

**How are Educational Psychologists' Professional Identities Shaped by the Available Discourses?**

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### **Abstract**

This research explores how educational psychologists' (EPs) professional identities are communicated and constructed through discourses. As such, discourses at both a macro and micro level, including texts and talk are of interest. Discourse analysis drawing on a critical framework was used in an attempt to illuminate tensions amongst discourses, which shape EPs' professional identities. The analysis grapples with how the wider discourses made available to EPs resist or affirm those at an individual level. Interviews were carried out to explore how EPs' professional identities are communicated through their talk about professional practice experiences. Furthermore, the research is interested in how professional values are reflected in the EPs' talk about complex casework. The analysis suggests multiple discursive constructions contribute to the shaping of EPs' professional identity and that these relate to the wider discourses. Five wider discourses were identified as a result of the analysis. These include, 'EP as relational worker', 'EP as research practitioner', 'EP as scientist practitioner', 'EP as LA officer' and 'EP as advocate for the child'. The research contributes to critical conversations in the field of educational psychology and emphasises the importance of exploring the relationship between professional identity and practice when considering future directions for the profession.

## Contents

Chapter	Title	
Prelude		1
1. Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research aims.....3</li> <li>• Research question.....3</li> <li>• Definitions.....3               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Identity</i>.....3</li> <li><i>Professional</i>.....3</li> <li><i>Discourses</i>.....4</li> <li><i>Values</i>.....4</li> </ul> </li> <li>• The research context and the researcher.....4</li> </ul>	1 3 3 3 3 4 4 4
2. Literature review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction.....6</li> <li>• The rationale for the research.....6</li> <li>• A critique of identity theories.....8               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Exploring EPs professional identity using Critical Discourse Analysis</i>.....8</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Professional Identity.....10</li> <li>• Do EPs have a unique professional identity?.....13</li> <li>• Organisational Identity.....15</li> <li>• Role.....18</li> <li>• Professional values.....19</li> <li>• The ambiguity of role and identity within educational psychology literature .....20</li> <li>• How the suggested area relates to practice/the current EPS.....21</li> <li>• Chapter summary.....22</li> <li>• A summary of the wider discourses that emerged through the literature review.....23</li> </ul>	6 6 8 8 10 13 15 18 19 20 21 22 23
3. Methodology Chapter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction.....24</li> <li>• Research question.....24</li> <li>• Theoretical framework to underpin and guide the research.....24</li> <li>• Rationale for methodology.....25</li> <li>• Frameworks for Critical Discourse analysis.....27</li> <li>• Critical Discourse Analysis: Theoretical perspectives.....28</li> <li>• How CDA has come to be understood and applied in the context of the current research.....29</li> <li>• Foucauldian theories of discourse analysis.....30</li> <li>• A Foucauldian approach to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA).....32</li> <li>• Pilot study.....34</li> <li>• Procedures.....35</li> <li>• Data collection.....36</li> <li>• Field notes.....37</li> <li>• Research diary.....37</li> <li>• Ethical considerations.....38</li> <li>• Interview analysis.....38</li> <li>• Analytical strengths and short comings.....41</li> </ul>	24 24 24 25 27 28 29 30 32 34 35 36 37 37 38 38 41

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Robustness.....43</li> <li>• An overview of steps taken when engaging with a Foucauldian approach to Critical Discourse Analysis.....44</li> <li>• Willig's six stages of Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA) which incorporates Parker's (1992) reference to historically located discourses.....45</li> <li>• Chapter summary.....46</li> </ul>
4. Analysis and interpretations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction.....47</li> <li>• Stage One.....48 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Overview of discursive constructions.....48</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• Overview of discursive constructions for Interview One.....48</li> <li>• Examples of implicit and explicit discursive constructions of the discursive object (EPs' professional identity) were identified in Interview One.....49</li> <li>• Summary of how the EPs' professional identity was constructed through their talk about a challenging piece of casework (Interview One).....51</li> <li>• Overview of discursive constructions for Interview Two.....52</li> <li>• Examples of implicit and explicit discursive constructions of the discursive object (EPs' professional identity) were identified in Interview Two.....53</li> <li>• Summary of how the EPs' professional identity was constructed through their talk about a challenging piece of casework (Interview Two).....55</li> <li>• Overview of discursive constructions for Interview Three.....56</li> <li>• Examples of implicit and explicit discursive constructions of the discursive object (EPs professional identity) were identified in Interview Three.....57</li> <li>• Summary of how the EPs' professional identity was constructed through their talk about a challenging piece of casework (Interview Three).....60</li> <li>• Making sense of how the discursive constructions located within all three interviews contribute to the shaping of EP' professional identities.....60</li> <li>• Stage Two.....62 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>How is the professional identity of EPs, as constructed in the talk about a challenging piece of case located within the wider discourses?.....62</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• The wider discourses identified as a result of the interviewees' talk about a challenging piece of casework.....62</li> <li>• Locating the wider discursive constructions within the wider Discourses.....63 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Wider discourses.....63</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• A diagram of how the unique discursive constructions relate to the wider discourses.....65</li> <li>• Stage three: Action Orientation.....66 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>What is gained from selecting a Particular discursive object to construct</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li style="text-align: right;"><i>the discourse?</i>.....66</li> <li>• Stage four: Subject Positions.....69 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>How do EPs position themselves and how are they positioned in the wider discourses where the construction of their professional identity is concerned?</i>.....69</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Stage five: Practice.....71 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>What are the possibilities for action contained within the discursive constructions indentified within the talk about a challenging piece of casework?</i>.....71</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Stage six: Subjectivity.....72 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>What can be felt, thought and experienced from within various subject positions that the EP talk indicates constructs professional identity?</i>.....72</li> </ul> </li> <li>• How are professional values reflected in the EPs' talk about a challenging piece of casework?.....75</li> <li>• The process involved with how EPs' talk about a challenging piece of casework interacts with their values to construct their professional identity.....77</li> <li>• Chapter summary.....78</li> </ul>
5. Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction.....79</li> <li>• Key findings from the research.....79</li> <li>• How does the literature relate to the analysis and interpretations?.....80</li> <li>• The five wider discourses and how they relate to the construction of EPs professional identity.....82</li> <li>• EP as relational worker.....82</li> <li>• EP as LA officer.....83</li> <li>• EP as scientist practitioner.....85</li> <li>• EP as research practitioner.....86</li> <li>• EP as advocate for the child.....89</li> <li>• The historical location of wider discourses in documents and policy and how these relate to the shaping of EPs' professional identity.....89</li> <li>• The relationship between discourses and power.....92</li> <li>• Approaches to assessment and the implications for identity construction.....92</li> <li>• Professional and organisational values revisited.....93 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>How are EPs' professional values reflected at and individual, group and organisational level?</i>.....94</li> </ul> </li> <li>• A diagram depicting the discursive constructions, social actors and wider discourses identified as shaping EPs' professional identity.....95</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EPS values created by EPs as part of service days and a Working group.....96</li> <li>• An interpretation of how professional values are reflected at an individual, local and national level.....96</li> <li>• The ambiguity of role and identity within educational psychology revisited.....97</li> <li style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>The reconstruction and construction of educational psychology.....97</i></li> <li>• The professional landscape in times of change.....98</li> <li>• Professional identity within emerging traded services.....99</li> <li>• Chapter summary.....99</li> </ul>
6. Conclusion and implications for practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction.....100</li> <li>• Conclusions.....100</li> <li>• Implications and applied suggestions for practice.....101</li> <li style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>Societal level.....101</i></li> <li style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>Service level.....101</i></li> <li style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>Individual level.....102</i></li> <li>• Strengths and limitations of the research.....103</li> <li>• Reflections on the discursive constructions and my own emerging professional identity.....104</li> <li style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>Reflecting on the relevance of applying a Foucauldian approach to critical discourse analysis to my practice.....105</i></li> <li>• Future research directions.....106</li> </ul>
References	.....108

**P.T.O For a list of figures, tables and appendices**

## List of Figures

Figure	Title	Page
Figure. 1.1	An overview of steps taken when engaging with a Foucauldian approach to Critical Discourse analysis	44
Figure 1.2	Willig's six stages of Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA)	45
Figure 1.3	Overview of discursive constructions for Interview One	48
Figure 1.4	Overview of discursive constructions for Interview Two	52
Figure 1.5	Overview of discursive constructions for Interview Three	56
Figure 1.6	A diagram of how the unique discursive constructions relate to the wider discourses	65
Figure 1.7	The process involved with how EPs talk about a piece of challenging case work interacts with their values to construct	77

	their professional identity	
Figure 1.8	A diagram depicting the discursive constructions, social actors and wider discourses identified as shaping EPs' professional identity	95
Figure 1.9	EPT Values created by EPs as part of service days and a working group (2014).	96
Figure 1.10	An interpretation of how professional values are reflected at an individual, local and national level	96

## Appendices

Appendix	Title	Page
1.1	Ethical approval letter	116
1.2	Information sheet for educational psychologists	117
1.3	Consent form for educational psychologists	119
1.4	The annotated transcript from Interview One	120
1.5	The annotated transcript from Interview Two	142
1.6	The annotated transcript from Interview Three	153



## **Prelude**

Through this process, I have given considerable thought to how I communicate my beliefs, values and aspirations for practice. It is fascinating to think about the various constructions that contribute to my professional identity and the interactions involved in shaping it.

Whilst reflecting on the work I have carried out over time on placements, instances flooded back to me. The shaping of my own professional identity should also be credited to those whom I have interacted with and shared experiences. This includes fellow students, colleagues, tutors, professionals, children and families, who have allowed me to explore the possibilities of professional practice. This involved tackling directions which may have been challenging, but subsequently provided me with a greater sense of understanding.

Furthermore, working in a range of EP services (EPSs) as part of my training has encouraged me to peruse theories around professional identity and how values become intertwined with decision making in practice. Working with and amongst educational psychologists (EPs) from different backgrounds has contributed to the textured landscape of experiences I have gained as a trainee EP (TEP). The profession is by no means homogeneous which opens up and invites opportunities to be creative when applying psychology. I have particularly enjoyed thinking about how the Arts can be used to support children. More recently, I have been learning about Narrative Therapy (White & Epston, 1990) and consider this approach to have significant potential for effecting change. On reflection, my practice has become informed by consultative techniques, which enlists psychology that relates very closely to theories of social construction and discourse analysis. Consultation provides space for meaning making and the co-construction of ideas by drawing on the expertise of others, a position that I think is highly valuable (Wagner, 2000).

My experiences whilst training have intrigued and inspired me to further explore the subject of professional identity and the discourses that contribute to possible constructions of the EP. The diversity and complexity encompassing educational psychology is alluring and it has been motivating when attempting to gain a sense of the origins, structures and constructive components of the profession. The research has created a space for personal reflection and further validated the importance of looking at a profession from within as well as through the lens of wider discourses, which propel or inhibit the profession in its journey.

The rationale for including this reflective section is to acknowledge how my personal roots and professional interests have lit the way for what is hoped to be a passionate and in depth exploration

of how EPs' professional identities are constructed by the available discourses. There is a clear connection between the research and myself as I am actively part of the profession. It is also particularly timely considering I am currently a TEP finding my way and reflecting on the paths that currently appear available, as well as those that are more hidden.

I am also intrigued by historical accounts and changing contexts. The current research has allowed for an investigation of the past as well as suggestions for future practice. I believe that without a greater understanding of what has gone before, we cannot expect to understand the intricate constructions and their presented meanings, which have contributed to the evolution of ideas in the post-modern world. As Gergen (1991) said;

'If we can comprehend the origins and changes in our Western beliefs (about the person), they reason, we can soften the grip of what is currently taken for granted (...) Historical awareness might release us from the prisons of our current convention of understanding' (p. 11).

## Chapter One: Introduction

### **Research aims**

The aim of this research was to explore how educational psychologists' (EPs) professional identities are communicated through their talk of professional practice experiences, in particular their experiences of a piece of challenging case work. The current investigation is also interested in how EPs' professional values are reflected in the talk relating to the piece of casework.

Firstly, the research question will be introduced, followed by definitions of key terms relating to the area of study. Next, the research context and researcher will be presented, before finally illustrating the structural overview of the thesis as a whole.

### **Research question**

How are EPs' professional identities shaped by the available discourses?

### **Definitions**

#### *Identity*

When exploring the definitions of 'identity' they appeared to vary depending on the epistemological position of the writer. The definition of identity according to the Oxford Dictionary (1990) is 'the quality or condition of being a specified person or thing' (p. 585). Jenkins (2008) argues;

'identity is never a final or settled matter (...) identifying oneself is a matter of meaning and always involves interaction, agreement and disagreement, convention and innovation, communication and negotiation' (p.4-5).

#### *Professional*

The term profession refers to an 'occupation that requires a high degree of skill and extensive specialised training for the purpose of performing a specialized societal role' (Reber & Reber, 2001, p.568). Subsequently, a professional is an individual who works within a particular profession, and for the purpose of this study, that is educational psychology.

## *Discourses*

Claiming that there is a 'true' definition of the term 'discourse' is misleading as it can be understood in multiple ways (Burr, 1995). Instead the properties and qualities of a discourse can be discussed. Burr (1995) states;

'A discourse refers to a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements (...) that in some way together produce a particular version of events' (p.48).

Discourses are made up of *discursive constructions* that interweave and interact to create meaning about an object. They are fluid and changeable and can shape how the world is perceived and understood. These concepts are situated within a Social Constructionist framework, which urges society to question what is presented as knowledge and 'truth'. This includes engaging in critical reflection, when considering historical, social, political and cultural happenings (Burr, 1995).

## *Values*

For the purpose of this research, value will be defined as 'the quality or property of a thing that makes it useful, desired or esteemed' (Reber & Reber, 2001). Values emerge from and are constructed through multiple factors. These may include, family experiences, organisational ethos, professional ethics, societal norms and expectations. The current research is particularly interested in where the psychologists themselves feature in their work, their awareness of this, their level of engagement in reflexivity and how this shapes their professional identity. The research proposes to explore these areas of interest by analysing EPs' talk. Harre and Secord (1972) argue that;

'in order to be able to treat people as if they were human beings it must be possible to accept their commentaries upon their actions as authentic' (p.103).

This evokes the idea that relationships are integral to making a difference. Being aware of our own values and making these explicit could strengthen practice as genuine relationships can be established.

## **The research context and the researcher**

As I work as a trainee educational psychologist (TEP) in the same educational psychology service (EPS) as the EPs that were recruited for the current research, it seems appropriate to highlight any connections, influences or implications that may have arisen as a result of undertaking the project.

By making these reflections explicit, I hope to invite the reader to gain an insight into the world in which I was researching, as well as demonstrating an understanding of the importance of recognising one's own positioning and bias, when tackling a piece of research of this nature.

I kept a research diary whereby I made notes of any happenings, conversations or documents that were presented whilst working there. One of the most poignant reflections relates to service mornings and team meetings in which a session was held and then revisited exploring values of EPs as professionals and of the EPS as a whole. The research topic has been selected at a time when the role of the EP is a regular discussion point as uncertainties associated with a new government's approach to funding EP training, and the development of the traded model are receiving attention from the profession (Gaskell & Leadbetter, 2009).

## **Chapter Two: Literature review**

### **Introduction**

The aim of this literature review was to select and critique literature and research in the field of identity. The headings used to structure the review were selected as they emerged as dominant reoccurring themes. These included role and identity and the differences between these concepts. Additionally, organisational and professional identity was examined in the context of the relevant studies.

### **The rationale for the research**

Identity is an extremely broad area and as such a variety of journals were used to inform the review. A selection criterion was used to identify articles relevant to the research topics. This involved using the search terms, 'identity, role, educational psychology, and construction'. In addition a snowball approach was taken and references cited in key papers were followed up.

The literature review uncovered numerous studies, which on closer inspection related to the 'role' of EPs in contrast to their 'identity', suggesting the terms are used interchangeably (Ashton & Roberts, 2006). It was felt that the term role did not reflect the complexities of EPs' professional identities. The definition of role as stated in the Oxford dictionary (1990) is 'an actor's part in a play, film, and a persons or things characteristic or expected function' (p. 1043.) It may be argued that the term role weakens the EP position as it implies acting a part and minimises the values and beliefs held by an individual which impact on their approach to practice. It also implies that anyone could step into a role. Currently, this is the issue being resisted by the profession as it continually strives to evidence its distinct contribution and unique qualities (Farrell, Woods, Lewis, Rooney, Squires, O'Conner, 2006).

In addition, studies exploring the professional identities of teachers, nurses and social workers were apparent (Beijaard, Verloop & Vermunt, 2000, Hage, 2003, Mueller, Valsecchi Smith Gabe & Elston, 2008). However, research specific to the identity constructions of EPs themselves appeared limited. This indicates the nature of the research currently available to and informing EPs, and signifies a greater emphasis is currently being placed on outcomes (role) as opposed to the processes (identity). This assertion refers to the idea that 'role' relates to an individual fulfilling a 'function'. Professional identity on the other hand, is informed by the organisation's own codes of ethics and

conduct within their practice' (Reber & Reber, 2001, p. 568) and requires the individual to have a high level of specialized training. This highlights a gap in the literature, proposing EPs' professional identity and how it is constructed would be a valuable area to investigate. By exposing and undertaking a critically reflexive position, new perspectives may be uncovered and contribute to a different understanding around the journey of becoming a psychologist, what this might involve and how this could impact on future practice. Subsequently, there is room for further research into the matter of how EPs shape and negotiate their identity and how wider discourses influence its construction. In respect to wider discourses Gee (2005) asserts, 'the Discourses we enact existed before each of us came on the scene and most of them will exist long after we have left the scene' (p.27).

Gee's (2005) assertion highlights the rationale for considering the historical location of wider discourses, when exploring the relationship between identity construction and the social context. This will be investigated in more detail in the discussion section.

Psychology has been identified as having had a crisis of identity evidenced by the ongoing battle over what constitutes a science and whether psychology is yet credible as a scientific competitor for medicine, biology or any other established scientific field (Richards, 2004). As such, this suggests professional identity is a pertinent area for continued research. The discipline of psychology appears to be good at reinventing itself in response to societal change and political demands (Farrell, 2010). These flexible attributes can be mapped specifically to educational psychology. As a profession it has moved away from using psychometric assessment and a within- child model towards more systemic approaches (Love, 2009). This development in assessment and practice could be viewed as a strength of the profession and reinvention highlights the capabilities the profession has for surviving change and battling adversity and criticism (Lunt & Majors, 2000).

Another reason to pursue the current research is that with the introduction of the Education, Health and Care plan (EHC plan, DfE, 2011) on the horizon, EPs may once again need to justify their position and evidence their 'unique contribution' (Farrell, Woods, Lewis, Rooney, Squires and O'Connor, 2006). This study proposes to investigate the wider discourses available to EPs. This will include looking at those, which they use to generate critically constructive conversations and contribute to thinking about the profession and the uniqueness of the EPs contribution.

## **A critique of identity theories**

Firstly, one of the most prolific authors of identity literature is Erikson, (Kroger, 2002). Erikson presented a seminal theory of identity that has contributed to the critique and development of how identity is perceived and understood across a lifetime, (1950, 1968, 1974 & 1980). Erikson's work makes a valuable contribution to the field of identity. Erikson (1968) purported identity was shaped by the following processes: ego identity, identity versus role confusion, identity – formation, identity crises and psychosocial moratorium. Although Erikson's work is dominant more recent research has challenged the view that identity involves a path specifying stages of growth (Schwartz, 2001). The suggestion of a unidirectional process appears inflexible and to discount certain factors. For example a person may regress to different stages within different social and cultural contexts. However, as Schwartz (2001) identified, Erikson's work was in its early stages and evidence was therefore limited. Berzonsky, (1999) joins the debate, arguing that the validity of the concept of identity as a construct is questionable. In addition the quality of Erikson's theories has been critiqued and the descriptive nature of his work has led to criticism (Berzonsky, 1999). Identity as a concept has and continues to receive significant attention (Schwartz, 2001).

Berger and Luckman (1966) suggest that identity is formulated within a social context and there are certain ingredients required for it to become known as part of one's reality. They state that 'identity is a phenomenon that emerges from the dialectic between individual and society' (p.184). Berger and Luckman (1966) also claim that identities can be categorised into 'types' and although they discuss the socially constructed nature of identity, they also imply core elements remain concrete. More recent research and literature on the topic take this idea further and assert that identity is not crystallised but is instead a constantly developing phenomenon (Love, 2009).

### *Exploring EPs professional identity using Critical Discourse Analysis*

A review of literature in the field of identity uncovered the role of discourse in shaping identity (Potter & Wetherell, 1987, Wells, 2007). It has been argued that a dialogic experience is fundamental to facilitating identity construction and as such research indicates identity is not concrete and impermeable. Instead it is fluid, being formed, reformed, challenged and reflected upon in relation to experience. The term dialogic refers to a co-construction through an interaction. This process involves the emergence of ideas illuminated through connections that occur when thoughts are exchanged. O'Connor and Michaels (2007) state 'dialogic discourse connotes social



relationships of equal status, intellectual openness, and possibilities for critique and creative thought' (p.277).

Perrotta, (2006) argues 'the person and the world are constructed in a dialogic, socially shared process' (p. 456). This concept is situated in social constructionist theory and lends itself to the sense making involved in group processes and the dialogical dance that occurs. Gergen (2009, p.2) asserts;

'You should also realize that the ideas generally called social constructionist do not belong to any one individual. There is no single book or school of philosophy that defines social construction. Rather, social constructionist ideas emerge from a process of dialogue, a dialogue that is ongoing and to which anyone, even you-as the reader can contribute.'

Individuals engaged in this experience become part of the meaning-making and may begin to internalise the constructed ideas, accepting them as their own and bringing them closer to their peers, and subsequently strengthening their collective identity. Others may resist this experience and take a critical stance, rejecting the meaning being made from the conversation. They are however, still integrally involved in creating a resistant dialogue, the outcome being that an alternative discourse in respect to identity is created and individuals may choose to identify with this construction instead.

Identity has so far been presented as a crucial macro-concept, which is integral to understanding individual behaviour and meaning making within personal and professional contexts. Burr (1995) asserts that 'identity therefore originates not from inside the person, but from the social realm, where people swim in the sea of language and other signs' (p. 53).

Next, Jenkins (2008) criticises the process of categorisation in the field of identity and argues that this is a simplistic linear approach to a living multidimensional concept. This assertion made by Jenkins (2008) supports the suitability of selecting a type of analysis such as Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), as this approach facilitates exploration of such a complex concept. In particular it takes into account the interplay between the individual and wider discourse when shaping identities.

In order to embark on a fundamental part of what is associated with CDA and in this instance a methodology which draws upon a Foucauldian approach, it is essential to identify how, when and where the discursive constructions of the object (EPs' professional identity) are located within the wider discourses. When establishing what constitutes a 'wider discourse' it was considered important to reference the sources depicting the discourses, thus contributing to the transparency of any connections interpreted. This process has been further evidenced in the discussion chapter

and through the variety of documents informing this section. Golafshani (2003) pertains that examining multiple sources aids the triangulation and unification of ideas.

It will be interesting to explore how the discourses of individual EPs contrast with those made available to them in the literature and professional documents. This point refers to the securing of professional autonomy, which was reported as being a key feature of professional longevity and gravitas. These components are said to contribute to a greater level of control over professional ethics, conduct, values and responsibilities (Lunt & Majors, 2000).

### **Professional Identity**

Sachs (2001) states professional identity is 'used to refer to a set of externally ascribed attributes that are used to differentiate one group from another' (p.153). Here, Sachs assigns this definition to the teaching profession and argues that in this instance 'professional identity thus is a set of values that are imposed upon the teaching profession by outsiders or members of the teaching fraternity' (p.153). This statement positions teachers as needing to follow the obligatory identity type and appears authoritarian in its presentation. Placing restrictions on professional identity could have negative implications for individuals, as part of the collective, wanting to facilitate change or create professional identities outside of the imposed criteria. Furthermore, this appears to evidence a power imbalance, which restricts professional autonomy and oversimplifies the model. Having said this there are benefits to having a collective set of values. It can lead to individuals feeling a sense of belonging within the organisation, which in turn may increase participation and commitment (Strauss, Griffin & Parker, 2012). To achieve this there needs to be a balance, and group members need to be consulted and ultimately feel they have the ability to influence practice. By dictating a group's professional identity, individual values and experiences can be subverted (Sachs, 2001).

When seeking to understand professional identity, Sachs (2001) states that investigation into teachers highlighted that some individuals present and occupy various professional selves. This relates to the idea that individuals may teach across different year groups and subjects. It also suggests that identity is assumed to mirror a role, a part acted out, which can be adopted and relinquished as quickly as stepping in and out of a classroom. Alternative literature around identity indicates that it is more closely linked to values and experiences, which are evolving and constructed depending on context and experience. This further emphasises the confusion surrounding the use of the terms 'role' and 'identity' and how literature appears to have at times, interpreted the words as

having the same meaning. At this stage, this argument again steers the research towards applying discourse analysis as it makes sense to use a methodology, which accounts for and looks in detail at the meaning making of language and more generally messages used to communicate concepts and ideas.

When learning and being taught how to practice as a psychologist, there appears to be an absence of consideration of how one becomes such a professional. Many have asserted that it is essential for students to practice alongside learning in order to become and internalise the sense of being and what this means. This involves reflective processes, which helps to ground experiences in theory and make sense of them (Schon, 1983, Lingard, Garwood, Schryer & Spafford, 2003).

Medical journals include papers on the importance of phronesis for medical students, and how technical ability does not equate neatly to the ability to problem-solve and communicate with people whilst in stressful, emotive situations (Lingard et al. 2003). This recognition could be cultivated further by EPs. Lingard et al. (2003) assign great importance to experiencing uncomfortable and uncertain situations. Being familiar with these feelings and having experienced firsthand the anxiety, which the unknown can provoke, were found to strengthen medical students practice and relationships with patients. Acquiring what has been identified as a 'professional rhetoric of uncertainty' (p.603) was deemed a critical component of professional identity, (Lingard et al. 2003).

Contextual factors impact on the difference between ways of practising. Bardon (1983) asserts that differences between professional aims, jargon, approaches, monitoring and evaluation are all factors, which contribute to difficulties in partnership working and a potentially merging field. Furthermore these factors can influence a professional identity in a multi-agency context (Gaskell & Leadbetter, 2009).

The literature relating to understanding the concept of identity is complex and multilayered. This landscape comprises of literature, personal experiences, group dynamics, government policy, social media, local authority and institutional documents (Burr, 1995, Corley, 2004, Kenny, 2010). The number of varying sources of information illustrates the complexity involved in investigating such a topic. These are just a few key examples of the elements at work during the process of identity construction. Diversity within the profession has been acknowledged as important in order to foster a culture of creativity. However greater understanding supported by a framework promoting critical reflection is crucial to negotiating and developing practice (Brahm, 2005).

Brahm (2005) signifies the importance of looking critically at the profession in order to facilitate effective changes and opportunities for working with children. A shift towards a clearer link between theoretical and practical application of psychology in education is argued for, particularly in the current context of uncertainty regarding service models and local authority policy (Woods & Farrell, 2006). The integration of theory with experience and then how practice informs knowledge is multifaceted. Unpacking this is subsequently problematic, but through addressing the processes new ideas for practice could come into fruition (Fox, 2003). The significance of taking creative, inventive approaches and risks is growing as service providers are under pressure to perform, and are in competition for clients. The introduction of the traded services model reflects this idea.

Brahm (2005) asks the question of 'whether one needs to be a professional psychologist to use psychological knowledge and understanding' (p.387). This question features frequently within educational psychology literature. Defending the profession and specialism appears high on the EP agenda (Brahm, 2005). In order to substantiate claims surrounding EPs 'unique contribution' it would seem useful to investigate professional identity, which in turn could contribute to a conversation about the intricacies of EP practice.

Furthermore, Brahm (2005) accuses educational psychology of being 'too psychocentric' (p.388). This positioning of EPs may not be a solely conscious, collective or active one. For instance, the recently introduced Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) guidelines for practising psychologists (HCPC, 2012) explicitly dictate what the role of an EP should be. Using wording such as 'for educational psychologists only' when describing the distinct responsibilities of this profession. The use of the term *only* appears extremely prescriptive and implies that there is *only* one specific way of doing things as an EP. This has implications for professionals' identities and invites research investigating whether a resistant discourse is in operation. Furthermore, moving to the regulation of Educational Psychologists by the HCPC (2012) (alongside the accreditation of EP training courses by the British Psychological Society, BPS) may influence changes in professional identity construction, as once again psychological practice, research and methodology are examined. However, this examination could be viewed as a strength as it requires EPs to once again consider their position and profession in a wider context. Thus, it would be more beneficial and proactive for educational psychology itself to develop further research in this area. This would then add to strengthening and informing theory and practice (Lunt & Majors, 2000).

Next Perrotta (2006) refers to cultural capital as a fundamental instrument in organisational working, competition and exchange experiences. Cultural capital and habitus are terminology used to describe and explain individual functioning within a group and how patterns and behaviours are submitted to the unconscious and played out through everyday practice, for example in discourse, behaviour and attitudes (Perrotta, 2006). This theory is founded in a psychodynamic paradigm and relates to object relations. However, instead of being created from childhood they emerge as a result of taking on a collective identity.

Identity is entangled with numerous external values, morals and practices. For instance communities, organisations, the media and local government are all part of the interplay between individual and collective identity patterns and transformations (Wells, 2007). In reference to the current research the EP is entwined in complex systems and frameworks including that of the school, child, family, local authority; for this reason it is important to consider the impact of the various systems. There are many difficulties and pressures that arise from interacting with and operating in complex systems. EPs encounter these experiences on a regular basis. Attending to the knowledge that these tensions exist is not unproblematic. However, Wells (2007) maintains that recognition of these difficulties is important in learning how to work effectively and build relationships with clients. By ignoring the difficult issues there may be an assumption that one model fits all.

When investigating identity reoccurring reference is made to Activity Theory (Wells, 2007, Gaskell & Leadbetter, 2009). Studies have used this model to understand and interpret findings around the factors that mediate and intersect with an individual's identity formation. Research in this area has suggested that identity change and which identity is adopted relates to what motivates an individual. This is of particular interest in terms of EP work, as the approach to casework and selection of assessment tools may relate directly to a person's identity, core values and what drives their desire to practice.

Wells (2007) introduces the terminology 'crafting of identities'. This illustrates the creativity and multidimensional process involved in shaping identities. The terms craft and shape imply malleability and flexibility and are associated with development, change and progress.

### **Do EPs have a unique professional identity?**

'Distinctive' and 'unique' are reoccurring expressions that have emerged throughout the literature review. This indicates the significance placed on positioning EPs in a certain light and journals

suggest there is a growing need to justify the EP contribution to making a difference for children and families. This may have developed from the current climate and financial pressures that have ensued. Many organisations have experienced budget cuts across the board that has resulted in professionals striving to protect themselves and their employment. In these uncertain, frugal times the need to justify and evidence specialism and job worth has been amplified. Duplication and replication of roles must be avoided where possible and EPs are under scrutiny to evidence the outcomes of their work and the difference they are making (Farrell et al. 2006). In this light it may be helpful to draw on new research investigating what it is that makes EPs 'distinctive' and 'unique'. Addressing the gap in the literature relating to EP identity may contribute to unravelling and further examining what individuals bring to practice.

Farrell et al. (2006) frame the expectations of EPs and suggest how providers may commission and select a psychological service based on the individual skills of an EP. This may also make for a successful working relationship as the communication around desired outcomes is made explicit. Research has shown and previous reflections have highlighted that this 'match' is not a simple linear equation. However, research by Farrell et al. (2006) indicates the EP *role* appears to take on a mechanistic persona, as the report does not seem to acknowledge the emotive aspects of the job or individual professional values. How emotions play out in talk around professional identity is an interesting area. Berger and Luckman (1966) argue that the terms used to categorise individuals are internalised and consumed by the individuals and become encompassed in their reality. The extent to which they feature and construct characteristics may depend on the frequency and strength of socially constructed reinforcers (Vasquez & Urzua, 2009).

Kelly and Gray (2000) carried out research investigating the views held by families and schools of EPs. A key finding they highlighted was that schools reported they wanted 'the same quality of support from individual EPs irrespective of personalities' (Kelly & Gray, 2000, p.7). This statement appears to acknowledge the differences, which may arise as a result of personality and is explicit about needing to mediate this in order to achieve desired consistent outcomes. Instead of celebrating the diversity amongst EPs' characters and 'tool kits', it appears that Kelly and Grey (2000) found schools requested sameness. This poses a tension for individual EPs in how their preferences for practice and professional judgement are perceived and valued by schools.

There is much information about what should be known and how to know it. However, there appears to be less research exploring what an individual brings to a developing role and emergent professional identity in the field of educational psychology. Investigating the values and beliefs that

underpin motivation, paradigm preference and general approach to practice is unclear and needs attention. Furthermore, presentation of such findings may have implications for policy makers and lead to additional critical debates about the EP contribution and unique offering brought to the table.

Beijaard et al. (2000) conducted a study using a questionnaire looking at teachers' views of their professional identity within a secondary school context. Several themes emerged from the questionnaire data. Beijaard et al. (2000) reported that responses indicated a journey of identity change from the early stages of their career to when they had become more established. This mirrors research in other fields, which have identified transformations in identity as experiences unfold (Lingard, Garwood, Schryer & Spafford, 2003). Furthermore, these findings reinforce the concept that identity is not fixed, but instead a fluid element of human growth.

### **Organisational Identity**

Bardon (1983) acknowledges a difference that can exist between an 'individual's identity within an organisation and that of their personal identity, organisational identity and personal/professional identity are not necessarily the same' (p.187). Hymans (2008) reported explicit aims, shared organisational values accompanied by transparent definitions and responsibility of roles contributed to facilitating effective multi-agency working. Conflicting research illustrates multi professional contexts can lead to role confusion (Perrotta, 2006). This further emphasises the importance of gaining a better understanding of what constitutes an individual's professional identity. Previous discussions have illuminated the confusion between role and identity and what appears to be the synonymous use of both terms. The terms professional identity and role appear even more indistinguishable. The current research positions role and professional identity as interchangeable within the literature. An analysis of national documentation, alongside relevant literature and participants' own discourses will be undertaken for the current research. Patterns and distinctive features will be investigated and explored.

Cultural factors feature significantly as being problematic when undertaking inter-professional pieces of work (Hymans, 2008). Professional tensions can arise not only between professional groups but also amongst them. Diversity among group experiences, values and beliefs can be translated into significantly different approaches to practice. In turn this can leave individuals exposed to criticism and finding the need to defend their chosen path. Sub-groups can be the result

of diverging within-group organisational cultures. However, these sub-groups perform a meaningful function, serving as a way of being identified as supporting a particular strand of professional culture whilst having the safety of a collective, which endorses their 'different' behaviour (Perrotta, 2006). This authorisation of discourse is based on the organisational culture recognised as superior at the time.

The literature aligns itself with the notion that group identity constriction and power are entangled. The discourse which is privileged depends on numerous factors born out of the group dynamics (Perrotta, 2006). The collective are said to compound and drive the dominant discourse; strength in numbers increases the strength of what is said through repetition and affirmative re telling of the perceived 'truth' (Perrotta, 2006). What is perceived to be highly reputable and as 'best practice' can vary between groups of EPs (Bird, 1999). Best practice may also be shaped by local authority prioritised targets, organisational hierarchy, individual and collective identities, previous experience and training background.

Having an overarching supervisory body that underpins the core knowledge from which to practice was viewed as a strength contributing to the integrity of a collective, (Bardon, 1983). This may have been the case previously, however, this perceived strength has been tainted and the criteria from which psychologists are expected to practice and the body of knowledge from which they are required to consult has significantly changed. Some may argue that the recent introduction of Health Professions Council guidelines (HCPC, 2012) has complicated and contributed to the confusion of professional identity. Alternatively it may be argued that as a result there will be increased opportunities for collaborative work. The guidelines precede and appear to anticipate the forthcoming 'Education Health and Care Plan' (DfE, 2011) which outlines the current governments' model around future multi-professional working.

Beatty and Kirby (2006) introduce the concept of invisible identities in the work place. This theory is a valuable contribution to sense making in relation to how individual and professional identities are intertwined and how this then plays out in the work place. When reviewing literature on organisational identity the terms 'in group' and 'out group' were common place. Research has found that individuals seek familiarity and a sense of belonging when working amongst others. People orientate themselves towards a particular person or group depending on their values, lifestyles, beliefs and eating habits to name but a few (Kenny, 2010). Workplace identification has been associated with activity motivation, wellbeing, sense of achievement and success. However Corley



(2004) argues organisational identity theories can be over simplistic and neglect the multidimensional layers operating as a result of individual differences and influences.

Langley, Golden-Biddle, Reay, Denis, Herbert, Lamothe and Gervais, (2012) carried out a study that involved analysing two case studies from different health care settings. The focus of their research was to investigate the processes involved in formulating identity after the merging of settings. Langley et al. (2012) assert that literature based on identity highlights the fact that attachment issues can be a result of organisations or groups that evolve, through merging or disbanding. Individuals may feel under threat when faced with the possibility of their identity being re-constructed. Strong emotions may be associated with their identity and as such any threat may cause a reaction of resistance. Additionally, Langley et al. (2012) believe that the organisation of the within group hierarchy can impact the top down processes shaping collective identity.

The study by Gaskell and Leadbetter (2009) identified the importance of addressing EP identity construction within a multi-agency context. Activity theory was used as a framework in conjunction with thematic analysis to categorise and make sense of the participants' responses. The findings highlighted that initially several EPs struggled to define their distinctive role in the multi professional team. Gaskell and Leadbetter (2009) suggested that this issue led to a feeling of self-doubt and searching for an understanding of how psychology could be applied to enhance the already established working dynamic. This critical reflection was then followed by forging a path for the development of a new role involving EPs bringing a specialist contribution to a diverse team (Gaskell & Leadbetter, 2009).

Furthermore, a community perspective was found to underpin certain integrated working practices and team constructions. The majority of EPs interviewed in the study by Gaskell and Leadbetter (2009), were encouraging about a multi-agency way of working where a new role was constructed. However, one participant experienced the uncertainty and flexibility of the role in a negative light. This reflects the complexity related to multi-agency working and the diversity of emotions experienced within an unfamiliar context (Gaskell and Leadbetter, 2009). Furthermore, the question of identity was found to arise when approaching EP work from this standpoint. Gaskell and Leadbetter (2009) found that 'in discussing identification as a psychologist a number of respondents said that they felt more of a psychologist in a multi-agency context' (p.104).

This raises interesting questions for the profession and the experiences available for TEPs developing their skills, both practical and reflective. The findings of Gaskell and Leadbetter (2009) suggest it

would be useful for psychologists to experience being part of a multi-agency team for numerous reasons. Specifically, the opportunities associated with working in multi-agency contexts and constructing identity as an EP prompted critical thinking and reflection (Gaskell & Leadbetter, 2009). It appears that the construction of EP identity, roles, responsibilities and approaches to working is not to be taken for granted. The literature has highlighted the significance of emphasising and protecting time for critical reflection of identity as an EP and the direction individuals may wish to take in this line of work (Bird, 1999).

It is important to engage psychologists in a dialogue around this issue as research has identified a sense of positive professional identity can impact on self-efficacy, confidence and satisfaction in the role (Vasquez & Urzua, 2009). Furthermore, EPs are under pressure to clarify their unique selling point (Farrell et al. 2006) and this has been compounded by the current economic climate. Subsequently, gaining a greater understanding of how identity is constructed could contribute to an understanding of the EPs' professionally distinct contribution. When exploring the construction of EP identity, theories associated with identities under threat have also been investigated. This is a particular area of interest in light of the new government agendas such as the Children and Families Bill (DfE, 2013) and professionals working with children and families, (Gaskell & Leadbetter, 2009).

## **Role**

The role of the EP has long been debated and certain literature suggests EPs can often be fashioned into certain positions (Gillham, 1978). The following statement highlights the poignancy of EPs' uncertainty around the future of the profession, 'work with the educational psychology profession and local commissioners to review the future training arrangements for educational psychologists' (DfE, 2011, p. 94). With this potential regulation and review of EPs it seems ever more necessary to explore and expose the complexities and uniqueness of the profession by addressing the experiences of individual EPs and how their professional identity is shaped through their specific understanding of their role. In order for this exploration to bear fruit the professional discourses at an individual, organisational and national level need examining. This multi-level analysis will investigate the development of EPs professional identity and role and the extent to which the related discourses create or restrict a sense of agency allowing individuals to enact professional values.

The Green Paper for instance (DfE, 2012) lacks clarity in relation to the role of the EP. Whilst other professions such as Medicine are distinctly referred to, the contributions of EPs are merely alluded to. This is an example of a document that appears to place EPs in a subordinate position and threaten the future roles and identities of EPs. In addition within the Green Paper (DfE, 2012) the responsibilities assigned to an EP did not reflect the complex multifaceted role and everyday working dynamics. This may also instigate the need to address the identity of EPs and how trainees are supported to question, construct and reflect on this. If this is given careful consideration challenges can be made towards bodies in power attempting to prescribe EP practice. Group dynamics and power imbalances are key features associated with professionals and personal identity.

Love (2009) argues that psychologists are 'shaped by expectations of their role' (p.5) as such this has implications for future practice and indicates the importance of EPs continual engagement in critical reflection when considering the value of the work undertaken. For instance, organisations may function in a certain way without questioning or evaluating the reasons for this. Others may employ methods to reconsider approaches but organisational politics may lead to a resistance of change. This however has been recognised as a useful process to enhance sub-group cohesiveness and strengthen the pursuit of different ideas. Furthermore a sense of collective identity can reaffirm feelings of self worth and work satisfaction, (Vasquez, 2007).

### **Professional values**

Sachs (2001) argues that defining what constitutes as 'professional' and 'professionalism' is mediated by the context in which the terms are being debated. For instance the words mean different things to different people. Remedying this confusion is not unproblematic. The terms and what is understood by them can impact how individuals interpret their work-selves and what is expected of them. The current research is interested in exploring what individuals perceive to be, and how they work within their individual framework of understanding what it means to be a professional and how their values shape this identity. Individuals construct their understanding of themselves and their place within the professional world through discourse (Sachs, 2001). Struggles for power and position emerge from exposure to and participation in discourses. Subsequently, individuals may decide to affirm and strengthen a particular discourse that resonates with them or reject one in favour of alternatives.

Literature suggests uncertainties in employability and the longevity of work positions has caused changes in attitudes and approaches to careers (Strauss, Griffin & Parker, 2012). Individuals need to adopt skills in transition, a broad application of skills and the ability to cope with the uncertainty. Strauss et al. (2012) assert that there has been an increase in the need for people to be actively flexible and present themselves as such to future employers. The cut in jobs has led to a demand for a merger of roles and responsibilities. This flexibility can be appealing to recruiters – yet where does this leave professional identity?

The emphasis is now on the individual to seek employment within an organisation that mirrors their values and future career hopes (Strauss et al. 2012). This argument implies there has been a shift from employers issuing top-down values to workers to a bottom up imprint of individual's values on their professional conduct. These values then permeate work ethic, professionalism, authenticity and commitments. These elements are illustrated through approach to work, presentation of work, interaction with colleagues, clients and work based discourse. This suggests values are at the core of professional achievement.

At this juncture Fox (2003) presents the ideologies psychologists are currently grappling with relating to evidenced based practice. Fox argues that there is a dichotomy of thought in existence whereby some psychologists endorse a preference for experience and reflexivity to evidence best practice. Alternatively, others argue objective methods should dictate what constitutes as evidence based practice. In order to further this debate and immerse oneself in the thinking behind such rhetoric the question 'what constitutes knowledge?' seems fitting. The thinking behind evidence based practice appears intertwined with epistemology. Subsequently, this is not a straightforward categorisation but a value laden process which some may argue does not need a distinctive 'outcome' as the debate itself is rewarding and serves as the platform from which new knowledge is constructed (Fox, 2003).

### **The ambiguity of role and identity within educational psychology literature**

The literature review exposed the confusion surrounding the terminology, identity and role. Both terms appeared to be used interchangeably and certain descriptions of an EP's role read as though they were depicting elements of identity. This assertion may account for the lack of literature assigned specifically to identify in the field of educational psychology. Subsequently, there is a need to revisit the language used and meaning assigned to such terms in order to question the discourse

surrounding professional identity, the unique contribution of EPs and how professional values influence practice. These questions contribute to critical thinking about EP discourses and whether there is a different way of presenting and debating our position and contribution. Having raised this question and explored the possibilities the research findings aim to contribute to a critical conversation about professional identity and the significance of individual values on practice and subsequent outcomes for children.

Hatoss (2012) asserts that group processes can be tumultuous and impact directly on a person's perception and positioning within or outside of the group. This raises questions about identity and the factors encompassed in the construction and re-structuring of a professional self. The tensions associated with identifying oneself with what is popularised as the organisational or professional status quo and that of the outsider group I find fascinating. These issues may provide a useful insight into the discourse currently available to EPs. Could it be the case that EPs feel the need to self-identify with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC, 2012) at present, especially in these times of economic and political flux? Questioning where professional identity features in the literature could elicit critical thinking about where EPs feature in the wider social and political communities.

### **How the suggested area relates to practice/the current EPS**

The EPS targeted for the research is currently in a state of flux. Whole team service days and organisationally run 'road shows' have illuminated the changing professional climate resulting in new demands and pressures. During one road show the proposed values of the service were introduced and feedback was invited. Responses outlined the differences in professional priorities and organisational values.

The service has recently been re-organised and re-branded. The new service structure evolved in light of numerous economical and political factors. A senior psychologist raised the importance of needing to revisit the dominant values of the team and how these play an active part in shaping the service delivery. An opportunity to share opinions and voice professional values was declared as an upcoming priority. As such it could be interpreted that the service is motivated to reflect on how individual's contributions can inform collective professional values and organisational identity. This current research could serve as a means of exploring this issue and use the findings to contribute to a wider service delivery model or construction of core organisational values.

There is a wealth of literature, which stresses the significance of organisational structure and relationships and how these interact with professional values (Sachs, 2001, Ashton & Roberts, 2006). These are mediated by a sense of belonging, freedom, level of control and autonomy over work delivery and management expectations. Values and beliefs are multifaceted and entangled with both professional and personal experiences. Reflective practice and supervision feature in the process of formulating values and constructing a professional identity. The fluidity of identity leads to the importance of revisiting such a concept and places greater intrigue around how and why it changes. The influence of values on how individuals present, formulate hypotheses, design and implement interventions and engage in reflexivity is also of interest.

### **Chapter summary**

In conclusion, the literature searches using the data bases showed that when using the search terms 'role of EP' a significant number of articles were found. Yet when 'identity of an EP' was used a much smaller number were presented. This indicates the nature of the research currently addressing EPs and indicates that a greater emphasis is currently being put on the outcome (role) as opposed to the process (identity). This argument highlights a gap in the literature, proposing that it would be a valuable area to investigate. By exposing and undertaking a critically reflexive position new perspectives may be uncovered. This may contribute towards the formation of a new understanding of the journey to become a psychologist, what this might involve and how this could impact on future practice.

According to Erikson's theory it appears that the EP profession is mirroring the adolescent stages of identity formation. This is particularly true of themes such as identity versus role confusion and identity crisis (Kroger, 2002), in which EPs could become actively involved. Kroger (2000) asserts that there is a need for future research around identity development; Erikson's theories also have provided useful insights yet areas such as social and cultural context in the present day now need investigation. Research would benefit from exploration of individuals' understanding and interpretations of how these factors influence their identity (Kroger, 2000).

The literature review has been more heavily weighted towards theory as this reflects the limited research carried out specifically around how EPs shape their identity and how this impacts on practice. The reasons for this have been explored somewhat during this review. For instance Webb et al. (2004) outlined the difficulties in researching the concept of identity and the problems

associated with methodologies. These issues need taking into account when undertaking the current research. Overall the literature and research presents an abundance of integral factors, which contribute to work place effectiveness, functioning and harmony (Love, 2009). That said there is still a distinct lack of identity research in educational psychology investigating EPs themselves. Bird, (1999) advocates critical reflection of research and practice in the field and provokes future discourse outlined in his paper 'Towards a more critical psychology'.

### **A summary of the wider discourses that emerged through the literature review**

When undertaking the literature review themes emerged which contributed to the identification of 'wider discourses'. In this instance the term 'wider discourses' includes consideration of discourses operating within the profession of educational psychology in conjunction with those which appear to resonate with the current research question at a local and national level. These identified discourses appear to attend to tensions relating to the defining of the EP role, expectations of stakeholders and service users and the historical context and evolution of educational psychology. Exploration into these wider discourses helped to inform thinking in the analysis and discussion chapters. For instance the wider discourses which appear to speak to the current research question include: 'identity is a fluid, multi-storied concept' (Jenkins, 2008), 'identity as a social construction' (Burr, 1995), 'EP as collaborative' (Gaskell & Leadbetter, 2009), 'EP as consultative' (Farrell et al. 2006), 'EP as local authority worker' (Gillham, 1978 & Woods & Farrell, 2006, DfE, 2011), 'EP as advice giver' (Ashton & Roberts, 2006), 'EP as scientific' (HCPC, 2012), 'EP as needing to define their distinctive contribution' (Farrell et al. 2006), 'reconstructing educational psychology' (Gillham, 1978), 'educational psychology as experiencing a crisis of identity' (Richards, 2004), 'EP as a researcher' (BPS, 2013), 'EP as statutory assessor' (DfE, 2013) and 'EP as valuing/promoting reflexive practice' (Fox, 2003).

Literature disseminating information, which relates to EPs and the meanings made around the profession, contributes to the exploration of how the wider discourses available influence EPs' identity construction. Additionally, the current research may help to identify the discursive links between policy documents, research and practice. The relationship between EPs' talk and the literature has been further considered as part of the analysis and discussion chapters.

## **Chapter Three: Methodology**

### **Introduction**

The aim of this chapter is to provide the reader with an informative outline of the research aims, questions and design. In addition the rationale for decisions made in respect to methodological issues and analytical frameworks will be explored in detail. This exploration will attempt to encompass the theoretical groundings, dilemmas and nuances associated with these elements.

### **Research question**

How are EPs' professional identities shaped by the available discourses?

### **Theoretical framework to underpin and guide the research**

Identity can be understood and analysed in numerous ways depending on the paradigm in which the researcher is positioned. With this in mind certain approaches may critique a study investigating identity as there is not a generic, quantifiable approach which can ascertain 'truths' on the matter. Contrastingly, Berger and Luckman (1966) pertain that theories rooted in psychology may be most suitable and fruitful when studying identity. Taking a quantitative approach would be inadequate and dilute the richness of findings. Statistical data would provide a surface understanding or be the means of categorising individuals. Questions around identity are complicated. For example Berger and Luckman (1966) critique the use of a single theory to understand identity. Due to the social construction of identity, just as the individuals are unique, the theories generated by research cannot be universally applied as they are bound by the social and cultural context in which the theory was grown, (Berger and Luckman, 1966).

The research is founded within a social constructionist epistemology and critical framework. The literature around the dialogic construction of knowledge is situated within a social constructionist paradigm (Burr, 1995). After researching the alternative methodologies critical discourse analysis appeared most fitting for the current research. The appeal of critical discourse is that it takes into account the relationship between meaning making and the wider social context (Hall, 1997).



## **Rationale for methodology**

Identity has been acknowledged as being a fluid concept, shaped by a multitude of factors, including social context, language and experiences (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). The dialogic process and influence on identity formation is of particular interest and as such relates to the reasons for selecting discourse analysis for the current research. Further investigation revealed that in order to grapple with the complexities of communication and the inherent multiple meanings it was decided that critical discourse analysis (CDA) would be most suitable to tackle this understanding and attempt to do justice to meaning making.

CDA takes positionality and power into account and does not make assumptions based on the face value of text or language. Instead, CDA proposes to uncover possible meanings behind what is initially presented and to explore how the context the discourse is situated in impacts how it is made sense of. Sachs (2001) argues that discourses make a significant contribution to how professional relationships are understood within the context of an organisation and wider social and political arenas. It would be neglectful to ignore the multiple layers of authority and power woven into a professional context.

CDA appears to underpin elements that are of significant interest to research and practice. Exploring how discourse shapes identity could give a better understanding of how people make sense of their professional selves. This in turn could provide an insight into practice and working relationships.

Discourse analysis has been identified as being a methodology with pluralistic qualities. The multidimensional, cross cultural, flexible application are strengths of this epistemology. Furthermore, Hewitt (2009) suggests that an 'insider' position is necessary to strengthen interpretation of discourse as the 'subculture's norms' can be investigated and brought to the surface as part of the analysis. Consequently working as part of the Educational Psychology Service (EPS) itself will allow for greater access to documents and policies (permission will be sought). Inhabiting the context of the research enables the facilitation of reflexive practice. Reflexive field notes aim to aid interpretation and submersion in the data. In turn carrying out research using this reflexive approach will help to practice essential skills (Parker, 2012).

Discourse has been viewed in many different ways over time. It has been interpreted and reinterpreted by individuals from various academic, social and political backgrounds. A continuum appears to exist in relation to those who view discourse in a linguistic sense (Halliday, 1985) and those who view discourse as a 'system of representation', a method of communicating meaning to

others (Foucault, 1972, Hall, 1997, Billington, 1995 & Parker, 2012). In this latter view the words are just one aspect of discourse. Language is a powerful mechanism and can be used with intentionality to reframe perspectives and steer a discourse for the benefit or detriment of the audience. Persuasive discourse has been used for centuries to deconstruct and reconstruct knowledge. For example history can be created and listeners manipulated by what they hear through the use of language. However, it is not only language through which meanings are made.

Meanings are interchangeable. Different languages evidence that a different word or sound represents a different meaning (Kay and Maffi, 1999). This is also dependent on the context and culture, once again illustrating the significance of a methodology that takes into account the socially constructed elements of discourse. Any medium via which a meaning is created can be termed a form of discourse (Hall, 1997). Foucault proposed that discourse was a 'system of representation' as opposed to a construction of words or speech (Hall, 1997).

The key differences between a discursive and critical discursive methodological approach, which appear to be summarised in the literature, stem from the object, process and application of findings to social context. For example the literature positions discourse analysis as being concerned with analysing the 'discourses people use to explain facts and behaviours' (Parker, 1997, p.284). This differs from critical discourse, which gives more of a focus to the social and political context and how this influences how discourse is shaped and presented.

Hall (1997) argues Foucault posits language is the tool we use to express ourselves and represent knowledge as it is created and perceived. Discourse is therefore a means of sharing a unique understanding of the world, which may then be collectivised to form a new way of knowing. Subsequently, discourse can shape the way the world is viewed and is open to the interpretation of the audience.

It is imperative to take a critical stance and question what is communicated. Taking discourse on face value is what accommodates the status quo and prevents society from addressing challenging topics. Discourse can empower people or foster helplessness. The need to be critical and reflexive is fundamental when working as a psychologist. Subsequently, applying discursive techniques will support thinking when undertaking work as a TEP. Foucault (1972) argues that the construction of knowledge, which subsequently impacts practice, is a direct result of 'discursive formation'. This being the case a space is necessary for dialogic exchange to occur in order for practitioners to develop new theories and reflect on their practice.

## **Frameworks for discourse analysis**

Since the birth of discursive methods numerous analytic frameworks have been developed, for example frameworks by Foucault (1972), Hajer, (1995), Gee, (2005), Dryzek, (2005), Flyvbjerg, (1998), Potter and Wetherell, (1987). There appears to be key principles, which apply to discourse analysis. These include questioning motivation, identifying relationships between beings and to think beyond the surface meaning of the presented discourse; by for example, looking for metaphors.

Selecting a particular framework could help to structure the analysis and bring transparency to the methodology. This would enhance the robustness of the research, namely how trustworthy the data is.

Discourse analysis has progressed and evolved over a number of years. It is thought to have been first brought to life by Spitzer, a German academic in the 1920's. Numerous philosophers, psychologists and sociologists have been influenced by his work and differing strands of discourse analysis have since evolved and vary according to the epistemological preference of the researcher (Graham, 2011, Parker, 2013).

The title 'discourse analysis' is associated with multiple approaches and consequently has a spectrum of associated methodologies nestling beneath this heading (Morgan, 2010). Between them Morgan (2010) and Parker (2013) specified eleven approaches to discourse analysis that feature on a spectrum from realist to relativist perspectives, these include (in no specified order):

- Conversation analysis
- Interactional sociolinguistics
- Discursive psychology
- Critical discourse analysis
- Bakhtinian research
- Ethnomethodology
- Narrative analysis
- Thematic analysis
- Foucauldian discourse analysis

- Semiotic analysis
- Political discourse theory

The extensive list evidences the elasticity of the term and although all of the approaches above have been identified as relating to discourse analysis the traditions themselves have distinct and in some cases conflicting features. The researcher's preference and choice of approach will be arbitrated by their epistemological position and research question (Graham, 2011). Morgan (2010) identifies the intricacies associated with discourse analysis and the perplexing issues it can present for researchers using the methodology for the first time.

### **Critical Discourse Analysis: Theoretical perspectives**

The term discourse analysis has come to mean different things to different people depending on their epistemological preference (Graham, 2011, Morgan, 2010); consequently there are multiple offerings of how one could construct an analysis of discourse (Gee, 2005). Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is interested in problematising discourses (Parker, 1992, Willig, 2008) and invites the researcher to engage with critical philosophies and to consider a way of being, as a researcher. Powers (2007) concurs arguing that 'the researcher is the tool' (p.31).

CDA sits in a post-structuralist framework and takes the epistemological perspective that what is knowable is constructed through numerous discourses (the term discourse here refers to spoken language, written text, signs and symbols). Subsequently, an analysis of this kind considers there to be no one constant reality, instead discourse creates various different interchangeable realities interlinked with the ever-changing social, cultural and political contexts (Morgan, 2010, Willig, 2008). CDA takes these fluctuating variables into account and as such there are variations of analysis to mirror the instability of the area being researched. Discourse is perceived to actively contribute to the construction and re-construction of social action. It is understandable then that this methodology offers a useful approach to draw on when investigating the role of power within society. CDA promotes the use of a critical lens and helps to stimulate thinking around alternatives and possibilities that may otherwise go overlooked (Willig, 2008, Gee, 2005 & Parker, 2013).

Over the years discourse analysis and in particular the terminology 'CDA' has sought to understand texts whilst grounded in critical social and linguistic theories. Fairclough (1995) and Van Dijk (2001) offer interpretations as to how to embark on CDA which aims to explore the presence and contribution of linguistic factors and how the use of pronouns, verb tenses and other lexical

presentations are constructed and expose issues of power (Pomerantz, 2008). Alternative ways of interpreting CDA have been highlighted amongst the research community and researchers are encouraged to explicitly reflect on their own values and position when approaching the analysis. The emphasis on making the thought processes transparent attempts to address power issues entangled in the relationships between the researcher and the researched (Wodak & Myers, 2009, Holloway & Jefferson, 2007).

### **How CDA has come to be understood and applied in the context of the current research**

Pomerantz (2008) provides a useful insight comparing various types of analysis which are interested in examining language and highlights criteria associated with approaches to critical discourse analysis. At this juncture it is important to note that there are certain aspects of established forms of CDA, which have not been addressed in the current analysis. For instance as stated previously the linguistic components (use of verbs and nouns) have not been explicitly identified or investigated at this time. By acknowledging this distinction and communicating how the theory of CDA has come to be understood in the context of the current research, I hope to demonstrate the theory which has informed the meaning making and discussion, where the EPs' talk and identity construction is concerned.

The current interpretation of CDA speaks more broadly to understanding psychology as a discipline through a critical lens and how this connects with Foucauldian principles when thinking about how EPs' identities are constructed by the available discourses. In addition Parker's (1992) 'seven criteria for distinguishing discourse' have supported an understanding around the complex, critical and interactive concepts of CDA, which I draw on for the current research. Parker (1992) asserts the following criteria support the application of theory to analytical practice.

- 1) A discourse is realised in texts
- 2) A discourse is about objects
- 3) A discourse contains subjects
- 4) A discourse is a coherent system of meanings
- 5) A discourse refers to other discourses
- 6) A discourse reflects on its own way of speaking

## 7) A discourse is historically located

The current research has also been informed by the strand of CDA which is strongly associated with the work of Michael Foucault and his works have contributed to a Foucauldian approach to discourse analysis (Parker, 1992, Willig, 2008). Foucault pertained 'the subject of knowledge itself has a history; the relation of the subject to the object; or more clearly truth itself has a history' (Foucault, 1973, p.2). Foucault's ideas sought an alternative to empiricism and became part of the post-modernist wave, which opened up possibilities for knowledge construction and meaning making (Powers, 2007). The historical authority associated with positivism was also brought into question and space for a constructionist debate was created (Gergen, 2009).

Lastly Wodak and Meyers (2009) would argue that in order to facilitate the critical component of the analysis the researcher must first question what is communicated by the language and theory presented and what this means to them. This process entails making connections between analytical assumptions, which then informs the methodological path the researcher decides is the most appropriate in respect to the question being asked.

### **Foucauldian theories of discourse analysis**

Taking a Foucauldian perspective, knowledge is an expression of the social, cultural and political messages, which are inextricably linked. This position is founded upon a critical reflection of historical circumstances. Seminal works by Foucault illuminate this point, in particular 'Madness and Civilisation' (Foucault, 1965).

Foucault theorised that discourse is broader than the spoken word and linguistic rules and instead harnessed the need to acknowledge the intricacies of patterns woven between language at an individual level, core societal messages, values, beliefs and the historical context when analysing discourse. Subsequently, power or 'bio power' was a particular focus of Foucault's and his writings explored the bi-directional systems of power, and how variables which influence the shifts in power are intricate and operate on both macro and micro levels (Parker, 2013). To view discourse in terms of linguistics as located *within* individuals is too simplistic and reductive and would limit the exploration required for the current research. The relationship between power and discourse is a pivotal element of Foucauldian discourse analysis (FDA) as outlined by Willig (2008) and this relationship will be investigated as part of the analysis and discussion chapters.

In addition, genealogy and archaeology are considered pivotal Foucauldian systems as Foucault's theory of discourse involves looking to history to make sense of power structures and how they come into being (Parker, 2013). Foucault's work was influenced by German philosopher Nietzsche who initially used the term 'genealogy' (Powers, 2007). In respect to genealogy Powers (2007) summarises a Foucauldian principle, stating;

' discourse cannot be analysed only in the present, because the power components and the historical components create such a tangled knot of shifting meanings, definitions and interested parties over periods of time' (p.26).

A Foucauldian approach asserts that there is no definitive truth, instead meaning making and knowledge is thought to be constructed through discourse and therefore multiple possibilities exist for what can be known as 'truth'. Opportunities arise from exploring the construction and re-construction of new discourses and how they can be used to communicate meaning.

Willig (2008) provides '*a light sketch*' of a Foucauldian discourse analysis (FDA). Where the term FDA is used in the current research it refers to Willig's six stages and description of this type of analysis (see figure 1.2). Willig's reluctance to claim a definitive structure suggests careful consideration needs to be given to the elements required for the most illuminating analysis. In a similar vein Parker (2013) argues that:

'Good research takes previous studies into account but refuses to simply replicate the method in a sequence of steps that obey a fixed grid of criteria that conform to the way that the discipline of psychology defines its objects. Existing approaches to discourse analysis are, as we shall see, internally contradictory, and are all the better for that, and it is from that existing work and the contradictions that define them that a researcher will be able to develop new studies and new methodologies (Banister et al. 2011). We are marking the boundaries between forms of discourse analysis in the hope that researchers taking up some of these ideas in their own research will disturb those boundaries and invent new connections between the concepts (p. 224)'

With this in mind a combination of analytical approaches was considered as providing an attractive opportunity to explore professional identity in connection with reflexive components (see sub-heading 'a Foucauldian approach to CDA'). The present research lends itself to a critical approach as it aims to illuminate issues related to working in the field of educational psychology and the discourses which facilitate and prevent transformations within the profession.

## **A Foucauldian Approach to Critical Discourse Analysis**

Foucauldian and critical approaches to discourse analysis are often spoken about as intersecting and presented as overlapping in respect to concerns with power and historical context, as well as 'sharing the same concerns' (Graham, 2011, p. 672). This interpretation once again reflects the pluralism amongst the discursive methodologies, as contrastingly the literature also asserts distinctions can be identified between CDA and FDA which revolve around CDA's attention to the structural, grammatical and semiotic elements (Pomerantz, 2008). This process is also absent from Willig's (2008) FDA and subsequently it will not be reflected in the current analysis and interpretations.

Furthermore, taking a Foucauldian approach to CDA does not entail investigating the linguistic components of the text but instead grapples with the interactions and evolution of discourses at a macro and micro level. This endeavour aims to explore how the talk is constructing and positioning the discursive object (EP identity) through the asking of critical questions which emerge from reflexive engagement with the text (Fairclough, 2003, Pomerantz, 2008, Willig, 2008, Parker, 2013).

The reference to a Foucauldian approach to CDA and the term CDA in this research aims to convey the researchers' interest in critical psychology, whilst recognising the need to problematise the discipline of psychology from within the profession (Gillham, 1978, Parker, 2013). Additionally, caution is given when attempting to define and label the current analysis as FDA only, especially as a developing researcher undertaking this type of analysis for the first time.

Furthermore, in this instance the approach to analysis and interpretation was informed by theories taking a critical standpoint. I considered it important to attempt to tackle the dilemmas and issues associated with the profession of educational psychology in order to facilitate meaningful and authentic reflection.

Both Parker (2013) and Willig (2008) urge the researcher to engage in reflexivity and to critique the intentions of a pre-conceived brief when entering into a methodology which is interested in attending to discourse. Consequently, I attempted to illuminate the aspects of the methodology that I was drawn to based on the reading I had undertaken, which highlighted the need to embrace critical curiosity. This was named 'a Foucauldian approach to discourse analysis'. Figure 1.1 could be described as illustrating a hybrid methodology, as its creation was a result of combining theoretical principles presented by Parker and Willig, which they suggested needed attending to when exploring research interested in a Foucauldian approach to discourse analysis.



The challenge associated with tackling the text using a Foucauldian approach to critical discourse analysis, especially for a developing researcher is that the guidance is heavily informed by complex theoretical concepts which need to be visited and re-visited prior to beginning the analysis itself. This type of analysis appears to resist the structuralist 'gaze' when presenting guidance, which has again highlighted the requirement of the researcher to commit to way of 'seeing the text'; in this case interview transcripts. Parker (1992) asserts;

'There is a degree of conceptual work that needs to go into the analysis before the material is touched, and then, as the analysis proceeds, it is necessary to step back a number of times to make sense of the statements that have been picked out. Each criterion raises questions about the theoretical framework the researcher is using' (p.3).

Careful consideration was given to the language used to communicate the current analytical approach and I grappled with Willig's assignment of the title 'FDA' to her guidelines, as the literature asserts Foucault did not stipulate a specific analytical recipe, instead he offered a theoretical basis from which to engage with thinking about and interacting with discourses (Morgan, 2010). However, Willig does argue for the researcher to practice caution and critical reflection when applying the stages of Foucauldian discourse analysis which she suggests. This being the case it is important to acknowledge that the analysis and interpretation is based on encompassing Willig's six stages to FDA and developing a way of engaging and being with the text from Foucauldian perspective rather than claiming to have carried out FDA or CDA in a pure form. Graham (2011) argues 'it is quite difficult to find coherent descriptions of how one might do a 'Foucauldian' discourse analysis, but perhaps the difficulty in locating concise descriptions is because there is no such thing?' (p.663). Subsequently, please note that, as mentioned earlier the term FDA used throughout this document is describing Willig's (2008) interpretation of a Foucauldian analysis.

When reflecting on the works of Willig and Parker it was decided that the most appropriate methodology involved combining both Willig's six stages of Foucauldian discourse analysis with Parker's consideration of how discourses are historically located. The rationale for this decision was based on the significance given in the literature to Foucault's concept of genealogy, which connects with Parkers (1992) identification that 'a discourse is historically located'. Understanding the historical context of the discourse is necessary to secure a greater understanding of power relations over time and the implications for knowledge construction.

Next, Willig (2008) pertains 'Foucauldian discourse analysts also take a historical perspective and explore the ways in which discourses have changed over time and how this may have shaped historical subjectivities' (p.107). This approach however, is not explicitly presented or explored as

part of Willig's six stages and as such it was deemed important to ensure that wider 'EP identity discourses' were considered as part of a historical inquiry. For example as part of the interpretation and discussion chapters, policy and literature helped to offer an understanding of the discourses relating to EP identity, which have emerged over time.

The exploration of educational psychology lends itself to further historical investigation as literature evidences that substantial shifts have occurred over time. Taking a Foucauldian approach to CDA could help shed some light on how to make sense of these changes and inform considerations for future development. Graham (2011) asserts 'identifying and following discursive traces leads one back to the knowledge domain upon which the statement relies for its intelligibility...' (p.671).

Furthermore, the concept and significance of a historically located discourse was explored through researching education legislation and policy documents which appeared to capture the changing landscape, positionings of EPs and available discourses constructing the profession of educational psychology. This includes the Summerfield Report (1968), Warnock Report (1978), HCPC professional guidelines (2012), Children and families Bill (2013) and the Reconstructing psychology discourse (Gillham 1978, 1999), which have been explored as part of the critical reflection in the discussion chapter; however this is not an exhaustive list.

Finally, taking a Foucauldian approach to CDA also opens up the possibility of multi disciplinary work and cross contextual partnerships, as analysis considers a broader picture and is not confined to a particular field (Jansen, 2008). Graham (2011) asserts that methodologies encompassing a Foucauldian perspective can be especially influential amongst educators as the analytical process does not take knowledge as a given. The relationships between the macro and micro discourses or individual and wider discourses are of particular interest and a Foucauldian approach to CDA promotes the significance of these interactions.

### **Pilot study**

A pilot study was carried out initially in order to investigate the framework of the interview procedure. The quantity and pattern of interview questions was explored. A trainee EP (TEP) participated in a pilot interview. The TEP was presented with an information sheet and asked to complete a consent form prior to the interview (appendix 1.2 & 1.3). A Dictaphone was used to record the participants' responses.

Initially it was thought a two phase approach to interview questioning might facilitate greater exploration. The proposed phases were as follows;

- Phase one: Asking participants to talk about a piece of case work which they have found challenging.
- Phase two: Asking participants about their thoughts around their Educational Psychology Service's (EPS) values and specific value statement.

This idea has since been reviewed. The revised approach involved asking the open ended question proposed in phase one and then to analyse the responses and explore how the EPs talk about challenging case work relates to the wider discourses (Willig, 2008). It was decided that taking a more implicit approach to investigating the relationship between EPs talk about their work and their professional values would be more fruitful when trying to gain an understanding of the discourse that shapes their professional identity.

As part of the pilot study a meeting was arranged with an EP who had conducted their doctoral research in the area of identity and used critical discourse analysis. The EP shared their experiences of the research process and was extremely helpful in answering questions relating to the strengths and weaknesses of discursive approaches. This conversation also put a pragmatic slant on how to approach the research and the need to be realistic about what could be achieved in the time frame available. For instance selecting fewer participants to allow for a more in depth interpretation of the data was a key issue, which arose from the discussions. In addition the meeting facilitated a space to explore new ideas and critique existing ones. This dialogic exchange helped to develop my thinking around the research and being asked questions supported my own reflections and understanding of what was motivating my interest in the current research area.

## **Procedures**

### *Participants*

For the purpose of this study EPs in a city authority in the north of England were recruited. Participants were sent an email invitation asking if they would like to take part in the research. All EP email addresses are made public and accessible to colleagues therefore this process did not involve any breaches of privacy. Opportunity sampling was used to recruit participants for the research.

Three individuals were selected to be interviewed. Previously it was thought that participant selection would be based on the length of time working as an EP, the length of time working for the EPS, and the age and gender of the individual. The intention was to select a diverse cohort of participants and capture varying ideals, values and approaches to working. However on reflection and due to the interest in the research area and subsequent high numbers of volunteers, it was decided that a random sampling method would be more effective in ensuring that no one discourse was privileged over another. Once names were chosen individuals were contacted and an interview schedule was organised in accordance with the EPs' diaries.

The participants' responses were then analysed to the point of saturation. The number of participants being analysed has been selected due to time constraints and the desire to carryout in depth analysis on fewer samples of data.

As I work amongst EPs in the setting proposed for the research there may be implications regarding uptake and participation. Careful consideration was given when presenting the research idea, methodology, confidentiality procedures and opportunities for feedback. These factors have been identified as part of the ethics process and included in the documents submitted to the ethics committee (refer to appendix 1.1 for a copy of the letter granting ethical approval).

#### *Data collection*

The data was collected using interviews. Each interview lasted approximately one hour. The timing was flexible and revolved around the participants' responses and the length at which each individual wished to discuss the topic area. The interviews involved asking an open-ended question with the aim of encouraging the participant to talk freely and openly. The question presented was '*could you tell me about a case which you have found challenging?*' Guiding questions were also considered and were to be used where appropriate to help facilitate responses. Examples would be 'What would you like to do differently?' and 'What made you choose this particular case?' The intention was to keep any additional questions and researcher talk to a minimum to allow participants to engage in free associative talk.

The interviews took place in a private room within the EPS itself to allow for maximum flexibility and convenience for the individuals involved. The individuals were familiar with the interview setting as many of the rooms are used for meetings or private working. It is understood that the location of the interviews may affect the responses given by the EPs. For instance, being interviewed within the EPS

may influence the type of discursive constructions presented as some individuals may have felt obligated to give a certain response and/or been prompted to think more acutely about a certain aspect due to being 'in situ'. The study by Kenny (2010) has been particularly informative when considering my own positionality within the research and how to utilise the experience of being in situ whilst undertaking the current project. The role and importance of researcher reflexivity and subjectivity has been explored throughout the research as recollections occurred.

### *Field notes*

As I work within the organisation, notes were taken in relation to references made to organisational and professional identity and values as part of service delivery meetings. The EPS has demonstrated a keen interest into the implication of values on practice and expressed the desire to uncover some common themes which they hoped in turn could be transformed into a set of group core values. This expression of interest at a service level will be investigated further as part of the analysis and discussion, in conjunction with alternative discourses which feature at various levels, including individual (interviews), local authority (value statements) and policy documents (e.g. HCPC, refer to document section below for more details on documents). In addition I will also make a note of any documentation that is referred to by staff that may contribute to thoughts and interpretations.

### *Research diary*

A diary was kept as part of the research process and this served several functions. It included ongoing records of thoughts, ideas and questions, which arose throughout the research journey. It has supported reflexive practice, which is extremely important when considering how my own values and assumptions have impacted on interpretations of the data. The diary has also helped to provide evidence for emerging patterns of thought and possible connections that surfaced as a result. Having a detailed overview of the process is very useful when trying to piece together large bodies of work.

## **Ethical considerations**

An ethics application was submitted prior to collecting any data. Only once this had been verified and passed did data collection commence. An enquiry was made to the Principal EP (PEP) in the EPS proposed for involvement in the current research. Questions were asked relating to the ethical procedures in place and any protocol that needed to be followed before embarking on the research project. In this instance the research was agreed by the PEP and they reported they were satisfied with the University's ethics procedures.

The British Psychological Society (BPS) ethical guidelines were adhered to throughout the duration of the research. Participants were required to read, complete and sign the information and consent form prior to any participation in the research. Furthermore individuals taking part were given the opportunity to be debriefed once the research was completed. This process offered those involved with the chance to learn about the analysis and interpretations and offer feedback before the final thesis was written.

All participant information will be kept confidential when documented. Individuals will be given a pseudonym to protect their identity. Any information kept electronically will be stored securely.

## **Interview analysis**

Willig's (2008) guidance in conjunction with Parker's reference to the historical location of discourses has been incorporated to form the analytical framework for the current research project. Figure 1.1 illustrates the framework applied to the analysis and the six stages proposed by Willig (2008) have been adapted for the current research project (see figure 1.2 for Willig's six stages). In respect to FDA it appears adaptation of the methodology is not uncommon and in some cases construction of a hybrid method is encouraged provided the researcher gives a detailed account of how the analysis progressed (Taylor, 2001). Subsequently, figure 1.1 was created to depict the intersection of these theories and went on to inform how I engaged with the transcripts, whilst keeping in mind the connections between the discursive objects which emerged from the EPs' talk and discourses located outside of these individual dialogues.

Points one to six below relate directly to figure 1.1 and aim to elaborate on the elements depicted in the diagram. The text was analysed using a Foucauldian approach to critical discourse analysis. The following process was involved in the analysis:

1) In the first instance the interview data was analysed by first transcribing the interview recordings verbatim. All names of the EPs interviewed and the individuals they talked about were anonymised to ensure confidentiality.

2) Free association was initially used when annotating and analysing the interviews. This involved raising questions, reflections and making comments on the transcripts (refer to appendix 1.4, 1.5 & 1.6 for examples of the annotations). This stage was completed individually in the first instance. Willig (2008) asserts discourse analysis involves a particular 'way of reading' which is interested in exploring what the 'text is doing' and as such this process requires the researcher to interact with the text as though it was a social action (p. 93). Parker (1992) conveys asserting;

'Discourse research strikes a critical distance from language, and one useful aspect of the approach is the reflexivity urged upon a researcher, and reader. When discourse analysts read texts they are continually putting what they read into quotation marks: 'Why was this said, and not that? Why these words, and where do the connotations of the words fit with different ways of talking about the world?' (p.1).

Furthermore, Parker (1992) advocates for free association being carried out at some stage with an 'other', subsequently the EPs talk was later explored in conjunction with my research supervisor. The act of free association in a partnership encompassed opportunities for joint critical reflection. This involved practising referring to the talk as an object and exploring the discursive constructions, as well as offers of challenge in respect to individual assumptions which emerged. I found this experience extremely valuable as space for peer inter-subjectivity was facilitated. This process aided the creative construction of dialogic exchanges, which led to multiple sense-making possibilities connected with how the interviewees talk was speaking to the discursive object: EPs' professional identity.

3) For the current research the interviewees were asked to talk about a piece of casework they had found challenging. The rationale for not posing the direct question 'how is your professional identity constructed?' was to allow for a more intricate analysis of what might arise and be responsible for the construction of professional identity. Furthermore, it was felt that the talk may present a more

biased constructive offering, should EPs be asked to talk specifically about their identity. Through analysing the talk about the challenges of casework connections, positionings and subjectivities can be addressed and used to build a picture of how the professional self is shaped.

Burr (1995) explains 'numerous discourses surround any object and each strives to represent or construct it in a different way' (p. 49). The implicit and explicit discursive constructions relating to the research question were identified within the interviews (refer to table 1.1 - 1.3 for an example from each interview). The implicit and explicit discursive constructions contribute to the shaping of the discursive object: the EPs' professional identity. This process investigated the talk where EPs referred to their role directly and the occurrences where the talk about professional identity was more implicit. This procedure also encompassed identifying and colour coding the social actors that 'showed up' in the talk, as they contributed to the implicit construction of the discursive object (see appendix 1.4, 1.5 & 1.6 for an example of colour coding used to identify the social actors constructing the EPs' identity).

4) The implicit and explicit discursive constructions were then explored in relation to the steps in figure 1.2 and thinking was informed by the works of Willig (2008) and Parker (1999). The dominant discursive constructions were identified by looking through the transcripts and noticing patterns of similarity and difference. This led to the emergence of possible clusters of/relationships between discursive constructions and suggestions of a collective title, which best represented how the talk appeared to be engaging with the research question (refer to page 74 for an example of this in respect to how the unique discursive constructions relate to a wider discourse). The questions posed by Willig (2008) as part of the six stage guide were adapted to explore how educational psychologist's professional identities are constructed by the discourses available to them. In addition, Parker's (1992) steps have helped to shape the consideration of discourses over time. The relationships between the individual EPs' talk and wider discourses which are historically located have been captured in more depth in the 'five wider discourses' section and as part of the discussion chapter.

5) The findings from the individual interviews have been reported separately in the first instance and then the various discursive constructions have been summarised. Similarities and distinctions have been investigated as part of this stage. The findings have been structured in the order that Willig presents the six steps.

Willig's (2008) guidance for presenting the findings of a critical discourse analysis have been followed (p.112-118). As such illuminating quotes have been incorporated within the writing to



make the rationale for the interpretation clearer to the reader. Each quote has been located along with the transcription line numbers.

6) The wider discourses (step two in figure 1.2) appearing to shape EPs professional identities have emerged over the course of the research. The literature review and stages of analysis have contributed to the highlighting of wider discourses. For instance where a particular author, article or policy has been a dominant feature this has led to further understanding of where the individual discourses are situated within their wider counterparts.

In this instance, the discursive constructions of EPs' professional identity from the individual interviews were located within the wider discourses and have been examined as part of the 'five wider discourses' (page 91) and 'discussion' (page 88) sections of the current research. Critically reflecting on the connections between the individual discursive constructions and literature interpreted as speaking to the wider discourses, aims to illustrate the complex interaction between the discourses available to EPs at individual, group and organisational levels.

### **Analytical strengths and short comings**

In contrast to some other approaches FDA does not offer clear guidelines in respect to analysing the data, subsequently a critique of FDA relates to the unstructured, open ended nature of the approach. It seems reasonable that a methodology born of a post-structuralist epistemology, would warrant one approach that explicitly considers the need to be flexible and adapt to the circumstances of the research question at the time. This however could be an unsettling and off-putting concept for researchers new to the methodology. On the other hand it suggests room for growth and puts an emphasis on the researcher to engage with a responsibility for the analytical framework. However, there has also been discussion relating to the 'exclusionary effect'. This refers to the reluctance of researchers to tangle with a Foucauldian approach due to a lack of explicit methodological instructions and for fear of reprisal at not having executed the analysis 'correctly' (Graham, 2011, p.664).

The literature suggests that there is a need to experience discourse analysis and that by engaging directly in the analysis it is possible to begin to better understand the process (Graham, 2011).

In respect to tackling the analysis and how to minimise limitations, Antaki et al. (2003) outline six analytical shortcomings when undertaking discourse analysis. These points will need to be reflected upon at a deeper level when embarking on the analysis. The points include:

- Under analysis through summary
- Under analysis through taking sides
- Under analysis through over – quotation or isolated quota
- The circular discovery of a) discourses and b) mental constructs
- Under analysis through false survey
- Under analysis through spotting

Returning to the advantages, CDA does not ignore the context and FDA in particular allows the researcher to shift from a micro to macro lens intermittently thus creating an interface between social phenomena. FDA encourages the researcher to make connections across contexts and time. This then presents opportunities for meaning making of a fruitful nature and the potential to uncover relationships between data which might have been missed had another methodology been enlisted.

As previously mentioned there are no rigid instructions for carrying out FDA. Subsequently, various researchers have proposed pathways by which analysis could be undertaken (Willig, 2008, Parker, 1992). Parker (1992), Willig (2008) and Kendell, Wickman (1999) and Hall (1997) have each outlined stepped approaches to FDA. However Parker (1992) in particular emphasises that the steps are only an identification of key areas for distinguishing discourse and should not be viewed as prescriptive guidance (Morgan, 2010). Willig (2008) also discourages readers from subscribing rigidly to the guidelines offered in 'The Handbook of Qualitative Research in Psychology'. There is a danger of passively following analytical signposts set out by others without engaging in reflexive thinking when instead Morgan (2010) argues 'discourse analysis is more than just a methodology - it is a philosophy, a way of being' (p. 1).

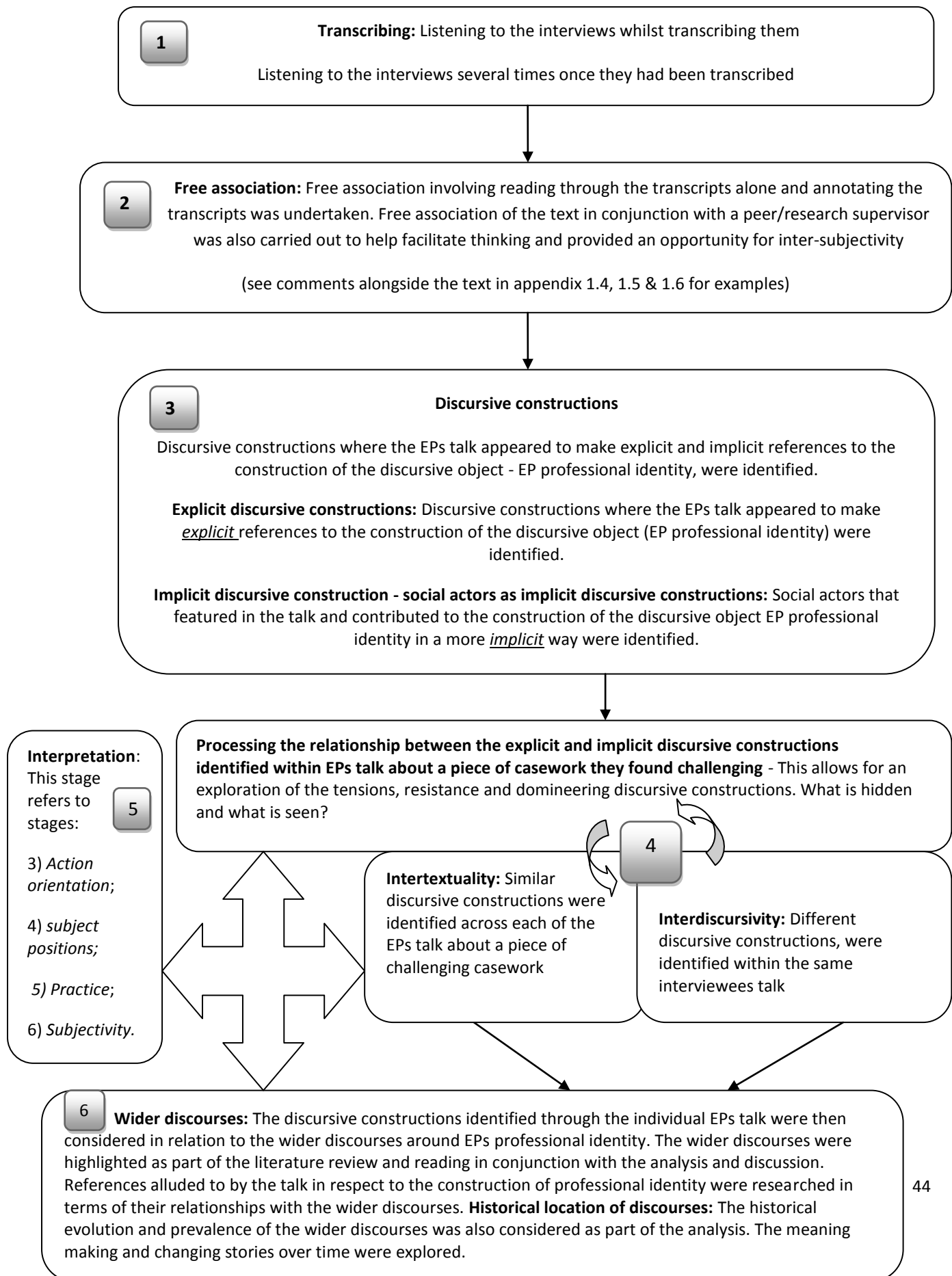
It is extremely important to grapple with the landscape of FDA and negotiate the multiple suggestions in respect to analysis before settling on the most suitable combination. Morgan (2010) posits each variation proposed demonstrates strengths and weaknesses, once again reinforcing that the responsibility lies with the researcher to tailor the methodology to research question at hand.

## **Robustness**

Qualitative methods continue to increase in popularity and literature evidences that levels of respectability and credibility have increased more rapidly of late within the social sciences and beyond (Yardley, 2000). Qualitative methods appear to be searching for a stronghold amongst disciplines, which are considered more rooted in empirical methodologies (Yardley, 2000). Studies applying qualitative techniques are taking root and generating new perspectives. They have done this by motivating discussions, which validate the need to consider the reasons for the investigation as opposed to selecting a methodology based on preference or levels of exposure. The existence of a dichotomy where research methods are concerned is too simplistic and leaves the researcher in danger of limiting investigations and interpretations.

This said the current research question warrants a qualitative approach and in order to maximise the integrity of the research the qualitative quality criteria will be considered and adhered to wherever possible. The 'Big tent' criteria (Tracy, 2010) will be used to guide the credibility and quality of the research. In addition peer examination of the data and reviews will be sought to elicit critical questions and deeper reflexive thinking around the claims made in regards to the interpretations.

**Figure. 1.1 An overview of steps taken when engaging with a Foucauldian approach to Critical Discourse Analysis**



**Figure 1.2 Willig's six stages of Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA) which incorporates Parker's (1992) reference to historically located discourses.**

	<b>Willig's six stages of Foucauldian discourse analysis</b>	<b>Willig's steps re-constructed to include the specifics of the current research question</b>
Stage 1	Discursive constructions	How is the EPs professional identity constructed?
Stage 2	Discourses – 'locating the various discursive constructions within the wider discourses'  <i>Parker's (1992) reference to 'historically located discourses' has been incorporated in the analysis process in relation to stage two when thinking about the relationships between the wider discourses and individual discursive constructions.</i>	How is the professional identity of EPs, as constructed in the talk about a challenging piece of case work located within the wider discourses?
Stage 3	Action orientation	What is gained from selecting a particular discursive object to construct the discourse?  What is invested in constructing a discourse in a certain way and subsequently taking up a position? What is referenced implicitly and explicitly?
Stage 4	Subject positions	How do EPs position themselves and how are they positioned in the wider discourses?
Stage 5	Practice	What are the possibilities for action contained within the discursive constructions identified within the text?
Stage 6	Subjectivity	What can be felt, thought and experienced from within various subject positions?

Discourse analysis appears somewhat encumbered by a reputation of being a 'free for all' approach (Morgan, 2010 & Graham, 2011). This perception may be associated with examples of poor analysis

hindered not necessarily due to the skills of the researcher per se but related to the complicated multiplicitous nature of such an analysis (Antaki, Billig, Edwards & Potter, 2003).

As mentioned previously, six key areas identifying what is thought to be unskilled practice where discourse analysis is concerned have been written about (Antaki et al. 2003). Exploring these specific pitfalls in conjunction with the Big Tent Criteria (Tracy, 2010) could stimulate critical reflection prior to embarking on the analysis. Additionally, making the arguments explicit raises the reader's awareness that these issues have been contemplated prior to the analysis, subsequently, increasing the levels of transparency and subsequently, credibility.

### **Chapter summary**

In summary, this chapter has investigated a variety of elements considered integral to undertaking this piece of research, with the aim of presenting a clearer picture of how the research has developed in both a theoretical and practical sense. A critique of the frameworks incorporating discourse analysis has attempted to demonstrate the diversity associated with this methodology. This had been undertaken alongside the somewhat problematic, yet in the same instance potentially liberating feat of undertaking this type of analytical expedition.

## Chapter Four: Analysis and Interpretations

### **Introduction**

The analysis and interpretation of the research will be structured initially by providing an over view of the individual discursive constructions that emerged as a part of the analysis of each interview (stage one). Secondly a summary of the key discursive constructions identified as contributing to the shaping of EPs professional identity will be presented. Finally, the interviews will be explored in direct relation to stages two to six of Willig's guide to CDA taking a Foucauldian approach.

The works of Willig (2008) and Parker (1992) have informed the steps taken in order to analyse the talk and texts gathered for the current project. Please refer to figures 1.1 and 1.2 in conjunction with this chapter for a detailed overview of the analytical process undertaken.

The literature indicates that in order to develop the necessary skills when taking a Foucauldian approach to CDA, researchers are encouraged to seize the task of analysis and interact with the challenges, which present themselves. It is through this often challenging process that clarity of understanding can be gained.

The framework enlisted as a guide for the current analysis (refer to figures 1.1 & 1.2) allows for a critical lens to be adopted. Critical psychology is a growing field and offers EPs a pioneering platform from which to problematise practise (Gillham, 1978, Billington, 2000).

This initial stage of the research process is demanding as embarking on the analysis requires and inspires multi level thinking when considering aspects of the discursive constructions and wider discourses currently being focused on. Due to the need to capture various factors, which mediate and contribute to the construction of discourses a substantial amount of time and care needs to be taken in order to attempt to gain a richer understanding. Analysis involves exploring how the discursive object is illuminated and concealed amongst the competing and conflicting discursive constructions and where they feature in the tapestry of wider discourses. At the same time, meaning can be established through the interplay between each context, layer and thread. It is important to take space and time to reflect on what appears and re appears when analysing the data. Subsequently, it is crucial to extend the analysis to oneself and participate in the process of reflexivity so as not to lose sight of the potential to be influenced by one's own experiences.

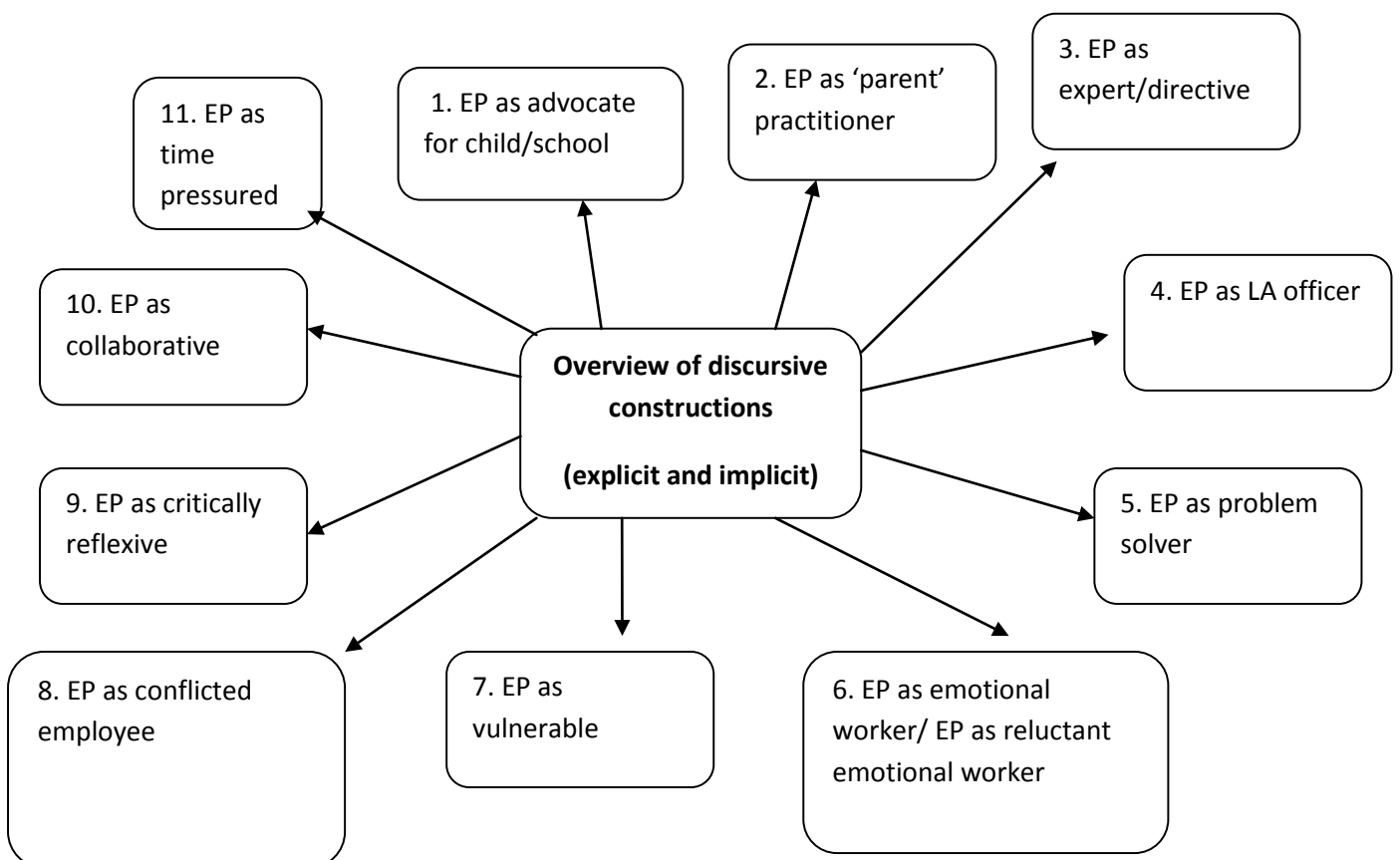
## Stage one

### *Overview of discursive constructions*

The analytical process guided by the steps outlined in figure 1.1 and 1.2 helped to identify the discursive constructions within the text of each interview. An overview of the discursive constructions from each EP has been included to inform the analytical narrative for each individual.

It is through the process of unpicking the discursive constructions that the analysis begins to take shape, as these constructions contribute to the meaning making around a particular perceived reality or truth. Taking into consideration both the implicit and explicit reference to the discursive object, positioning and subjectivities allows exploration of the discourses contributing to the construction of identity; in this instance professional identity is the area of interest.

**Figure 1.3 Overview of discursive constructions for Interview One**





**Table 1.1 Examples of implicit and explicit discursive constructions of the discursive object (EPs' professional identity) were identified in Interview One**

For each discursive construction identified, an example of either an explicit or implicit construction has been provided.

Number	Discursive construction	Explicit discursive construction	Implicit discursive construction
1	EP as advocate for child		'So for example, we talked about football, he loves football and he was talking about, erm how good he was there and we talked about being a team player and taking responsibility and letting other people take their turn and all that kind of a thing and how that might transfer' (line 69-73).
2	EP as 'parent' practitioner		'Erm, you need to think you know sort of he is your child and I'm sure you want him to do well, I'm sure you want, you know, to look after him and for him to develop and do well in school' (line 134 - 137).
3	EP as expert/directive	'I just think the job really, my role is to solicit information gathering, get the views of the people involved but then to observe and then maybe do some work and then to begin to use psychology to think about how I could add extra intervention. Or how I am understanding the issue and to offer some hypotheses and formulation about what's happening, erm once I've got all the information. Whether that's more doing a sort of piece of case work or something a bit more formal like a, it's like a total assessment' (line 410 - 418).	
4	EP as LA officer	'I feel I sort of come to work and almost when I put the badge on, the badge around my neck, then I'm sort of in my persona and I'm an EP then,	

		Erm that's the way I co-ordinate myself to the point where if you go out for lunch or something you take the badge off and you're like a civilian, you're like a normal person again' (line 217 - 222).	
5	<b>EP as problem solver</b>	'I was quite keen to move forward and to continue to support and I felt some support was needed there to maybe sort of pull the situation forward' (line 58 - 60).	
6	<b>EP as emotional worker/EP as reluctant emotional worker</b>		'Erm, and it was all the negativity of dad, dad was so negative and initially at the start he was saying, oh you know there's lots of issues but I'll let the boy's mum talk about them. And then he just proceeded to talk over her and just, erm, he did all the talking really, she said a few things' (line 27 - 31).
7	<b>EP as vulnerable</b>		'Maybe I felt I was not being professional, maybe I felt I was having a personal reaction and I don't tend to do that' (line 168 - 170).
8	<b>EP as conflicted employee</b>	'I guess you have that professional persona about I'm an EP and this is the way that I work and you go in as a man and you have your shirt on and you're part of a thing and you have your uniform as it were, and your title. Erm, and maybe I felt that I was straying from that to be a person, maybe that felt uncomfortable as well, erm, I'm not sure' (line 171 - 175).	
9	<b>EP as critically reflexive practitioner</b>		'It's just understanding as well school's opinions and what their beliefs are and just that, I guess social construction, some underpinning, that everyone has their own views formed, definitely me included. I'm not separate from that at all, erm about the situation' (line 405 - 408).

10	EP as collaborative	'and that's again me making a judgement that my way of doing that [gathering views] is a positive one but hopefully if you are using sort of consultation with people rather than acting as the expert and saying this is what you should do, erm, understanding their context perhaps in their own situations, I see more. Hopefully I ask the right questions and try and effect some change in those ways, rather than erm telling people that I know best about their lives and I've only met them for half a day or something like that' (line 426 - 432).	
11	EP as time pressured	'we have quite sort of a strict time allocation system, I discussed with the school and said, you know this will be extra time, it'll be additional, erm which again is something I tend to be quite strict with' (line 62 - 64).	

***Summary of how the EP's professional identity was constructed through their talk about a challenging piece of case work (Interview One)***

The analysis has generated reflections in respect to what has been made explicit and implicit in the talk and which discursive constructions correspond to these categories. The talk analysed in Interview One highlighted eleven discursive constructions, which have been presented in Table 1.1.

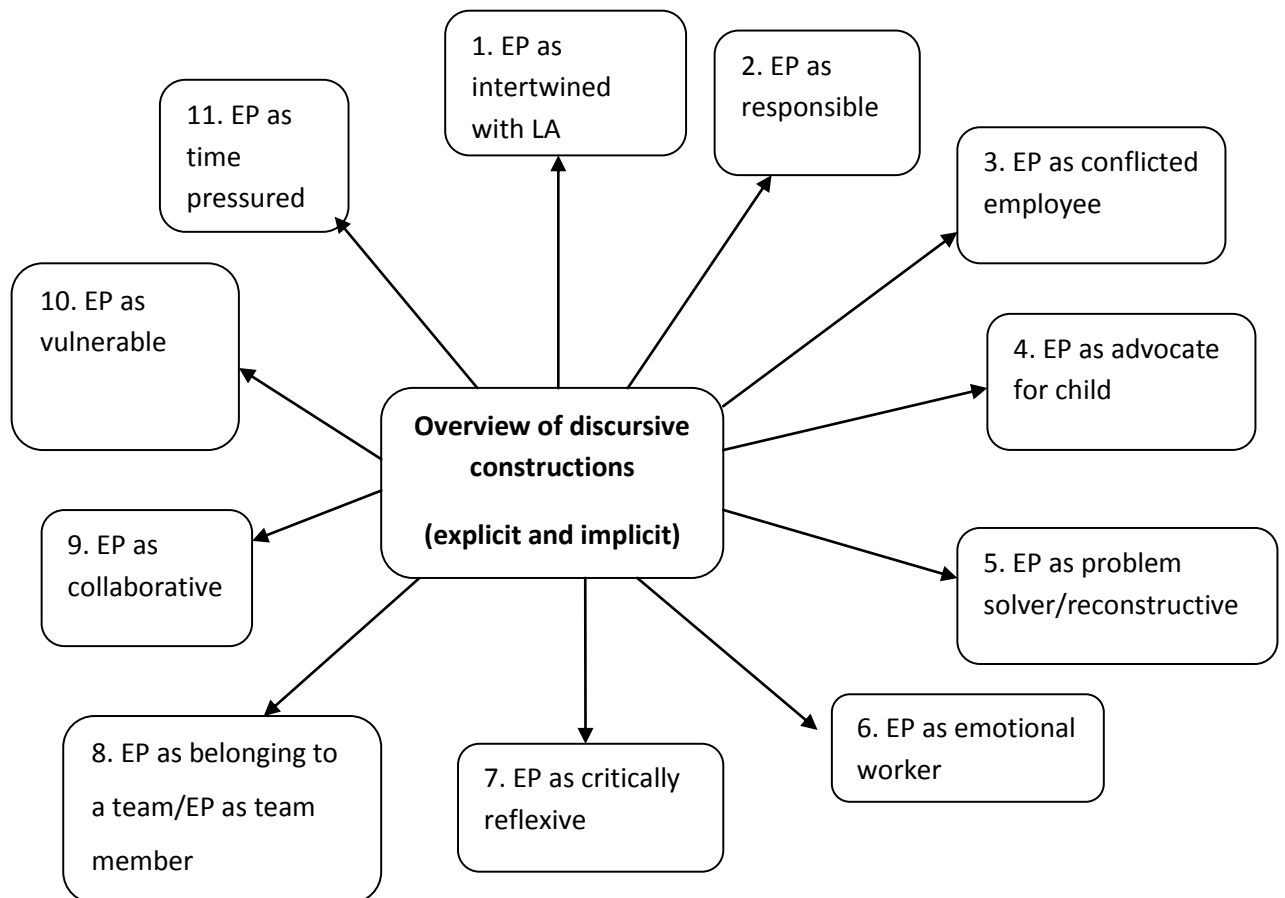
The explicit discursive constructions, which emerged through the analysis of the talk in Interview One, suggest that there is a conscious, controlled and cautious portrayal of the EP and their professional identity. This occurs alongside the more implicit discursive constructions that reference the part played by emotions when involved in a challenging piece of case work. This has been an interesting area to consider when unpicking the various discursive constructions and the part they play in constructing the professional identity of the EP. This occurs in conjunction with how sense is made of the opportunities and positions facilitated or restricted by the discursive constructions.

The implicit discursive constructions were uncovered through the identification of the social actors within the talk. The interview question did not ask the EPs explicitly about their professional identity and as such examining the talk about 'others' (social actors) helped to widen the understanding of how this was constructed.

In the first interview the analysis shows that, the EP's professional identity was constructed using several key social actors. These included: school - the SENCo in particular, the parents and child involved in the case work - greater weight seemed to be placed on the role of the father and the Local Authority (LA). The identification of various social actors reinforces the complexity relating to the EP role, as multiple stakeholders are enmeshed in the working world of an EP. Subsequently this can create tensions and dilemmas in respect to methods of practising as an EP and who is viewed as the client.

The talk in Interview One appeared to evidence the need to create firm professional boundaries. This seemed to be associated with the EP detaching themselves from any challenging feelings relating to casework this links to the identification of 'EP as a resistant emotional worker'. The talk suggests the EP as playing a role and thus creating a distinct professional persona is extremely important. The division of personal and professional selves may act as a protective and/or coping mechanism.

**Figure 1.4 Overview of discursive constructions for Interview Two**



**Table 1.2 Examples of implicit and explicit discursive constructions of the discursive object (EPs' professional identity) were identified in Interview Two**

Number	Discursive construction	Explicit discursive construction	Implicit discursive construction
1	<b>EP as intertwined with LA</b>	'that historically the way things have been done and historically the way we (EP and LA casework officers) communicate as two teams or erm a bit of fear on both sides about erm ability for each other to understand each other's position' (line 243-246).	
2	<b>EP as responsible</b>	'and I think I found that probably the most challenging because it felt like quite a, you are so setting this young person up on a bit of a path and I suppose my sense of responsibility came from the fact that we are certainly not decision makers in any way but we are adding to that story and that understanding and going along with the flow of what's already been said or trying to diverge it off which brings a new strain into it' (line 35 -41).	
3	<b>EP as conflicted employee</b>		'and then after that what I found very challenging was that I felt that it was, the complexity of it was understood by the Receiving Officer who was responsible to kind of look into it all, that they made a very very quick decision based on one phone call to parents, what do you want, the psychologist hasn't really come off the fence here, what do you want, you want that or that and then that unearthed a plethora of difficulties with that receiving school' (line 63 - 69).
4	<b>EP as advocate for the child</b>		'and really really tried to listen to what he was trying to tell me even though he was struggling to know what he was trying to tell me anyway' (line 47 - 49).

5	<b>EP as problem solver/reconstructive</b>		'and trying to represent that and trying to put that on balance, trying to unpick the ethics of going along with a child who has obviously got erm difficulties with experience, difficulties with the education system and what they want versus what the adults around him want, what his family want' (line 49 - 53).
6	<b>EP as emotional worker</b>	'I think it's very easy to identify with human emotions especially in our job and it's very easy to feel and to empathise with another person's experience'(132 - 134).	
7	<b>EP as critically reflexive</b>		'I feel like you are always trying to make sure that your motivations are where they should be at and that your intentions are where they should be at and you are not because when you spend that length of time with the young person you can get quite involved with their story and you can, there's certain parts which you will attune to and you will hear that will mean something to you, because of your own professional background or personal background' (82 - 88).
8	<b>EP as belonging to a team/  EP as team member</b>	'the access with peers here, the time is very much given to you know you've got an hour, an hour and fifteen minutes to explore a specific aspect of a specific case with peers. And it is a very erm, open kind of there's no answers expected, there's no so what are you now going to do about this? Erm, and again in respect, such a rich perspective because you have maybe got seven other psychologists there all giving their views or not giving their views, just asking specific questions or just listening. And it's such a rich experience that it enables you to engage with something that can be	

		quite thick and quite dense, maybe a technique or perspective, take a step back, take a new look at it, but it enabled that' (289 - 299).	
<b>9</b>	<b>EP as collaborative</b>	'if you are sitting opposite a very experienced head or very experienced teacher who is being very trusted and honest and very raw in terms of their experience working with this young person, and has very very clear views as to where they should go (...) I think it's our job in my opinion to sit alongside that and not be, I am coming along to hear what you are going to say and then I will go away and find if there's truth in it or not' (line 135-140).	
<b>10</b>	<b>EP as vulnerable</b>		'so for me they were probably the key part and enabled me to even feel quite okay with what I had written and how I had presented it instead of feeling like really I've not done very well here or I've missed something or I've not been able to answer what I was asked. I was able to you know do the final full stop, hit print, sign it, give it in and feel do you know what... all was in place I've really done what I can do and that's okay' (line 312 - 318).
<b>11</b>	<b>EP as time pressured</b>	'well that would be a massive luxury of time, where would that come from, that's not realistic' (line 668-669).	

***Summary of how the EP's professional identity was constructed through their talk about a challenging piece of case work (Interview Two)***

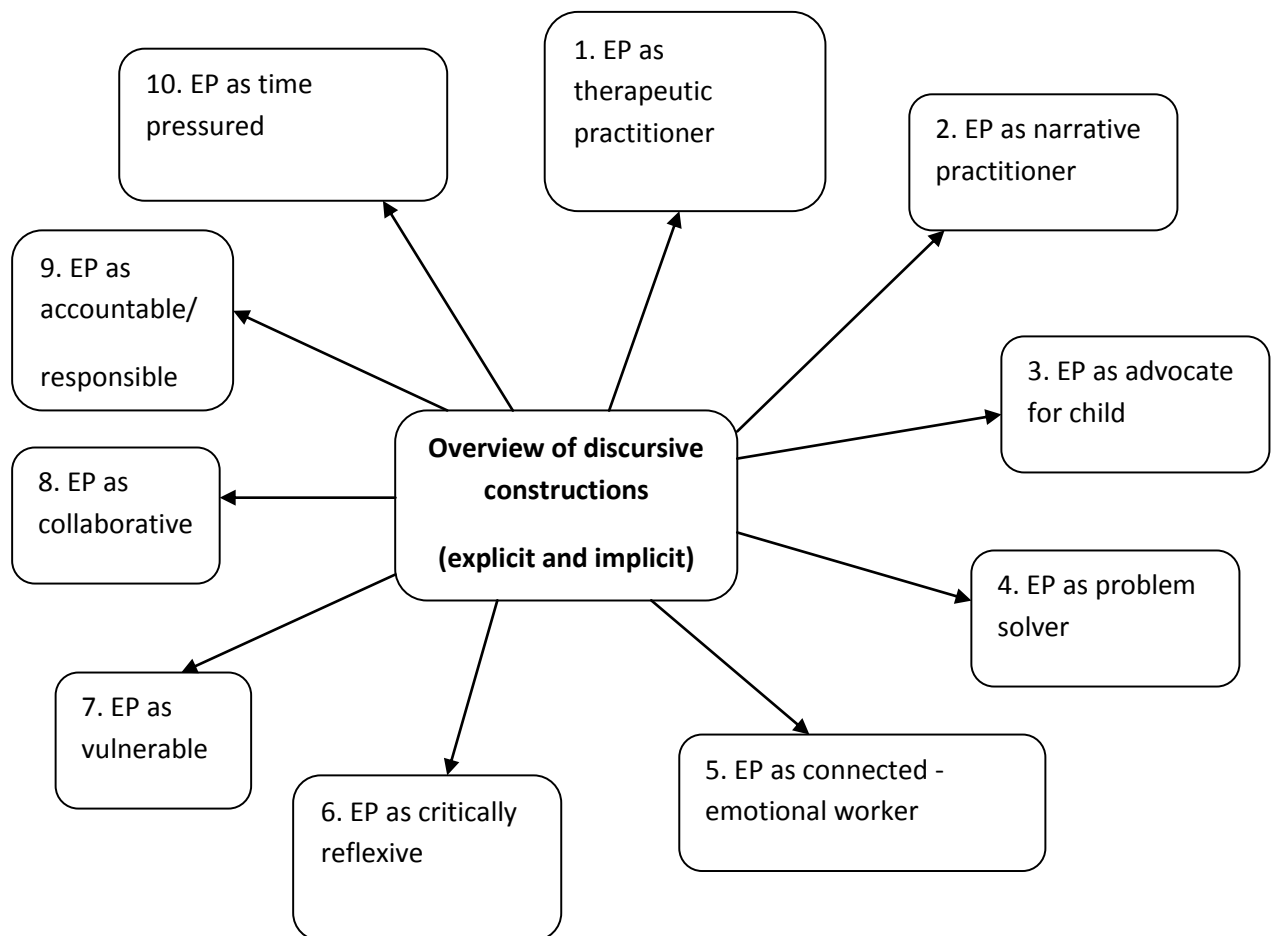
The analysis uncovered eleven discursive constructions which appeared to be interlinked with the EP's professional identity and have been presented in Table 1.2. The search for implicit and explicit references provided an interesting perception of the different aspects used to reference role and professional identity. There appears to be an emphasis placed on the discursive construction of 'being responsible' and wanting to 'advocate for the child'. The discursive construction of EP as a

'problem solver' suggested the EP as not only driving positive change for the child but also contributing to the reconstruction of wider LA discourse around working relationships between EPs and casework officers (lines 212-218). The discursive construction of being 'intertwined with the LA' was a dominant feature in the EP's talk.

In addition the discursive construction concerning 'EP as an emotional worker' became apparent when analysing the text. For instance, the function of the discursive construction seems to be associated with the practicalities of being mindful of the presence of emotions and the importance of critical reflection in order to remain aware of the impact their views may have on decision making. The 'EP as emotional worker' highlights the need to acknowledge the emotive nature of certain situations and how they interact with experiences. It also appears the talk promotes EPs as not being disconnected from these types of intensive interactions.

The following social actors were identified within the EP talk in Interview Two. These included: colleagues, EPs and casework officers, the child and family and school.

**Figure 1.5 Overview of discursive constructions for Interview Three**





**Table 1.3 Examples of implicit and explicit discursive constructions of the discursive object (EPs' professional identity) were identified in Interview Three**

Number	Discursive construction	Explicit discursive construction	Implicit discursive construction
1	<b>EP as therapeutic practitioner</b>		'I just loved the idea of externalising things because when we did all these activities on our training it just felt like such a great way off, erm ... giving permission to talk about things, erm ... distancing yourself from the issue but also really getting into the issue in a way that feels hopefully and in my experience when I have done it myself feels less personal, less threatening, less blaming, erm ... so I suppose yeah there is a sense, erm ... of wanting to use that approach and feeling that approach would be helpful here' (line 207 - 214).
2	<b>EP as narrative practitioner</b>	'I have got into narrative stuff and the more that I have used it here the more it feels like it's a way of being and how do you begin to move towards that way of being and how do you begin to move towards that way of being, I guess my question for them where am I on that way of being in the moment and what pulls me into a narrative approach' (line 201 - 205).	
3	<b>EP as advocate for child</b>	'for this young person and I guess the sort of sub-question of that has been around areas of my practice, why the narrative that I wanted to develop and being comfortable that those fit are appropriate, you know that it feels okay to be using those approaches in this case and that that's, erm ... helpful for	

		me but predominantly its led by more I think what the young person thinks is going to be helpful for them. (line 34-41)	
<b>4</b>	<b>EP as problem solver</b>	'I guess for me as a psychologist I felt that my work was about using some of these psychological approaches like narrative, like CBT and to look at, erm ... with [Name] some of the psychology of what is going on for her' (line 167 - 170).	
<b>5</b>	<b>EP as emotional worker</b>		'I think her response has been quite a quiet one and I guess that has left me with questions and wonderings about what do I then make of that, that quietness, erm ... she has engaged with me up to a point at the end of term there was a big disengagement in our work together which has been very challenging to manage and to think about what that might be about in terms of our, erm ... our relationship' (line 216 - 221).
<b>6</b>	<b>EP as critically reflexive</b>	'so I guess, I suppose there is in practice always that issue of how you navigate that really isn't it, and who is in charge and yeah I guess reflecting on the piece of work, that is still a big question because I don't think I could say with absolute confidence that this has been a piece of work that she has driven. Erm ... so there are questions about is the work being done with, is the work being done to, erm ... and I guess as I am sitting here thinking now, I am thinking there has been lots of done with moments. Erm ... but maybe also some done to moments, erm ... which I guess I will think about a bit more in a minute' (line 121 -	

		130).	
<b>7</b>	<b>EP as vulnerable</b>		'could I also make a story about that being about a fracture in our relationship, or erm ... a failing in my practice, a failing in my attunement as well, I am not sure. So I still have questions and wonderings about that, erm ... could I make a story about, could I have an interpretation about this being about endings and relationships and disconnections at the end of the year' (line 290 - 295).
<b>8</b>	<b>EP as collaborative</b>		'and I guess for me professionally thinking about again what is the psychology behind that which is about building awareness, understanding, opportunities to think, reflect, plan, put something into place. Erm ... and again sitting alongside that have been meetings with parents involving, erm ... initially involving just me and the SENCO but then trying to incorporate all of these other people, so we are trying to build a bit of a network really' (line 168 - 174).
<b>9</b>	<b>EP as accountable/ responsible</b>	'there is another big practice question for me in terms of the way that the work is at the moment and how it is about, erm ... about looking at the impact of what's, erm ... how we have worked in the relationship that we built and questions about, erm ... whether the intervention has been helpful or not, effective or not' (line 71 - 76).	
<b>10</b>	<b>EP as time pressured</b>		'I think it has been a really meaty piece of work as an educational psychologist, it's been unusual because

			you know it's not often you get to do quite so many sessions with a young person, quite so many sessions you know linking, erm ... maybe people who are supporting that young person as well' (328 - 332).
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***Summary of how the EP's professional identity was constructed through their talk about a challenging piece of casework (Interview Three)***

In Interview Three, ten discursive constructions were noted which have been displayed in Table 1.3. Alongside these, several social actors were identified, including: the child, the family (parents), the school (specifically the SENCo, a key worker and other pupils) and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) practitioners.

The discursive constructions identified in the talk of Interview Three focused on the EP as an emotional worker, applying therapeutic principles to supporting the child in question. There was specific reference to the use of Narrative Therapy (White & Epston, 1990) as an intervention that has been presented as the discursive construction 'EP as narrative practitioner'. The talk acknowledged the EP as being aware of their feelings and reflecting on the meaning of these in order to inform developments where the intervention was concerned as well as aiding the ability to be critically reflexive.

The discursive constructions contributed to the creation of a practitioner who appears to value 'connections' with others and places a lot of weight on the relationship between the EP and the stakeholders, in particular the child. This interpretation has been represented as 'EP as emotional worker'. In addition, the discursive construction of 'EP as advocate for the child' is present in the talk of Interviewee Three.

***Making sense of how the discursive constructions located within all three interviews contribute to the shaping of EPs' professional identities (discursive object)***

Each of the discursive constructions from the individual interviews has been captured allowing for further investigation into any connections, tensions and resonance with wider discourses.

Several overlapping discursive constructions were apparent within the body of text. Within the framework of discourse analysis the terms, interdiscursivity and intertextuality are used to describe the similarities identified within the text/transcripts (interdiscursivity) and across the different texts/transcripts (intertextuality). The discursive constructions emerged from the story of the professionals experiences whilst undertaking a piece of casework they considered challenging.

Furthermore, it is interesting to reflect that out of the three EPs interviewed there were different dominant discursive constructions. For example, Interview One included lengthy narratives around school whereas Interview Two frequently referred to the interactions between EPs and the LA structures and employees. Finally the talk in Interview Three contained varying references to critical reflection of using narrative approaches and the child's experiences of engaging with this type of intervention, specifically the interactions with the EP.

In particular, two interviewees made an explicit reference to their relationships or an experience they recalled with casework officers. This talk centred on the working practices between the two teams and the somewhat contrasting and conflicting roles and responsibilities. Furthermore, there was a stark acknowledgement from one EP that as a professional working for the LA they were mindful of the expectations and reflected on the apparent confusion relating to ownership and autonomy when working under a LA. The following quote illuminates this point;

'you always have to be mindful don't you of what question you are being asked in any given situation and I think the local authority have obviously a very very visible and strong watertight statutory assessment process and they are asking you as a paid employee please give us your view' (line 192 - 196, Interview Two).

Within the talk in Interview One references were made to the professional role and professional self, alongside specific identification of the emotional connection with the work and the rationale for distancing oneself from the situation.

A common discursive construction amongst each of the three interviewees talk was around time allocation from the EP service and how this was managed. Interestingly each of the stories selected for presentation by the EPs involved spending above and beyond the time usually dedicated and allowed. This may emphasise that more time spent involved is associated with a greater investment and an opportunity to establish relationships with stakeholders as part of the process. In connection with wider discourses, additional literature including the Warnock Report (DES, 1978), Summerfield Report (DES, 1968) and articles presented by practising EPs, have identified: time, capacity and ratio of EPs to children needing support as a long, standing issue for the profession.

Next, a discursive construction that seems to have a relationship with professional identity in each individual EPs interview text was that of 'EP as vulnerable'. It appeared the need to seek reassurance and maintain a distance was highlighted through the EPs' reflections on the actions they had taken (line 47-49, Interview One). There may be an undercurrent of anxiety related to the discursive construction, 'EP as vulnerable'. Additionally when examining this construction in respect to the LA, there are numerous attempts to distance and distinguish the professional role and identity of the EP from the LA officers. However, there also is a clear attempt to grapple with the problematic constructions and to reconstruct new positions and understanding of the professional differences and expertise;

'so I do think there's a bit of a difference in understanding but I think that could be resolved. I think we don't spend enough time as two teams kind of talking and interacting and seeking to understand each other' (line 212-215 Interview Two).

## **Stage two**

*How is the professional identity of EPs, as constructed in the talk about a challenging piece of casework located within the wider discourses?*

In order to embark on a fundamental part of what is associated with critical discourse analysis, and in this instance a methodology that draws upon a Foucauldian approach, it is essential to identify how, when and where the small/local discourses are located within the wider discourses.

## **The wider discourses identified as a result of the interviewees' talk about a challenging piece of casework**

There are five key wider discourses that were illuminated after carrying out the interview analysis. These included 'relational worker', 'scientist practitioner', 'research practitioner', 'Local Authority officer' and 'advocate for the child'. Each of the identified wider discourses have been investigated with the research question in mind - how are EPs professional identities constructed by the available discourses? This exploration involved exposing the links between the EPs individual talk and the meaning making on a larger scale, including the profession, other partners and social and historical contexts. There appears to be some overlap between the five wider discourses. However, in the interest of structure each discourse has been given an individual section so that the interpretations associated with each discourse can be made more explicit to the reader. The discussion also will also

consider some of the components of the five wider discourses in more detail as the historical context influencing the emerging discourse is of interest.

**Locating the discursive constructions within the wider discourses (refer to step six in figure 1.1 & two in figure 1.2)**

The importance of investigating the wider discourses is to expose the dominant 'knowledge's' that appear widespread in educational psychology. The gravity of this investigation is interlinked with the ideas of power and control, which have been prominent areas of focus for Foucault (1965). Burr (1995) discusses how power is affected by and a result of available discourses; 'we can exercise power by drawing upon discourses which allow our actions to be represented in an acceptable light' (p.65).

The most dominant discourses are often the most difficult to identify as they have become entrenched and interwoven within culture itself; subsequently they can become expertly concealed (Billington, 2000). This is especially the case if the discourse is serving a function and contributing to powerful acts and agendas of control and marginalisation (Foucault, 1965, Szasz, 1972). It is then ever important for EPs to consider what lies behind the scenes of the available discourses and why restrictions appear present (Desforges, Desforges & Desforges, 1995).

This process could open up possibilities when working with children, families and professionals to influence positive change. Furthermore, this critical stance contributes to maintaining the integrity of the profession and shaping EPs' identities. Finally, consideration of wider discourses has involved the positioning of EPs over time and the impact of these endeavours on professional identity construction.

*Wider discourses*

The following section attempts to outline the patterns that appear to have emerged between the individual and wider discourses. The interviewees' responses are considered and connections with discourses outside of the interviews are reflected upon.

The wider discourses that appear in figure 1.6 were identified through reflecting on the patterns which emerged when analysing the transcripts at an individual and group level, some of which

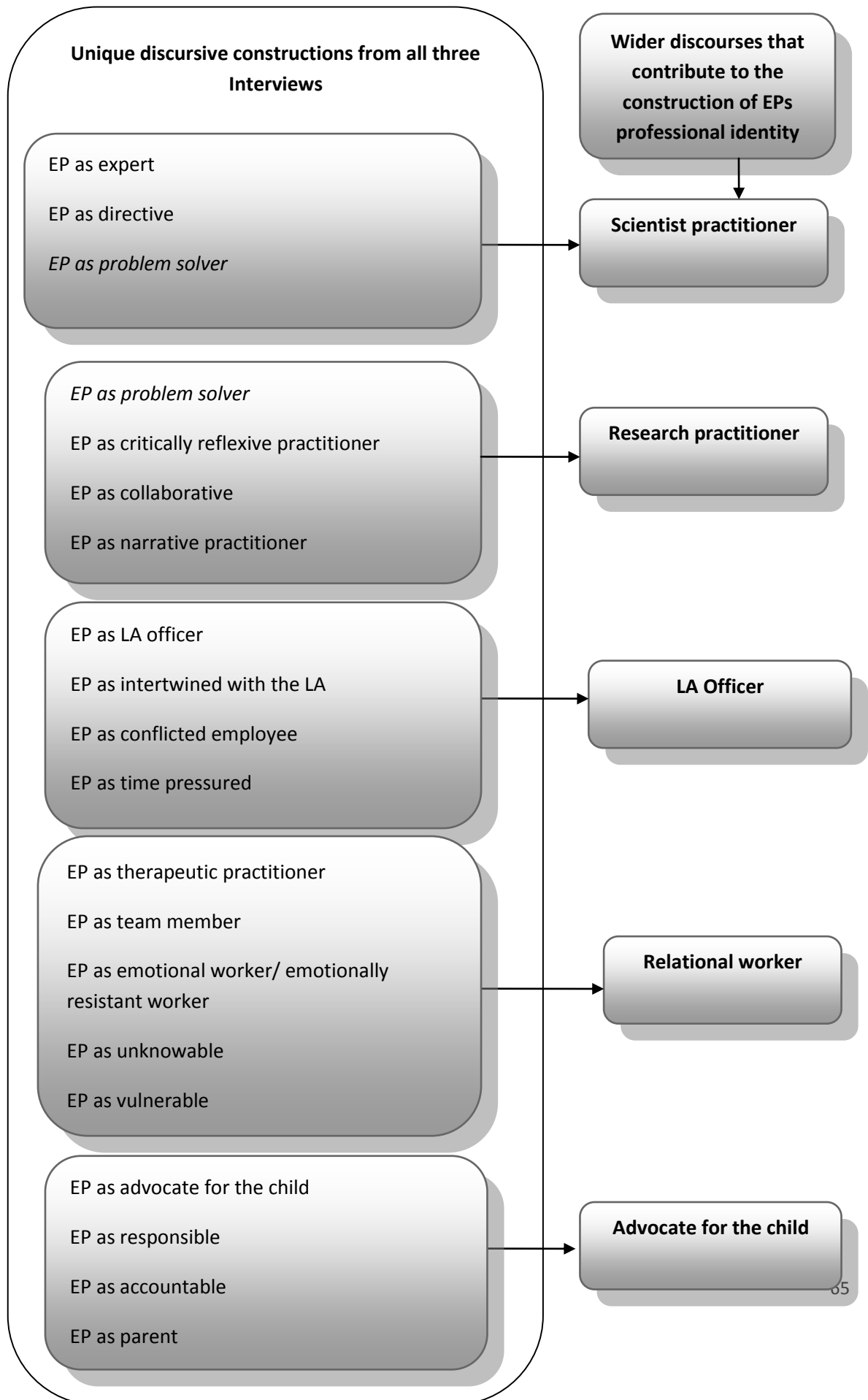
appear to have shown up earlier in the literature review; subsequently this led to snowball searches relating to the EPs' discursive constructions. For instance consideration was given to which wider discourses the individuals discursive constructions were 'speaking to' and vice versa. In respect to the wider discourses a bi-directional approach was taken when exploring connections between the discursive constructions.

A variety of sources were considered in respect to the wider discourses and how these interact and influence the discursive constructions of the object - EPs' professional identity. These include local authority and policy documents, journal articles and legislation thought to demonstrate a significant relationship between the current research question and the historically located discourses. Powers (2007) states the significance of Foucault's attention to the journey of a discourse through time and space relates to the theory that 'discourse cannot be analysed only in the present, because the power components and the historical components create such a tangled knot of shifting meanings, definitions and interested parties over periods of time' (p.26).

The grouping of discursive constructions by pattern led to exploring how the discourses at a local and national level both in research, literature and policy appeared to inter-connect and co-construct these groupings (see fig 1.6). Due to the exploratory nature of the research, new named wider discourses were highlighted and selected to represent the connections. Subsequently, this is the reason for the introduction of additional literature and research at the 'wider discourses' stage of the analysis.



Figure 1.6 A diagram of how the unique discursive constructions relate to the wider discourses



### **Stage three: Action orientation**

*What is gained from selecting a particular discursive object to construct the discourse? What does the EP gain from selecting a particular professional identity to construct the discourse?*

Drawing on the 'action orientation step', it was identified that accompanying the discursive construction of 'EP as vulnerable' and 'EP as responsible/accountable' was often a construction encompassing the LA and the problematic interactions in both a practical, theoretical, and conceptual sense.

The talk in Interview One appears to emphasise the importance of taking a forward direction when tackling the issues presented by the school and family. This is reinforced by the use of the reference to a solution focused method and the talk around 'to maybe sort of pull the situation forward'. The use of 'pull' might suggest the EP has the ability to take and enforce action in this situation. The talk in Interview One further highlights this interpretation through the following excerpt;

'obviously you need to be making positive change, otherwise, erm maybe you're not doing the job correctly. But hopefully line managers will ensure that's discussed as and when needed' (line 696-698, Interview One).

In respect to the action orientation being presented in the previous quote, it appears the talk reflects an interpretation of responsibility associated with the role of EP as being to contribute to 'positive change'. In the same instance, the talk positions the line managers as holding the overarching power to pass judgement on and endorse or sanction acts of practice. The discursive construction 'EP as LA worker' seems present within the talk illustrated in the quote above. For example stating 'you may not be doing the job correctly' suggests there is a 'correct' way of working, which could be interpreted as working within a system which is regulated by lane managers perceiving there to be the existence of a particular reality and 'truths'. However, this appears to be conflicted with the talk of a social constructionist framework for practice.

The EP may also gain a sense of security from constructing the discourse in a way that identifies the need for rules and regulations. Furthermore, the construction may help to substantiate the 'EP as emotionally resistant worker' discursive construction. This possibly shapes a path that provides the EP with stability and possibly a justification for keeping personal and professional selves separate when working with stakeholders. Finally, this construction could act to legitimise decision making and taking a directive/authoritative stance when faced with certain situations.

The discursive constructions presented in Interview Two appear to serve several different purposes. The first is that the discursive construction of 'advocating for the child' and being critically reflexive'

appear to reflect a positive image of the EP as a responsible, caring professional. There is also a strong reference made to the importance of being accountable for decisions made in practice and how these may affect the child. This point also enforces the 'EP as advocate for the child' construction. Next, the talk surrounding role and responsibility appear to promote an approach that could lend itself to a narrative or social constructionist perspective. This conclusion has been based on the exploratory route the EPs involvement seems to take and references to using the child's words when attempting to represent his story (line 47 - 49, Interview Two). This example seems to highlight the concern and consideration that has gone into the work on behalf of the child, perhaps giving the EP a sense of having been able to act as an advocate for the child through the writing of the report.

The discursive construction 'EP as conflicted LA worker' and 'EP as entwined with LA' could act as a way of providing the EP with a way of making sense of the tensions which have arisen in respect to this particular piece of case work. Furthermore, the discursive constructions indicate the EP is part of a complex system and so is justified in reporting and managing the difficulties in a particular way. The action of this construction also appears to relinquish an element of responsibility where the finality of statutory decisions are concerned; this interpretation is based on lines 112 -123 in Interview Two. The EP's talk permits a certain dissociation between the EP and LA casework officers involved in the statementing process. Furthermore, the constructions that appear in the talk in Interview Two suggest a desire to be acknowledged for the professional contribution they can bring - which is distinct but not inseparable from the acts of the casework officers.

The LA has been one of the dominant features of the talk within Interview Two. The discursive constructions associated with this subject appear pivotal when considering the discursive object as the talk seems to wrestle with the action and positioning of the constructions interwoven with the LA. The following reference from the transcript highlights the attempt to reconcile a difficult relationship between the wider discourse of 'EP as local authority worker' and the individual discursive construction of 'EP as conflicted LA worker';

'that historically the way things have been done and historically the way we (EP and LA casework officers) communicate as two teams or erm a bit of fear on both sides about erm ability for each other to understand each other's position' (line 243-246) and 'there are sometimes implicit layers of difficulty that you can feel sort of tensions' (line 272-273 Interview Two).

The talk in Interview Two indicates the EP is resisting a discourse surrounding 'EP as LA Officer'. In Interview Three the discursive object of the EP's professional identity appeared to be constructed in such a way as to open up opportunities for collaborative work which sought the active participation

and support of other adults (e.g. school/family) involved as a conscious process (line 143-150 Interview Three).

In addition to the ongoing promotion of developing and sustaining direct links between the EP, family, school and child, the EP also undertook individual work using Narrative Therapy. This approach offers a construction of the EP as bringing applied psychology to the situation and drawing on a distinctive approach (168-171, Interview Three). The discursive construction 'EP as narrative practitioner' is dominant within the talk of Interview Three and this appears to strongly shape the professional identity of this individual. The talk in this instance indicates the EP has selected a presentation of their professional self to highlight to the listener. This discursive construction may act as a way of illuminating professional values that help to make sense of and justify rationales for decisions made in relation the casework. There is also a clear indication that psychological expertise in the form of Narrative Therapy and Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) is being drawn upon. Additionally, the presentation of 'EP as narrative practitioner' gives permission for the EP to practice in a particular way and enforces a particular contribution they can make which may be different from that of their colleagues. Finally, the talk involving narrative approaches demonstrates an affinity between the EP's work and the discursive construction 'EP as therapeutic practitioner'. This may help serve the purpose of communicating the EPs desire to pursue the application of therapeutic approaches within the field of educational psychology. Both of these approaches are associated with a wider therapeutic discourse (White & Epston, 1990).

All three of the EPs' talk referred to time restrictions and the dilemmas associated with balancing workload with effective practice when involved in complex situations. The talk about rules, regulations and being required to follow a time allocation model may offer EPs a means of reconciling anxieties associated with being able to do a 'good enough' job. A problem discourse appeared to arise between what the rationale dictates as appropriate and what the capacity of the EP model of working currently allows (line 328-331, Interview Three). This has been a recurrent theme throughout the EPs talk in all three interviews and is depicted as 'EP as time pressured'.

The tensions surrounding the 'EP as relational worker' were evident within all three texts and appeared to be dominant in the talk about the challenging casework. The talk about the role of emotions and how they interact with practice may offer EPs a way of expressing and making sense of the complex qualitative involvement they have with clients. In addition, by introducing talk about emotions this highlights the importance of relationships, which has been identified as a dominant discourse associated with EP's work.

#### **Stage four: Subject positions**

*How do EPs position themselves and how are they positioned in the wider discourses where the construction of their professional identity is concerned?*

The subject positions within the interview are created by the constructions of the discursive object, which is in this case the EP's professional identity. The discourse of 'hidden world' (line 705-706, Interview One) indicates that the perception of being 'mysterious' has attachments with EP's talk about the profession. This raises an interesting question around the 'hard to reach' discourse (Pomerantz, Hughes & Thompson, 2007) as the talk in the interview suggests the role of the EP is created by discursive constructions referring to the unknown or unknowable. This could then place EPs in the position of 'hard to reach' for families as opposed to the more dominant discourse amongst the profession that it is in fact some parents/clients who resist engagement. This of course would offer an alternative discourse around the 'hard to reach' and the group represented within this discourse. This suggestion of re-framing the 'hard to reach' discourse restricts the opportunity to justify problematic experiences by employing a discourse around the family being reluctant to engage. This tension is apparent in the EP's talk about challenging casework;

'so it was a review meeting after I'd sort of done my report and we talked about things, and I got his views. Erm, and the parents, erm, came along and school was quite surprised because the parents didn't always engage', (line 24-27, Interview One) and 'the school thought that they resisted support, erm, so they'd mentioned him to me on a few occasions but just after some time they gave their consent and I began to work with him', (line 15-17, Interview One).

The quote illustrates how the talk offers a position for the EP to take in when trying to make sense of the family involvement, or lack of.

The 'EP as expert' also featured within the talk of the first interview and the language associated with positivist methods such as hypothesis and formulation were used to possibly position the EP in the role of 'expert'. There is also an assumption within the talk (lines 411-415, Interview One) that refers to the deductive process. This appears to suggest that through the lens of the EP a reality can be uncovered which could lead to solving a problem thus implying the EP can offer an expert rationale. Interestingly the talk proposes psychological approaches are employed after the views of those involved are gathered, as opposed to being encompassed within this process.

Reflecting on the overview of discursive constructions presented in figures 1.3, 1.4 and 1.5, the analysis has identified several more different constructions which have then been located within the wider discourses (refer to figure 1.6). Initially the discursive construction relating to 'EP as intertwined with the LA' and 'EP as critically reflexive' indicates the tensions between the EP as

advocating for the child and the EP as LA worker. The EP appears to have been given a problematic positioning by resisting the mantle of key decision maker where statutory assessments are concerned (line 67-69, Interview Two).

A further example of talk encompassing the 'EP as critically reflexive' appears to make a reference to the wider discourse of 'EP as scientist practitioner'. The discursive construction resists a realist perspective and offers an alternative to positivist constructions by acknowledging the role of the self in meaning making (line 201 - 205, Interview Three). Within Interview Two and Three, the EP is positioned as having an awareness of the possibility of privileging one discourse over another, when writing reports and feeding back to school staff, family and other professionals (line 168 - 174, Interview Three & line 135-140, Interview Two). The discursive constructions 'EP as responsible', 'EP as accountable', 'EP as collaborative', and 'EP as advocate for the child' support this interpretation. These examples suggest the EPs favour an integrationist approach, which requires reflective analysis and appreciative enquiry. These discursive constructions offer the opportunity for working through a consultative framework where the expertise of others is valued (Wagner, 2000).

When analysing how EPs position themselves and how they are positioned in reference to Interview Three it became apparent that as previously mentioned the 'EP as an emotional worker' was compatible with the wider discourse of 'EP as relational worker'. The discursive construction of 'EP as therapeutic practitioner' elicits space for critical reflexivity and the recognition of how the EP's own feelings might influence decision making and interpretations ('but I guess the big question for me is, is always is that enough, is it affective, is it authentic, is it real, erm, its interesting isn't it when you start drawing down' line 255-257, Interview Three).

Across the interviews the EP's talk also appears to position them as a working *with* and *for* the child. This corresponds with the wider discourse 'EP as an advocate for the child'. However analysis of the transcripts uncovered uncertainty relating to the talk around school expectations. This could be viewed as exposing the sometimes conflicting agendas and perceptions surrounding 'who is the client?' and who makes the decisions as to the focus of EP involvement (I suppose from the schools perspective perhaps also doesn't feel very successful, when the school looked at, erm [Name]'s academic progress as they were moving towards the end of the year they found that she has made sub levels, regression and we are very concerned about that' line 304-308, Interview Three).

## **Stage five: Practice**

*What are the possibilities for action contained within the discursive constructions identified within the talk about a challenging piece of casework?*

The talk, which contributed to the discursive constructions, embellishes the readers' understanding of the possibilities for action intertwined with the discourses presented in the interviews. According to the analysis the EP takes on the role of fixer and responsible adult - 'EP as problem solver', 'EP as responsible' and 'EP as accountable'. In Interview One the EP even appears to position themselves as the parent. For example the talk indicates the EP considered the need to organise the family with the interests of the child in mind ('I just work with the school to sort of chase parents up, for want of a better phrase, to erm, check they're attending their meetings', line 87-89, Interview One). Additionally discourses associated with the LA seem to have positioned the EP in a way that they then perceive the need for their actions to need to be directive and authoritarian at times (Ashton & Roberts, 2006).

The variety of discursive constructions explored as contributing to EPs' professional identity indicates the complexity inherent within the professional identity of EPs. Additionally, the discursive constructions highlight the possibilities for action alongside the sometimes competing agendas. These agendas and subsequent expectations place demands on EPs due to the multiple contexts they inhabit.

In Interview Three the discursive constructions appear to offer multiple possibilities for action on the part of the EP, school and child. The constructions of 'narrative practitioner' and 'advocating for the child' seem to suggest a child-led approach which has attempted to weave a systemic and individual intervention together. Constructions relating to critical reflection however suggest the EP takes great responsibility to self evaluate their role as problem solver in the scenario. This highlights an expectation of what can be ethically and effectively delivered within a framework bound by a specific time allocation. Furthermore the discursive construction of 'EP as therapeutic practitioner' appears to be associated with the primary role of maintaining connections in support of better understanding the child. The concept of 'EP as therapeutic practitioner' however seems to conflict with 'EP as time pressured'. This may cause tensions between ideals and practicalities of working as an EP.

## **Stage six: Subjectivity**

*What can be felt, thought and experienced from within various subject positions that the EP talk indicates constructs professional identity?*

Willig is explicit about the need to acknowledge the section of 'subjectivity' within the analysis in 'the most speculative' (2008, p.117). The reason being this stage of analysis refers to the potential experiences felt by the interviewees based on the discursive constructions that were explored within the transcripts.

When attempting to gain an insight into the thoughts and feelings of an individual's experiences it needs to be stated that this process is extremely interpretative (Willig, 2008). The aim is to try and make connections between the talk and the possible effects on experience. This stage (stage 6 in figure 1.2) is problematic as it cannot be assumed that the talk directly equates to feelings, subsequently the following interpretations have been presented with this in mind.

The talk in Interview One suggests the EP was experiencing, thoughts and feelings from a parental position. In contrast, however, there appears to be a role reversal when discussing the EP's emotional reactions to the father's talk, which suggests that the EP is reflecting on the position and feelings of the child. This could be due to the emotive reaction to talk of the child going into care and thus empathising to the extent that the EP is relating to the child's potential pain and confusion. It could also be attributed to the idea that the father does not appear to be positioning the EP in a role of authority so restrictive positions have been created (line 93-97, Interview One).

These reflections relate to the discursive constructions referred to in the interview around the EP being controlled and knowledgeable and as wearing a uniform as he takes on the responsibility of a LA officer (line 171-173, Interview One). These discursive constructions also feed into the concept that the EP is a problem solver and supports progress to be made by improving outcomes for children. When this idea is countered by the father's talk (line 80-82, Interview One) hopelessness becomes a feature of an emotion associated with the construction, which may cause anxiety and threaten confidence where practitioner skills are concerned. Subsequently, the talk verifies the importance of peer supervision and the need to seek reassurance with decision making to reduce anxieties around professional competency. The text selected suggests peer supervision, as it was referred to in the interview, provided a context through which to make sense of emotional aspects which can arise as part of an EP's work;



'it was great that colleagues were so supportive and sort of gave their ideas and erm, had a chat and were there to reflect with me and could be compassionate about it, why I was feeling this and what some possible next steps would be.' (line 100-103 Interview One).

Additionally the peer supervision platform may have allowed EPs to explore the wider discourse 'EP as a relational worker'.

Furthermore the discursive construction 'EP as LA worker' infers a reality has been created whereby the EP acknowledges they are operating within a system and as such need to adhere to the rules, regulations and internal discourses relating to being a council employee. This indicates the EP sometimes takes a hierarchical perspective and possibly finds comfort in the structure prescribed. This (LA) structure is not fully unproblematic as the discursive constructions indicate a strain on the ideal and perceived self in certain situations. For example, the need to be compliant and follow hierarchical procedures appears to be conflicted with favouring a way of working and further developing as a practising psychologist (line 656 - 663, Interview One).

In addition tensions appear to arise between the personal and professional discourses and the talk in Interview One suggests the EP is striving to promote the 'EP as professional' discursive construction. The way in which this construction is depicted, is of course subjective and in the instance of Interview One this discursive construction seems to be affiliated with 'EP as emotionally resistant worker', 'EP as unknowable' and 'EP as reluctant emotional worker'. The positioning of the EP in this way may highlight the need to keep a private self protected in response to the feelings of vulnerability associated with the role. I can recall a conversation during an EPS meeting whereby some EPs reported to value and advocate for the explicit separation of the private and professional self. Whereas on the other hand colleagues including myself were left grappling with the idea that two divergent constructions of the self could co-exist harmoniously and discretely without influencing the other. I wonder if the tensions apparent in Interview One are in respect to 'EP as reluctant emotional worker' and 'EP as vulnerable' and are a reflection of this difficulty.

I feel that my personal values and beliefs motivate my desire and interest in EP practice. This statement does of course require engagement in critical reflexivity as I am mindful I will bring my own assumptions and experiences to interactions and when meaning- making. However, I do not view this as a weakness and I feel that through a heightened awareness of this positioning I hope to negotiate power imbalances more empathetically and transparently.

The discursive constructions associated with 'EP as LA worker' and 'EP as emotional worker' raises questions relating to subjective experience. To have identified a dichotomy where EP and LA are

concerned would be too simplistic. However the explicit references to the workings of and working relationships with the LA suggest the 'EP as entangled with the LA' as a system. There also appears to be a desire to reconcile differences and develop more opportunities for transparent discussions around roles, responsibilities and the associated stressors for professionals, families and children (line 227-229).

Returning to the interviews, the talk indicates that there is value placed on collaborative working amongst the team and in particular peer supervision when difficulties arise. Sharing anxieties with colleagues seems to serve a function that aids critical reflection, which in turn allows a greater capacity to process thoughts and discover new avenues for practice.

The importance of taking on the role of reflexive practitioner was identified as a discursive construction from an explicitly conscious position as there are multiple references within the transcripts highlighting the importance of engaging in this activity. Furthermore, the emphasis on being self-critical formed part of the 'EP as critically reflective practitioner' discursive construction. When considering the talk in this instance, there appears to be a more implicit reference to a discursive construction of 'anxiety and insecurity' and 'EP as vulnerable'. In relation to the current analysis, in Interview One and Two it seems that the strategy of seeking reassurance through peer supervision was used to combat uncomfortable feelings such as anxiety.

Additionally, the need to be a good enough EP shows up implicitly amongst the talk about being a reflexive practitioner. I have grappled with the concept of 'good enough' and maintain this is an incredibly difficult and subjective construction to articulate. I wonder if this is due to the aspects of being a relational worker and the intangible aspects associated with experiencing connections with others that lead the way to positive changes. I would also argue it is extremely difficult to have a universal definition or measure of what a good enough job looks like. Although I would also see this as a reflection of the complexities involved in the job and the unique situations EPs respond to and interact with.

Returning to the concepts of individual and collective professional identities it would appear that reassurance is sought through the support gained from a group of EPs. Working in isolation was constructed as inhibiting progress and problematic when needing to tackle challenging elements of casework. A significant emphasis was placed on peer supervision and 'in group' support from colleagues within the same profession.

Next, when considering the discursive constructions identified from Interview Three there are some interesting inferences that can be made to the HCPC professional guidelines (2012). For instance the HCPC (2012) guidelines determine the specific practitioner related activities for each profession they regulate. This includes EPs, therapists and health psychologists. The discursive constructions that emerged from Interview Three indicate the EP affiliates themselves with a therapeutic practitioner discourse, as there is explicit talk about the use of Narrative Therapy.

However, according to the HCPC regulations, the role of EPs does not encompass therapeutic relationships with stakeholders, even though learning how to apply therapeutic skills is still a requirement of EP training (BPS, 2013). This aspect of the analysis has also been explored in the discussion of how the individual constructions of EP's identities portrayed in the interviews are connected and interspersed within the wider discourses. Whilst undertaking this research I have noticed myself becoming more interested in the political and organisational discourses intertwined with EPs' professional identity. I can recall feeling impassioned after hearing a presentation given by the AEP representative and I began to appreciate the active, strategic positioning of EPs within the political framework and the opportunities to make a difference from the top down. This experience embedded connections illuminated through taking a social constructionist and CDA/FDA theoretical perspective as part of the current research.

### **How are professional values reflected in EPs' talk about a challenging piece of case work?**

The influence of values on professional decision making and how these influence and interact with practice and meaning making has been explored in respect to decision making, job satisfaction, work productivity and commitment to the role (Hayden & Madsen, 2008, Mueller, Raffaella, Valsecchi, Smith, Gabe & Elston, 2008). The current research is interested in the discursive constructions related to professional values. These will inform further discussions and analytical reflections. Several papers emerged as evidencing the importance of gaining a better understanding of the influence of values on practice (Berliner, 2003, Mueller, Valsecchi, Smith, Gabe & Elston 2008, Eccles, 2009). Subsequently, this was thought to be a useful strand of EPs' professional identity to explore. The diagram on page 71 highlights how the interview process led to the reflection of values being illuminated through EP talk about case work.

The analysis indicates professional values have 'shown up' in EP's talk about casework they have found challenging. For example, when reflecting on certain issues and how to overcome these,

values and principles appeared as part of the discursive constructions of the EP in descriptions of their practice. The discursive construction of 'EP as problem solver' and 'EP as advocate for the child' and 'reflective practitioner' provide an insight into what might be important to the EP. This was further evidenced by the privileging of particular discursive constructions within the interviewees' talk. This analysis has facilitated space for reflection as to how values might be reflected in EPs' talk about challenging casework.

After analysing the EPs' talk about a piece of casework they found challenging a wider search helped to identify a theoretical framework from which to consider the findings; in particular the action orientation, subject positions and subjectivity associated with the interviewee's talk. Hayden and Madsen (2008) conducted a study centering on individual, collective and humanistic value perspectives and claimed;

'In terms of the individual perspective, value is placed on ones centering position and interdependence of working relationships. A collective perspective values equal reward, group co-operation and team work, while humanistic perspective focuses on the nature of the work as a means of self expression and satisfaction.' (p.33).

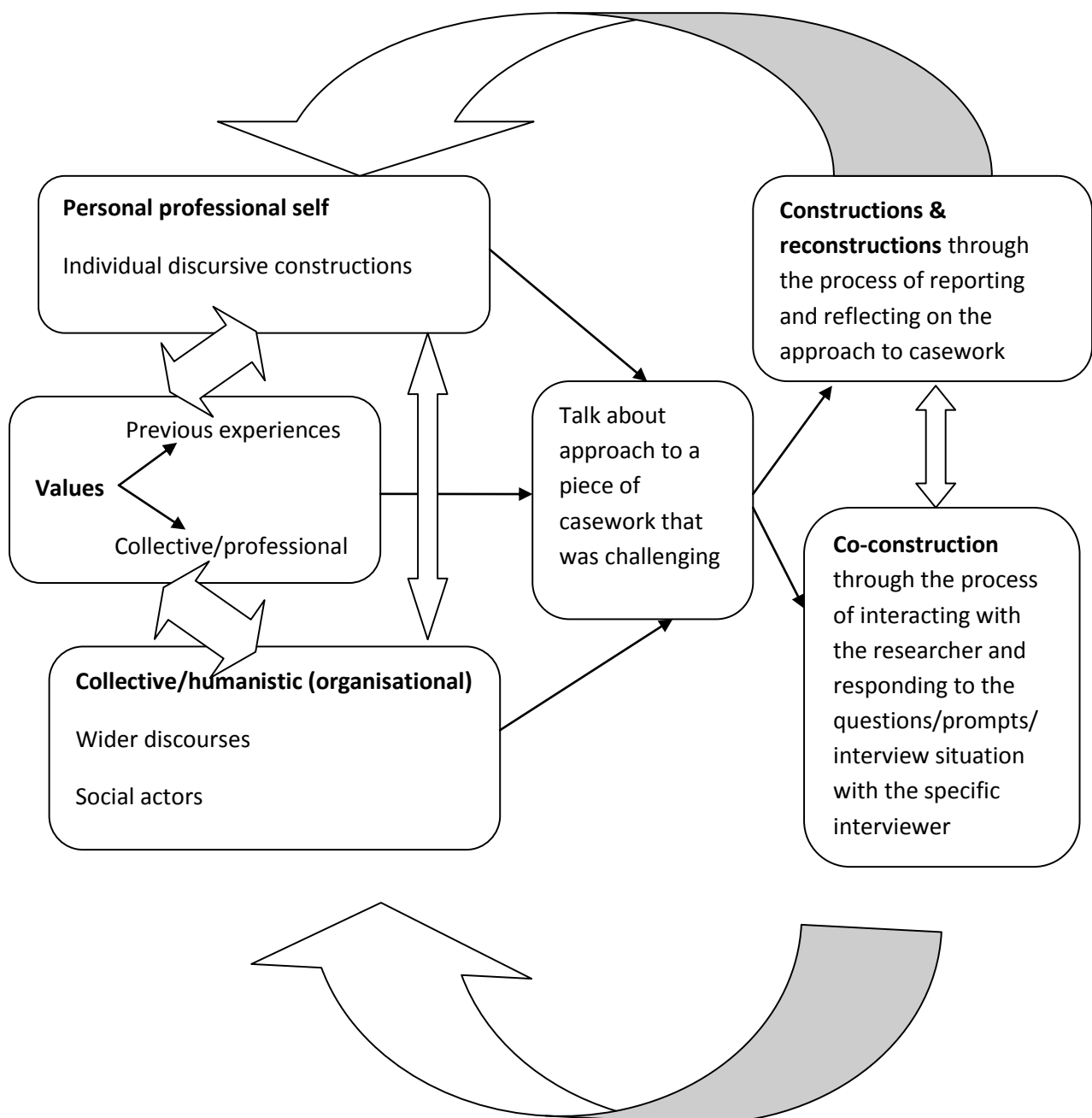
Hayden and Madsen (2008) expressed themes relating to individual personal values (*ambition or pleasure*) and collective values (*responsibility and helpfulness*). On reflection these components can be related to the current analysis. For instance the reference to ambition, maps onto the discursive construction 'EP as authoritative' and links to the talk about being in a position of status. Thus possibly evidencing a personal value relating to achieving success and gaining a respected position within society/the LA.

Furthermore, the description of what constitutes a collective value is reflected in the discursive constructions, 'EP as responsible' and 'EP as helpful'. Moving beneath the surface of this interpretation provides an insight into possible positioning and action orientations within the EPT and corresponds with the importance placed on peer support. For example 'EP as helpful' can refer to work with clients as well as a means of behaving within a professional group. Interviewees one and two made explicit reference to the value placed on peer supervision and the support as part of a collective.

Finally, humanistic and collective value perspectives appear most fitting when considering not only the EPs' talk but the wider discourses surrounding the profession. Acting on behalf of the client's best interests, whilst upholding the principles of working responsibly, equitably as part of a team, are critical components to ethical professional practice (Hayden and Madsen 2008). This value

position is also mirrored in the EPS group values and professional guidelines (see figure 1.9 on page 105 & the Division of Educational and Child Psychology (DECP), 2013) which further triangulates the assertion that the terms humanistic and collective are suitable for describing the values featured in the EPs talk about challenging case work and the wider literature depicting professional ideals. Approaches informed by professional values can enhance the integrity and authenticity of the interaction (Wells, 2007). Subsequently, an increase in job satisfaction and commitment is said to occur where employees' values are inextricably linked to practice (Hayden and Madsen, 2008).

**Figure 1.7. The process involved with how EPs talk about a piece of challenging case work interacts with their values to construct their professional identity**



## **Chapter summary**

This chapter presented the process of analysis and the interpretations relating to Willig's (2008) six stages of FDA, which informed a Foucauldian approach to CDA. The concept of professional values was also considered in terms of how this was reflected in the EPs' talk about complex casework. The next chapter will tackle the wider discourses in more detail as well as reviewing how the current study relates to the literature.

## Chapter Five: Discussion

### **Introduction**

In this chapter, the relationship between the key unique discursive constructions and wider discourses and how they relate to the shaping of EPs professional identity will be discussed. The literature presented in chapter one will also be considered when reflecting on the current analysis.

The key findings from the analysis illuminated various discursive constructions of EP professional identity and a number of social actors were active in those constructions. The wider discourses have been investigated in relation to the interviewees' talk as well as in respect to the profession as a whole.

### **Key findings from the research**

Figure 1.8 was based on the analysis from the current research project alongside the sources gathered that provide supporting evidence for the role that the wider discourses identified play a part in shaping EPs' professional identities. Figure 1.10 represents a diagram of how EPs professional identities are shaped by the available discourses and how values are reflected in their talk. The diagram aims to depict the complex interconnectivity involved in the professional identity construction of EPs.

In this instance CDA encompassing a Foucauldian approach has involved evidencing the origins of the 'wider discourses' (e.g. seminal documents, policies and pivotal organisations) in order to strengthen the credibility and transparency of the discussion, by presenting the rationale for the selection of texts and explaining how they are connected to the EPs' talk and discursive constructions. Research acknowledges the importance of taking group dynamics organisational documents and policies into account when investigating the process of identity construction (Corley, 2004, Wells, 2007 & Kenny 2010). The current study reflects the importance of considering the social and political contexts and when exploring the wider discourses available to EPs when constructing their professional identities.

## **How does the literature relate to the analysis and interpretations?**

Limited studies were found involving EPs directly, when exploring professional identity. Literature corresponding to EPs appeared focused on role (for example Woods & Farrell 2006). When considering the discourses available to EPs, to talk merely of role is limiting. The current study illuminated a variety of diverse discursive constructions and five wider discourses perceived as shaping professional identity. These included, 'EP as research and scientist practitioner ', 'EP as relational worker', 'EP as advocate for the child' and 'EP as LA Officer'. These constructions indicate that there is room for further research to strengthen the evidence base concerning the distinctive professional contribution EPs can make to practice, research and policy and how this is interlinked with their professional identity. This is especially important in light of the imminent EHC plans and traded model of service delivery.

The discursive constructions 'EP as emotional worker' and 'EP as team member' were linked to talk about the importance of supervision and containment from peers. This indicates that being part of a profession offers collective support from colleagues belonging to the same organisation. Strauss et al. (2012) concur with this interpretation adding that maintenance of professional autonomy is facilitated through belonging to a professional group. This speaks to the wider discourse of 'EP as relational' worker and emphasises the interaction between individual discursive construction and wider discourses in shaping EPs' professional identity. This would also include 'EP as time pressured' feeding into the wider discourse of 'EP as LA Officer'.

Sachs (2001) investigated the professional identity of teachers and found that the same individual presented as occupying various professional selves. This discovery relates to the concept of social actors, as the EPs' talk demonstrates a manoeuvring of positions mediated by the interactions with various stakeholders in their everyday work. The number of discursive constructions identified in the analysis evidences the different elements contributing to the professional self and identity. The tensions and anxiety surrounding the talk about decision making and the differentiation of role between EPs and casework officers, suggests difficulties arose when demands were made, which required the occupation of multiple professional selves that harboured conflicting interests. However, the theory offered by FDA in respect to Willig's six stages provides a better understanding of the various professional selves presented through concepts such as positioning, action orientation and subjectivity.

The discursive construction 'EP as vulnerable' was identified as a key finding across the interviews. The EPs' talk referred to feelings of anxiety and discomfort when faced with various experiences.



When interpreting the EPs' accounts, confusion and negative feelings were relieved through the seeking of support from colleagues in peer supervision, which led to co-constructive ideas for how to improve the situation for the child and the EP. These examples from the analysis contributed to the formulation of 'EP as reflective' and 'EP as vulnerable'. Lingard et al. (2003) claimed exposure to uncertainty and the ability to process uncomfortable emotions as an essential element of practice and professional development. The study by Lingard et al. (2003) refers to medical students, although the theory demonstrates transferability to the current research context when making sense of the discursive construction 'EP as emotional worker' and the wider discourse, 'EP as relational worker'. For an EP, the ability to engage in reflexive practice is crucial when effectively and ethically applying psychology, (DECP, 2013).

Next, the importance of validating the specialist knowledge offered by EPs has been identified as a recurring theme (Brahm, 2005, Fallon, 2010). This point directly relates to the current findings as the talk about the tensions relating to EPs and the casework officers indicates. These interactions resulted in the EPs becoming positioned and needing to position themselves by asserting their professional opinions (line 49 - 53, Interview Two is an example of this), drawing on their experience and training in order to clearly delineate the differences in roles and responsibilities between the two LA teams.

Through the application of CDA using a Foucauldian approach, the current findings highlight the complex interactions between the social actors EPs encounter and the impact this has on discursive constructions and ultimately shaping professional identity. The current research question investigated professional identity by analysing EPs talk about a piece of casework they found challenging. However, the findings are also relevant in terms of understanding the social and political context within both the EPS and LA. The findings demonstrate the diversity of approaches and application of psychology across the interviewees accounts. This corroborates Bird's (1999) view that what constitutes good practice can vary between EPs. Similar threads were identified across the EPs' talk that pointed to professional values. The talk evidenced that the EPs' approaches to practice were strongly related to the EPS value statements (see page 105 for EPS values). This finding shows compatibility between the individual and collective values and how they are communicated through talk about casework.

## **The five wider discourses and how they relate to the construction of EPs' professional identity**

Rather than referring to wider discourses in an abstract sense, the sources contributing to the construction of the meaning making have been identified. In addition to references cited in the literature review, further supporting evidence was gathered post-analysis in order to establish the connections, credibility and transparency between the individual constructions and wider discourses.

### **1. EP as relational worker**

Billington (1995) asserts 'as practising psychologists, we need to find ways in which we can remain aware of the potential complexity within all human interactions and alive to our own presence within them' (p.36). The current analysis confirms the importance of relationships in the EPs' approaches to practice. Moore (2005) concurs and asserts 'It is now time for educational psychology practice to be primarily viewed as a social and ethical endeavour with a central concern for social relationships' (p.103.)

In a social constructionist vein, Gergen (2009) asserts that individual's 'do emotions' in a manner that reflects their cultural context. There are also expectations placed on what constitutes appropriate public and private emotional expression within Western society and especially amongst discourses attributed to 'professionals' and 'being professional'. This dilemma appears to arise in the EPs' talk about relating to stakeholders and becoming immersed in emotionally demanding situations.

Next, Gordon and Gergen (1968) investigate the theories associated with 'the self as experiencer' and suggest the 'self' and subsequent role positions are created in conjunction with social interactions and through the perceptions of others. For the purpose of the current research, this idea has been applied to how professional identity is created through discourses.

The concept of inter-subjectivity is crucial when considering what is meant by 'relational worker' and the implications for practice (Holloway & Jefferson, 2007). 'The persons subjectively organised knowledge about his world of daily life forms a frame of reference for the interpretation of new information about himself and his actions' (Gordon & Gergen, 1968, p.35). Bruner (1990) asserts psychology should advocate the importance of subjectivity and reflexivity when sense making. This argument is supported by the EPs' talk as all three Interviews include the discursive construction 'EP

as reflective practitioner'. Each EP also makes specific reference to engaging in reflection as a means of processing and developing their thoughts about practice.

Burr (1995) tackles what is termed a 'prevailing discourse' constructing women as less capable of being scientists, instead positioning women as the primary source of 'emotionality, illogicality and intuitiveness' (p.53). Thus, the discourse of 'emotional being' has been associated with a specific gender, which could restrict men from partaking in a dialogue about feelings. Further, the term emotionality is used in conjunction with illogicality and intuitiveness implying these constructions are less valuable than 'scientific' constructions.

Alternative discourses however credit the ability to relate to others and emotionality as necessary in order for effectual difference to be made and difficult issues to be tackled. This view is supported in conjunction with EP practice and is reflected in studies by Ashton and Roberts (2006) and Williams (2012). Cameron's (2006) claim substantiates the current findings and captures both the 'relational worker' and 'research practitioner' discourse;

'Thirdly, for all applied psychologists, there remain the twin challenges of linking highly specific, frequently-piecemeal research with the urgent and often-messy demands of the real world. The task of making this link (...) requires considerable creativity and high level communication skills'  
(Cameron, 2006, p.292).

## **2. EP as LA officer**

It is not a new concept that EPs are embedded within the Local Authority (LA). Past literature dictates that EPs can be 'directly answerable' to professionals within the LEA who do not have a psychological background (Facherty & Turner, 1988, p. 99). Furthermore the agendas of EPs and LAs may lead to a questioning of who is the client of the psychologist and with whom the power around decision making resides (Gillham, 1978). This assertion also contributes to the 'advocate for the child' discourse that will be explored in more detail later.

Woods and Farrell (2006) suggest that the specifications of psychological assessments have attracted attention from within the profession for a considerable number of years. One of the contributions considered unique to EPs is the completing of psychological advice for statutory advice purposes. It is this role that Woods and Farrell argue is the most valued by LAs. This conclusion by Woods and Farrell (2006) appears to carry weight in accordance with one aspect of EPs' professional role but it also seems reductive and assumes a limiting narrative surrounding EPs worth as part of a LA organisation.

Woods and Farrell further tackle the 'distinctive contribution' in respect to assessment. Psychometric assessments are identified by those outside of the profession as the unique professional commodity. Subsequently, additional psychological expertise can become neglected or overlooked by the demand for assessments, which meet the EPs core offer. Woods and Farrell (2006) posit that the responsibility to better educate others about the valuable contributions EPs can make toward positive changes for children, young people and families lies with the BPS, AEP and DECP. In particular, they see part of this responsibility as communicating, perhaps more assertively and creatively, the role of the EP. It is also however essential to be mindful of the social and political contexts interacting with the profession. For example a study by Lokke et al. (1997) identified that psychometric assessments were selected by psychologists when there was an indication of possible tribunal action post-statutory assessment. This in itself is an interesting concept as it suggests that a discourse of power has aligned itself with psychometric assessments and that when EPs feel under threat this is the approach best suited to combating challenge.

Davis (1996) asserts that criteria created by the LAs for identifying special educational needs and the recommended provision has led to the carving out of particular statements recognised as indicating certain types of provision. This may have been a reaction to the introduction of the 1981 Education Act, whereby it was made mandatory for LAs to formally oversee the agreed provision outlined in the statement (Facherty & Turner, 1988). These statements have become entrenched within the process of writing psychological advice.

Subsequently, in order to measure the efficacy of an outcome, the particulars of the interventions and methods of evaluating are required to inform the plan to meet need - the Statement of Special Educational Need. It may be that a shift in accountability has moved from the LAs to the writers of the advices. For example, EPs are expected to attend tribunals where necessary and the LA can request the advice of an EP in respect to the special educational needs of children. Davis (1996) posits that the freedom and creativity encompassed with the EP role has diminished in line with LA requirements. This issue implies an implicit/embedded struggle between the autonomy of the EP as a professional and the context of being employed by a LA with a changing agenda.

Gregory (1993) writes about the dilemmas that appear to have unfolded and are reflected in the discursive constructions presented within the interviews. In particular, Gregory looks at the tensions EPs grapple with in relation to their role and duties when working within the LA. Gregory (1993) states 'my philosophy acknowledged the split allegiance between the local education authority and parents and children. My position in reality oscillated between the two' (p.67). The current analysis

indicates that this area remains one of contention for EPs and, with contradictory positions available, a conflicted dimension of their professional identity.

### **3. EP as scientist practitioner**

Literature surrounding the scientist practitioner appears to stem from the clinical fields amongst which psychologists and in particular, Clinical Psychologists have investigated the meaning within the profession (Stricker, 2002). Journal articles are also concerned with how EPs connect to the role of scientist practitioner and how this construction has punctured the profession and contributed to discourses embroiled in the 'psychology as a science' wider discourse. The British Psychological Society state, an experimental psychologist as someone 'who conducts research utilising experimental scientific methods to discover the processes underlying how people think and behave' ([www.BPS.org.uk](http://www.BPS.org.uk)).

The definition of 'scientist practitioner' for the purpose of the current research has been outlined by Stricker (2002) who asserts that;

'the practitioner best suited to do this is one who can reflect on each case, treat it as a scientist would a research problem without abandoning the empathetic stance necessary for effective alliance formation and treatment, and incorporate whatever information is available in a flexible and thoughtful manner' (p.1282).

The creation of this profile is not congruent with wider discourses constructing the 'scientist' per se, but harnesses a level of professional and methodological pluralism required to fulfil the role of scientist practitioner. Stricker (2002) notes an undeniable gulf between 'potential and actualisation' in respect to the scientist practitioner model. Although every effort can be made towards achieving the application of science to practice, it is not unproblematic.

Burr (1995) asserts that 'science is thought of as a logical, objective and value free' (p. 53), and goes on to question the construction of the type of knowledge underpinning this claim. Instead Burr argues for 'the scientist' as a social construction permeated by the values of a society. This raises an interesting paradox as a positivist scientific discourse would separate itself from subjectivity and personal values. In fact, it is imperative in quantitative research to evidence research as replicable and generalisable if the findings are to have the utmost impact and credence (Sutherland, Spiegelhalter & Burgman, 2013). This is not the case with qualitative research and a different value system applies (Tracy, 2010).

Taking 'scientist' as the discursive object, there is substantial evidence that the associated discursive constructions are based in a positivist epistemology (Billington, 2000). A positivist epistemology refers to the assumption that knowledge is observed through scientific methodologies to create facts that are considered 'true' and can be known. The concept that a 'good' science and 'good' psychology is underpinned by a positivist discourse is well established (Rorty, 1979). These discourses have acquired accolades throughout history (Richards, 2004).

However, the post-positivist movement began to question this epistemological stance and social constructionism offers an alternative framework for understanding theories of knowledge and how we come to 'know'.

Billington (2000) writes of the pathologising discourse within educational psychology. By locating the discourses within the individual, certain practices are validated and attention is drawn away from taking a critical view of how the discourse facilitates power and control. The agenda may not be to promote the development of scientific approaches but instead be to credit the existence of practitioners through creation of a public role. Subsequently, 'science' can be used to legitimise decision making influenced by political values (Billington, 2000).

Tamimi (2002) also raises suspicions in relation to the term 'science' being saturated with value laden claims by psychiatrists, arguing that child psychiatry and psychology in general 'should be viewed as a moral rather than natural science' (Tamimi, 2002, p.28). This position illuminates the thinking that there is not one almighty 'science' but multiple 'sciences' in operation (Moore, 2005) which in turn suggests a multiplicitous arena is involved in the construction of scientific knowledge.

The next wider discourse identified as part of the discussion will be the 'research practitioner'. Critical of the prevailing discourses 'science is more valuable than practice' when informing interventions, Stricker (2002) believes in a partnership whereby each professional values the origins of the other where the 'practice orientated psychologist' should not vilify the scientifically orientated psychologist. Stricker argues this principle is the epitome of the 'scientist practitioner model'.

#### **4. EP as research practitioner**

A definition of research practitioner has been adapted from Dadds' (1998) work. Research practitioner for the purpose the current project refers to ' people undertaking forms of enquiry in their own working contexts and, usually, on their own professional work, in whatever sphere they

practice. The main purpose of the enquiry is to shed light on aspects of work with a view to bringing about some benevolent change' (Dadds, 1998, p.41). Gergen illustrates a post-modernist challenge and theoretical standpoint as to how the world comes to be known 'it is not the real world that determines scientific description and explanation, but rather social processes within science and society' (Gergen, 1991, p.90).

An alternative discourse to the 'objective scientific researcher' is that of a research practitioner who not only appreciates but also beholds the intricate relationships between individual and researcher. The concept of an ethical, mindful, respectful, critical and inter-subjective practitioner grant another way of developing ideas in the name of research and subsequently, constructing the research practitioner discourse (Holloway & Jefferson, 2007).

Moore (2005) asserts that EPs need to be more forthcoming with aligning practice with post-modern principles, urging the profession to 'establish a new relevant epistemological basis for future educational psychology practice' (p.104, Moore, 2005). Although a welcome contribution to the debate surrounding professional identity, the training programmes for TEPs at some universities actually specifically emphasises the importance of taking an eclectic approach in order to be best informed as to the theoretical underpinnings and histories of certain frameworks and paradigms. The professional competencies appear to enshrine this view point and TEPs and EPs are required to maintain a standard of practice in order to preserve their professional status.

Positivist-empiricist paradigms are becoming less popular amongst psychologist practitioners (Bozic, 1999). The discourses (what is written and talked about) identified as part of the current research have illuminated a desire for difference. The longevity of the discourse 'reconstructing educational psychology' highlights a passion for exploration of epistemological assumptions and indicates an established resistance to the status quo.

There is a growing value placed on research practitioners grappling with the quandaries of ontology, epistemology and methodology (Moore, 2005). Through the contextualisation and problematising of such questions, EPs can construct their own professional meanings and position themselves more strongly as an applied psychologist embodying the role of research practitioner. This assertion seems to be validated by the interpretations of the EPs' talk, which highlighted the discursive constructions 'EP as problem solver', 'EP as reflective' and 'EP as collaborative'. These constructions are then reflected in the wider discourse 'EP as research practitioner'.

Values are inextricably linked to the importance placed on research and knowledge (Gergen, 2009). As such, Tamimi (2002) asserts that it is good practice for a research practitioner, to remain acutely aware at all times of applying the concept of reflexivity to practice. Being open to questioning and being questioned facilitates ethical actions. It is crucial that the research practitioner not become unconsciously enmeshed within a system. Within the realm of psychiatry, Tamimi (2002) predicts a reluctance to engage in reflexivity will cause negligence towards the very client the professional is trying to help;

'The professional may be so convinced of the truth of their theoretical frame that it becomes unquestionable and unavailable for discussion. Thus, the professional may be more likely to attribute pathology or resistance to the client and not ever to the theoretical framework itself, if the client finds the professional's ideas unsuitable' (Tamimi, 2002, p.28).

EPs can look to this statement when reflecting on practice and in particular reasons for decision making when working with children and families. This is another occasion where discourse analysis provides an insight into the use of professional language and messages. It also shows how EPs need to be mindful to consider the rationale for theoretical approaches and to actively question whom the agenda will be benefiting. However, this is by no means an attempt to refute that EPs are a critically reflective profession. Throughout the training as a TEP, significant emphasis is placed on becoming a reflexive and accountable practitioner. These professional qualities are monitored and assessed through the competency framework.

A study by Woods and Farrell (2006) highlighted that when asked to identify the theoretical underpinning for their work, forty percent of the EPs, did not specify a particular psychological approach. This finding offers limited substantiation towards the view that EPs actively and consciously draw on psychological paradigms and frameworks to inform their practice. Furthermore, it indicates that articulating the psychological rationale for practice-based decisions is problematic. This raises a concern with how ideas are communicated to clients and also weakens the argument relating to a 'distinctive contribution' if EPs themselves have difficulties with identifying this fundamental and unique component of their role. (Farrell et al. 2006). The discursive constructions identified in the current analysis suggest a variety of psychological approaches were referred to in the EPs talk when reflecting on their approach to casework. These included 'EP as problem solver', 'EP as narrative practitioner' and 'EP as collaborative'.



## **5. EP as Advocate for the child**

The literature indicates that the profession has a firm grasp on the advocating for the child discourse (Harding & Atkinson, 2009, Hammond, 2013) which, alongside the EPs' talk has informed the title selection of the fifth wider discourse. The EPs' responses appear to further evidence this claim and as such, the discursive construction 'EP as advocate for the child' arose in all three interviews. This discourse seems to offer a purposeful position for EPs to occupy and seems to be an integral part of how they see themselves. There is also an indication that the EPs actively pursue this role and embrace the responsibility in a somewhat 'loco parentis' role, even if it is associated with situations of stress and anxiety. There appears to be an explicit drive to uphold the status of being an advocate for the child. This notion would of course fit with the ethical and professional guidance and legislation surrounding the profession (DECP, 2013). However, the social justice discourse also arises in the literature, which communicates the need to strive for equality and supporting vulnerable and marginalised groups (Holloway & Jefferson, 2007, Tamimi, 2002, Pomerantz et al. 2007 & Hammond, 2013).

### **The historical location of wider discourses in documents and policy and how these relate to the shaping of EPs' professional identity**

Investigating the historical location of wider discourses is integral to CDA, as Gee (2005) outlines; 'Discourses, through our words and deeds, have talked to each other through history, and, in doing so form human history' (p.27). This next section aims to discuss some of the key historical documents that were identified as informing the wider discourses available to EPs, which are reflected in the construction of their professional identity. In particular the discursive constructions 'EP as LA officer', 'EP as intertwined with the LA', 'EP as advocate for the child', 'EP as conflicted employee' and 'EP as time pressured' appear to be reflected within the documents on page 99. The Summerfield Report (DES, 1968), Warnock Report (DES, 1978), 1981 Education Act and HCPC Standards of proficiency for practitioner psychologists (HCPC, 2012) should not be considered as the only key documents, however this selection was deemed suitable due to the scope of the current research.

Firstly, The Summerfield Report (DES, 1968) asserts that greater control should be given to the LA in terms of ensuring the training costs of EPs are protected (Summerfield report, DES, 1968). This led to a raise in numbers. This reflects the value placed on the profession as an integral part of the system

aimed at supporting children and young people. The discursive constructions identified as part of the analysis (EP as LA officer, EP as intertwined with the LA and EP as conflicted employee) illuminate the enmeshed relationship between EPs and the LA. Discourses exposing the tensions between LA demands and EPs application of psychology and role are evident (Woods & Farrell, 2006), yet the LA are predominantly responsible for facilitating progressions in numbers and prestige of EPs through funding them.

The Summerfield Report (DES, 1968) clearly identifies the importance of fostering collaborative working with colleagues outside of education. The EP literature has promoted this way of working for numerous years (Gaskell & Leadbetter, 2009). There also appears to be a return to explicit multi-professional working represented in the form of the EHC plans, which are due to replace the current statement of special educational need (DfE, Children and Families Bill, 2013). The identification of various social actors and the discursive construction 'EP as collaborative' reflect the emphasis placed on joint working, suggesting EPs value the opportunity to practice in this way.

In light of the Children and Families Bill (DfE, 2013) further clarification surrounding roles and professional identity may be sought as multi-agency working will be ever prevalent. EPs themselves may view this as a constructive venture as research indicates that uncertainty around professional roles can result in anxiety (Ashton and Roberts, 2006). Joint working however has been regarded as good practice for a number of years and subsequently there has been time for the practice and refinement of negotiating roles within multi-agency contexts. However, the complexities of working within such contexts should not be disregarded (Gaskell & Leadbetter, 2009, Hughes, 2006).

Secondly, 'The Warnock Report' (DES, 1978) contributed to the facilitation of legislation and policy outlining the statementing process. The writing of psychological advice and the statementing process has emerged through the interviewees' talk and the associated tensions on EPs' workload, professional autonomy and application of psychology, which have formed discursive constructions tackling role and responsibility ('EP as responsible/accountable' 'EP as advocate for the child'). Lady Warnock appeared to recognise these problems, acknowledging that investigating alternatives to the statutory process would be beneficial (McKie, 2005).

Next, the process of statementing and the associated legislation was first outlined in the 1981 Education Act. In the context of this research, statementing refers to a statutory requirement, which involves the LA requesting psychological advice (written report) from EPs when a child has an assessment of their special educational needs. Statutory assessment became part of EPs' core offer and as such had implications for their service delivery and application of psychology. By needing to

prioritise the writing of psychological advice, time has shifted from collaborative, preventative work to bureaucratic requirements (Gregory, 1993). The 1981 Education Act was created as a means of striving to promote inclusion for children identified as having special needs. However, Gillham (1999) views the introduction of statementing 'as nothing less than a tragedy for the profession' (p.220).

The introduction of statementing operates within the social, cultural and political system and as such is mediated by the various factors, which affect the perceived value of the process (Gregory, 1993). Where finances, school placement and provision are inextricably linked by statements there is a clear agenda for why an increase in requests has arisen over the years. In addition, the value associated with statutory assessment is infiltrated by surrounding local and national discourses available to professionals and families. Research by Ashton and Roberts (2006) explored what SENCos valued about the EPs' role and the top activities were advice-giving and statutory assessment work. These discursive constructions conflicted with the answers provided by EPs in the study who reported building relationships with school and facilitating changes in perspectives as the top two most valuable aspects (Ashton and Roberts, 2006). These responses suggest a need to take greater action in promoting discourses, which reflect EP values, including understanding of their role in statutory assessments (Woods & Farrell, 2006).

It is interesting to consider Willig's six steps of FDA when exploring the HCPC standards of proficiency for practitioner psychologists. Several observations can be made, specifically relating to action orientations, subject positioning, implications for practice and how EPs are located in the wider professional community. The language used in the HCPC document (2012) is authoritarian and statements such as 'EPs only' and 'Clinical Psychologists only' are made when referring to the distinct roles and responsibilities of the various professions.

In reference to the current analysis, the talk in Interview Three explicitly describes the use of therapeutic techniques such as Narrative Therapy. Returning to the HCPC document the following is outlined 'Counselling psychologists only - understand the dynamics present in therapeutic and other relationships' (p.8, 2012). This statement also directs the work of Health and Clinical Psychologists, but is absent from the role of EPs. This may be a result of different definitions of the term 'therapeutic'; the interviewees' talk explicitly emphasised the importance of understanding the dynamics present in relationships. This assertion was captured in the discursive constructions 'EP as emotional worker' and 'EP as collaborative'.

The HCPC standards for practitioner psychologists (2012) also appear to have overlooked the diverse backgrounds and layers of experience EPs can have. For example, some psychologists will have a

background in counselling, which they would use in their practice. The complexity of producing a document of this nature inevitably reflects the need for ongoing development, a process that is recognised and promoted within the standards (HCPC, 2012, p. 4 & 5).

### **The relationship between discourses and power**

Raising awareness of the power relations at work provides an opportunity to tackle issues that may have previously been concealed or gone unnoticed (Billington, 2000) Critical discourse analysis aims to provoke reflection and the construction of more equitable discursive alternatives. EPs within the current EPS have introduced a critical psychology group, which attracted a variety of colleagues. Conversations with individuals suggest this has emerged as a result of wanting to engage in an opportunity for CPD and peer reflection. This highlights the value placed on critical thinking and offers an insight into possibilities for constructing professional identity through participation in sub-groups. Theory implies sub-groups are associated with individuals who are seeking an alternative to the 'norm' (Williams, 2012, Kenny, 2010). This concept seems to relate to the EPs' talk about the distinctions between managerial and peer supervision. This implies the existence of a hierarchy where supervision is concerned and suggests the sessions provide alternative functions for reflection and support. The importance of peer supervision featured as a dominant discursive construction within Interviews One and Two and as such this will be considered as part of the implications for practice section.

### **Approaches to assessment and the implications for identity construction**

The current analysis highlighted the use of integrative, consultative (EP as collaborative) and therapeutically driven (EP as narrative practitioner) approaches to applying psychology. In contrast Fallon et al. (2010) conducted a study that revealed that formal assessments are recognised by others outside of the profession (and by some within) as an imperative part of the EPs' 'tool kit' (Farrell, 2010). The value placed on these methods is entangled with the cultural weight placed on a positivist epistemology but is also reinforced by the utilisation of such tests by EPs themselves. In addition, research conducted in 2006 (Ashton & Roberts, 2006) found that SENCOs not only most valued the statutory assessment work of EPs, but also considered this alongside the use of psychometrics as the aspects unique to EPs. These reports appear problematic for EPs as although they are not necessarily generalisable findings, they indicate a wider discourse helping to determine

the role of the EP, which conflicts with internal professional views being promoted (Farrell et al. 2006). This suggests a need to make the psychology used with professionals, children and families more explicit, thus offering people alternative narratives for describing and identifying psychological principles. This suggestion could contribute further to the construction of professional identity and help to clarify the role of the EP (Ashton and Roberts, 2006).

EPs need to consider the historical, social and political construction of types of assessment. In particular, reflecting on the values which underpinned applying these techniques when working with children (Woods & Farrell, 2006). This is particularly important when considering the reasoning for using psychometrics and the influence of societal norms on preferences and promotion of assessments (Woods & Farrell, 2006). Furthermore, research has identified 'tradition bound EP practice' as being a barrier for reconstructing service models and professional identity (Fallon et al. 2010). The term 'tradition bound' refers to the use of psychometric assessments.

The diagram in figure 1.8 was constructed with the intention of providing an overview of the complex interactions and connections involved in shaping educational psychologists' professional identities. Each element of the diagram reflects the key interpretations, which emerged through the analysis in a synthesised form. Furthermore, figure 1.8 aims to represent the relationships between the possible 'selves' (professional and personal), a topic which was highlighted as an area of interest when reflecting on how identities are presented, performed and made sense of through discourse. The implications of a personal, professional dualism have been touched upon but an additional piece of future research may be of interest when exploring these concepts in more detail.

### **Professional and organisational values revisited**

Values guide behaviours and beliefs and, as such approaches to practice and decision making can be informed by values (Hayden & Madsen 2008). This area is of particular interest in terms of the tensions which may arise if professional values are compromised or challenged by organisational priorities. Discourses can be used to exert control, and privilege certain types of knowledge over others (Szasz, 1972; see also Foucault, 1965; Laing, 1977). Consequently, dominant discourses offer and restrict opportunities for developments in society depending on what is considered most advantageous for individuals at the time, often at the cost to minority groups (Burr, 1995, Foucault, 1965). EPs need to be mindful of the affect discourses can have on their own, and others' positions

when practicing. The current analysis offers an insight into the discourses, which both support and offer challenges to preferred professional identities.

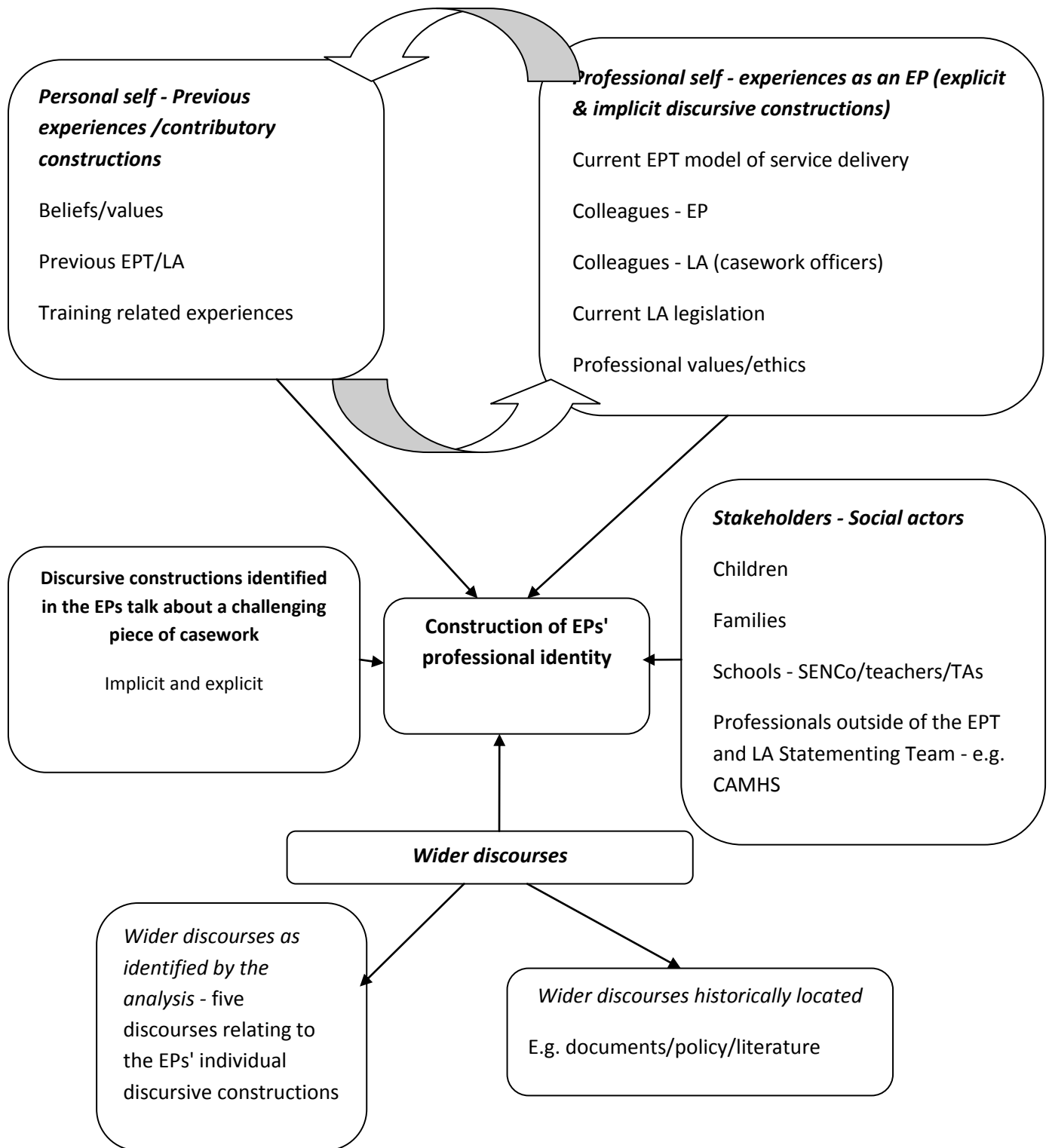
Willig (2008) identified exploring the relationship between discourses as a pivotal part of FDA. This process can play a substantial role in unmasking agendas and raising awareness of what may constitute the motivation for privileging a discourse in a particular way. Szasz (1972) argues that personal and professional values are instrumental in practitioners deciding which theories to champion and how to approach practice.

The most dominant discourses are often the most difficult to identify as they have become interwoven within culture itself and subsequently expertly concealed (Billington, 2000). This is especially the case if the discourse is serving a function and contributing to powerful acts and agendas of control and marginalisation (Foucault, 1965, Szasz, 1972).

*How are EPs' professional values reflected at an individual, group and organisational level?*

The values, goals and vision stated in the LA guidelines for employees are used in the recruitment paperwork and service advertisements for the EPS. This is a stark acknowledgement that distinctions between EPs and other LA employees working in the education sector are, at first glance, difficult to identify. This is an important issue and one that has featured in EPS service mornings. More recently, several EPs from the current EPS presented the collation of EPs ideas that had been transformed into a value set specific to the service. A document outlining a set of core values and principles has been created. The core values specific to the current EPS are illustrated in figure 1.9 (p. 105). The discourse surrounding the construction of principles and values seemed to embody a powerful collective, validating professional autonomy whilst working within a LA. This suggests a collective resistance of LA power and the desire to establish and assert a distinctive professional position.

Figure 1.8 A diagram depicting the discursive constructions, social actors and wider discourses identified as shaping EPs' professional identity



Kenny's (2010) analysis proposed that groups need to promote a discourse associated with an 'outside' in order to preserve the 'in group' narrative and rationale for participating (p.63). This was perceived as fostering a sense of belonging for those in the group; however Kenny (2010) suggested commitment to the group routines was 'policed' (p.63) as membership was associated with workplace identity. Kenny's (2010) study offers an insight into group processes and inferences can be made to the current research when reflecting on the function of discursive constructions. The peer supervision group operates on a voluntary basis and is organised outside of the senior leadership team. In addition 'EP as intertwined' with the LA' and 'EP as conflicted employee' may be depicting an 'outside', which serves as a means to resist the wider discourse of 'EP as LA Officer' and to construct their professional identity alternatively.

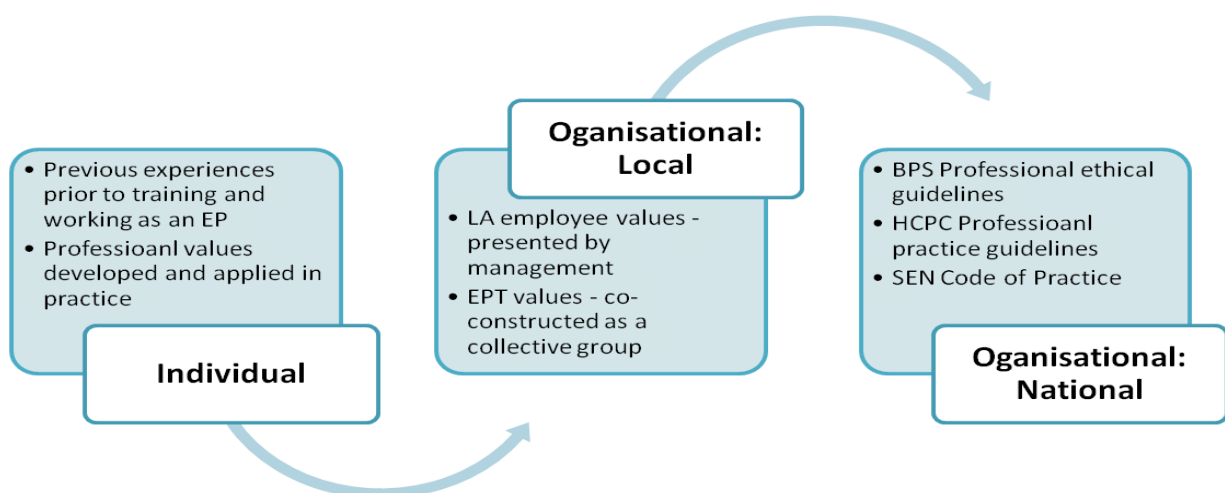
**Figure 1.9. EPS values created by EPs as part of service days and a working group (2014).**

**Promoting equality through empowerment** (social justice; acknowledgement of power inequalities, which exist, and seeking to give voice to those who may be disempowered or disenfranchised).

**Recognising that connectedness and belonging are fundamental needs** (the value and importance of relationships).

**Believing that everybody and every situation has the potential for positive change** (optimism, humanism, curiosity, respect).

**Figure 1.10 An interpretation of how professional values are reflected at an individual, local and national level**





## **The ambiguity of role and identity within educational psychology revisited**

Professional identity is not only determined by the discourses privileged by the collective (organisation/professional bodies) but it is also shaped by how the individual interacts with these. Furthermore, identity may be constructed through the resistance of discursive constructions offered which then shape the creation of new professional ideals and selves. Elsbach and Bhattacharya (2001) assert 'we define who we are by defining who we are not' (p.406). This supports the need to consider where the EPs' talk implies a rejection of a 'type', 'role' or homogenous categorisation.

Over the last 100 years educational psychology itself has seen many changes (Arnold & Hardy. 2013), therefore, it is not unfounded that there may be uncertainty and ambiguity surrounding the individual identities of EPs.

### *The reconstruction and construction of educational psychology*

The reconstruction movement within educational psychology arose in the 1900's (Arnold, 2013<sup>1</sup>) and the existence of tensions between the profession and its employer have been further identified in literature since the 1970s (Gillham, 1978, 1999, Woods & Farrell, 2006). The difficulties appear to stem from the LA positioning of EPs whereby the statutory role is given maximum credence (Fallon, 2010). This recognition from the LA can overshadow the application of psychology and capacity of an EP to act as a research practitioner, attending to systemic changes and progression. However, this is not the sole barrier for EPs and it is important for the profession to take a critical stance when identifying the reasons for their current positioning. This will better prepare EPs for participating actively in debates prioritising areas of professional development. Furthermore, issues surrounding capacity, workload and understanding the intricacies of applying psychology need to be negotiated and effectively communicated between EPs and professionals within the LA and beyond.

The idea that educational psychology would benefit from reconstruction is not a new phenomenon (Gillham, 1978). In fact, the profession has spent a large majority of its life shape-shifting and evolving. The application of discourse analysis allows for a greater insight into how EPs have explored and negotiated their roles within the field, and more importantly how they have been positioned by the discourses available to them. It is also clear from this exploratory study that given

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<sup>1</sup> Arnold, C. Cited in British Educational Psychology: The first 100 years. Chapter One: Origins, (2013),

the range and variety of discursive constructions of the EP evident within the talk that is unhelpful to suggest that a homogeneous viewpoint exists amongst EPs, as this would ignore both complexity and eclectic expertise held by individuals who make up the profession as a whole (Bird, 1999).

### **The professional landscape in times of change**

The profession is represented by two regulatory organisations (British Psychological Society, BPS and Health Care Professions Council, HCPC). The number of regulatory bodies indicates diversity amongst the profession and could contribute to confusion for external professionals.

There have also been arguments in favour of such 'fluidity' and 'flexibility' as a profession (Fallon, Woods & Rooney, 2010). For example, EPs are required to adjust and adapt to avoid the threat of budget cuts. LA pressures may be reflected in service delivery and this could have implications for the type of work prioritised and the 'core offer' provided by an EP service (Fallon, 2010). It is important to ensure that EPs do not become overly enmeshed within the LA jurisdiction, although it is inevitable that a blurring of boundaries will sometimes occur. The discursive construction 'EP as intertwined with the LA' reflects this interpretation. This has been evidenced within the interviewees' talk where references have been made to situations becoming 'messy' (line 74 - 75, Interview Two) and the difficulties associated with who is responsible for certain decisions. In addition, the findings highlighted problems in respect to subject positions where casework officers were concerned and the talk indicated EPs resisted reductive accounts of children's situations (line 63-69, Interview Two). Additionally, the EPs' talk suggests they resisted being positioned by making their professional judgement explicit. This interpretation indicates the role power can play within professionalism, and how a knowledge based discourse can help to distinguish between EP and casework officer roles within statutory processes.

Through positioning themselves as being able to offer a 'unique contribution' and 'invaluable knowledge', EPs attempt to stake their claim amongst the workforce and secure their position (Farrell, 2010 & Fallon et al. 2010). Another perspective might be that flexibility replaces substance and integrity, leaving the profession and professional identity fragile and vulnerable to external influences attempting to assert power in times of confusion and flux. It has been interesting to reflect on this assertion when participating in EPS service mornings, in particular when addressing the Children and Families Bill (DfE, 2013) and revisions to the SEN Code of Practice (DfE, 2014).

### **Professional identity within emerging traded services**

The situation and circumstances in which EPs are working will initially become murkier upon the introduction of traded models. These changing times it seems, demand more than ever before that the profession upholds an identity reflective of its professional integrity and autonomy (Fallon, Woods & Rooney, 2010). This will aid the enforcement of ethical guidance and advocating for the 'client' (DECP, 2002). The economic situation may appear to justify forceful arguments for a traded model however, it will be essential for EPs and EP services to critically reflect on their role and responsibilities and how their professional values underpin this work (Fallon et al. 2010). The ethical guidelines for practice for EPs (DECP, 2013) who intend to trade stipulate four aspects required for ethical communication with clients. These include; respect, competence, responsibility and integrity. This document highlights the relationship these guidelines could have with the construction of EPs' professional identities, especially when designing a contract for traded services (DECP, 2013).

Trading may facilitate a new independence for EPs whereby they are directly involved in the negotiation of work and can create bespoke packages. As previously discussed, the current focus on EPs completing statutory work is unnecessarily reductionist, (Woods and Farrell, 2006). Subsequently, it may be better for EPs to enter into dialogues with the LA to better inform them about the application of psychology in the modern age. This idea resonates with the statement located in the Summerfield Report (DES, 1968) which refers to the importance of ensuring EPs' work is reflective of their level of training and expertise.

### **Chapter summary**

The current analysis illustrates the interwoven discursive constructions of the professional self encompassed in the construction of professional identity construction and how these speak to the wider discourses. The EPs' talk did not reflect a fixed identity constructed in isolation. This assertion is validated by the numerous discursive constructions and social actors identified as contributing to the shaping of interviewees' professional identities. This finding highlights the value of using a CDA framework situated within a social constructionist epistemology when investigating identity construction.

## **Chapter Six: Conclusions and Implications**

### **Introduction**

In this chapter, the conclusions and contributions of the study will be discussed, followed by strengths and limitations, which will be explored from a reflexive position. Finally, suggestions for future research and implications for practice will be presented.

### **Conclusions**

The current study has illustrated the multi-storied components contributing to the construction of EPs' professional identity. This research offers an insight into the landscape of wider discourses on offer to EPs and how these have influenced the shaping of the profession. This study subsequently reaffirms the assertions that identity is a fluid concept that relies on social and symbolic interactions for construction and re-construction.

There is a need to hold up a critical lens to the profession of educational psychology, and CDA informed by Foucault's work offers a means of applying this theoretical perspective when working with children, their families and other professionals (Billington, 2000). This involves investigating the world of EPs in conjunction with the social and political context in which they inhabit (Woods & Farrell, 2006).

The analysis suggests multiple discursive constructions contribute to the shaping of EPs' professional identity and that these relate to the wider discourses. Five wider discourses were identified as a result of the analysis. These include, 'EP as relational worker', 'EP as research practitioner', 'EP as scientist practitioner', 'EP as LA officer' and 'EP as advocate for the child'. The research contributes to critical conversations in the field of educational psychology and emphasises the importance of exploring the relationship between professional identity and practice when considering future directions for the profession.

## **Implications and applied suggestions for practice**

### *Societal level*

EPs' professional identities are multifaceted and entwined within the wider discourses. Identities are shaped by an array of discursive constructions that draw on experience, values, relationships and interactions with others (Burger & Luckman, 1966, Wells, 2007). In addition literature, research and policy informs discourses relating to EPs' identities and is interested in positioning individuals, organisations and ultimately the profession. The underpinnings of an EP's role have been written and debated about over many years (Arnold & Hardy, 2013). This highlights the fascination and preoccupation with the profession from within the profession.

The current study suggests EPs may wish to consider developing a steering group and/or forum to consult about EP position papers. This could raise the profile of inter-professional research and how the messages associated with professional identity are communicated at a societal level.

A Foucauldian approach to CDA provides a theoretical grounding from which to make sense of the professional discourses available to EPs and offers opportunities to affirm or reconstruct their identity. Furthermore, the steps included in the analysis: investigating the discursive constructions, locating the constructions within the wider discourses, action orientation, subject positions, and possibilities for practice and subjectivity could be applied to the wider EP community. For instance, these concepts could be applied when developing policy and critical research communities.

### *Service level*

Literature reports that establishing a strong professional identity and values, at both an individual and collective level, has been linked to a sense of autonomy and belonging, increased job satisfaction, commitment and longevity in a position (Strauss, Griffin & Parker, 2012). These factors demonstrate the importance of this investigation on developing practice, organisational management and critical professional reflexivity.

The discursive constructions identified in the current study and their relationships with the wider discourses, could inform critical reflection of roles and responsibilities amongst a multi professional workforce. This contribution could uncover a deeper understanding of the unique contribution EPs make when reflecting on the position of the profession in the changing context (Farrell et al. 2006), in particular with the introduction of the EHC plans and an increase in traded services.

In light of an increase in traded services, EPs will need to consider how to establish a marketable yet ethical agreement, whilst retaining a sense of individual and group professionalism, integrity and identity. Capturing these elements more concretely within EPSs across the UK may influence the infrastructure of services and cross-country working patterns. Additionally, the service model agreements may provoke resistance or strengthen affiliations with a particular EPT, which consequently could lead to migration across services and possibly impact on the numbers of private EPs. This argument has implications for changing professional identities cultivated by a new traded landscape. For example, clients may begin to outsource EP work based on their understanding of how psychology is applied and the values underpinning a particular EPS. A study in this area could offer an understanding of how EPs maintain professional autonomy within a traded context.

In response to the discursive constructions and wider discourse identified in this study, EPSs may want to set up working groups to promote the importance of professional identity. This could also link to a piece of action research, serving to illuminate EPs distinct contributions and the value associated with applying their psychological expertise outside of statutory responsibilities.

#### *Individual level*

The study suggests EPs valued the opportunity to engage in reflexive practice in order to untangle and make sense of complex experiences and emotions. EPs may wish to refer to the current interpretations, and Willig's six stages in particular, to inform their supervisory conversations, appraisals and/or structure their reflective logs. In addition, by applying the questions used to frame the current analysis EPs could construct a more explicit picture of the 'unique' contribution they are bringing to the team.

The discourse 'EP as advocate for the child' highlights that paying attention to the power dynamics involved in interactions between individuals is crucial when working as an EP. This is an important area for EPs to revisit when evaluating how they position themselves and others in practice. The principles of CDA can offer EPs ideas of how to unite theory and practice. The type of knowledge CDA constructs offers a means of applying critical thinking to complex, multi-layered situations inhabited by numerous people 'carrying' a variety of discourses (Gee, 2005). Willig (2008) continues, stating;

Foucauldian discourse analysts do not seek to understand the 'true' nature of psychological phenomena, but rather the ways in which particular versions of such phenomena are constructed through language (and other symbolic practices)' (p.120).

## **Strengths and limitations of the research**

In order to reflect on the quality of the current research and what constitutes a 'good' piece of qualitative research the Big Tent criteria (Tracy, 2010) have been referred to. The following key areas were considered when attempting to evaluate the study; worth, rigor, credibility, sincerity, resonance, contribution and ethics.

Firstly, the analysis actively facilitates the identification and interpretation of connections between discursive constructions of the wider discourse and EPs' professional identity. By selecting this type of methodology a range of aspects can be attended to by the researcher. For instance, the analytical concepts promote critical thinking and embrace the diversity of constructions and the complexity of connections with identity construction in the present talk and amongst the wider discourses.

An additional strength of discourse analysis is that it does not appear to attempt to suppress unwanted narratives. Instead it has raised awareness as to the how discourses have come under construction and the agendas present that influence which discourses 'show up' and become more dominant (Burr, 1995). Additionally through a heightened awareness comes information and with it greater choice and ability to resist being unwittingly positioned. In this instance, understanding the theory can influence the subsequent action of thought and subject position.

I am fully aware that this position as an 'insider' creates opportunities for bias and meaning making which may be different from other TEPs' working in a separate LA, conducting the same research.

Being positioned within the EPS selected for the study has allowed for an ethnographic angle on the research. I have been privy to conversations, meetings and feedback from working groups, which are currently interested in professional values and how the EPS (myself included) define and enact these. This development has been extremely timely and contributed to thinking around the research question. It has also provided multiple opportunities for personal and peer reflection in respect to the construction of professional identity and how this is communicated externally. This example emphasises the transferability of the findings as the analysis relates directly to the interests of the current EPS and so could inform further exploratory work amongst the EPs.

When carrying out the analysis I selected various methods to minimise projecting my own thoughts around identity onto the interviewees' talk. This included conducting a pilot study, keeping a research diary, engaging in joint free association in respect to the analysis and seeking regular feedback from my supervisor throughout the process. In addition, I revisited the transcripts after

the analysis was complete, in order to further triangulate my interpretations of EPs' talk and wider discourses that emerged as a result. In retrospect, had time allowed I would have participated in a personal reflective interview and carried out some analysis of this talk to aid transparency regarding potential biases. This said I have captured elements of my developing identity within the write-up, to offer a sense of my own professional identity as an emerging EP.

In respect to the analysis Willig (2008) and Parker (1992) make no apologies for not providing stringent criteria for carrying out FDA. Initially this contributed to feelings of anxiety when entering the crux of the analysis as an element of risk-taking was required. However, the critically constructive supervision I received helped to tackle these difficulties. The limitations identified by Graham (2011) most definitely resonate with feelings I experienced during the process; 'lack of explicit methodological instructions – and for fear of reprisal at not having executed the analysis 'correctly' (p.664).

The depth of analysis is most certainly time-bound as the multiple layers of analysis demanded numerous hours per transcript, to gain a sense of immersion in the texts and in order to reach a point of saturation. This initial stage of the analysis required time to consider intermittent positions at, both a macro and micro level in order to establish the level of critical analysis necessary. On reflection, I have been left anticipating future opportunities to revisit FDA. I think it is an approach which demands commitment and energy; especially when tackling many new perplexing concepts.

### **Reflections on the discursive constructions and my own emerging identity**

I have engaged in a personal reflexive analysis of my own professional identity development. Dominant discourses shaping my own professional identity appear to have shown up within dialogic exchanges with other EPs and in particular in supervision whilst undertaking the training. On reflection, I have adopted and resisted positions opened up by the discourses made available, which has influenced the pathways I have circumnavigated as a result. Furthermore, the outward presentation of my 'professional self' has grown and strengthened. This process has been creative and multi-dimensional, although not without its difficulties. I have found that advocating for professional ideals and values assumes a greater responsibility and accountability for decisions made in practice.

Primarily it is through the negotiation of roles and responsibilities that I have practised communicating and enacting my professional identity (as a TEP). I value the joint construction of



ideas that involves the sharing of expertise. This reflection suggests that working in a multi professional context can influence identity construction, as it requires learning about another field, their methods, language and values in order to collaborate effectively (Gaskell and Leadbetter, 2009).

I have also grown in confidence and attribute the thinking I have done around the thesis as contributing constructively to my relationships and interactions with schools, in particular practitioners in high school. The current analysis has presented me with a new framework for sense-making and increased my ability to take multiple perspectives (e.g. when considering the subject positions and the social actors that show up in the talk). Ultimately the current project has created an invaluable reflexive opportunity.

Whilst on placement in years two and three I have experienced interactions with casework officers, which reflect 'EP as intertwined with the LA' and 'EP as LA officer'. This has included discussions negotiating roles and responsibilities between casework officers and myself, in particular surrounding the perception of EPs as gatekeepers to statutory assessments and provision. Over time, I have developed a more assured position as a TEP when expressing and maintaining professional boundaries.

The current study has highlighted the breadth of discourses available to EPs and those which I feel affiliated to. The discursive constructions that resonate with my own emerging identity are 'EP as collaborative' which I have been exploring through increased participation in consultative approaches and 'EP as reflective practitioner' a construction that I associate with professional integrity and accountability. I consider the wider discourse 'EP as relational worker', 'EP as research practitioner' and 'EP as advocate for the child' as integral elements informing EP professional identity and practice.

*Reflecting on the relevance of applying A Foucauldian approach to critical discourse analysis to my practice*

Critically reflecting on discourses available to EPs relating to professional identity offers multiple viewpoints and stimulates reflexivity when examining the genealogy of educational psychology;

'...given the general acceptance of the psychology of the individual, its empirical scientific roots and benevolent intent, it is recognised that imagining a different psychology operating within the UK education system is not an easy task.' (Williams, 2013, p.305).

After engaging with the analytical process I noticed I began applying the approach to a wider context. For instance when involved in a consultation process I have become more explicitly aware of how Willig's six stages relate to my practice. In particular the impact of the wider discourses on the positioning of the child and adult and their sense of agency and self-efficacy is of interest. I have considered how I could introduce the theory of CDA more transparently into the interactions with stakeholders and I think creative approaches may support facilitation; thus combining amongst two approaches that I feel resonate with my practice. Additionally, action research lends itself to using CDA within schools. The process of conducting a joint analysis with staff could create a space to develop relationships, reflect and engage in sense making together and co-construct new ways of thinking about a problem. Billington (1995) supports this idea stating 'Discourses analysis is a model of psychological inquiry which can be used by the individual EP in order to sharpen perceptions of human relationships' (p.36).

### **Future research directions**

Considering the topical nature of the EHC plans and traded service models of delivery, it seems future research into these areas might lead to meaningful contributions of how EPs' professional identities are communicated and maintained within a multi-agency and commercial realm; including the implications for EPs' professional integrity, autonomy and responsibility. The importance of this investigation is further evidenced by the findings in a study by Farrell et al. (2006) which evidences the need for increased transparency about the specialist professional contribution EPs can offer when defining roles between practitioners. A research project of this kind might help inform the possibility Farrell et al. (2006) discuss relating to a union between clinical and educational psychology professions.

The current study indicates the EPs' professional identity is informed, in part by wider discourses situated in documentation concerning professional ethics and values, and suggests congruence between these available wider discourses and EPs' individual discursive constructions. It would be interesting to consider carrying out a longitudinal study whereby the researcher could explore EPs' identities over time. This could allow for a deeper understanding of how discourses influence professional identity construction and could further evidence the fluidity and malleability of professional identity.

Finally, the reconstructing psychology discourse demonstrates the integrity of the profession as EPs are embracing and enveloped in critically reflexive discussions in order to look for continued ways of

developing (Gillham, 1999). This is occurring even though it might mean leaving some traditions behind and grappling with new horizons offering opportunities to construct greater understanding of the profession's epistemological assumptions and identity. This is particularly the case where the concepts of scientific and research practitioner are concerned (Richards, 2004).

These concepts are strongly associated with debates surrounding evidence-based practice and practice based evidence and what constitutes as a helpful discourse to inform the practice of EPs (Moore, 2005, Fox, 2003). This is an important area for future exploration in respect to EP practice and professional identity.

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#### *Website*

The British Psychological Society state is a site that presents information for and about the profession of psychology (<http://www.BPS.org.uk>).

## Appendices

### Appendix 1.1: Ethical Approval letter



**The School  
Of  
Education.**

Helen Thorley Waters  
DEdCPsy Programme

30 April 2013

**Head of School**  
Professor Cathy Nutbrown  
School of Education  
388 Glossop Road  
Sheffield  
S10 2JA

**Telephone:** +44 (0)114 222 8167  
**Email:** dedcpsy@sheffield.ac.uk

Dear Helen,

#### **ETHICAL APPROVAL LETTER**

**How are Educational Psychologist' s professional identities and values shaped through discourse?  
How does discourse shape Educational Psychologist' s professional identity?**

Thank you for submitting your ethics application. I am writing to confirm that your application has now been approved.

We recommend you refer to the reviewers' additional comments (please see attached). You should discuss how you are going to respond to these comments with your supervisor BEFORE you proceed with your research.

This letter is evidence that your application has been approved and should be included as an Appendix in your final submission.

Good luck with your research.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Dan Goodley', written over a horizontal line.

Professor Dan Goodley  
Chair of the School of Education

cc Tony Williams

## **Appendix 1.2: Information sheet for educational psychologists**

### **Introduction**

You are being asked to participate in a research project being carried out by Helen Waters currently studying for a Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology at the University of Sheffield.

### **Purpose of the research**

The aim of the research is to investigate how Educational Psychologists' professional identities are communicated through their communication of professional practice experiences.

### **How the data will be collected**

The data will be collected in the form of individual interviews, which will last for approximately one hour. It is my intention for the interviews to be informal and facilitated using open ended questions. The aim being to allow participants' the opportunity to talk freely about their experiences of working as an Educational Psychologist.

The interviews will be recorded using a Dictaphone and then transcribed and analysed using qualitative techniques.

### **How the findings will be used**

The findings will then be written up and presented in the research project of Helen Waters for the purpose of her university postgraduate course.

Procedures will be in place to ensure the confidentiality of the participants and that they remain anonymous within the research. All kept data will be stored securely and password protected. All data will be destroyed six months after the final hand in of the thesis unless participants have otherwise given consent.

Participants have the right not answer a specific question or to withdraw from the research at any time during the interview, if they so wish, without giving a reason.

Participants may also decide to withdraw from the research up to two weeks after the interview if they so wish without giving a reason. Participants are asked to put this decision in writing for the researcher's records. If this is the case any individual data gathered will be destroyed and excluded from the analysis and write up of the research.

Participants will be debriefed, at a time convenient for the individuals involved, if they so wish.

### **Please read and complete the attached consent form.**

If you wish to ask any further questions regarding the research please feel free to contact myself or my research supervisors at any stage of the process. The contact details are as follows;

Student researcher: Helen. T. Waters

Email: [edphw@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:edphw@sheffield.ac.uk)

Contact no: 0785126148

Research supervisor: Dr Anthony Williams

Email: Email: [anthony.williams@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:anthony.williams@sheffield.ac.uk)

Contact no: 0114 222 8119

**Appendix 1.3: Consent form for educational psychologists**

**Please place your initials in each box after if you have read, understood and agree with the statement**

I give my consent to be a participant in the research project of Helen Waters, a student at the University of Sheffield.

I confirm that I am of 18 years of age or above.

I understand that the data collected during the interviews will be kept confidential, and I will remain anonymous throughout the process and no named information will be kept in hard or electronic form. A pseudonym will be assigned to protect individuals from being identified.

I understand that I have the right to decline from answering a question, if I so wish.

I understand that I am free to withdraw from participating in the interview at any time, without giving a reason and as such any documentation or recordings in which I have been included will be destroyed.

I understand that I am free to withdraw from the research up to two weeks after participating in the interview if I so wish without giving a reason. Any individual data gathered will be destroyed and excluded from the analysis and write up of the research.

I give my permission for the findings to be presented in the research project of Helen Waters and in a possible future publication.

***Please tick this box if you wish to be debriefed about the research at a later date***

Name of participant:.....

Signature:.....

Date:.....

Name of researcher:.....

Signature:.....

Date:.....

*Thank you for taking the time to read the information sheet and consent form. Your involvement in the research project is very much appreciated.*

**Appendix 1.4:** *The annotated transcript from Interview One* (this has been removed from the electronic copy)

















































**Appendix 1.5:** *The annotated transcript from Interview Two* (this has been removed from the electronic copy)

























**Appendix 1.6:** *The annotated transcript from Interview Three* (this has been removed from the electronic copy)























