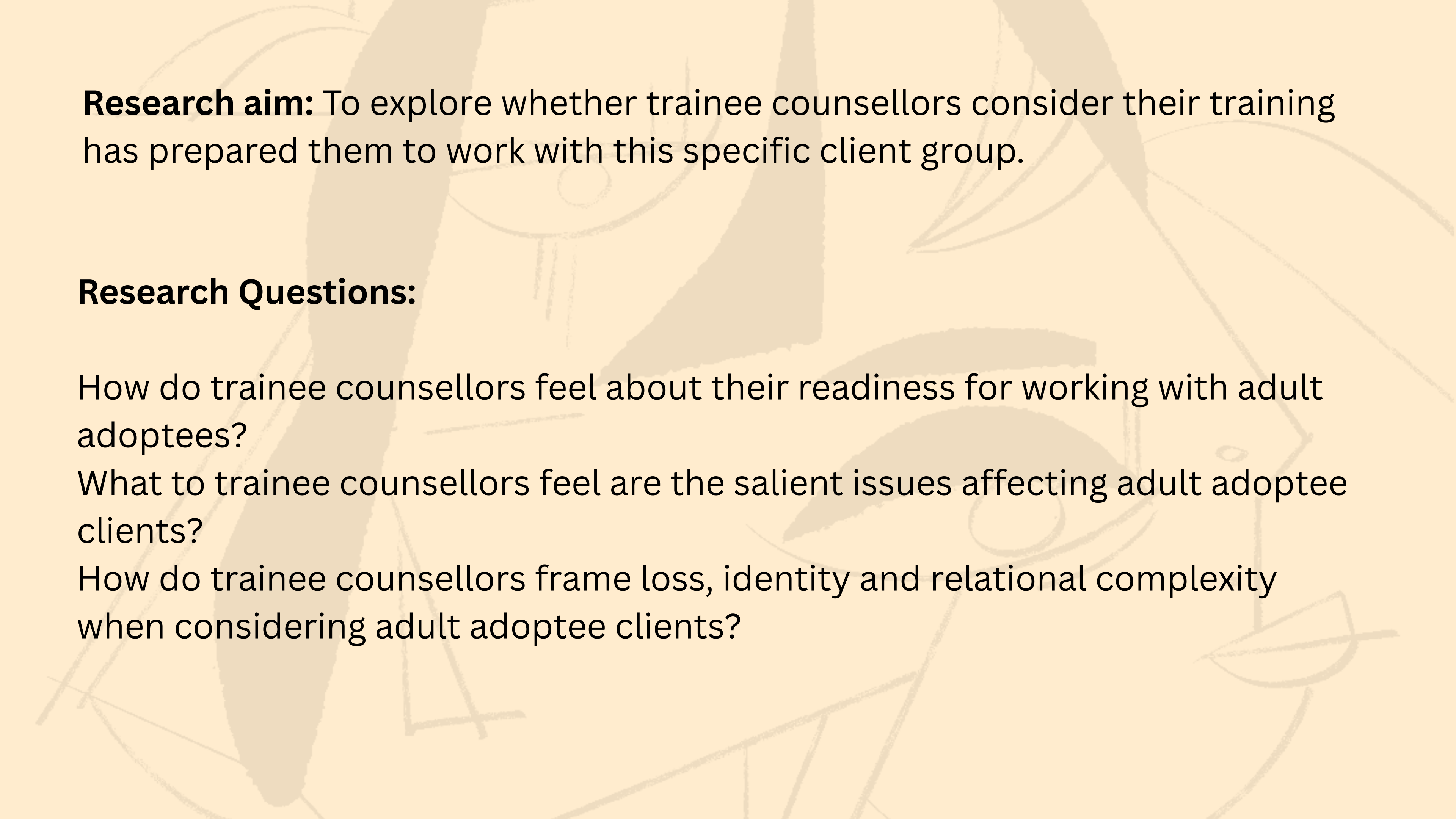


How ready do trainee counsellors feel to work with the adult adoptee client issues loss, identity, and relational complexity?

A reflexive thematic analysis based on semi-structured interviews



A faint, light-colored background illustration of a person's face and hands. The face is in the upper center, with a simple outline and a few lines for features. The hands are positioned around the face, with fingers spread. The overall style is minimalist and sketchy.

Research aim: To explore whether trainee counsellors consider their training has prepared them to work with this specific client group.

Research Questions:

How do trainee counsellors feel about their readiness for working with adult adoptees?

What to trainee counsellors feel are the salient issues affecting adult adoptee clients?

How do trainee counsellors frame loss, identity and relational complexity when considering adult adoptee clients?



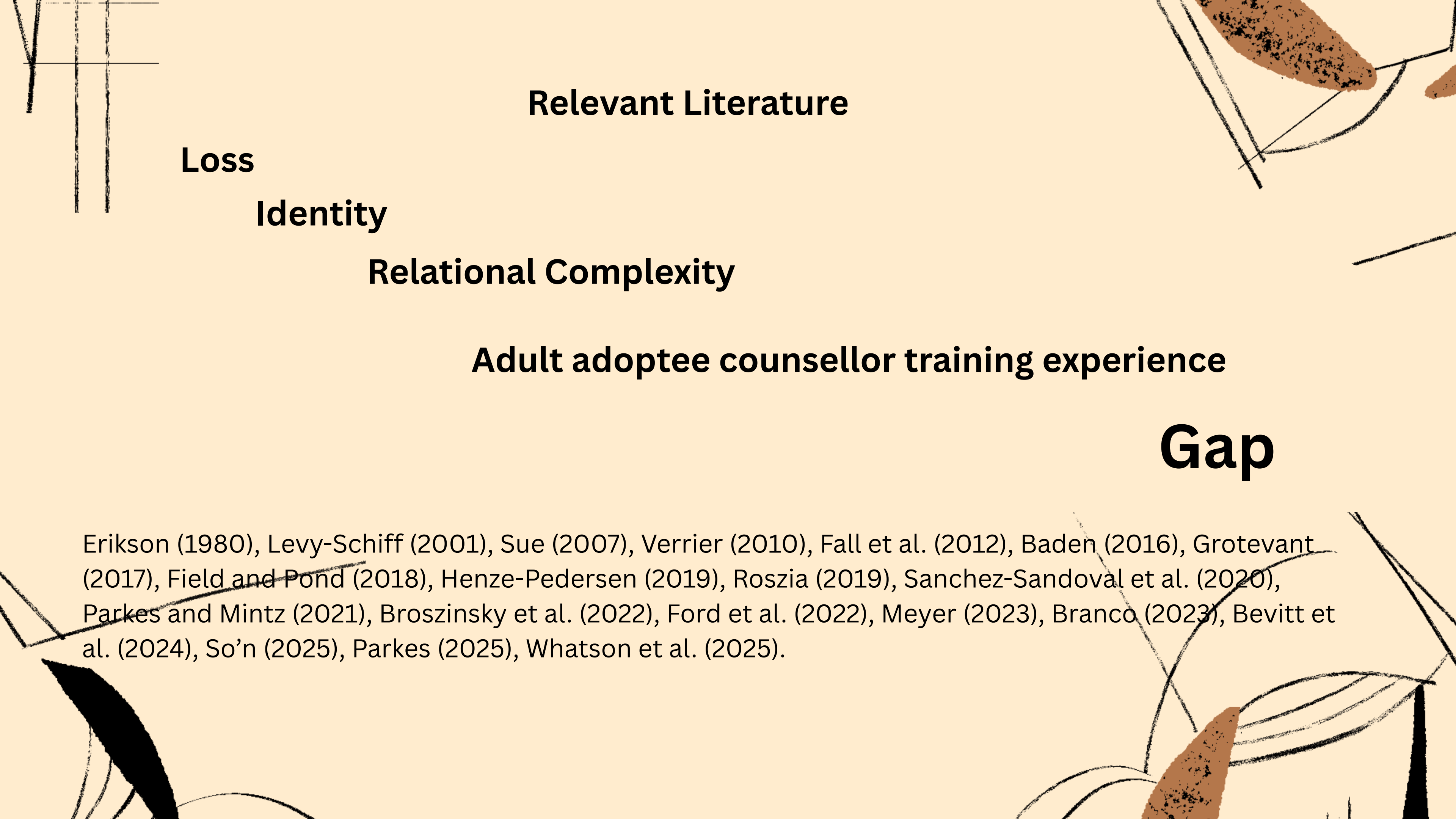
Rationale

Legislation changes mean more adult adoptee clients may be exploring adoption related issues in therapy.

The BACP is currently preparing a competency framework for working with adult adoptees.

As trainee counsellors working with clients in placement, how does working with this client group prior to the production of this competency framework feel?

UN (2009), BACP (2023), Corral et al. (2021) Mclamb et al. (2022), Geller (2025), Parkes (2025)



Relevant Literature

Loss

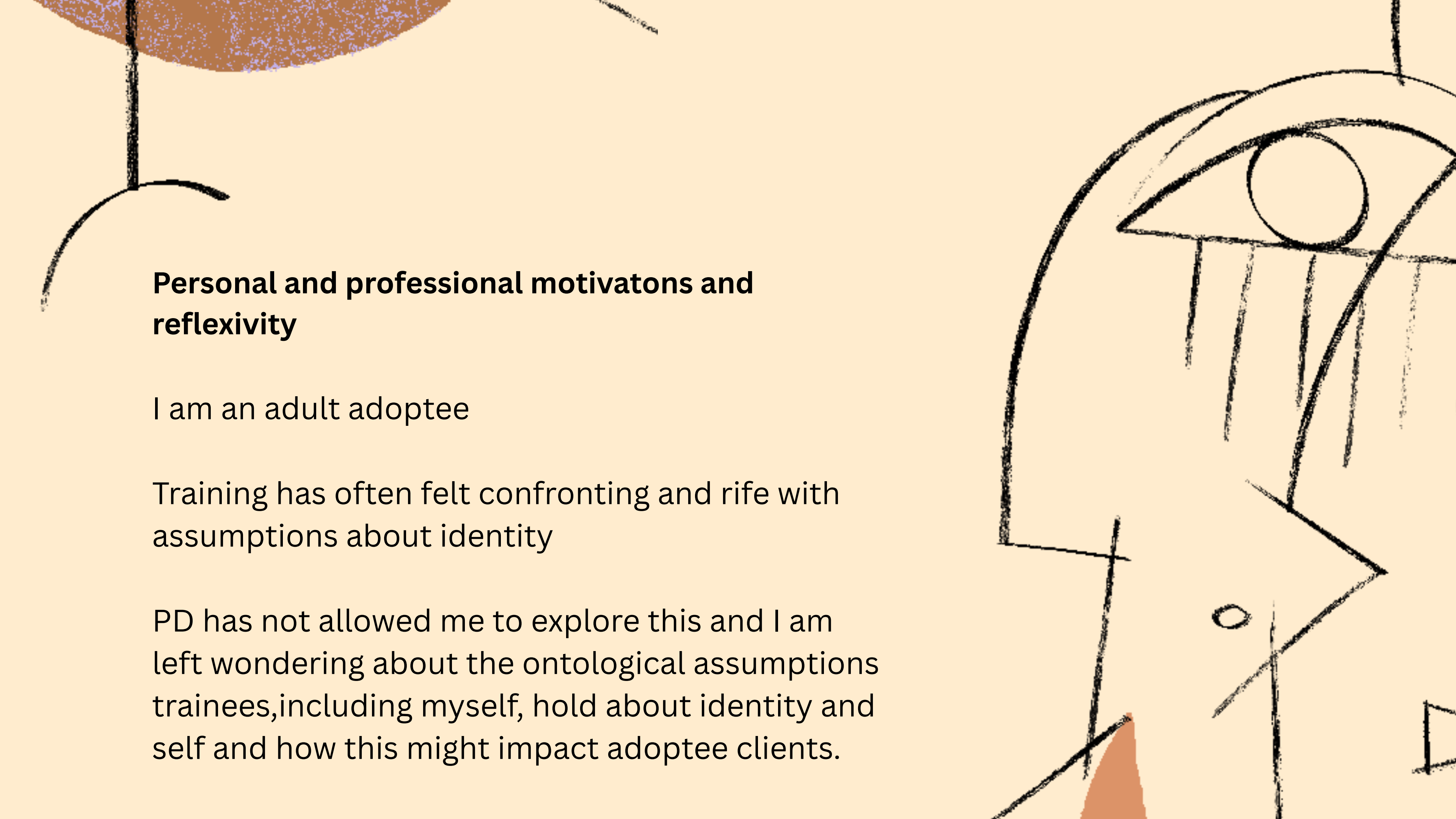
Identity

Relational Complexity

Adult adoptee counsellor training experience

Gap

Erikson (1980), Levy-Schiff (2001), Sue (2007), Verrier (2010), Fall et al. (2012), Baden (2016), Grotevant (2017), Field and Pond (2018), Henze-Pedersen (2019), Roszia (2019), Sanchez-Sandoval et al. (2020), Parkes and Mintz (2021), Broszinsky et al. (2022), Ford et al. (2022), Meyer (2023), Branco (2023), Bevitt et al. (2024), So'n (2025), Parkes (2025), Whatson et al. (2025).

An abstract drawing on a light beige background. On the right side, there is a large, stylized face. The face has a large, almond-shaped eye with a thick black outline and a small circle inside. Below the eye, there are several vertical lines of varying lengths, suggesting a beard or hair. The face is composed of thick, hand-drawn black lines. On the left side, there is a dark brown, textured shape that looks like a tree branch or a leaf, extending from the top left corner towards the center.

Personal and professional motivations and reflexivity

I am an adult adoptee

Training has often felt confronting and rife with assumptions about identity

PD has not allowed me to explore this and I am left wondering about the ontological assumptions trainees, including myself, hold about identity and self and how this might impact adoptee clients.

Research Paradigm

Ontological Position Interpretivist/relativist

Epistemological Position Postmodern - Knowledge as socially constructed.
Reflective of power and discourse.

**Reflexivity within this
research**

“Recognition of assumptions as
assumptions” (Willig (2019, p192)





Methodology

Reflexive Thematic Analysis

Semi-structured interviews of 30 minutes

5-7 participants purposively sampled from current counselling and psychotherapy training

Video recorded in person/online interviews

Coding and theme identification a reflexive process

Relativist lens to analysis of discourse and language use.

Reflexive analysis of language, interpretation and positioning of researcher

Language of curiosity, inquiry and appreciation of difference

Ontological curiosity, not forced alignment



Ethics and Trustworthiness

BCP and BACP ethics for research adhered to at all times

Participants provided with information sheet and consent form.

Participant right to withdraw

Non-adoptee participants sampled but consider ethical implication of asking

Participant data anonymised and stored on OneDrive in line with GDPR 2018 and current updates

Participants referenced in analysis and transcription only by pseudonym

Contextual anonymisation, i.e. consider any identifiable factors

Consider ethics of revealing own adoptive identity

Audit trail

Considering power dynamic and implications of sense of being appraised

Use language indicative of curiosity and dialogue, not interrogation

Focus on skills of rapport building and horizontalism

Active listening and motivational interviewing skills

Offer regular breaks and refreshment, affirm that emotions will be held and supported

Offer debriefing for participants to regulate and reflect following interview

Contact details of supervisor provided to participants via debrief form to take away

“Psychology has the peculiar characteristic that informing people of what is being tested has the effect of altering their ‘natural’ behaviour.” (Coolican (2024) p309)

Thank you for listening. Any Questions?



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