity within the profession:

Earl: *"You know, I don't see a reason why there couldn't be more Black educational psychologists. We know a big reason, and this is not just for Black people, is that we're too quiet as a profession. Nobody knows who the hell we*

are and what the hell we do. So that's a criticism I have anyway. So, if you've got that as the preset, that this kind of secret profession, and then actually on top of that it's a secret profession that only a few people know about, and it seems to be, you know, White females that know about it especially... well, okay, we've got to be louder as a profession generally and letting people know."

Desmond further added:

Desmond: *"I feel like I want the profession to recognise that and just own it. It's a White female profession and this creates a sort of perception of who Educational Psychologists should be, and I think that we need to dismantle that. We need to... people like the BPS, the Division of Educational Psychology, should dedicate events to dismantling these ideas and bring working examples of how people are trying to bring race, culture and ethnicity into their practice."*

Together, these reflections align with calls for structural accountability within professionals, emphasising that diversity efforts without institutional change risk reproducing existing hierarchies (Ahmed, 2012). Participants positioned advocacy not as optional, but as necessary professional responsibility requiring collective ownership.

This theme illustrates how participants' commitment to equity was sustained not through idealised perseverance, but through an ongoing transformation of experience into action. Participants' narratives demonstrated a movement from navigating constraint towards actively reimagining the conditions of practice, with responsibility increasingly directed towards institutional change rather than individual resilience. Advocacy emerged here as both relational and structural grounded in lived experience, while remaining focused on shaping the professional environments in which those experiences were formed. In this way, the *'fire'* symbolised not only persistence, but a generative force, one that converts frustration into direction and action, oriented towards a more accountable, equitable and responsive profession.

2.7 Interpretive Synthesis

This study sought to explore how Black EPs make sense of their training and practice experiences through the lenses of race, culture and ethnicity. Rather than revealing a single or unified narrative, the findings demonstrate that meaning making

was dynamic, relational and structurally situated. This was shaped through ongoing interactions between identity, power and professional contexts. Across participants' accounts, race was not experienced as a discrete or occasional factor, but as an ever-present dimension of professional life that contributed to how they experienced legitimacy, belonging and agency. Sense-making, therefore emerged not as an internal cognitive process alone, but as something produced within social, relational and institutional environments.

A central contribution of this study lies in how it illuminates the simultaneous interacting nature of participants' experiences. While earlier themes highlighted silencing, invisibility and racialised positioning, later themes revealed connection, relational depth and sustained purpose. These were not linear sequential stages but co-existing realities. Participants described navigating constraints while also exercising agency, experiencing burden while also identifying strength and encountering systemic barriers while continuing to reimagine the possibilities of their professional role. In this way, identity, resilience and professional purpose were continually negotiated rather than fixed. This aligns with RTA's understanding of meaning-making as fluid, situated and co-constructed rather than stable or linear (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

Participants' narratives also challenge the assumption of neutrality within the Educational Psychology profession. Across the dataset, professional spaces were frequently experienced as structured by unspoken norms that positioned whiteness as the implicit reference point for professionalism, knowledge production and practice. Within this context, race was often rendered invisible, positioned as peripheral or treated as inappropriate to name. Such dynamics shaped what could be spoken about, what could be legitimised and whose knowledge was recognised. Accounts therefore suggest that neutrality did not function as absence of bias, but as a mechanism that maintained existing norms and limited engagement with racialised realities. These findings echo wider critique that professional knowledge systems are socially situated and shaped by dominant cultural frameworks rather than universally neutral (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

At the same time, participants did not describe themselves as solely constrained by these structures. Instead, lived experience emerged as a meaningful resource of professional knowledge and interpretive depth. Participants described how their racial, cultural and ethnic identities informed relational consultation,

strengthened connection with families and enabled more nuanced understanding of CYP's experiences. In this sense, experiential knowledge functioned not as subjective bias but as an epistemic resource that expanded psychological interpretation and relational attunement. This resonates with Fricker's (2007) concept of *epistemic justice*, which highlights the importance of recognising marginalised knowledges as legitimate contributors to understanding rather than outsider perspectives. Through this lens, participants' identities were not simply something to be managed within the profession, but something that actively shaped how psychology was being practised and understood.

The findings further highlight the relational and structural nature of resilience in the participants' professional journey. Participants did not frame endurance as an individual trait or personal strength alone, but as something sustained through connection, shared understanding and psychologically safe spaces. Where safe spaces were present, whether in supervision, peer relationships or informal networks, participants described increased capacity to reflect, integrate and remain engaged within the profession. Where such spaces were limited or non-existent, emotional labour, isolation and representational burden intensified. These findings suggest that resilience is not solely located in the individual but emerges through relational and systemic conditions that either support or constrain professional functioning. In this way, agency was shaped not by personal motivation, but by the extent to which environments enabled voice, recognition and belonging.

A further contribution of this study is found in how participants described transforming racialised experiences into professional purpose. Rather than disengaging in response to marginalisation, participants articulated an ongoing commitment to advocacy, relational practice and systemic challenge. Importantly, this commitment was not framed as idealised perseverance, but as a process requiring continual negotiation. Participants frequently redirected responsibility for change away from individuals and towards professional structures, emphasising the need for true accountability and collective ownership. This challenges deficit narratives that locate difficulty within individuals and instead foregrounds the role of systems in shaping experiences and possibility.

Taken together, the findings suggest that Black EPs make sense of their training and practice experiences through an ongoing and dynamic process. One which considers negotiating identity, power and professional contexts. Race, culture

and ethnicity were not peripheral to professional identity, but central to how participants understood themselves, their practice and the systems they worked within. Through this lens, the study highlights the importance of recognising lived experience as a legitimate form of professional knowledge, and of creating relational and institutional conditions that enable such knowledge to be integrated rather than marginalised.

2.8 Implications for EP Practice

This section considers the practical implications of the study for the everyday work of EPs, training providers and local authority services. The analysis suggests that how race, culture and ethnicity are recognised, held and worked with within professional spaces has meaningful implications for EP practice. Across participants' narratives, identity, voice and psychological safety were positioned as central to shaping engagement, agency and sustainability within the role.

Rather than viewing the analysis as individual perspectives in isolation, this section brings together the core insights from the seven themes to consider their implications for professional practice and development. In doing so, it moves beyond race-avoidance approaches. It engages with the 'White Noise' present within professional systems, identifying areas where practice can be more responsive to issues of race, culture and ethnicity.

The section is structured around three key areas within Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Model: the development of professional identity with the individual EP at the centre; the EP's guiding frameworks and approaches, situated within the microsystems and mesosystems; and the role of institutions in supporting equitable practice within the macrosystems. This systemic framework provides a useful way of understanding how practitioner agency, professional interactions and wider institutional structures dynamically interact. Across these areas, race, culture and ethnicity are positioned not as additional considerations, but as aspects requiring meaningful integration into everyday psychological practice, rather than remaining at the margins.

2.9 Reimagining Professional Identity

A key practical implication of this study is the need to move away from the idea of a 'universal trainee' model, which continues to underpin most of EP training. This model positions the practitioner as neutral, objective and 'race-less', where personal identity is seen as secondary to professional knowledge and skill. While

statutory frameworks, such as HCPC SoPs (2024), make clear that EPs are expected to practice in ways that actively challenge discrimination, the analysis highlights a gap between this expectation and the lived reality of the training experienced by participants.

Participants' accounts across Theme One and Theme Three suggest that this 'universal' model continues to operate as a White-normative baseline, where the experiences, communication styles and presentation of the dominant group are treated as the standard, and other racial, cultural and ethnic identities are positioned as additional (Lander, 2011). Participants described the impact of this in terms of ongoing self-monitoring, identity shifting, and a sense that aspects of themselves needed to be adapted in order to be seen as 'professional'. As such, increasing representation alone is not enough. While the analysis suggests that the wider training environment does not give permission for minoritised individuals to be fully themselves, inclusion risks becoming tokenistic and falls short of what is required for genuinely inclusive practice.

In everyday practice, this points to the need for a shift in how professional identity is understood and supported. Training providers and services need to actively dismantle implicit assumptions about what it means to be a professional EP, even down to what they look and sound like, and instead create space for a wider range of identities to be explicitly recognised as valid within the role. This includes attending to the 'White Noise' that shapes expectation around communication, presentation and behaviour. As reflected in Theme One, these expectations were often experienced as subtle but pervasive, influencing how participants felt able to show up within professional spaces.

These norms are often unspoken, yet they function in ways that reflect what Sewell (2016) described as epistemological oppression. As seen across Theme One and Theme Three, by centring Western notions of 'professionalism', this can marginalise or filter out racialised ways of being. Within this context, participants described how authentic communication styles or cultural expressions were not simply experienced as different but were at times interpreted as less professional or riskier, particularly where they disrupted dominant expectations. As such, reimagining professional identity requires more than individual awareness of tolerance. Drawing on participants' experiences, it calls for a more intentional shift at an institutional level, where these narrow understandings of professionalism are critically examined, and where practitioners are not disadvantaged for expressing

identities that do not align with these unspoken norms.

Addressing this requires a more explicit focus on the ‘hidden curriculum’ within EP training. For example, this may involve recognising and valuing different cultural expressions within professional assessments, ensuring that authenticity is not interpreted as a lack of competence, but as part of what it means to practice effectively.

The analysis also highlights the importance of the supervisory relationship within the training context. Across Theme Six, participants described the challenge of navigating conversations about race, culture and ethnicity within supervision, often feeling that the responsibility to raise concerns sat with them. This suggests a need to move away from race-avoidance approaches, towards a more proactive and culturally responsive model of supervision.

Drawing on frameworks such as transcultural supervision (Hawkins & Shohet, 2012), this involves creating space to explore identity, values and lived experiences as part of the work, rather than something separate from it. It also requires both the supervisor’s and supervisee’s values and assumptions to be brought into the open, rather than remaining implicit or unexamined. Unlike more traditional supervision, which may focus mainly on the case or task, this approach encourages reflection on how personal beliefs and cultural positioning shape practice, while also recognising the wider inequalities that sit around the work. Consequently, supervision can move beyond positioning race as something that is only addressed when raised by the trainee, and instead create space for more open, holistic conversations about identity, experience and strengths.

In practical terms, this may involve targeted training for supervisors to build confidence in engaging with conversations around race, culture and ethnicity, including recognising discomfort, defensiveness, and the impact of power within the supervisory relationship. As reflected in the participants’ accounts, creating safe spaces where these conversations can take place openly is essential in ensuring that supervision supports, rather than constrains, the experiences of Black EPs. This is also supported by wider literature, which suggests that culturally responsive supervision can enable practitioners to recognise and draw on their own cultural strengths, while also supporting broader understanding of the role of culture within the profession (Soni et al., 2021; Halton et al., 2023).

Importantly, this is not about isolating or spotlighting ‘racial’ issues in a way that further marginalises individuals, but about creating space for practitioners to

explore identities more fully, including the strengths, perspectives and insights they bring to their work. In doing so, the focus shifts from expecting individuals to adapt to existing systems towards creating professional spaces that are more responsive to, and shaped by, the diversity of those within them.

However, it is important to note that moving away from race-avoidance brings its own tensions. In trying to name and engage with race, there is a risk that training programmes may still unintentionally spotlight difference in ways that feel exposing, or even burdensome for trainees within predominantly White spaces. This is not something that can be addressed through curriculum and or policy changes alone. It calls for a shift away from a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to conversations about race, towards something more attuned to the individuality of trainees, their preferences, their readiness, and their sense of psychological safety.

These tensions do not lend themselves to neat, procedural fixes. Instead, they require ongoing commitment to reflexivity and responsiveness. What becomes important here is a shared sensibility across both staff and trainees with a willingness to notice, name and sit with how power operates in the moment. Through such an approach, programmes can begin to challenge these structures without positioning trainees into spaces of hyper-visibility.

2.10 Reimagining Professional Practice

Another key implication of this study is the need to reconsider how EPs apply their practice in everyday work. While Section 1 focused on the internal experiences of the practitioner, this section moves towards how psychology is enacted in practice, particularly in relation to how race, culture and ethnicity are recognised and responded to within casework. Across participants' accounts, there was a consistent sense that dominant professional norms, particularly around 'neutrality', can unintentionally reproduce inequities by overlooking the lived realities of minoritised children and families. As reflected in Theme Two, these norms can shape what is seen as relevant within psychological practice, often positioning racialised experiences as peripheral rather than central. This reflects what King (1991) described as 'dysconscious racism', where White norms and privileges are the dominant norm and remain largely unexamined within professional practice.

In this context, 'neutrality' is not experienced as absence, but as a set of underlying assumptions about what counts as valid knowledge. Participants described how this can limit the extent to which race is meaningfully engaged with in

practice, particularly within formal processes such as report writing and formulation. For example, Danielle (Theme One) reflected on the pressure to produce 'neutral' or 'colour-blind' accounts, where naming race explicitly felt risky or potentially challenging within institutional contexts. This suggests a need for a shift towards a more active and intentional engagement with race within psychological thinking.

One practical implication of this is the need to reimagine creative and valuable ways in which we can more explicitly integrate race, culture and ethnicity into psychological formulation. Rather than it being treated as an additional or contextual factor, the analysis suggests that race and its associated experiences should be considered as central to understanding a child's outcomes and trajectory. As highlighted by Amanda (Theme Two), this includes recognising patterns such as the disproportionate pathologisation of Black boys within school systems and close monitoring of referral data to monitor and identify inequality (Knights & Atkinson, 2025). Similarly, Emerald (Theme Two) reflected on how these factors are often acknowledged but remain at the margins of formal reports. Bringing these dynamics more centrally into formulation aligns with CRT principles around the centrality of experiential knowledge (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002), enabling EPs to move beyond supporting the child to adapt to the systems and instead begin to question how the system is responding to the child. Here, the focus shifts from simply identifying what someone's identity is to engaging more deeply with how and why it shapes their lived experience.

The analysis also highlights the importance of relational practice. Across Theme Five, participants described how moving away from rigid, standardised approaches allowed for more meaningful engagement with children and families. In particular, there was an emphasis on the value of authenticity and cultural connection within consultation. For example, Desmond (Theme Five) described using culturally relevant metaphors to support understanding, demonstrating how drawing on shared cultural knowledge can deepen relational trust and support more effective communication. This suggests a need to broaden understandings of what constitutes 'professional' practice, and reflects principles of cultural humility (Hook et al., 2013), which recognises that relational authenticity and cultural responsiveness are not separate from psychological skill, but central to it.

Finally, participants' accounts point to the challenges faced by EPs when attempting to hold a more race-conscious position within practice. As reflected in

Saffron's (Theme Two) account, EPs who explicitly engage with race may be perceived as 'focusing too much' on it, highlighting the tension between individual practice and wider institutional expectations. This tension reflects broader systemic dynamics, such as interest convergence (Bell, 1980), where equity is often only supported when it does not disrupt the dominant norms. This suggests that supporting more equitable practice is not solely an individual responsibility but requires organisational recognition and support. At the same time, participants' accounts also highlight the strengths that emerge when race is meaningfully engaged with in practice. As described by Kammi (Theme Five), the ability to anticipate and understand the impact of systemic factors on children's experiences can be a significant strength within EP practice. Creating space for this way of working to be recognised and valued is essential in moving beyond surface-level inclusion, towards a more responsive and equitable approach.

In light of these tensions, there is a need for a more structured and intentional way of supporting EPs to engage with race, culture and ethnicity within their practice. The following framework is proposed as one way of supporting this shift in practice.

Building on the analysis and the discussions above, this study proposes a preliminary framework to support more race-conscious approaches within EP practice to be implemented in casework to support consultation, psychological formulation and report-writing. Rather than offering a prescriptive model, this framework is intended as a reflective tool, grounded in participants' experiences, to support EPs in moving beyond race-avoidance approaches. It brings together key patterns identified across the data and translates them into a structure that can be applied within everyday consultation.

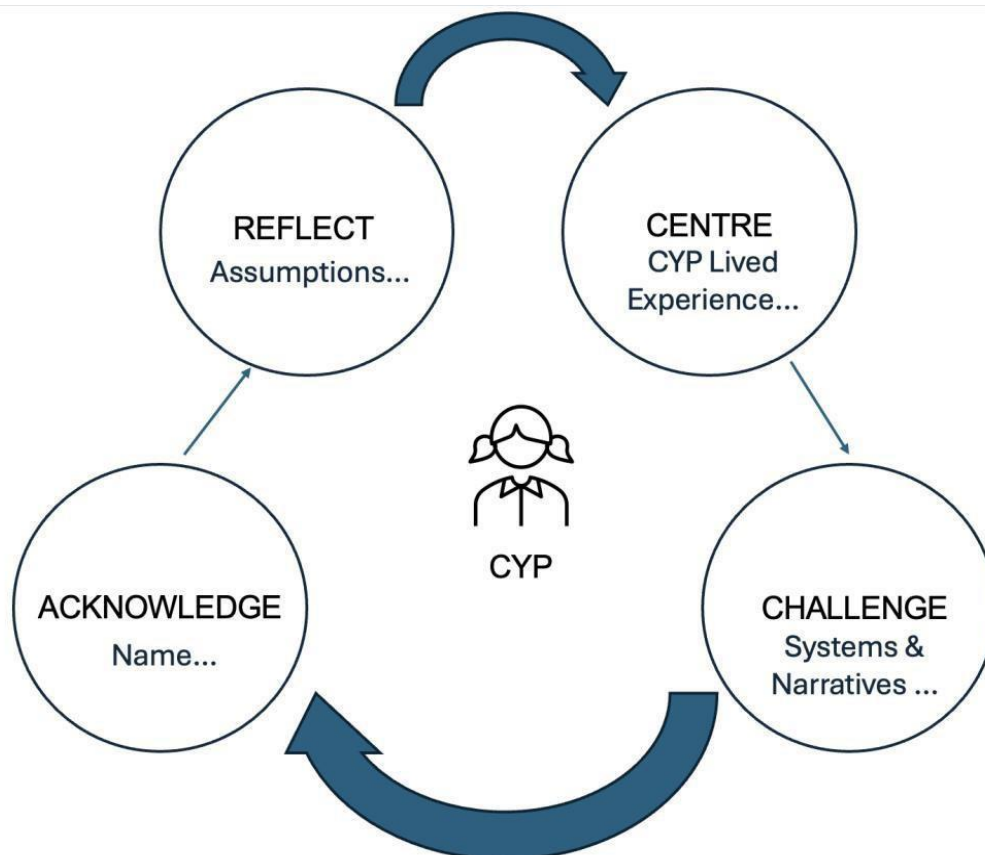
In putting forward this framework, it is important to situate it within the wider context of evolving professional guidance, particularly the BPS (2023) *Self-assessment Framework for Promoting Racial Equity in Educational Psychology Services*. This framework aligns with and builds on Section 2 of the framework, which centres on professional practice and the need for culturally responsive casework. While the BPS (2023) guidance sets out what equitable practice should look like at a service level, the framework proposed here is concerned with the more day-to-day, reflective *how* at the level for the individual practitioner. By offering a structured approach to consultation and formulation, it provides a way for EPs to

enact the BPS's call for increased racial literacy and equity within their applied practice and decision-making.

The framework is organised around four interconnected processes: Acknowledge, Reflect, Centre and Challenge (ARCC). The abbreviation ARCC is also a deliberate play on the idea of a narrative 'arc'. Just as an arc traces movement and change within a story, this framework seeks to shift the racialised narrative that can negatively shape the experiences of minoritised children and practitioners, towards something more equitable and authentic. These are not intended as linear stages, but as part of an ongoing and iterative process, enabling practitioners to continually revisit and deepen their understanding of how race, culture and identity may be shaping psychological practice. A proposed illustration of the framework is presented in Figure 2.

Figure 3

The ARCC Framework



Note. The figure presents a tentative, cyclical consultation framework developed from the study analysis, positioning the child or young person (CYP) at the centre and outlining four interrelated processes: Acknowledge, Reflect, Centre and Challenge.

The 'Acknowledge' phase involves making visible and vocal what is often left unspoken within consultation spaces. As highlighted within the analysis, dominant norms can often obscure the role of race, positioning it as secondary rather than central. This stage requires EPs to explicitly recognise and name how race, culture and identity may be shaping both the presenting concern and the wider context. A key consideration, however, is that the act of 'naming' requires a high degree of relational sensitivity and ethical care. If not approached with care, explicitly foregrounding race, culture and ethnicity can risk becoming an 'othering' process that inadvertently reinforces stereotypes or deepens marginalisation. As this framework remains a tentative proposal, future developments should consider how this 'Acknowledging' phase can be navigated through a reflexive and relationally attuned stance. In the hopes that making racial dynamics visible works to empower individuals, rather than positioning them within pre-existing power structures.

Reflect focuses on the EPs own positioning. This involves the EP considering how their personal values, assumptions and professional identity, including race, culture and ethnicity, and other intersecting aspects such as gender, class, religion, influence interpretations and decision-making. As reflected in Theme Six, where participants described discomfort navigating conversations about race, this stage encourages EPs to hold both personal and systemic dynamics in view, rather than defaulting to race-avoidant positions.

Centre involves positioning the lived experiences of children, families and, where relevant, EPs at the core of psychological understanding. As demonstrated in Theme Five, participants highlighted the importance of relational authenticity and cultural connection. This stage moved beyond deficit-led interpretations, drawing on cultural strengths, contextual knowledge and shared meaning-making.

Finally, challenge represents the move from understanding to action. This includes interrogating dominant narratives, systemic responses, and institutional practices that contribute to inequitable outcomes. This may involve explicitly naming racialised patterns, advocating within systems, and reframing how difficulties are understood, shifting from adapting individuals to interrogating systems.

To support the application of this framework within practice, each stage can be accompanied by reflective prompts. These are not intended as checklists, but as a way of slowing down and creating space for more critically informed, culturally responsive thinking. For example, EPs may ask *What is being left unspoken here?*

How is my own positioning shaping this understanding? Whose voice is being prioritised? What assumptions are being reinforced, and what might need to be challenged? Such questions reflect the iterative and reflexive nature of the framework, aligning with the study's broader emphasis on moving beyond surface-level inclusion towards more purposeful engagement with race, culture and ethnicity within practice. Consequently, this framework is presented not as a definitive or complete model, but as an initial proposal for further development. It offers the profession a starting point that will require ongoing refinement and reflection within the professional community as it evolves into a more comprehensive practitioner tool.

When considered together, the ARCC framework offers a way of translating participants' experiences into a practical and reflective approach to EP practice. It intends to support EPs to make the shift from unintentional 'colour-blind' approaches, towards a more intentional, relational and critically engaged way of working where race, culture and ethnicity are not treated as optional additional considerations, but as central to psychological understanding and intervention.

2.11 Reimagining Institutional Accountability

The final, and perhaps most significant, implication of this study is the need to shift from a focus on individual resilience towards greater institutional accountability. Across the later themes, particularly Theme Six and Theme Seven, participants made it clear that the responsibility for navigating race, culture and ethnicity within the profession cannot continue to sit solely with minoritised EPs. While participants describe a sustained commitment to advocacy and change, they also spoke about the emotional and professional weight of working within systems that can remain silent, resistant or defensive when faced with racialised critique. Consequently, a key practical implication is the need for professional bodies and local authority services to move beyond performative EDI statements towards structural accountability mechanisms (Ahmed, 2012).

There is a need for more intentional and visible structures that support minoritised EPs/TEPs within the profession. Across Theme Six, participants highlighted the importance of informal peer networks in creating safe spaces of validation, understanding and support. For example, Emerald described these connections offering 'a different level of peer supervision'. Suggesting that these

spaces provided something that formal structures were not consistently able to offer. Rather than relying on these connections to develop organically or reactively, there is a need for services and professional bodies to recognise and support such spaces more formally, positioning them as a legitimate and valued part of continued professional development (CPD). This aligns with broader understandings of psychological safety (Edmondson & Lei, 2014), where individuals feel able to speak openly without fear of negative consequences and positively impacts workplace performance. As reflected in Saffron's (Theme Two) account, without this safety, raising concerns surrounding race, culture and ethnicity can carry the risk of being misunderstood or positioned as 'disruptive'.

Participants' accounts also point to the role of the wider profession's leadership in shaping the direction of the field. Across Theme Seven, there was a clear call for professional bodies to more openly acknowledge their demographic and cultural positioning. As Desmond reflected, this includes recognising the historical construction of Educational Psychology as a predominantly White, female profession, and actively working to challenge assumptions about who the role is for. This speaks to the need for what Lawrence and Suddaby (2006) describe as 'institutional work, where change is not left to individuals, but is actively driven through shifts in professional norms, expectations and structures. In practice, this may involve developing clearer mechanisms for accountability within training programmes and services, including opportunities for minoritised practitioners to safely share their experiences of 'White Noise', gatekeeping, or inequity within practice.

Finally, the sustainability or a more diverse and equitable EP workforce depends on the profession's ability to support, rather than contain, the advocacy described by participants. As seen across Theme Seven, the 'fire' to challenge inequity remains strong however, without supportive structures, there is a risk that this becomes another burden for individuals to carry. The ARCC framework proposed in the previous section offers one way of supporting more race-conscious practice, but its effectiveness is dependent on wider institutional contexts. In particular, for EPs to meaningfully engage in the 'Challenge' stage of the framework, there must be space within systems that welcome challenge, value challenge and then act upon those challenges. In this sense, the focus shifts from recruitment alone towards the creation of a profession that is able to hold and sustain difference. This involved moving beyond expecting individuals to navigate these

complexities in isolation, towards recognising equity and social justice as a shared, collective responsibility across the profession, as the HCPC SoPs (2024) suggest.

2.12 Limitations

This study is situated within an RTA (Brau & Clarke, 2022) framework, where themes are understood as interpretive constructions shaped through the interaction between the dataset, researcher positioning and theoretical lens. The analysis, therefore, represents one coherent and theoretically informed reading of the data, rather than an objective or singular account. Whilst reflexivity is embedded throughout, it is important to acknowledge that my own positioning, alongside the use of CRT, will have shaped how the data were interpreted and which narratives were brought to the forefront.

By centring race, culture and ethnicity as analytic lenses, other aspects of professional experience may have been less fully explored, despite being present within participants' accounts. This reflects an intentional focus aligned with the aims of the study, though it does mean that a fuller exploration of intersecting identities may not have been captured in depth.

A further limitation relates to the nature of the sample. Recruitment through professional networks and social media may have attracted participants who are already engaged in conversations around race or who feel more able to articulate their experiences in this space (Miles & Huberman, 1994). As such, the data may reflect the perspective of a particular group of Black EPs with a level of agency and confidence in discussing these issues. The experience of those who may feel more marginalised, less visible or less able to speak openly within the profession may therefore be underrepresented, and the findings are not intended to be generalisable beyond this context (Willig, 2013).

In addition, the study captures a snapshot of participants' experiences at a particular point in time. Identity, as reflected within the analysis, is fluid and context-dependent, and it is likely that participants' perspectives may shift across different stages of their professional journey. Participants' accounts may also have been shaped by perceptions of professional risk within a relatively small professional

community, influencing how experiences were narrated, emphasised, or at times withheld (Moyes & Porter, 2015). While efforts were made to create space that supported openness and reflection, these dynamics cannot be fully removed.

2.13 Directions for Future Research

Future research could build on these limitations by adopting designs that allow for a broader exploration of intersecting professional experiences beyond race, culture and ethnicity, while still maintaining a critical focus on these constructs. Research conducted across more diverse professional contexts, or utilising longitudinal and relational methodologies (Willing, 2023), may provide greater opportunity for participants to reflect over time and support deeper insight into how identity, agency and professional positioning evolve.

There is also value in creating research conditions that support fuller disclosure, particularly in relation to experiences that may feel professionally sensitive. Approaches such as Participatory Action Research (PAR) offer one way of doing this, by positioning Black EPs not only as participants but as active contributors to the research process. This aligns with more collaborative and decolonising approaches to knowledge production (Fletcher-Watson et al., 2019).

Beyond methodology, further research is needed to explore how supervisory and organisational structures cultivate psychologically safe spaces, where identity can be engaged without placing responsibility solely on minoritised practitioners. This includes examining how such spaces are created, sustained and experienced across different contexts. Longitudinal enquiry may also examine how purpose, agency and professional commitment evolve across career stages, particularly in relation to organisational conditions and opportunities.

Furthermore, there is a clear need for research to take a more appreciative stance by identifying and documenting examples of effective practice and services that are making progress in these areas. While much of the existing literature foregrounds systemic barriers, future work could benefit from a stronger focus on 'what works', exploring services or training programmes that have successfully fostered equitable, inclusive and psychologically safe environments. By foregrounding these positive examples, research can build on critique to offer more tangible blueprints for institutional change, exploring the specific mechanisms that

enable positive practices to flourish and the subsequent impact on practitioner wellbeing and retention.

In addition to identifying what works, future research should also evaluate mechanisms of intentional disruption, marking a shift away from just describing experience. For example, there is scope to explore how approaches such as the proposed ARCC framework and similar frameworks are taken up within EP practice, and what impact this has on consultation, formulation and decision-making. This includes examining how outcomes may shift for minoritised children, young people and families when race, culture and ethnicity are more explicitly and consistently integrated into psychological thinking. In doing so, research can begin to explore how institutional practices, norms and assumptions are challenged or reshaped over time. This supports a shift from awareness towards accountability.

Finally, future research could extend this enquiry by exploring the relational experiences between EPs and minoritised children, young people and families. A more multi-perspective approach would offer a richer understanding of how identity, representation and systemic factors shape engagement, trust and outcomes within psychological practice. In doing so, research can begin to move beyond understanding individual experiences, towards informing more culturally responsive and equitable systems within the profession.

2.14 Conclusion

The current study offers an important and timely contribution to the field of Educational Psychology, providing a critical lens through which to understand how race, culture and ethnicity shape the professional experiences of Black EPs in the UK. By centring voices that have historically been marginalised within the profession and wider contexts, this research responds to a clear gap in the literature and challenges the longstanding assumption of neutrality that underpins psychological practice. The analysis demonstrates that professional experience is not formed in isolation, but within systems shaped by power, relational dynamics and historically situated norms. In this context, what is recognised as legitimate knowledge is neither neutral nor evenly distributed.

The analysis highlights a complex and at times exhausting interplay between structural constraint and professional agency. While participants described environments that could limit recognition and silence racialised experiences, they

also demonstrated a sustained commitment to their work. This involved continuing to engage with, navigate and influence their professional context. Their accounts reinforce that expertise within Educational Psychology is not solely technical or procedural, but deeply relational, experiential and socially situated. In doing so, this study challenges the notion of a 'universal practitioner'. While this ideal may not be explicitly taught, the analysis reveals an underlying expectation that practitioners conform to a professional identity that does not always fully account for racialised realities. By naming this, this study highlights that the identity of the EP is not separate from practice, but central to how understanding is formed and enacted.

More broadly, this research calls for a shift in how the profession understands and responds to difference. It moved beyond viewing race, culture and ethnicity as demographic markers and additional considerations, and instead positions them as integral to psychological thinking and practice. The introduction of the ARCC framework aims to offer one way of supporting this shift, translating participants' experiences into a practical approach that encourages more intentional, reflective and responsive engagement within everyday work.

Ultimately, this study invites the profession to reflect on not only what it does, but how and for whom it does it. It challenges Educational Psychology to move beyond performative inclusion and towards more accountable and critically engaged practice, where the experiences of minoritised EPs are not simply accommodated, but recognised as essential. The significance of this work lies in its insistence that equity cannot sit at the margins of the profession. It must shape it.

3 Chapter 3: Reflective Chapter

3.1 Introduction

This reflective chapter is written in the first person to emphasise my active role in reflexively engaging with the research purpose. Throughout my research journey, I have sought to critically examine not only the research itself but also to interrogate my position within it. That is, to explicitly recognise that as a Black Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP), as a researcher, as someone whose personal and professional experiences are deeply intertwined with the focus of this study. Engaging in ongoing research supervision and maintaining a reflective research diary enabled me to document my evolving thinking, emotional responses and decision-making across the research process.

As part of this reflective practice, I have also engaged in writing spoken word poetry as a form of creative reflexive expression. This form of reflecting has provided a medium through which I have been able to process the emotional, relational and embodied dimensions of conducting research on race and professional identity, aspects that are not always fully captured through traditional academic writing. This creative reflection has allowed me to articulate moments of tension, responsibility, vulnerability and growth in ways that resonate more authentically with how I experience and make meaning of the research process. Selected spoken word reflections are therefore included within this chapter, not as stylistic additions, but as legitimate reflexive artefacts that illuminate my positionality, epistemic commitments and evolving understandings.

In this chapter, I reflect on my motivations for undertaking this research and the personal, professional and socio-political contexts that shaped its direction. I consider my ontological and epistemological positioning, and how these informed the methodological choices I made, the relationships I formed with participants, and the way I interpreted and represented their narratives. Particular attention is given to the complexities of occupying a dual insider-research position, and the responsibilities this carried in relation to voice, representation, and knowledge production.

I also reflect on key moments of learning, challenge and growth throughout the research journey, including the emotional and intellectual labour involved with issues of race, identity and professional belonging. In doing so, I consider both the

strengths and limitations of the study, and how the process has contributed to my development as a reflective, reflexive and socially conscious practitioner-researcher.

This chapter aligns with the expectations of doctoral-level reflective practice and demonstrates my engagement with HCPC Standards of Proficiency (2023) and BPS Competency Framework (2023), particularly in relation to reflexivity, ethical practice and professional self-awareness (HCPC 10; BPS 9f, 10b, 10e). I conclude this chapter by reflecting on the wider implications of this research, including its potential contribution to knowledge, practice and ongoing conversations around equity, voice and representation within the Educational Psychology profession.

3.2 Motivations

Growing up in urban Suffolk, in the late 1990s to early-mid 2000s, I was surrounded by many different cultures and ethnicities, but it was not lost on me that being Black Caribbean amongst a white majority county meant I never quite felt like I belonged. During school, I was the only Black person in my year, and I so desperately wanted to be like everyone else, to fit in. To me, that looked like straightening my Afro hair, wearing make-up that was too light for my skin tone and trying extra hard in school so people would not think I was 'stupid' because I had immigrant parents who did not academically *achieve*.

I never saw people who looked like me in positions of authority, no Black educational staff, and my friends' parents all had 'impressive' jobs, whilst my mother was a domestic cleaner and my father was retired. And yet, I had a natural love for academics, I craved learning and always knew I wanted to pursue further education. Following my GCSE results, it was the first time I realised I could aim for the stars and do whatever I put my mind to; the first of six children to pursue higher education. Over time, my commitment to working with children and young people and supporting families in diverse capacities naturally guided me towards a career as an Educational Psychologist.

Unsurprisingly, it seemed that every pursuit of mine was met with some level of unavoidable self-awareness due to the colour of my skin. Whether that looked like always being the *only* one in the room within professional roles, or feeling overlooked and dismissed, whilst the white majority appeared as though they had a secret rule book that gave them the social upper hand. Though in all of these experiences, I do not believe it ever completely rocked me or made me feel insecure, and I have my

faith to thank for that. I learned early on who God created me to be, and my identity was securely based in that, and not in my race. Psalm 139:13-14 puts it this way:

“For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful; I know that full well.”

It is important, then, to understand that I did not set out to pursue research that focused on race; if anything, I wanted to avoid it. I did not want to be the Black girl who made *everything about race*. That was too textbook. That was until a defining moment led me towards this research. As a first-year TEP, I was asked to support a young boy who had been excluded on multiple occasions, with several incidents recorded as ‘racism’. It was not the racism that bothered me; it was the lack of preparation and supervision that came with it. I was not asked how I felt about it. There was no curiosity and exploration of why this was happening or whether I was the right professional to be involved, and following my involvement, there was no debrief. It was ignored, and I realised then that if I, in a privileged position, was not even considered, then what on earth were other EPs experiencing, and all the more for the children, young people and families we were supposedly supporting. I knew then that I could not remain quiet. I had a passion to be a part of the change, to seek justice; justice for what I had seen working within the education system, justice for the narratives I had consistently heard surrounding non-White people and justice for how I had seen racial discrimination outworked in my own professional life. Justice in this case meant giving a voice to what had remained systemically silenced.

I began to notice more and more how easily non-Black professionals could avoid engaging with race, culture and ethnicity, often choosing the comfort of disengagement. In contrast, Black individuals could not step away; their racialised identity remained visible and inescapable. My hope for these research findings is that they encourage practitioners to pause and critically reflect on their own practice, invite the profession into meaningful and honest dialogue, and contribute to long-overdue change within systems that have historically marginalised minoritised individuals. The following spoken word piece, written at the beginning of my research journey, captures how I came to the decision to pursue this work:

“If not me, then who?”

Your ideas are ambitious, inspirational even,

You’re sounding the trumpet, but is anyone even listening,

*Your thesis can't change the world, you know, keep it simple
You've got to produce something to show, but even the smallest word can
cause a ripple.
If I listen, throw in the towel and bow down,
Not make it too challenging or uncomfortable, so you get to keep your crown
Once again, we are silenced, hands tied and screaming into a void,
I'm heartbroken, tired and yet still worried it will be you I disappoint.
But I'm not her; she is not me. I was raised to stand, not sit, fight and not flee.
So, I call you out on your lies and challenge you on your beliefs.
My thesis can change the world, just not the world of the thieves.
A stolen voice, a marginalised soul, the 'angry' black woman, or so from the
storied you tell.
The little Black girl who does not know this space is for her, the young black
boy whose longing for someone to care. So, if not me, then who?
Because if not me, it certainly won't be you."*

3.3 Locating My Contribution Within Educational Psychology

As I progressed through the research journey, I became increasingly aware of a noticeable silence within Educational Psychology literature. Whilst there is growing scholarship exploring the experiences of minoritised trainees more broadly, and a more established body of work within Clinical Psychology, the specific voices of Black EPs remain comparatively underrepresented. Minoritised experiences were often grouped in the literature, which I felt reduced the distinct racialised experiences of Black practitioners. Considering my own experience, this absence felt significant and prompted me to question whose experiences are centred within our professional knowledge base, and whose are sidelined.

This gap is not merely academic; it carries implications for practice. If our profession lacks a nuanced understanding of the racialised experiences of its own practitioners, this inevitably shapes how we conceptualise and respond to the needs of minoritised CYP and their families. The way we theorise identity, inclusion and systemic practice is influenced by whose voices inform those theories. In recognising this, I came to see my research not only as filling a gap, but as challenging the conditions that produced the gap in the first place.

As I engaged with the literature, it was clear to me that psychological theory and research are not neutral spaces. They are contexts shaped by history, power

and epistemology, of which minoritised trainees are often required to navigate systemic harm and forms of “forced positioning” within predominantly Eurocentric frameworks (Masih, 2024; Sobogun & Nkansa-Dwamena, 2025). What the literature described as professional isolation, alongside ‘colour-blind’ approaches frequently embedded within training and practice contexts (Prajapati et al., 2019), was not an accidental failure; rather, it is deeply rooted in the profession’s historical commitment to positivist traditions.

In revisiting the literature on the history of Educational Psychology, including its entanglement with eugenics and the work of figures such as Francis Galton and Cyril Burt, I was confronted with the reality that claims of scientific “objectivity” were once utilised to legitimise racial hierarchies (Wright, 2020; Awad et al., 2025). This prompted me to question how the privileging of Western-centric, supposedly “universal” truths may have historically marginalised identities, rather than interrogating the structures that marginalise them (DeCuir-Gunby & Schutz, 2014). Whiteness operates as an unmarked structural and epistemic norm within the field, and yet, it is rarely named.

Through listening to participants’ narratives, I wanted my research to amplify how Black EPs understood themselves within professional systems and encourage the profession to reconsider how professional identity is theorised within the field. CRT offered me this conceptual language through which I could interpret these patterns. Rather than viewing racism as episodic or exceptional, I wanted my research to spotlight its ordinary occurrence, manifesting through discrimination, silencing, interest convergence and the subtle regulation of conversations about race. Operationalising these concepts within an applied Educational Psychology context felt important, as it extended CRT beyond abstract theory into the everyday realities of EP practice and organisational structures. Choosing the counter-narratives of Black EPs also required me to reflect on knowledge production itself. By centring these experiential accounts as valid psychological knowledge, this research contributes to broader epistemological shifts that value narrative and lived experience alongside traditional approaches.

This work allowed me to reflect on the kind of professional I wished to be, and the contributions I could make. Whilst our profession frequently articulates a commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion (BPS 3, HCPC 5), participants lived experiences revealed the tension between rhetoric and reality. This dissonance led

me to reflect critically on how inclusion discourse can, at times, become performative within organisational EDI agendas. Holding this tension was uncomfortable, yet it reminded me that meaningful change requires more than declarative commitments; it demands structural interrogation.

By no means do I assume that my research can transform the profession, but what I do hope is that it seeks to widen the theoretical and epistemic space within which the profession understands itself. It is my hope that, as EP professionals begin to interrogate the lenses through which we theorise and understand the CYP and families we work with, we become better equipped to serve those who do not resonate with our Western-centric frameworks. The spoken word below captures my reflections inspired by engagement with Māori Psychology:

“Some support is better than none,

*They say some support is better than none,
but who are they?*

Do they know the foundations of my world?

Or the bedrock of my being.

Do they acknowledge the values of my systems?

Or are they simply incapable of seeing?

See, I see your foundations, your values and your diadem,

I tiptoe amongst your principles,

Silenced because I can't relate to them.

It's not that I refuse or for lack of my trying,

but it's just not who I am,

My soul would be lying.

*So, I stay dominated and chained by your recommendations of should, could,
might work,*

*But I wonder if you'd recognise that your 'expertise' has only amplified my
hurt.*

Some support is better than none, they say,

But what if I told you, the best support is support that is done my way.

3.4 Ontological and Epistemological Orientation

When it came to ontology and epistemology, my research supervisor will tell you, I was not always the biggest fan. The way I understood it at the beginning of my Doctorate journey was a necessary means to an end. It felt abstract and somewhat

disconnected from my practice. What I had not yet recognised was the extent to which my own epistemology positioning was already shaping how I interpreted the world around me.

It was through this research journey that I began to genuinely engage with, and eventually embrace, these philosophical foundations. Encountering BFE (Hills-Collins, 2000) felt less like discovering something new and more like recognising something I had always known. It just made sense, as a Black woman, I am not separate from my lived experiences; I knew they shaped my worldview, my interpretations, and the questions I am drawn to ask. An epistemology that affirms my experience and my knowledge production resonated deeply with me. It enabled me to locate myself within the research, rather than distance myself from it. Something that RTA welcomes (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

My epistemological stance became grounded in interpretivism, which allowed me to truly prioritise meaning-making and subjective experience. However, this was not a simplistic individual-level interpretivism. Drawing on both social constructionist and constructivist lenses (Crotty, 1998), I engaged with meaning at multiple levels. At the individual level (social constructivist), I sought to understand how Black EPs interpret and construct meaning from their lived experiences. How identity, belonging and marginalisation are actively negotiated and reflected upon. At the structural level (social constructionist), I examined how race, a socially constructed concept that has real-life implications (Delgado & Stefancic, 2023), operated within professional spaces. Here, professional identity could not be understood in isolation from whiteness as the unmarked norm, nor from inclusion discourse shaped by institutional language and power.

By researching in this way, I felt that my research could intentionally accomplish several things. It enabled me to apply a theoretical and epistemological lens that does not accept the status quo as neutral but instead interrogates how knowledge is produced and whose knowledge is legitimised. It allowed me to amplify voices that have historically remained marginal within Educational Psychology research and to generate themes that deepen our understanding of racialised professional experiences. Ultimately, I hoped that grounding my work in this orientation would contribute, in some small but meaningful way, to practices that move the profession towards greater equity and social justice.

3.5 Decision-Making

In this section, I will outline how my BFE positioning and reflexive methodological commitments shaped key decisions made throughout the research process, particularly regarding the research question, participant sample, interviews, and analysis. As I came to appreciate that interpretivism, grounded in a relativist ontology, does not assume or seek one final or universal '*truth*', but instead understands knowledge as constructed and evidenced through careful engagement with the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022), this enabled me to position my research question. Not in an effort to find an *answer*, rather, I approached it as an exploration of meaning, something co-constructed, contextual and supported by the data and the processes through which it was interpreted.

In developing my research question, I was mindful of avoiding individualising narratives of difficulty by focusing solely on negative experiences. At the beginning of the research journey, I briefly considered the idea of forming research questions that focused on positive experiences only, in an effort to avoid reinforcing stories that highlighted hardship. However, through reflective conversations with my research supervisor, I came to recognise that this too would risk diminishing or distorting experiences. A more neutral framing allowed space for more authentic accounts to emerge, rather than inadvertently '*cherry-picking*' more narratives. Using CRT as the theoretical framework within my literature review informed how I came to understand the ways in which race and power are embedded within institutions and structures (Crenshaw, 1989). Rather than positioning racism as an episodic occurrence, I sought to explore how already embedded systemic conditions shaped the everyday and professional experiences of Black EPs. Additionally, I drew upon CRT's principle of counter-storytelling to centre Black voices as the legitimate experts of their own lived experiences.

As a Black TEP EP with my own racialised experiences, preparing to enter the profession, I made the deliberate decision to focus specifically on Black EPs. This felt both personally and academically coherent, as much of my literature review findings and the rationale underpinning this study centred on national responses to events and circumstances that disproportionately impacted Black communities. Although broadening the scope to include other racially minoritised groups may have increased sample size, doing so risked flattening distinct racialised experiences and obscuring the specificity of anti-Black racism. The spoken word below captures the

tension I wanted the research to hold, not simply what happens, but how it is lived and interpreted within historically embedded systems of power:

'You see me, but you don't see me'

*You see me, you see us, this I know be true,
Our skin, our hair, the barriers we've broken through.
Though hear us, you do not, this I am quite sure of,
Our voices, our knowledge, into a void they have become lost,
how do we know, you ask of me?
I've read the stories, I've longed for the dream
The dream where our voices are amplified, not silenced
Not measured for tone, nor moderated for guidance,
So, why does this feel like a repeat of before?
We've marched this road, and we've stood at this door,
you study the surface, you reference our pain,
But if nothing is shifting, we're speaking in vain.*

My decision to recruit only qualified EPs was grounded in ethical reasoning. Given the weight and sensitivity of the topic, I did not feel it would be appropriate to invite TEP EPs to reflect on their racialised experiences whilst they were still in the midst of their training journey. I was mindful that discussing issues surrounding race could place trainees in a potentially vulnerable position within systems that they were still navigating. As a Black TEP EP myself, I was also mindful of my position as both an insider and outsider within my research. Whilst I shared racialised experiences with participants, I was not yet fully embedded within the profession in the same way as qualified EPs. By recruiting qualified EPs, I recognised that their retrospective reflections on their training experiences, whilst also drawing on their professional practice since qualification, allowed for a broader and more reflective perspective on how racialised experiences may unfold across both training and professional contexts.

In addition, I made the decision to recruit Black EPs from across England rather than focusing on a single geographical location. This was intended to provide a broader understanding of how experiences may differ within different local authority contexts and professional environments across the country. However, I remained mindful that the community of Black EPs in England is relatively small. Consequently, careful consideration was given to protecting participant anonymity.

Although recruitment intentionally sought a geographical spread, identifying details such as specific training providers, placement locations, and current workplaces were intentionally omitted when reporting participant characteristics to minimise the risk of identification.

In order to gather data that touched on participants' training and professional experiences in a meaningful way, I made the decision to use semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews are particularly well-suited for exploring the lived experiences of race, culture and ethnicity, as the open-ended yet guided nature of this approach creates space for participants to share nuanced accounts of their experiences in their own words. In doing so, the interview process becomes a space for the co-construction of knowledge between researcher and participant, allowing for the emergence of complex and sensitive aspects of identity that may be difficult to capture through more structured methods such as surveys (Fryer et al., 2015). For these reasons, I chose to conduct individual interviews over focus groups. I felt that the one-to-one format would create a more dedicated space for participants to share their personal narratives, without the risk of different ethnic and cultural experiences becoming merged into a single collective account. Individual interviews also provided a level of psychological safety that felt particularly important when discussing sensitive topics related to race and identity. In this way, participants were able to speak openly about their experiences, including those that may have been unique, complex or even contradictory, without the social pressures that can sometimes arise within group discussions (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

When paired with RTA, this approach aligned with my epistemology and explicitly acknowledged my subjectivity as a researcher as an important analytical resource in interpreting meaning within participants' narratives, rather than treating it as a source of bias (Braun & Clarke, 2022). The use of semi-structured interviews enabled the analysis to remain grounded in the voices of the participants, whilst also allowing me to remain reflexive about the broader power dynamic and socio-political contexts that shape research concerning minoritised identities (Lei et al., 2024). The development of the interview questions (Appendix D) was informed through my engagement with the literature, alongside reflection on my own experiences and discussions with my supervisor and peers. I was also mindful that the questions remained sufficiently open and broad so as not to appear leading. This allowed participants to guide aspects of the conversation and raise experiences or

perspectives that may not have been explicitly anticipated within the structure of the interview schedule.

For me, the decisions surrounding data analysis were important in that they would align with my overall research positioning. Whilst I had briefly considered the idea of Narrative Analysis as a way of capturing the chronological ‘story’ of each participant’s experience (Riessman, 2008) I ultimately decided that this approach may have anchored the analysis too closely to individual narratives. Although the stories shared by participants were deeply important to me, I was also interested in understanding how broader patterns of experience emerge across participants, particularly in relation to systemic and structural dynamics within the profession.

On this basis, I ultimately selected RTA (Braun & Clarke, 2022). I was drawn to the flexibility of this analytic approach, as well as its explicit recognition of the researcher’s subjectivity as an integral part of the analytic process, rather than something to be controlled for. Within research exploring race, culture and ethnicity, I felt it was particularly important, as it acknowledges that meaning is not simply extracted from the data but developed through an interpretive process in which the researcher inevitably plays a role. In this sense, my own lived experiences and professional lens inevitably shaped how I engaged with and interpreted the data. Rather than attempting to distance myself from this influence, RTA allowed me to remain reflexive about how my positioning interacted with participants’ accounts in the co-construction of meaning. This also enabled me to move beyond purely descriptive reading of the data and consider the underlying assumptions, social dynamics and structures of power that may shape how Black EPs experience and navigate the profession.

Through the use of RTA, I was able to appreciate the process of theme development, not as ‘discovering’ themes that already existed within the data, but as a reflexive and interpretive process through which patterns of meaning were constructed. In doing so, I aimed to develop a thematic understanding that remained grounded in participants’ accounts whilst also attending to the broader intersectional and systemic contexts in which those experiences were situated. The journal extract below captures my reflections on the theme development process as it unfolded during analysis:

‘Telling a Story – Theme Development

I think developing my themes has been my favourite part of the process so far. Although I’ve had to keep reminding myself not to become too attached with

what I initially generated, this has felt like the big moment. To intricately craft themes that tell a meaningful story from my participants' voices. A narrative that does justice to what this whole process has really led up to. If I can't tell a story that people want to hear, then what was the point? It would be so easy to tell a story that literature, though sparse, already tells. But I wanted to capture more than that. I wanted to intertwine the journey, the highs and the lows, the wins and the losses. A tale not only concerned with pain and injustice but one that foresees a hopeful and healing future. A story that recognises and is comfortable with holding the tension between both/and; that two things can be seemingly true and exist together in the same space; Invisibility and hypervisibility, power and silence, assimilation and authenticity. So now I guess I am ready to write. In my heart, I know what to do, and in my mind, I know I can do it. The question is, can my words prove as insightful and powerful to my readers as they will to me?'

It was through the use of supervision and journaling, as seen in the example above, that allowed me to critically reflect on how I was making decisions about my themes. I was also holding in mind that as the researcher, I am part of the meaning-making through my interpretations, whilst also being careful not to over-identify with the participants' narratives. It is true that some experiences were synonymous with my own, and others I could not relate to. Therefore, it was important to me that I regularly took a step back from the analysis to avoid the risk of forming a story from my data that was a reflection of just my own lens, but rather one that stayed rooted in my participants' experiences.

I have to admit that the initial coding process felt like a huge responsibility, because I was aware that how I labelled data would directly inform the story I later told. There was a lot of second-guessing and doubting myself, which again invited many opportunities for me to critically reflect as a researcher, rather than dismiss my own thinking. Moving from coding to candidate themes to refinement felt like an exciting process, at least for me. It allowed me to interrogate my labelling and encouraged a natural creativity that resonates with me. I knew I did not want basic theme names, but names that told a story within themselves. Theme names that would immediately provoke thought for my audience, that, when paired with the theme introduction, could be enough to draw the readers into the analysis. I have

always been fascinated with words and semantics. How the ways in which we choose language form part of the constructions people come to believe or understand. With this in mind, I was able to form a thematic structure that I was pleased with. Though this was not a totally individual decision. I toyed with the language choices in my research supervision spaces, and whilst sitting in a busy city café with a fellow colleague, I read my theme names aloud and asked her to tell me what came to mind when she heard my words. This process really helped me move from my initial thematic map (see Appendix A) to my final thematic structure (see Appendix E). The spoken word below gives an insight into how I processed the language I wanted to portray:

'The Weight of Words

*I've sat; I've analysed. I've questioned my own thoughts,
I've read over your words; I've held up the torch.
I've shone the light, I've highlighted the pain,
Your loss, my loss, my gain, your gain.
It's heavy, it's tiring, am I doing this right?
This label here, that label there, and now I've ended up in a fight.
Not with myself and not even with you,
But with these words, oh these words, how they hold so much truth.
And hold them I will, but perhaps I shouldn't be so attached,
For it might be these very choice of words that result in an attack.
Attack on my character, attack on our being,
Because no matter how hard we try, they're still not capable of seeing.
But I'm committed to the story, you've shared with me your gold,
it's all part of the process, is what I've been told.
Oh words, so beautiful, so creative, so great,
Oh words, so powerful, so dangerous, you hold so much weight'.*

When it came to the analysis, choosing which data extracts to include in my report was harder than I thought. As Braun and Clarke (2022, p. 133) highlight, this stage required careful consideration to ensure that the extracts selected most strongly evidenced my analytic claims, while also allowing the reader to assess the relationship between the data and my interpretations. Unsurprisingly, I also wrestled with the words I chose during the analysis. I used those café sessions with my colleague once again to soundboard '*what sounds better, this word or this word?*'

giving her very little context but wanting to use the opportunity to speak out loud. Additionally, I felt like I wanted to use everything I had; my participants gave so much of themselves, and it felt wrong not to use every part of that, but I learnt it is not what was said but how it was said that helped reinforce my analytic commentary. At times, the responsibility of representing participants' experiences felt particularly significant. For example, one participant powerfully described feeling their '*identity had to calm down*'. Moments such as this reminded me that the extracts included in the analysis were not simply illustrative examples, but fragments of lived experiences entrusted to the research process. As I reached the end of the analysis, I kept wondering whether I could have done more. In many ways, I think this was the perfectionist in me wanting to honour the depth and significance of what participants had shared. The following extract from my reflexive journal illustrates the tension I experienced during the early stages of analysis:

'Analysis Musings

I underestimated just how hard this part is. Yesterday I wrote up my first theme, and it took me all of the hours in that working day, questioning whether I chose the right quotes. Had I used the most appropriate words? Did my interpretation make sense? I know reflective thematic analysis explicitly acknowledges the role of the researcher, and the reflexive nature is a strength, but it feels like a step even further, where I'm finding myself relating on a personal level to the experiences shared with me. All the more reason to be honest about my interpretations and interrogate my own thinking. Is this truly a reflection of my participants' own thinking? Or have I seen something that isn't there?... I guess it is so easy to overthink this stage of the research journey, and on one hand, it's important to and on the other, it's just as much about enjoying the process and allowing the story to unfold. At the end of this research journey, I don't just want to say, 'I made it', I want to say I loved it too.'

This entry reflects the wrestle I experienced when I began writing up the findings. Although the themes had already been developed, turning them into a written narrative felt like a different challenge altogether. In many ways, this stage made the responsibility of representing participants' experiences feel very real.

3.6 Developing as a Researcher

To illustrate my development as a researcher, I reflect on a number of key moments throughout the research journey. In doing so, I consider the strengths and limitations that became apparent at different stages of the process.

3.6.1 Recruitment

One thing you are often prepared for when completing any research is the complications that come with recruitment. So, like any other researcher, I had prepared myself for difficulty finding participants. This part surprised me. The willingness of participants to take part meant that recruitment reached capacity quickly, meaning that I had to close the process earlier than anticipated. Whilst this initially felt like luck or a practical success, it also prompted reflection on what this level of interest might indicate about the need for research in this area. As one participant explained, they ‘wanted to be part of a conversation... as an opportunity to express my views and experiences and feelings as a way of processing and out letting as well.’

However, this rapid engagement also brought into focus a key tension within my research. While my literature review critiques how academic discourse often conflates race, culture and ethnicity, collapsing individual identities into broad categories, my empirical recruitment relied on the label of ‘Black EPs’. I was mindful that in doing so, I risked reproducing the same reductionism I had previously challenged.

At the same time, the strength of the response suggested that, for participants, this label did not, for example, erase the specificity of their Yoruba, Caribbean or British identities. Instead, it functioned as a necessary point of connection and the study itself explored cultural and ethnic identity precisely for those reasons. Within a profession where shared racialised experiences are often overlooked or left unspoken, the category ‘Black’ created a collective space for dialogue that might not otherwise have been possible.

This tension was something I held onto throughout the research process, recognising individual nuance and acknowledging the importance of collective visibility. This became an important reflexive thread throughout the process, shaping both how I engaged with the data and how participants’ identities were understood.

3.6.2 Interviewing

At the time, I chose not share interview questions in advance to preserve the spontaneity of lived experiences (Patton, 2015). However, whilst reflecting on this decision later, I wondered whether providing participants with more time to consider such sensitive and complex topics may have led to richer reflections (Braun & Clarke, 2020). I also found that the format of online interviews contributed to the success of recruitment, as it made participation more accessible for EPs across England who were balancing busy schedules in their roles as qualified EPs.

3.6.3 Data-Analysis and Write-Up

During the early stages of analysis, I intentionally stayed close to the surface meaning of the data through semantic coding, allowing participants' accounts to speak in their own terms before bringing in deeper interpretation. As I spent more time with the data, I began to consider it more latently, holding CRT in mind to interrogate the wider systemic and relational dynamics shaping participants' narratives. Initially, I had imagined the themes to form a coherent story with a clear beginning, middle, and end (see Appendix F). However, through research supervision and continued engagement with the data, it became clear that participants' experiences did not tell a linear, neat story. Instead, the themes appeared interwoven and interacting with one another and surfacing at different points, rather than unfolding in a simple sequence.

3.7 Key Learning

One of the biggest things this research taught me is the importance of approaching qualitative work with openness. I came into the study with a clear sense of the questions I wanted to explore, but the process quickly showed me that participants' experiences do not always follow the direction you expect. There were several points during the journey where I had to pause and ask myself whether the direction I had in mind was actually the direction the data was pointing.

As the analysis progressed, it became clearer to me that my role as a researcher was not to uncover a story that was already sitting there waiting to be found, but to engage honestly with the meanings participants were sharing. At times, this meant trusting my interpretations, while at the same time questioning them. I also noticed moments where participants' experiences resonated with my own understandings of professional spaces. Rather than trying to distance myself from that connection, it made reflexivity even more important, reminding me to remain

open and transparent about how my own perspective shaped the way I interpreted the data.

Reflecting on the significance of creating space for participants to speak openly about their experiences was another thing that was a key moment for me. Many of the conversations extended beyond just answering specific questions and became moments where both the participants and I reflected on experiences that we hadn't yet found the opportunity to articulate. This reinforced for me that qualitative research is not simply about gathering responses, but about creating environments where people feel able to share perspectives that may otherwise remain unheard, while co-constructing (Mason, 2002). This also highlighted the relational nature of this kind of research; these were not distant or transactional exchanges, but conversations built on trust and openness, where participants were entrusting their experiences to the research process (Kopec et al., 2025).

Another important learning from this process for me was recognising the value of creative reflection within the research journey. As someone who enjoys creative expressions of writing, writing spoken word pieces and reflexive journal entries became a way for me process moments in the research that were difficult to capture through conventional academic language. Utilising an art form that historically originates from Black spaces felt poetic in itself, aligning with the idea of spoken word as a 'culturally sustaining' methodology that honours the oral traditions and 'vernacular knowledge' of marginalised communities (Paris & Alim, 2014). In many ways, this also reflects what has been described as 'arts-based reflexivity', where creative practice can act as a bridge between the researcher's internal emotional landscape and the more formal process of analysing data. These creative reflections allowed me to acknowledge the emotional and relational dimensions of the work, whilst also giving me space to think more deeply about how I was engaging with the data.

3.8 Personal and Professional Reflections

This research also prompted a lot of personal and professional reflections. Listening to participants talk about their experiences of navigating professional spaces was not something I could engage with purely from an academic distance. At times their reflections felt familiar, echoing wider conversations about race, identity and belonging within professional contexts. Because of this, the research often required me to sit with both the analytical side of the work and the emotional weight

of what was being shared. It's important to reiterate that had it not been for the spoken word outlet, the emotional element of this work would have been more difficult for me to manage.

As a TEP, this has also encouraged me to think more critically about the systems we work within. Many of the experiences described were not simply individual incidents, but reflections of wider systemic dynamics. Meaning participants from across England had shared experiences they were not even aware of. Hearing these perspectives reinforced how professional environments can shape whose voices are heard and whose experiences remain less visible. Whilst these realities can sometimes feel difficult to change, the research reminded me that questioning these systems is still an important part of our role.

At the same time, this research also highlighted the power of voice. Participants spoke openly and honestly about their experiences, and their willingness to engage in these conversations demonstrated just how important this work was. In many ways, the research became more than an exploration of professional experiences; it was an opportunity to listen more carefully to perspectives that are not always centred in professional conversations. The spoken word below reflects a culmination of my own reflections on using my voice, alongside those expressed within participants' accounts:

'I'm Speaking

*I have learnt to try my hard, so people trust me.
You see, regardless of my education, my skin colour protrudes,
The years of study, research and gaining respect that with the wrong words I
could lose.
It's not that I'm being fake or untrue to myself,
But I guess I've been moulded to not stand out.
Don't speak unless you're spoken to,
Don't make the wrong name for yourself hun.
But the truth is, you've already decided my name before my words have
formed on my tongue.
So, screw it, it's tiresome, bothersome, screw it all,
The worlds already determined to watch me fall.
So, I'll stand, I'll jump, I'll speak,
Because I know the one who determines my peak.*

*The lifter of my head, the author of my story,
The one to whom, and only whom, belongs all the Glory.
But okay, I'll listen, I'll take notes whilst you're teaching,
But when my time comes, please be quiet, because now I'm speaking.*

3.9 Dissemination of Findings

Given the importance of the experiences shared by participants, it feels important that the insights from this research extend beyond the thesis itself. One way I hope to do this is by creating accessible summaries of the findings that can be shared with professionals working within EP services and the wider educational contexts. Research has the potential to open up conversations within professional communities, and I hope the themes explored in this research will encourage further reflection on how professional environments can become more equitable, thoughtful and responsive to the experiences of those working within them.

Another way in which I intend for this research to extend beyond a doctoral purpose is through the development and delivery of CPD and training. Initially, I hope this can be shared within EP spaces, contributing to the profession's anti-racist practice agenda, before being developed further to support practice within school contexts.

Finally, my ultimate desire would be to publish these findings within journal articles such as *Educational Psychology in Practice*, allowing the experiences shared within this research to reach a wider professional audience. The following spoken word, and final piece in my reflective chapter, reflects some of my own thoughts about what it means to take this research beyond the doctorate, particularly the responsibility that I feel comes with sharing participants experiences more widely:

' Remember my name

*I'm here, I'm in. You entered so willingly,
Just a sheet, and my name, yet you offered your stories to me.
It was an adventure, a journey.
For all of us I'm sure of it,
You sang, I listened, you entrusted me your words to submit.
A process I've treasured and loved, an experience that filled me up to my
core,
I've sat, I've wondered, should I be doing something more?
So much vulnerability, depth, laughter and smiles,*

*The researchers process that would keep me here for a while.
As I come to the end I ask myself, so what comes next?
To run, to retreat to pause and to rest.
And part of me will be tempted by such things,
I will take a moment to reflect, breathe and take it all in.
And then I'll run, though not away, but towards the big, wide world,
I'll amplify our voices, where our knowing, our being, will not be blurred.
So, I ask you to remember my name, not for recognition or knowing,
but when you see it, you will be reminded
That there are voices behind that will not remain unspoken.*

3.10 Conclusion

Writing this reflective chapter has given me the opportunity to take a step back and think about the research journey as a whole. Throughout this process, I have reflected on the motivations that led me to this study, the methodological decisions that shaped the research and the ways in which my own positionality influenced how I engaged with the data.

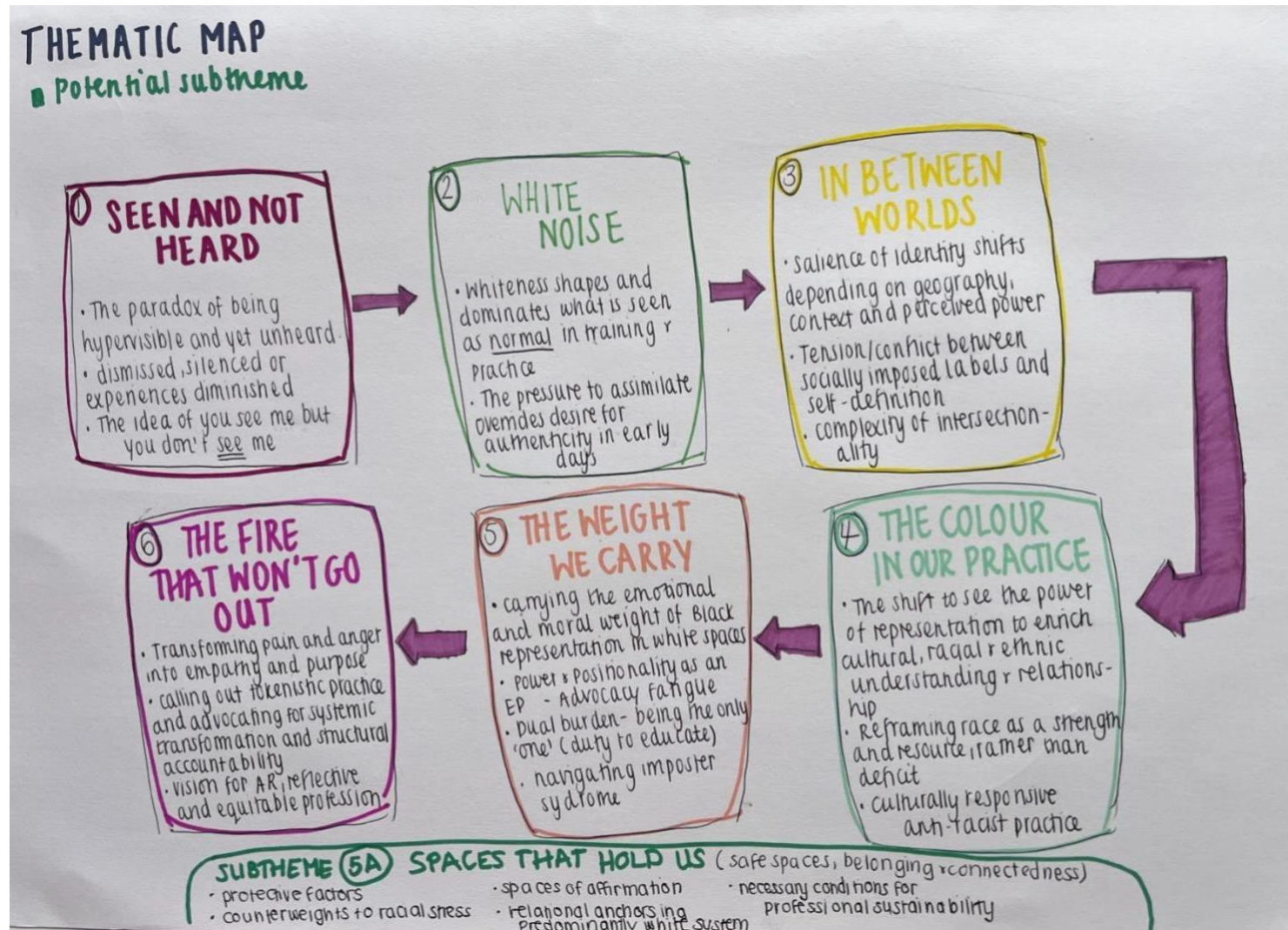
More importantly, this journey reminded of the responsibility that comes with representing participants' experiences. The stories shared throughout this research were thoughtful, vulnerable, honest and at times deeply personal. Participants trusted the research process as a space where their perspectives could be explored and heard, and that trust shaped how I approached both the analysis and the writing of this work. For that, I am eternally grateful to the 10 busy EPs who took time out of their schedules to contribute to this work.

As I move forward in my career as an EP, the insights from this research will continue to shape how I listen, question and reflect within my practice. The voices shared through this study will remain part of that ongoing reflection, reminding me of the importance of creating safe spaces where experience can be spoken, hear and understood. One participant captured the significance of this work in a way that will stay with me:

"It's really powerful and like really ignites my passion and purpose. I'm so glad you are doing this research and that it can be out there because it is so important, and it seems it's personal to you, it's just really powerful."

Appendices

A. Initial Thematic Map (Reviewing Themes)



B. Ethical Approval

Ethics ETH2425-1606 : Miss Y'etsha Bennett-Grant

Date Created 20 Feb 2025

Date Submitted 20 Feb 2025 Date of last resubmission 04 Apr 2025

Date forwarded to committee 07 Apr 2025

Researcher Miss Y'etsha Bennett-Grant

Category PGR

Supervisor Mr Ryan Cullen

Faculty Faculty of Social Sciences

Current status Approved after amendments made

Ethics application Applicant and research team Principal Applicant

Name of Principal Applicant Miss Y'etsha Bennett-Grant

UEA account dbq17apu@uea.ac.uk

School/Department

School of Education and Lifelong Learning

Category PGR

Primary Supervisor

Name of Primary Supervisor

[Mr Ryan Cullen](#)

Primary Supervisor's school/department School of Education and Lifelong Learning

Project details

Project title

Through their Lens: How Black EPs make sense of their training and practice experiences through the lens of race, culture and ethnicity

Project start date

01 May 2025

Project end date

31 Aug 2026

Describe the scope and aims of the project in language understandable by a non-technical audience. Include any other relevant background which will allow the reviewers to contextualise the research.

This research explores how Black EPs make sense of their training and practice experiences through the lenses of race, culture, and ethnicity. Educational Psychologists (EPs) play a crucial role in supporting the educational, social, and emotional well-being of children and young people (AEP, 2022). Their responsibilities include recognising and addressing barriers to inclusion, particularly those related to race, culture, and ethnicity, as outlined in practitioner competencies (BPS, 2017; HCPC, 2023). EPs must work sensitively with diverse communities, ensuring their practice is inclusive, equitable, and promotes racial equality within schools and beyond (BPS: DECP, 2006).

However, research indicates the profession still struggles to support minoritised individuals, particularly those entering the field.

By examining Black EPs' training and practice experiences, this research amplifies an overlooked population (Robinson et al., 2011) and expands our understanding of how race, culture, and ethnicity shape their professional lives. The primary focus is race, specifically Black EPs, while also considering individual cultural and ethnic identities. Black 'refers to individuals who identify as such, signifying solidarity among those facing oppression due to skin colour (Patel et al., 2000), regardless of cultural or ethnic background. Little has been done to understand Black EPs' experiences from their perspective. This research seeks to provoke thought, foster dialogue, and encourage training courses and EP services to critically examine the privileged discourses within which they operate by answering the question, 'How do Black EPs make sense of their training and practice experiences through the lenses of race, culture, and ethnicity?'

Provide a brief explanation of the research design (e.g. interview, experimental, observational, survey), questions, methodology, and data gathered/analysis. If relevant, include what the participants will be expected to do/experience.

The proposed study will adopt a qualitative research approach, recognised as an essential method for gathering rich, in-depth insights into complex issues (Lim, 2024). Participants will be invited to participate in online interviews on an 'opt-in' basis and will be asked to read the Participant Information Sheet and provide consent electronically. Purposive sampling will aim to recruit 7-10 Black EPs who have trained and are currently practising in the UK, ensuring a diverse range of experiences across different geographical regions in training and practice.

Online semi-structured interviews conducted over Microsoft Teams be employed to collect data. Semi-structured interviews provide participants with the flexibility to speak openly and in-depth, while ensuring that questions are asked that aim to address the research question (Willig, 2015). Interviews will be recorded using an audio device e.g., a Dictaphone or Microsoft Teams recording function (participants will be invited to turn their cameras off if they would like). Data will be transcribed, combined, and then analysed using Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) (Braun & Clarke, 2022). This involves the systematic coding of qualitative data to develop themes across participant responses (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

A Critical Race Theory framework will inform this research. CRT is guided by several key principles: the recognition that racism is ingrained in the fabric of society, the importance of giving voice to experiential knowledge from racialised and marginalised individuals, the critique of colour-blind ideologies, the acknowledgement of intersectionality, and the commitment to social justice (Stefancic & Delgado, 2010).

This will inform key themes. Data will be fully anonymised and stored securely on UEA OneDrive and once the project is complete data would be stored in line with the UEA Information Classification and Data Management policy.

Detail how any adverse events arising in the course of the project will be reported in a timely manner.

If unanticipated adverse events arise during the project, they will be reported immediately to the

Primary Research Supervisor, Ryan Cullen via email and to the EDU Head of School, Yann Lebeau.

They will then be reported on Ethics Monitor and the EDU Chair, Victoria Warburton will be notified via email for further action.

Monitoring for any adverse events for participants or the Researcher will take place throughout the research project. Participants will be provided with the researcher's email address to report any concerns. This will ensure that any adverse events are addressed and reported in a timely manner.

The Researcher will also monitor participant responses during the interviews to assess for and report any adverse experiences.

Will you also be applying for Health Research Authority approval (HRA)?

No

Indicate if you are applying for approval for an experiment to be conducted in the School of Economics' Laboratory for Economic and Decision Research (LEDR).

No

Is the project?:

none of the options listed

Does the project have external funding administered through the University's Research and Innovation Services (RIN)?

No

Will the research take place outside of the UK?

No

Will any part of the project be carried out under the auspices of an external organisation, or involve collaboration between institutions?

No

Do you require or have you already gained approval from an ethics review body external to UEA?

No

Does this new project relate to a project which already has ethics approval from UEA?

No

Research categories

Will the project include primary data collection involving human participants?

Yes

Will the project use secondary data involving human participants?

No

Will the project involve the use of live animals?

No

Will the project have the potential to affect the environment?

No

Will the project have the potential to affect culturally valuable, significant or sensitive objects or practices?

No

Will the project involve security sensitive research?

No

Will the project involve a generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) tool?

No

Human participants - selection and recruitment

How many Participant Groups are there who will receive tailored participant information?:

One

Name of Participant Group 1.

Black Educational Psychologists who have completed training courses in the UK and are currently practising in the UK

How will the participants be selected/recruited?

Participants will be recruited via purposive sampling based on the criteria that they have trained as an EP in the UK and are currently practising in the UK. Up to 10 (no less than 7) EPs will be recruited from across different geographical areas within the UK. This will be on a first-come, first-served basis until the maximum number of participants is reached, ensuring that there is a mixture of participant locality. The researcher will advertise the study by uploading the recruitment poster to social media, such as X(formerly known as Twitter) and LinkedIn via their private account(s) and advertise on publicly open Educational Psychology forums, such as EPNET.

If appropriate, upload a copy of the proposed advertisement, including proposed recruitment emails, flyers, posters or invitation letter.

How and when will participants receive this recruitment material?

Please see the Recruitment Advertisement attached to this form. Participants will receive this material once ethical approval has been granted. This material may be shared with participants

online e.g., via social media. If participants demonstrate an interest in the research and subsequently choose to opt in, they will receive this following ethical approval and the joint organisation of an appropriate time.

In terms of UEA participants only, will you be advertising the opportunity to take part in this project to?:

None of the above (i.e. UEA's Student Insight Review Group (SIRG) does not need to be informed)

What are the characteristics of the participants?

Up to 10 (no less than 7) of self-identifying as 'Black' Educational Psychologists of any sex, who have trained and currently practise within the UK will be recruited for this study.

Will the project require the cooperation of a gatekeeper for initial access to the individuals/groups to be recruited?

No

Is there any sense in which participants might be 'obliged' to participate?

Yes

If yes, provide details.

Black EPs may feel an implicit obligation to participate in this study due to several factors. Given the underrepresentation of Black voices in educational psychology research, they might feel a sense of duty to contribute, fearing that their experiences will remain overlooked if they do not take part. The shared racial identity between the researcher and participants may also create a sense of expectation, where declining involvement could be perceived as withholding support from a fellow Black trainee EP. Additionally, as the study focuses on race, culture, and ethnicity—issues that directly impact Black EPs, they may feel pressured to participate to ensure these topics are adequately addressed. Some may also worry that non-participation could limit the potential for change within the profession, particularly in relation to training and inclusivity. These factors could unintentionally influence their decision to take part

What will you do to ensure participation is voluntary?

Participants will be reminded that participation is voluntary and that they are under no obligation to participate. This is included within the Participant Information Sheet/Consent Form and will be expressed in any communication with the Researcher before and during the research process.

Participants will also be reassured that non-participation would not impact professional relationships. They will also be told that they have the right to withdraw until the point of data analysis.

Will the project involve vulnerable groups?

No

Will payment or any other incentive be made to any participant?

No

Include any other ethical considerations regarding participation.

Data will not be collected from participants who do not self-identify as Black, or for those who have not trained or are currently practising EPs in the UK. This will be established in the Participant Interest Form (linked on the recruitment poster), to minimise time wasted and data collection errors. The researcher acknowledges that discussion surrounding race, culture and ethnicity could be distressing for some participants. For example, it may bring up some uncomfortable feelings around experiences they have previously had. The researcher will use the experience gained in their role as a Trainee Educational Psychologist and personal experiences as a Black woman monitor responses and support participants to feel emotionally contained in this situation. Additionally, the researcher's own and their supervisor's email addresses will also be provided if participants require further support after the interview. Support charities for wellbeing, such as Mind will also be signposted and

supportive networks such as Black People in Psychiatry and Psychology Network (BiPP) and Black and Ethnic Minority Educational Psychology (BEEP) too. Confidentiality and anonymity will be closely attended to and identifying information will be mitigated where possible throughout the project. Online interviews will be held over Microsoft Teams, and all recordings will be kept on a OneDrive system with Authenticator access, on a password-protected laptop. The impact of the researcher's dual role as a researcher and Trainee Educational Psychologist has been considered. To overcome pressures to participate, participants will be explicitly told that participation is optional and that non-participation will not affect professional or personal relationships

Human participants - consent options

By which method(s) will consent to participate in the research be obtained?:

Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form Online Participant Information and Consent

Human participants - information and consent Participant Information and Consent

Will opt out consent for participation in the research be used?

No

You can generate a Participant Information Text and Consent Form for this application by completing information in the Participant Information Text and Consent Form Generator Tab. Alternatively you can upload your Participant Information Text and Participant Consent Form which you have already prepared. Confirm below: Generate automated Participant Information Text and Consent Form.

When will participants receive the participant information and consent request?

Participants will receive the Participant Information Sheet and consent request via the Participant Recruitment Advert, which includes a link to a Microsoft Form. This form contains both the Participant

Information Sheet and the consent form. Those who wish to participate will complete the form, which will automatically notify the researcher of their response.

How will you record a participant's decision to take part in the research?

Participants will provide informed consent to say that they are willing to participate in the research on an opt-in basis. This will be recorded via completion of the online Participant Information Sheet/Consent Form. The researcher will keep a record of the participants names and contact details who agreed to take part in the research project. This information will be stored on a password-protected computer within a file stored on a password-protected university OneDrive in line with GDPR guidelines.

Human participants - method

Which data collection methods will be used in the research?:

Interview

If your research involves any of the methods (including Other) listed above, upload supporting materials.

How have your characteristics, or those of the participants influenced the design of the study or how the research is experienced by participants?

As a Black Trainee Educational Psychologist (EP), my identity and lived experiences have influenced both the design of this study and how it may be experienced by participants. Given that the research explores how Black EPs make sense of their training and practice experiences through the lenses of race, culture, and ethnicity, my shared racial identity with participants may foster a sense of trust and openness. However, this also creates potential power dynamics, as participants may feel a sense of obligation to take part or to share experiences in a particular way. To mitigate this, I will ensure that participation is entirely voluntary, emphasising that there are no expectations regarding the nature or depth of disclosure.

My dual role as both a researcher and a Trainee EP also shapes the research process. While my professional training equips me with the skills to conduct research ethically and sensitively, I recognise that my position within the profession may influence how participants perceive the study. Some may feel comfortable discussing their experiences with someone who shares a similar professional journey, while others may feel cautious about speaking candidly. To address this, I will adopt a reflexive approach throughout the research, maintaining awareness of how my own perspectives might shape data collection and interpretation.

The study design incorporates strategies to promote participant autonomy, including clear informed consent processes, opportunities to ask questions, and assurances that anonymity and confidentiality will be prioritised. By acknowledging these dynamics, I aim to conduct the research in a way that is both ethical and sensitive to the experiences of Black EPs.

Will the project involve transcripts?

Yes

Select ONE option below:

Transcription software

If yes provide details.

Microsoft Teams transcription functions will be used initially. The researcher will then review transcripts manually.

Provide an explanation if you are not offering the participant the opportunity to review their transcripts.

Participants will be offered the opportunity to review their transcripts. This will be outlined on the Participant Information Sheet/Consent Form. Any amendments e.g., factual errors or mistakes must be returned to the researcher within 20 working days of the return of the transcript. Submissions after this point may not be amended. This will be explained to participants.

Will you be capturing photographs or video footage (digital assets) of individuals taken for university business?

No

Is this research using visual/vocal methods where respondents may be identified?

Yes

If yes, confirm what safeguards are in place for participants who are vulnerable or underage. Audio recordings will be recorded via the Microsoft Teams recording function during the interview. Due to the Teams function, video will also have to be recorded as you cannot record just audio.

Participants will need to provide consent for both video and audio recording. The recordings will be stored securely on OneDrive on a password-protected device and be deleted once they have been transcribed. This study will not be recruiting any vulnerable or underaged participants.

Will it be necessary for participants to take part in the study without their knowledge and consent at the time?

No

Will deception or incomplete disclosure be used?

No

Will the participants be debriefed after data collection?

Yes

If yes, how will they be debriefed and what information will be provided?

Participants will be verbally debriefed at the end of the interview. Additionally, Participants will be provided with a Debriefing Sheet that outlines the study in an easily understandable way and provides contact details for the researcher, their supervisor, and Research Ethics Subcommittee. This is in line with BERA 2018 guidelines. Please see the attachment below.

If yes, upload a copy of the debrief information.

Will substances be administered to the participants?

No

Will involvement in the project result in, or the risk of, discomfort, physical harm, psychological harm or intrusive procedures?

Yes

If yes, provide details.

The study does not intend to involve any intrusive procedures, physical harm, or significant psychological risk. However, to minimise any potential discomfort, participants will be provided with clear information about the study before consenting, including details of their right to withdraw at any time without consequence. The research will involve standard ethical safeguards, such as anonymisation of data and confidentiality measures, to protect participants' well-being. Additionally, participants will be signposted to appropriate support services if needed.

Will the project involve prolonged or repetitive testing?

No

Will the project involve potentially sensitive topics?

Yes

If yes, provide details.

The research will involve potentially sensitive topics, as it explores race, culture, and ethnicity in relation to the experiences of Black Educational Psychologists. Discussions may touch on issues such as discrimination, barriers to inclusion, and systemic inequalities within the profession. While participants will have control over

what they choose to disclose, there is a possibility that reflecting on these experiences may evoke strong emotions. To mitigate this, participants will be provided with clear information about the nature of the study, reassured that participation is voluntary, and given access to support resources if needed.

Will the project involve elite interviews?

No

Will the project involve any incitement to, encouragement of, or participation, in an illegal act (by participant or researcher)?

No

Will the research involve an investigation of people engaged in or supporting activities that compromise computer security or other activities that may normally be considered harmful or unlawful?

No

Does the research involve members of the public in participatory research where they are actively involved in undertaking research tasks?

No

Does the research offer advice or guidance to people?

No

Is the research intended to benefit the participants, third parties or the local community?

Yes

Provide an explanation.

The research is not explicitly designed to benefit participants, third parties, or the local community. However, the proposed research aims to support ongoing efforts in UK EP practice to address racial equity within the profession, including its practices and application of psychology (DECP, 2024). The findings hope to amplify the experiences of Black EPs, potentially identifying key themes that highlight areas for change. Additionally, the study seeks to encourage training programmes and EP services to critically evaluate and reform their approaches to better support a diverse curriculum, workforce, and practice. By understanding the lived experiences of Black EPs, this research responds to the identified gap in understanding how race, culture, and ethnicity can influence training and practice within Educational Psychology by centring minoritised voices and fostering intersectional dialogue in the profession. Furthermore, the outcomes aim to contribute to dismantling the barriers faced by Black EPs, echoing the research's goal to challenge and transform institutional practices that perpetuate inequities. This study aspires to promote meaningful conversation and thought that challenges systemic inequities and contributes to the profession's commitment to social justice and racial equality. Furthermore, participants may find value in the opportunity to reflect on their experiences.

What procedures are in place for monitoring the research with respect to ethical compliance? This research will be monitored for ethical compliance by being overseen by a UEA Research Supervisor. The Researcher and their Research Supervisor will meet regularly to discuss ethical compliance in adherence to the

procedures outlined in this application following ethical approval. Ethical compliance will also be maintained throughout the project through the use of key research practices, including ensuring data remains anonymous, obtaining informed consent, and upholding participants' right to withdraw at any stage without consequence. These measures will help monitor and uphold ethical standards during the study. Participants are also provided with contact details for the Researcher, Research Supervisor, and EDU Head of School to report any ethical concerns. These will be addressed immediately in liaison with the Research Supervisor and EDU ethics board. The Researcher is responsible for reporting any ethical breaches to their Research Supervisor, Course Directors, and the Education Ethics Committee. The research will be continuously monitored against UEA ethical guidance, the BPS Code of Human Research Ethics (2021), and the BERA Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (2018).

Does the study involve the use of a clinical or non-clinical scale, questionnaire or inventory which has specific copyright permissions, reproduction or distribution restrictions or training requirements?

No

Include any other ethical considerations regarding data collection methods. The data collected will be handled and stored in line with the Data Protection Act (2018) and GDPR guidance. For example, data will be stored on a password-protected computer within a password protected file on a university OneDrive. All attempts will be made to promote participants' anonymity throughout data collection methods. For example, participants will be given pseudo names and while location of study and practice will be collected, this information will not be reported in the study

Health and safety - participants

Is there a possibility that the health and safety of any of the participants in this project including a support person (e.g. a care giver, school teaching assistant) may be in question? Yes

If yes, describe the nature of any health and safety concerns to the participants and the steps you will take to minimise these.

****Emotive Topic and Online Interviews**** – Participants may become upset during interviews due to discussing potentially emotionally triggering experiences. The online format may limit the usual comfort and support provided in face-to-face settings, such as offering tissues or using non-verbal empathetic cues if cameras are off. To mitigate this, participants will be encouraged to take breaks if needed, turn their cameras on for additional support, and will be signposted to relevant mental health support services.

****Safeguarding**** – Participants may disclose safeguarding concerns when discussing their training and practice. To manage this, the researcher will advise participants to follow their organisation's safeguarding procedures and will refer them to appropriate support services if needed.

****Disclosure About Practice**** – Participants may disclose concerns about their own or a colleague's practice during the interview. To minimise this, participants will be encouraged to focus on their own experiences and avoid naming others. Any

significant concerns will be referred to the Research Supervisor and the School Senior Leadership Team if deemed necessary.

What procedures have been established for the care and protection of participants?

Participants will be provided with the Researcher's contact details if they have any concerns during or after the interview (within one-month post-interview). The researcher will offer advice if appropriate and will signpost participants to support organisations e.g., Mind for further wellbeing support. Participants will be asked if they have any difficulties that may present as a risk to them before participating in the interview. For example, if they have back problems. Reasonable adjustments will be made where possible e.g., regular breaks within the interview, Advice

will be sought from the participant about their needs.

Participants will be fully informed of any potential risks e.g., discussing sensitive topics before they consent to participate. This will protect participants from agreeing to participate in something that they are not comfortable with.

Participants will also be given the option to withdraw consent and terminate the interview at any time if they feel unsafe or uncomfortable.

This research will adhere to the UEA Research Ethics policy and guidance notes, the BPS Code of Human Research Ethics (2021) and the BERA Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (2018) to protect participants.

Describe your safeguarding protocol. What procedures are in place for the appropriate referral of a participant who discloses an emotional, psychological, health, education or other issue during the course of the research or is identified by the researcher to have such a need?

Safeguarding procedures would be clearly explained within the introduction to the interview. For example, "any information you share that could lead to harm for yourself or others will need to be shared with appropriate authorities".

If participants were to disclose an emotional, psychological, health or educational issue during the research, the Researcher would follow UEA safeguarding policy/procedures and would follow the safeguarding protocols of the setting where the interview was taking place. For example, the researcher would note down key details, write the date and time, and would sign the concern record

or use the school's online reporting system. This is in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023 safeguarding legislation.

The researcher will signpost to relevant supporting organisations where necessary.

If the researcher was concerned about the safety of the adult participants, this would initially be discussed with the Research supervisor for further guidance. UEA safeguarding protocols would be followed and a referral to a supporting organisation may need to be made.

If illegal or severe concerns were reported, then the researcher would also contact the Chair or the University Research Ethics Committee.

What is the possible harm to the wider community from their participation or from the project as a whole?

Although unlikely, participants could be harmed by disclosing negative experiences or examples of

poor practice, e.g., incorrect use of experiences of racism and discrimination. This could impact the dynamics of the working environment. However, all individuals, training courses, and geographical locations will be kept anonymous.

Therefore, the researcher does

not anticipate that the research will cause significant harm to the sampled population or the wider community.

What precautions will you take to minimise any possible harm to the wider community? Participants will be fully informed of the risks of taking part in the study before their involvement via the Participant Information Sheet/Consent Form. Identifying data, such as participant names, training providers and geographical location will be kept anonymous where possible throughout the research process.

Health and safety - researcher(s)

Is there a possibility that the health and safety of any of the researcher(s) and that of any other people (as distinct from any participants) impacted by this project including research assistants/translators may be in question?

Yes

If yes, how have you addressed the health and safety concerns? Describe any safeguards included and relevant protocols.

Given the sensitive nature of the research, discussing topics related to race, culture, and ethnicity—particularly in relation to discrimination and systemic barriers—may have an emotional impact on the researcher. To mitigate this, the researcher is aware of and can access UEA student counselling services should wellbeing support be required.

Additionally, regular research supervision will provide an opportunity to reflect on any emotional or ethical challenges that arise.

As the study involves online interviews, the researcher will ensure safe working practices. This includes conducting interviews in a private and confidential space and using a blurred or filtered background on Microsoft Teams to prevent unintentional disclosure of their location. These precautions help maintain both personal safety and professionalism during the research process

Risk assessment

Are there hazards associated with undertaking this project where a formal risk assessment will be required?

No

Data management

Will the project involve any personal data (including pseudonymised data) not in the public domain?

Yes

If yes, will any of the personal data be?:

Anonymised Pseudonymised

If using anonymised and/or pseudonymised data, describe the measures that will be implemented to prevent de-anonymisation.

The researcher will anonymise all personal data that could make participants identifiable e.g., participant names and training courses.

The researcher may also amend specific details provided by participants to prevent de-anonymisation whilst retaining the integrity of the research. For example, they would not include specific location.

The researcher will adhere to the ICO Anonymisation Code of Practice (2021) and will review the UK Anonymisation Network resources for further measures to prevent de-anonymisation.

If not using anonymised or pseudonymised data, how will you maintain participant confidentiality and comply with data protection requirements?

Will any personal data be processed by another organisation(s)?

No

Will the project involve access to records of sensitive/confidential information?

No

Will the project involve access to confidential business data?

No

Will the project involve secure data that requires permission from the appropriate authorities before use?

No

Will you be using publicly available data from the internet for your study?

No

Will the research data in this study be deposited in a repository to allow it to be made available for scholarly and educational purposes?

No

Provide details.

A repository is not available for Postgraduate Research Students. Therefore, there is no place to store the raw data for other people to use.

Who will have access to the data during and after the project?

The researcher will have sole access to the raw data during and after the project. However, anonymised data will be shared with the Research Supervisor and examiners if requested.

Where/how do you intend to store the data during and after the project?

Data will be stored in line with the Data Protection Act (2018) and UEA Research Data Management Procedures and Guidance, Guidance on Good Practice in Research, and Research Ethics Policy.

Digital data will be stored on OneDrive on the researcher's password-protected computer. Data will be backed up using a password-protected file on the researcher's secure Microsoft One Drive associated with their university account. Only the researcher will have access to raw (non-anonymised) data and data will be held and

destroyed in accordance with UEA procedures. Once the project is complete data would be stored in line with the UEA Information Classification and Data Management policy.

How will you ensure the secure storage of the data during and after the project?

Data will be stored on the researcher's password protected computer within a password-protected

file. This data will not be shared with anyone other than the Research Supervisor and for the purpose of marking/examining the research.

How long will research data be stored after the study has ended?

from date of last use

How long will research data be accessible after the study has ended?

from date of last use

How are you intending to destroy the project data when it is no longer required?

Data will be deleted from the device that it is stored on and further deleted from the recycling bin should it be found there.

C. Information Sheet and Consent Form

Participant Information Sheet

Thank you for taking an interest in participating in this thesis research study.

The study aims to explore how self-identifying Black Educational Psychologists (EP) make sense of their training and practice experiences through the lenses of race, culture, and ethnicity

You will be asked to complete an online interview with the researcher, Y'etsha, to discuss your views and experiences on how your identity has shaped your training and practice as a Black EP.

If you wish to participate, please read the attached Participant Information Sheet and complete the consent form and the researcher be in contact to agree on an interview date.

Thank you for your time.

* Required

Participant Information Sheet

Through their Lens: How Black EPs make sense of their training and practice experiences through the lenses of race, culture and ethnicity

What is this study about?

You are invited to take part in a research study exploring how Black Educational Psychologists (EPs) make sense of their training and practice experiences through the lens of race, culture and ethnicity. This research aims to amplify the voices of an overlooked population within the research (Robinson et al., 2011) and to extend our knowledge of how race, culture and ethnicity are being outworked in the lives of some Black EPs. It hopes to provoke thought, promote dialogue and encourage training courses and EPS to critically examine the privileged discourses they operate within and the institutional practices they engage in.

Within an interview, you will be asked to describe your training and practice experiences as a Black person. You will also be asked about if and how you believe your racial, cultural and ethnic identity has shaped those experiences.

You have been invited to participate in this study because you have identified yourself as a Black EP who trained and is currently practising within the UK. This Participant Information Sheet tells you about the research study. Knowing what is involved will help you decide if you want to take part in the study. Please read this sheet carefully and ask questions about anything that you don't understand or want to know more about. This Participant Information Sheet tells you about the research study. Knowing what is involved will help you decide if you want to take part in the study. Please read this sheet carefully and ask questions about anything that you don't understand or want to know more about.

Participation in this research study is voluntary. By giving consent to take part in this study you are telling us that you:

Understand what you have read.

Agree to take part in the research study as outlined below. Agree to the use of your personal information as described.

You have received a copy of this Participant Information Sheet to keep.

*

Continue ☐

Who is running the study?

This research is being conducted by Miss Y'etsha Bennett-Grant (Y.Bennett-Grant@uea.ac.uk) Postgraduate Researcher in the School of Education and Lifelong Learning at UEA. This study forms part of her thesis research project. This will take place under the supervision of Mr Ryan Cullen, Assistant Programme Director on the EdPsyD within the School of Education and Lifelong Learning (Ryan.Cullen@uea.ac.uk). *

Continue ☐

What will the study involve for me?

Participants will be invited to complete an online interview (Microsoft Teams) lasting no longer than 1hr at a time agreed with them.

You will be asked to volunteer (opt-in) and consent to participate in this study by signing and returning this consent form to the researcher via email (Y.Bennett-Grant@uea.ac.uk). You will then be invited to attend an interview with me, Y'etsha, online over Microsoft Teams. Interview arrangements will be agreed upon together at a time that is convenient for you.

The interview will take no longer than 1hr and a copy of the interview questions will be emailed to you beforehand. This will allow you to prepare your answers if you wish. Within the interview, you will be asked questions about how your race, culture and ethnicity have impacted your training and practice experiences as Black EP.

I will record our interview on an audio recording device to support with my data analysis. All names and identifying information will be anonymised or pseudonymised as far as possible to protect your confidentiality.

Once I have transcribed your interview, you will have the opportunity to review your transcript prior to publication. You will have 20 working days from the receipt of your transcript to request any amendments, such as factual inaccuracies by contacting the researcher via email (Y.Bennett-Grant@uea.ac.uk). You have the right to withdraw your data from this study (fully or sections from your transcript) at any point up until the point of formal data analysis. After this point, anonymised data will be analysed and reported within the research findings.

An audio/video recording will be taken.

You will have the opportunity to review information generated about you prior to publication. *

Continue ☐

How much of my time will the study take?

Interviews are scheduled to take no longer than 1hr. Reviewing your transcript is likely to add extra time (approximately 30 minutes). *

Continue ☐

Do I have to be in the study? Can I withdraw from the study once I have started? Being in this study is completely voluntary and you do not have to take part. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the University of East Anglia now or in the future. If you decide to take part in the study, you can withdraw your consent up to the point that your data is fully anonymised. You can do this by emailing the researcher at Y.Bennett-Grant@uea.ac.uk. *

Continue ☐

What are the consequences if I withdraw from the study

You are free to stop the interview at any time. Unless you say that you want us to keep them, any recordings will be erased and the information you have provided will not be included in the study results. You may also refuse to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer during the interview. If you decide at a later time to withdraw from the study your information will be removed from our records and will not be included in any results, up to the point we have analysed and published the results. *

Continue ☐

Are there any risks or costs associated with being in the study? I hope that you do not feel adversely impacted by participating in this study. However, discussing experiences around race, culture and ethnicity could be considered a sensitive topic. If you feel that discussing these topics has caused you distress in any way, please seek the support of professional organisations, such as:
Mind

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/racism-and-mental-health/useful-contacts/>

Black in Psychiatry and Psychology (BiPP) <https://www.bippnetwork.org.uk/>
Black and Ethnic Minority Educational Psychology <https://edpsy.org.uk/interest-groups/black-and-ethnic-minority-educational-psychology-beep-network/#:~:text=BEEP%20is%20a%20network%20for,issues%20and%20educational%20psychology.%20practice.>

*

Continue ☐

Are there any benefits associated with being in the study?

There are no direct benefits to taking part in this study. However, some participants may find value in having a dedicated space to reflect on their training and practice experiences in relation to race, culture, and ethnicity. This reflection could contribute to personal and professional development. Additionally, the research aims to contribute to broader discussions within the profession, which may help inform future training and practice *

Continue ☐

What will happen to information provided by me and data collected during the study? Your personal data and information will only be used as outlined in this Participant Information Sheet, unless you consent otherwise. Data management will follow the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA 2018) and UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR), and the University of East Anglia's Research Data Management Policy.

The information you provide will be stored securely and your identity will be kept strictly confidential, except as required by law. Study findings may be published and may also

be used for other scholarly and educational purposes such as in teaching, but you will not be identified if you decide to participate in this study. The data will be kept for at least 10 years beyond the last date the data were used. *

Continue ☐

What if I would like further information about the study?

When you have read this information, Miss Y'etsha Bennett-Grant (Y.Bennett-Grant@uea.ac.uk) will be available to discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. *

Continue ☐

Will I be told the results of the study?

You have a right to receive feedback about the overall results of this study. You can tell us that you wish to receive feedback by ticking the relevant box on the Consent Form. This feedback will be in the form of a one-page summary. This feedback will be and will be available following thesis submission, marking, and approval in August 2026. *

Continue ☐

What if I have a complaint or any concerns about the study?

If there is a problem please let me know. You can contact me via the University of East Anglia at the following address: *

Continue ☐

Researcher:

Miss Y'etsha Bennett-Grant

School of Education and Lifelong Learning University of East Anglia

NORWICH NR4 7TJ

Y.Bennett-Grant@uea.ac.uk

Research Supervisor:

Mr Ryan Cullen

School of Education and Lifelong Learning University of East Anglia

Norwich NR4 7TJ

Ryan.Cullen@uea.ac.uk

If you are concerned about the way this study is being conducted or you wish to make a complaint to someone independent from the study, please contact the Head of School of Education and Lifelong Learning:

Head of School of Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yann Lebeau

School of Education and Lifelong Learning University of East Anglia

Norwich NR4 7TJ

Y.Lebeau@uea.ac.uk *

Continue ☐

How do I know that this study has been approved to take place?

To protect your safety, rights, wellbeing and dignity, all research in the University of East Anglia is reviewed by a Research Ethics Body. This research was approved by the EDU S-REC (School of Education and Lifelong Learning Research Ethics Subcommittee). *

Continue ☐

What is the general data protection information I need to be informed about? According to data protection legislation, we are required to inform you that the legal basis for processing your data as listed in Article 6(1) of the UK GDPR is because this allows us to process personal data when it is necessary to perform our public tasks as a university. In addition to the specific information provided above about why your personal data is required and how it will be used, there is also some general information which needs to be provided for you:

The data controller is the University of East Anglia.

For further information, you can contact the University's Data Protection Officer at dataprotection@uea.ac.uk

You can also find out more about your data protection rights at the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

If you are unhappy with how your personal data has been used, please contact the University's Data Protection Officer at dataprotection@uea.ac.uk in the first instance.

*

Continue ☐

OK, I want to take part – what do I do next?

You need to fill in one copy of the consent form and if you are happy to take part, please can you complete and return the attached consent form to Y'etsha via email at Y.Bennett-Grant@uea.ac.uk. Please keep the letter, information sheet and the second copy of the consent form for your information. *

Continue ☐

Further information

This information was last updated on 3 April 2025.

If there are changes to the information provided, you will be notified by an email from the researcher Y.Bennett-Grant@uea.ac.uk

This information sheet is for you to keep *

Continue ☐

Consent Form

In giving my consent, I state that:

I understand the purpose of the study, what I will be asked to do, and any risks/benefits involved.

I have read the Participant Information Sheet, which I may keep, for my records, and have been able to discuss my involvement in the study with the researchers if I wished to do so.

The researchers have answered any questions that I had about the study and I am happy with the answers.

I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary and I do not have to take part. My decision whether to be in the study will not affect my relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the University of East Anglia now or in the future.

I understand that I may stop the interview at any time if I do not wish to continue, and that unless I indicate otherwise any recordings will then be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study results. I also understand that I may refuse to answer any questions I don't wish to answer.

I understand that the results of this study will be used in the way described in the information sheet.

I understand that personal information about me that is collected over the course of this project will be stored securely and will only be used for purposes that I have agreed to. I understand that information about me will only be told to others with my permission, except as required by law.

*

Continue ☐

I consent to audio-recording *

☐ Yes ☐ No

I consent to videorecording *

☐ Yes ☐ No

I consent to my transcript being reviewed *

☐ Yes ☐ No

Would you like to receive feedback about the overall results of this study? *

☐ Yes ☐ No

If you answered YES, please indicate your preferred form of feedback and address: *

☐ Postal ☐ Email

Preferred Address/Email *

Print Name *

Further Details

What is the name of the University you trained at? *

What area of the country are you currently practising in? *

Please provide an email address that you are happy to be contacted through and for information about this study to be shared to *

This content is neither created nor endorsed by Microsoft. The data you submit will be sent to the form owner.

Microsoft Forms



D. Interview Schedule

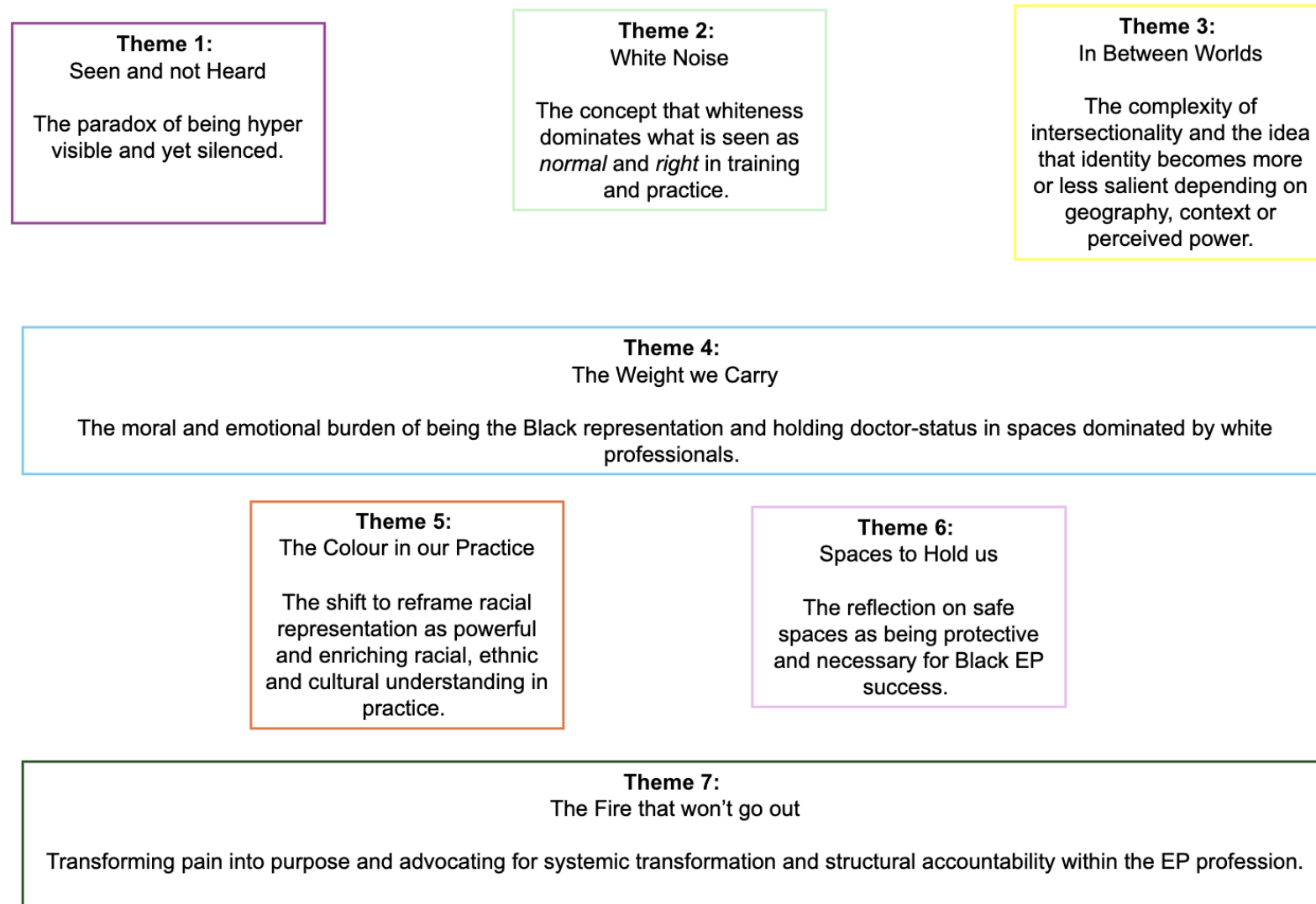
Semi-Structured Interview Schedule

1. What was it about this study “How do Black EPs make sense of them training and practice experiences through the lenses of race, culture, and ethnicity?” that interested you to participate?
2. In Educational Psychology, we often talk about matters related to ‘race, culture and ethnicity’. What do these terms mean to you?
3. How would you describe your own ‘race, culture and ethnicity’? How did you come to hold this view?
What does the term ‘Black’ mean to you?
How does this relate to the other ways you described your view of race, culture and ethnicity?
4. How have these things become important during Educational Psychology training?
How has it impacted on you?
How has it influenced your experience of training and practice (learning, peer relationships etc.)?
- Have there been times when your identities felt less/more important or relevant? Why?
5. How has the process of becoming an EP influenced
- Your sense of your own ‘race, culture and/or ethnicity’?
- Of identifying yourself as ‘Black’/or x?
6. How has your sense of your identities during EP training and practice influenced:
Your preferred approaches?
Your practice? Can you give me an example?
7. Can you describe a moment during your training where race, culture, or ethnicity significantly shaped your experience? How did you navigate it, and what impact did it have on your journey?
8. How has your racial, cultural, or ethnic identity influenced how you are perceived and how you practice as an Educational Psychologist? Can you share an example?
9. How has your experience of training prepared you (or not) for addressing race, culture, and ethnicity in your practice? Were there gaps or strengths in your training that stand out?
10. Do you feel the profession of Educational Psychology in the UK adequately addresses issues of race, culture, and ethnicity? What changes would you like to see?

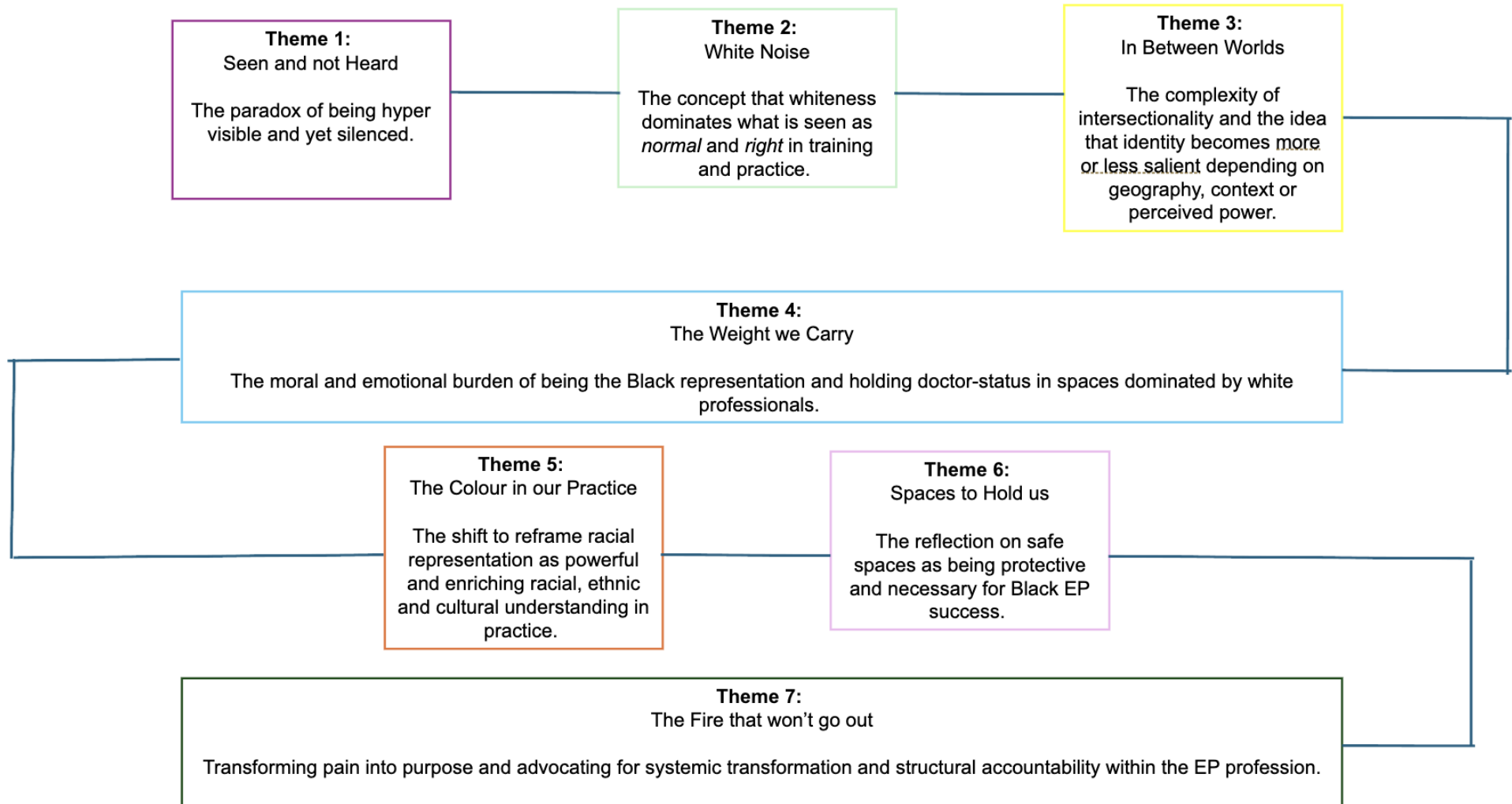
11. Is there anything we haven't touched upon in relation to race, culture and ethnicity and Educational Psychology training that you would like to talk about?

12. What has the experience of being interviewed for this research been like for you?

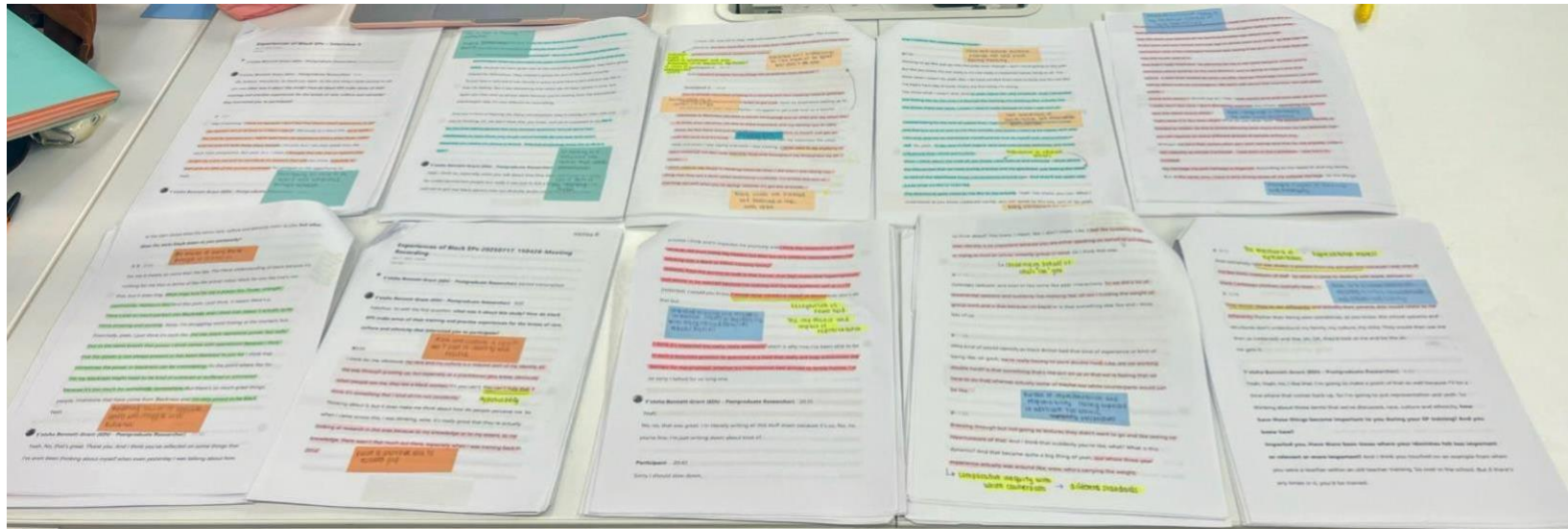
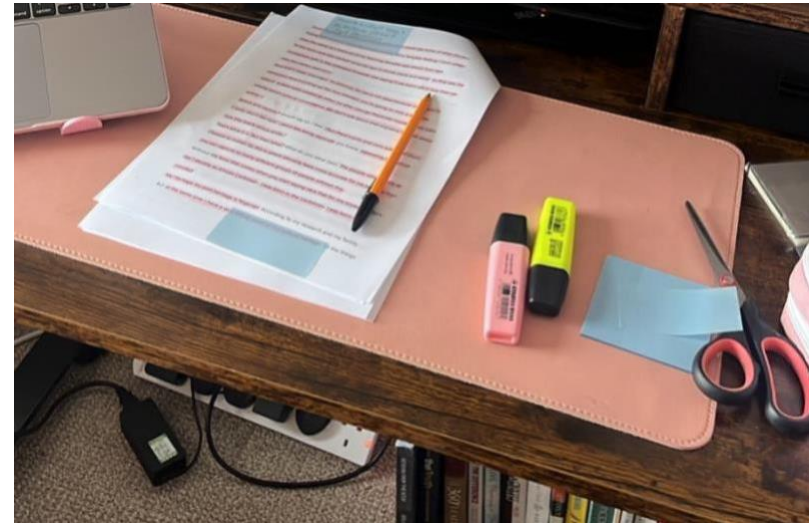
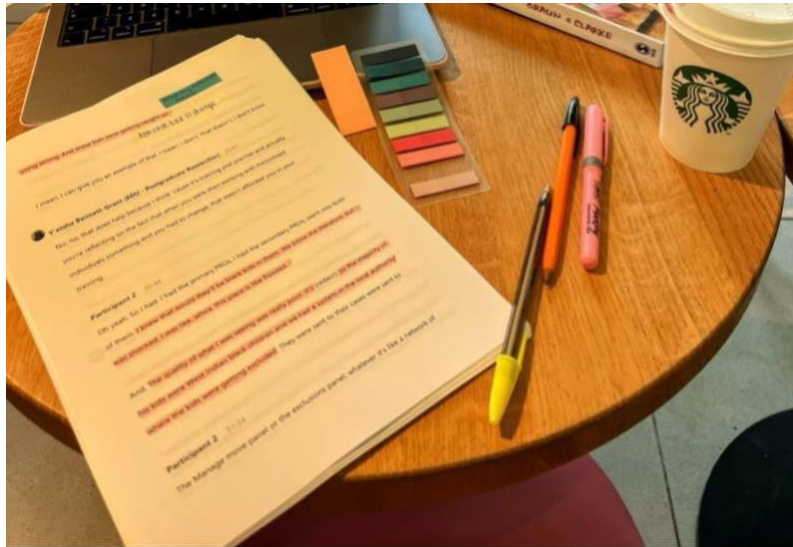
E. Final Thematic Map



F. Linear Thematic Map



G. Familiarisation with the Data



H. Coding examples

Personal discomfort rooted in the historical context of race terminology

It's wishy washy, it doesn't mean anything and I could see some of what she was saying but I have a, I don't know it's a feeling, it's a tangible feeling I have when I hear the word race because of my learning decades ago about how race.

At the term race was started centuries ago to divide black and white. So that was my connection with it. My colleague however was saying if we don't call it race then we miss the racism part of it.

And that's really important. So ethnicity for me is not ideal because unless you're conscious about picking up the race element, you're going to miss it and then culture. It feels even weaker so when we after George Floyd was murdered, we were talking about cultural competence. We don't talk about that anymore. We talk about active.

Active anti-racism, I should say so. I feel. I feel there's pros and cons with all of them.

I really don't like race. I don't like being separate, you know, separating the human race into black versus white.

Race language is necessary for anti-racist discourse

That's what it is. But then what? What do you what race? The people who identify as Chinese or Indian. So this is where ethnicity feels more accurate for me because then you can capture so many different groups of people without the.

Without the tone that comes when you start saying race that for me anyway, culture like I identify as African Caribbean. I was born in the Caribbean. I was born in Trinidad.

My Heritage my past heritage is Nigerian. According to my research and my family.

But at the same time I have a very strong sense of my cultural heritage. So the things

Multiple layers of identity and belonging

I hate pretentious, pretentious. Hate it so I think informally, I

poke sometimes, you know, you know, a few colloquialisms will split

Resistance to 'performative' professionalism
Maintaining authenticity

↑

yeah, I would want to talk about the things I'd talk about. And you interested, they're interested, you know what I mean? So you know that was it. But it wasn't reciprocated. It wasn't reciprocated. You know, come to, you know, I remember one particular time when we went to as a group because you're with these the same students for three to have a good and intentional relationship with them. And yeah, I going there and they went into a room where they were playing hip

Lack of social reciprocity and social exclusion

being paid by, you know, (redacted) I'm being paid by the local authority

I'm being I'm being paid by the local authority, so I have to hold a local authority position which is supposed to be neutral, but it's naturally not neutral and be an observer to injustices

Professional role limiting racial advocacy-conflict between neutrality & justice

Participant 2 24:08

So no, I didn't. I didn't talk about. I didn't talk about race. It's only now where I'm working, I will talk about race. The (redacted) well, where I'm not going to say the X is not. It's not necessarily better but where I work. We have a whole project on cultural humility and thinking about how, as it's a mainly white clinical team, again, all these places are, but there is more awareness, more conscious thinking.

hypervisibility vs silenced voice

More scope to actually be able to talk about one's position in relation to this issue.

The only time when I think I would think I'm skirting away from what your what your question was. But the only time when I felt comfortable acknowledging I was black, which is very strange concerning I'm walking around in this dark skin. Is the is the George Floyd thing, where murder. Everybody was like, oh, we've got this Black Lives

Conditional comfort in black identity

at I needed to

Blackness isn't professional. Be like them or be quiet, but don't be you.

because.

back and went, oh, I wonder what's going on, (redacted) And she's the only one who checked in. And I thought so. That was a bit disappointing. And I think that's when.

invisibility vs hypervisibility

you see me, but you don't see me

I. Generating Initial Themes



References

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