“LOOKING THE PART”: A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON HOW COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGISTS MAKE SENSE OF THEIR PROFESSIONAL ATTIRE

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ABSTRACT

The majority of clothing-related research has concentrated on anthropology and social psychology, suggesting that clothing can impact the wearers behaviours, mood and cognitions and that first impressions are formed rapidly with great accuracy. In light of this knowledge, a gap in literature on professional attire within therapy orientated research was identified. Whilst clothing oneself is an everyday practice, its ubiquity has rendered it almost invisible as a focus of psychotherapy research. Clients' preferences regarding therapists' clothing have been researched quantitatively with highly inconclusive results. Additionally, some advice on self-presentation exists in the form of blogs, with few connections to research. The main aim of this research was to explore the views around the professional attire of counselling psychologists and to answer the question 'How do counselling psychologists view and make sense of their attire in clinical work?'. Additionally, whether counselling psychologists can regard attire as an added source of information about the self. A variety of sampling strategies were used to recruit participants. Inductive thematic analysis was chosen to engage closely with data in an under-researched subject and additional research questions were developed during the analysis. Eleven semi-structured interviews were conducted with qualified counselling psychologists in the UK; four males and seven females participated. The interviewees' ages ranged from 33 to 91, with their experience of private practice ranging from 1 to 13 years. Three themes were identified. '*Shall We Talk About Attire?*' illustrated the ambivalence surrounding the importance of discussions about attire. The second theme: '*You need to look the part;* became an echo of clothing practices beyond specific garments and was explored within three further subthemes that grapple with what this part might actually look like. The last theme, '*Underneath our clothes'*, pointed to attire being used beyond simply being dressed, but as a way to enhance the therapeutic relationship, reflect congruence and acknowledge that clients notice us. The results highlight that counselling psychologists consider attire and their visual self-presentations to be an important aspect of clinical work, even if rarely discussed. This study is unique in empirically investigating the issue of counselling psychologists' attire and its findings are transferable to other helping professions. Further implications for counselling psychology and avenues for additional research are discussed.

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1. LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1 Introduction

The topic of counselling psychologists' attire is explored qualitatively in the current thesis. In the first chapter I will introduce the term 'attire', and examine some related research, as well as considering what the discipline of counselling psychology has to offer regarding practitioners' clothing during clinical work. As a research topic, attire has not received much attention within applied and psychotherapeutic psychology. Nevertheless, research on appearance and clothing has been conducted in other disciplines such as anthropology, the textile industry, sociology and social psychology. The second chapter introduces methodology, namely Thematic Analysis and the methodological details of the study. The third chapter focuses on reflexivity, followed by the analysis in chapter four, which introduces three developed themes and associated subthemes. The discussion examines the findings. Firstly, inherent ambivalence of attire as a research topic is recognised. The practicalities of attire choices - rules and uniforms, are discussed, based on the flexibility of counselling psychology. Additionally, aspirations of continuous professional development become transparent in the consideration of attire beyond simply covering the body. The terms 'clothing' and 'attire' are used interchangeably throughout this thesis.

1.2 What is attire?

'Attire' means the type of clothing people wear and as such it could be argued that clothing is an integral part of our life. Clothing is an intimate experience, as it lays next to our skin and creates the only boundary between the environment and the body (Entwistle, 2000), with some people being more conscious or interested in their attire than others. Attire has a number of synonyms such as clothes, dress, wear or outfit and sometimes it is referred to as appearance. The word 'appearance' includes physical characteristics, body, (Rumsey & Harcourt, 2005), attire, and overall public selves presented in society (Entwistle, 2000). Appearance, including body image, has become an intrusive metaphor, implicitly suggesting that physical attractiveness equals happiness and goodness (Rumsey & Harcourt, 2005). Body image research recognises clothing as an extension of the body, which can influence self-esteem (e.g. Tondl & Henneman, 1994) and wellbeing. As the

negative impact of appearance expectations have been identified (APPG, 2012; Jankowski et al., 2014), attire becomes an important topic to research, especially within helping professions.

In Western societies the media plays a significant role in the cultural socialisation of expected appearance, attire, behaviours and judgments which are based on visible attire cues (e.g. Entwistle, 2015; Howlett et al., 2013) and highlights the importance of appearance in general. Nonetheless, literature reports that clothing and fashion are often perceived as shallow and not worthy of being at the centre of research interests (Davis, 1992; Barnard, 2002; Rumsey & Harcourt, 2005; Woodward, 2005), despite the fact that social interactions are riddled with wearers and observers of attire (Kaiser, 1990). Even if not interested in fashion or clothing, one still partakes in the daily routine of choosing attire (Twigg, 2009) and the effects of clothing on observers' opinions and impressions have been long investigated (e.g. Howlett et al., 2015; Gillath et al., 2012; Glick et al., 2005; Kaiser, 1990). The presented research focuses on the rarely investigated wearer's understanding of their own attire. Attire in this research is understood as lived experience and daily practice in our lives. As practitioners, counselling psychologists (CoPs) wear clothes and present themselves to clients. Thus, it may be helpful for the profession to recognise whether clothing can become a concern for practitioners and consequently gain insight into the topic.

The following sections will introduce some of the existing research from anthropology, sociology and social psychology, as therapy research has so far, been largely indifferent to the clothing practices of practitioners and its possible influences on the process of psychotherapy.

1.3 The Evolution of Clothing

The organic base of wear means that there is very little direct evidence of advancement in clothing practices. However, it is believed that clothing was used to keep the first humans warm and safe from environmental factors (Wales, 2012). Clothing and appearance were traditionally used to inform others of one's tribal affiliation, status, gender etc. through visual cues. This was possible once our ancestors had developed techniques to create fairly sophisticated clothing and use tools such as simple sewing needles to enhance the survival of hairless humanoids.

In pre-industrial societies, making textiles was an expensive and lengthy process. Clothing was unavailable to the poorest and it was seen as a highly valued commodity.

Attire played a strong role in informing observers of the wearer's position in society; distinguishing connections to a social class (Kaiser, 1990). At the time, clothing reflected the salient identity and social status of its wearers. When both the wearers and the observers occupied the same cultural background, clothing was a source of readily available information about identities and affiliations (Crane, 2000).

Industrialisation transformed the availability, cost and variety of clothing garments. Post-industrial fashion and clothing became accessible to wider society, but the deep-rooted meaning of appearance and attire did not alter so easily. Even today, when many appearance related judgments are scientifically disproved (Rumsey & Harcourt, 2005), in a much more tolerant society, people are still judged according to their appearance and attire. Clothing and accessories have become visual cues about one's status and willingness to associate with others. In the 'classless' USA of the second half of the nineteenth century, uniforms were used to demonstrate ranks reflecting hierarchy on organisational levels (Crane, 2000). In leisure time, clothing became the code of ever more complex differences within and between the classes. So how does this knowledge fit the research on attire? Attire still holds information for the observers~~,~~ but these cues are as multifarious and nuanced as the fragmentation of society itself. Counselling psychologists are likely to be aware of being observed and judged on their self-presentation when in contact with clients. However, it is unknown how practitioners negotiate and manage attire within themselves.

Soper (2001) concerned herself with the omitted philosophy of clothing. Overarching themes in philosophy are those of mind and abstraction, rather than embodied experiences. She argues that whilst clothing does not define humanity, it is used as a 'marker of the divide between ourselves and the rest of the animal world' (Soper, 2001, p.17). Clothing indicates the wearer to be a person and presents the self to the world. As human cultural participants, people express the self through appearance, with all its subtleties. Getting dressed requires certain skills and conscious decision making (Entwistle, 2001), with which we engage daily. Undoubtedly, clothing is a fundamental part of our lives and as such, it should be included in therapeutic research due to its immediacy in clinical contacts. Clothing occupies the liminal space between internal and external experiences; which is also the main focus of counselling psychology. The following sections will explore clothing from the perspective of the wearer engaging with subjectivity and intersubjectivity as valued by counselling psychology (BPS, 2006).

1.4 Clothing and its Psychological Impact on Wearer's Behaviours.

Being clothed means that the human body is covered; as nakedness in front of others, especially unknown people, is humiliating for most people. Nudity is often used as a form of torture and psychological abuse. Humiliation by stripping prisoners naked was included in a now classic experiment: The Stanford Prison Experiment conducted in 1971 in California by social psychologist Phillip Zimbardo. Selected participants were randomly assigned to either a role of prisoners or officers, wearing a corresponding uniform. The function of uniforms for both groups was to 'enhance group identity and reduce individual uniqueness within the two groups' (Haney, Banks & Zimbardo, 1973, p.8). While Zimbardo's research was not only about clothing, it uncovered a very important aspect of the power held by clothing. The uniforms facilitated the seriousness of the role for each group of participants, as they assumed the duties attached to the uniform, during which time their individualities were obscured and self-awareness depressed. Zimbardo and his team named this phenomenon 'deindividuation'. Further deindividuation studies flourished and Johnson and Downing (1979) established that prosocial cues of clothing heightened prosocial behaviours and antisocial cues amplified antisocial behaviours and these were intensified in deindividuated conditions. In addition, black uniforms in contact sports such as football and ice hockey were associated with a surge in aggressive behaviours (Frank & Gilovich, 1988), indicating the power uniforms hold in directing the performance of an attributed role. In relation to current research, the research discussed above indicates that clothing cues can impact on the wearers' behaviours, but it appears to be context dependant.

Clothing can hold cues that impact on our behaviours. Adam and Galinsky (2012) proposed a concept of 'enclothed cognition' that occurs if two independent variables are present at the same time: clothing has symbolic meaning for the wearer and the physical experience of wearing this clothing. The authors propose that by wearing clothes, this experience becomes embodied. Clothes convey symbolic meaning which is activated by wearing them. Adam and Galinsky (2012) then tested the proposed construct of enclothed cognition by means of experiments with undergraduate students. The authors manipulated the symbolic meaning and physical experience of wearing clothes. They asked the participants to perform some tasks while wearing a doctor's or painter's coat or performing the tasks in their own clothes while a doctor's coat was visible but not worn during the period of the experiment. The results revealed that participants wearing a doctor's coat exhibited better sustained attention than participants seeing a doctor's coat. Participants seeing a

doctor's coat did better than participants wearing a painter's coat. The results cannot be explained by a difference in physical sensations as the lab coats were all the same. Adam and Galinsky (2012) proved that if a garment has a specific symbolic meaning for the wearer, it is activated by the physical experience of wearing this particular garment. Thus, Adam and Galinsky (2012) concluded that enclothed cognition profoundly influences human psychological processes, meaning that we take on the qualities which clothes represent in our minds. Based on the theory of enclothed cognition, Pine (2014) examined the impact on participants wearing a Superman T-shirt in adopting some of the traits. Those wearing Superman T-shirts perceived themselves as more likeable, physically stronger and even superior to other students, compared to those wearing a plain t-shirt or their own clothes. The theory of product symbolism, where products hold certain symbolism which enables consumers to perform a role well even if they lack role knowledge (Leigh & Gabel, 1995), is in favour of enclothed cognition. Despite the omitted issue of the implied universality of symbolic meanings, it is possible that uniforms, as assembled garments, can also facilitate role performance.

Overall, the above studies suggest that when wearing clothing that has some symbolic significance for the wearer, the wearer takes on those perceived qualities, potentially influencing the wearer's behaviours and cognitions. This may be important for practitioners, particularly if it helps them to select garments which hold symbolic meaning that supports the professional image and helps them to assume the role of a helping professional.

1.5 Clothing and Mood

Clothing can both reflect and influence our mood. The Mental Status Examination and other psychiatric and psychological tools, often include observing the state of a person's appearance and clothing presumed to be indicative of one's mental health. Hence, clothing is a form of non-verbal communication and represents a variety of meanings (Barnard, 2002), being potentially indicative of one's wellbeing.

Popular lifestyle magazine's Editor-in-Chief Lorraine Candy's editorial, pointed out that decision making on our appearance for the day ahead may potentially set the tone for it (Candy, 2017). But, can clothing influence our emotional state? Pine (2012) spoke to 100 women - aged 21 to 64 – about their clothing. The majority of participants (96%) believed that their clothing impacts on their confidence. Furthermore, participants were asked to

choose 3 items from a list of clothing that they are likely to wear when sad and depressed and when happy and positive. The outcomes showed, that when females were feeling low, they were more likely to choose a baggy top (57%), sweatshirt/jumper (41%) and jeans (51%). When happy, the participants indicated that they were more likely to choose their favourite dress (62%), jewellery (57%) and jeans (33%). While jeans were selected to be worn when sad, one third of females would also choose jeans when happy. As far as this brief paper goes, the claim that jeans signify a lack of happiness is unsupported. The paper claimed: 'it [clothing] reflects and influences the wearer's mood too' (Pine, 2012, p.1). While the study clearly explains that some clothing is likely to be worn when sad, it omits to inform readers about the specific psychological processes underpinning the observed relationship. However, many participants felt that clothing could impact on their mood and the author suggested that attire can be used to improve mood. So far, only hypothetical accounts have been identified where mood and clothing is concerned.

Moody, Kinderman and Sinha (2010) attempted to answer the question: Is there a connection between clothing and mood? The authors examined the relationship between fashion consumers' mood, emotions, personality and clothing preferences during the trying on phase of clothes shopping. While this research proposes some implications for retail, important conclusions for psychology are drawn too. The study was based on the presumption, that clothing reflects personality e.g. 'formal and tailored clothing (tailored, uniformed, disciplined and utilitarian values associated with formal clothes); casual, (unrestricted, undisciplined and relaxed values associated with casual wear); evening wear, (social enhancement, revealing, diverse and expressive values associated with evening wear)' (Moody, Kinderman & Sinha, 2010, p.167). The authors recruited 27 undergraduate female students, all size 12. For the purpose of the study, eight different pre-assembled outfits were prepared and styled, from formal to informal types of clothing. The participants filled in a number of questionnaires and were invited to try on all the outfits in a random order. The authors argued that trying on clothing, similar to the trying on stage, before buying a product, can impact on mood and emotions and that personality traits can predict clothing preferences. The results yielded an insight into mood management using unfamiliar clothing. The authors concluded that there is a strong relationship between positive and negative emotions and clothing preferences, as five out of eight presented outfits reflected on emotions. Mood strongly predicted clothing preferences. Also, clothing was used to alter the emotions during the trying on phase. Further results showed that personality had a moderate impact on clothing preferences. The participants with lower agreeableness preferred casual

outfits and participants with high agreeableness displayed a preference for formal clothing. Participants with low scores on neuroticism, who were more emotionally stable, with fewer feelings of negative experience, preferred a casual style. Overall, the authors concluded that clothing is used to manage and reflect mood and some personality traits. This research whilst executed well, did not discuss the fact, that perhaps, participants would not assemble their outfits in those particular ways. The study moved away from dichotomous clothing preferences by creating eight outfits. I wonder, whether the mood reflected the outfits or the prolonged trying on phase which took around 90 minutes per participant. While the personality traits of the participating students are known, one can ask whether these differ from those who chose not to participate. Translated into real life – some people dislike shopping and would do so only purposefully, while others enjoy browsing through the shops. Thus, they may differ in personality traits. However, how does this knowledge translate into the therapy room? CoPs may use their clothing to manage mood, but it holds the potential to inadvertently disclose some information about their mood and personality traits to their clients.

Clothing can induce self-objectification (Frederickson et al., 1998) and impacts on the emotional state of women (Tiggemann & Andrew, 2012). Frederickson and colleagues' (1998) research is based on Objectification Theory (Frederickson & Roberts, 1997), which understands females to be both accustomed to and internalising a view of the self which is reduced to a body; existing for male pleasure. Objectification is a function of sexualised gaze to which women are subjected in social interactions and portrayed in the mass-media as focused on the body and specific body parts. Consequently, an objectifying state of consciousness is developed which affects self-perception and the continuous monitoring of appearance. Self-objectification is explained as the process when people see themselves as objects to be used. Frederickson, Roberts, Noll, Quinn and Twenge (1998) asked 82 male and female undergraduates to fill in a number of self-evaluating questionnaires. They were randomly assigned to try on either a swimsuit or a V-neck sweater for females, or swimming trunks or a crew neck sweater for males. Each participant spent about an hour alone in a fitting room and the instructions were audiotaped. They were instructed to participate in some tests designed to conceal the real research purpose. Then, they were instructed to wear their assigned garment, and whilst waiting fifteen minutes as a part of the cover story about habituation to the garments, they were asked to complete a maths performance test consisting of twenty multiple-choice word problems. Further questionnaires were completed measuring self-objectification as a trait, self- objectification as a state after trying on the garment, body

shame and discreet emotions. Once finished, participants were then asked to fill in a further questionnaire in line with the cover story. An increase in the body-objectification state when trying on swim wear was detected for both sexes. When affective profiles were considered in the swimsuit condition only, significant differences between the sexes were shown. The authors concluded that the swimsuit condition produced a self-conscious state for both genders, but females were more distressed than men. The analysis of the maths performance yielded the following results: Men's performance was not influenced by the garment worn. However, the women wearing a swimsuit scored significantly worse in the maths test than the women wearing a sweater. The authors concluded that the experimental conditions i.e. the swimsuit garment, increased the state of self-objectification, disrupting concentration by the increased sense of body shame. The main contribution of this research lies within its support of objectification theory, and in illustrating the impact objectification can have on cognitive skills. In Tiggemann and Andrew's research (2012) 102 female undergraduate participants were asked to imagine how they would feel wearing a swimsuit or a sweater in a private or a public situation. This research demonstrated that the mere imagining of an objectifying situation can impact on our emotional experiences. Self-objectification research has concluded that the theory is also applicable to other groups including heterosexual and gay men, (Martins, Tiggemann & Kirkbride, 2007). This research as well as Woodward's (2005) simply introduced the idea that clothing heightens body shame and negative emotions for both genders. This begs the question as to whether CoPs manipulate their clothing to prevent being objectified, in order to minimise the impact of objectification on cognitive abilities and emotional stability.

1.6 Clothing and Communication

Fashion and clothing are means of non-verbal communication. People communicate through their clothing whilst adhering to societal expectations connected to their social role and status (Barnard, 2002; McCracken & Roth, 1989). Lurie (1992), attempted to decode clothing as a language in a semiotic approach, appearing rather dismissive of clothing complexities, despite the fact that she acknowledged the variety of attire expressions. Davis (1992) challenged Lurie's endeavour to establish the 'language of clothing'. But they both understood clothing as not only garments, but 'hair styles, accessories, jewellery, make-up and body decoration'(Lurie, 1992, p.4) and incorporated these into the dress language.

Davis (1992) proposed that clothing is a way of managing ambivalence in life and that the results are communicated through one's overall attire. He believed that high fashion is the most susceptible to managing binary tensions i.e. youth and older age, or male vs female. However, it is likely, that these tensions are managed daily by all who get dressed and the final outfit communicates the most current presentation of ambivalence management. Communication through clothing adheres then to codes, but knowledge of the code depends on the social position of the observer and the clothing itself (McCracken & Roth, 1989). The Canadian authors - McCracken and Roth (1989) - asked 360 participants to look at five photographs of each of six distinctive clothing styles e.g. punk or suburban leisure. These were named for the purpose of the study, but not used in communication with the participants. The results show that wearers can communicate an affiliation to a certain group through their clothing. However, observers may not hold the knowledge required to decode the clothing as affiliation to a certain sub-culture.

In my research (Henzelova, 2015), bereavement counsellors anticipated that attire may suggest their socio-economic background. One of the identified themes was the objective functionality of clothing. The participants believed that their attire facilitated warmth and sent messages about self-care, implying the ability to take care of others. This indicated that visual presentation, of which we are in control, has the potential to communicate some information about us. To my knowledge, no other research exploring therapists' views of clothing exists. Based on the premise of attire communication, CoPs may be using clothing to convey information to clients or indeed the opposite; to withhold information from clients simply via clothing.

1.7 Clothing and First Impressions

Clothing can influence observers' first impressions and people need very little information to form an accurate judgement of others (Ambady & Rosenthal, 1992). Despite this, the current research focuses on the wearers' understandings of attire, and it is necessary to consider research which concentrates on the perception of clothing variations, even if briefly.

Psychologists are perceived to be in a high-status job and in the USA the number of females in high-status jobs has steadily increased over the past four decades (Lippa, Preston & Penner, 2014). Thus, the following research (Glick et al., 2005; Howlett et al., 2013) which

focused on clothing in high-status jobs can also be brought to bear on the topic of counselling psychologists' attire.

Howlett et al. (2013) established that first impressions can be influenced by subtle changes in attire. 274 participants completed an online survey. They rated four faceless images of a man wearing either an off-the-peg or a tailor-made suit on five dimensions. The man was evaluated more positively on dimensions such as success, confidence, salary and flexibility, when wearing a tailored suit rather than a ready-made suit, despite these being matched on colour, fabric and with accessories such as shoes, shirt and tie. No difference was found in the trustworthiness rating, which was seemingly not influenced by first impressions.

Glick et al. (2005) investigated the perception of women in supposedly high- and low-status jobs. These authors stress that females commonly have wider possibilities to manipulate their appearance: 'there is no male equivalent of the low-cut blouse or slit skirt' (Glick et al., 2005, p.389). The authors committed the research to sexiness, where sexiness was understood as sexualising one's own appearance. Sixty-six undergraduate students (28 men and 38 women) evaluated the same woman in a video, wearing either a neutral look or a sexy look. The emphasised sexuality of a woman in a high-status job, negatively influenced the ratings of competency and intelligence. Additionally, participants expressed more negative emotions towards her. Furthermore, this was not observed for women in a low-status job. The authors theorised the impact of generalising these outcomes and advised women in high status jobs not to sexualise their appearance. While the authors appeared oblivious to the possibilities of appearing misogynist, the question that needs to be asked here is what does sexualised appearance mean in high-status jobs and why is a sexualised appearance being judged negatively?

More research (Howlett, Pine, Cahill, Orakçoğlu & Fletcher, 2015) with a similar approach as Howlett et al. (2013), seconds the findings of Glick et al. (2005) that women wearing provocative outfits in high-status jobs are evaluated less favourably compared to conservatively dressed females in high-status jobs. But no difference was found for provocatively or conservatively dressed females in low-status jobs. Howlett et al, (2015) recruited 54 female undergraduates and 90 employed women and focused their research on the change of perception by the subtle manipulation of female clothing in low- or high-status jobs. They regarded both clothing styles as conservative, but these varied in skirt lengths and unfastened buttons. The participants proceeded to rate twelve pictures on six dimensions (intelligence, responsibility, confidence, trustworthiness, authority, and organisation). As

hypothesised, the overall competence rating for females in provocative clothing was lower compared to that of conservative clothing. When concentrating on clothing, high-status job females wearing more provocative clothing were rated as less competent than conservatively dressed females. However, no significant differences were found for low-status job females. The subtle but implied provocative changes in clothing impacted on the tougher ratings of intelligence, responsibility, trustworthiness, and organisation. The authors concluded that this is in line with previous research, accentuating the objectification tendencies of women, with only a fraction of a second needed to form a first impression (Bar, Neta & Linz, 2006). Howlett et al. (2015) approached the topic more rigorously than perhaps carried out previously. The array of women's clothing is broad, and no two high-status jobs are the same. It would appear that no discussion has commenced regarding the closer inspection of sexualised/provocative or conservative clothing styles. There is an assumption that everyone knows what this means.

As Counselling Psychologists are currently placed in at least Band 7 within NHS salary hierarchy, it could be argued that they perform a high-status job. Based on first impressions as discussed above, it is possible that practitioners are aware of the impact clothing has during first contact with clients. Given the discipline's interest in all aspects of experience rather than a focus on pathology and symptoms, practitioners may perhaps engage with clothing to a certain level, in order to manage their attire and clients' impressions.

1.8 Clothing and Identity

All of the above discussed research points towards the idea that clothing provides wearers with a sense of identity; identity which is created, preserved and shaped by clothing and appearance. It is reasonable to expect that CoPs are not exempt from visual self-presentations in their work. Identities are expressed via garments, which perform together through outfits and appearance.

According to social anthropologist Woodward (2005) clothing is used to express the self to the world, where one constructs the self as viewed by the others to mediate the relationship between the individual self and society. Through accounts of three women's clothing practices, she illustrated the daily struggle in assembling attire. Participants intended the chosen attire and appearance to work for them. They considered the occasion and its social expectations, constructed themselves through a prism of being viewed by others and social

norms whilst reflecting on their individual clothing preferences and aesthetics. The paper exposed the decision processes applied to assembling daily attire, that often happen in privacy. All three participants seemed to agree that an outfit needed to reflect 'me'. If it did not reflect individuality, it felt uncomfortable externally as well as internally. Frequently, they reduced self-consciousness in clothing as well as consciousness of clothing through clothing qualities such as a fit and fabrics. Guy and Banim (2000) also focused on the role of clothing in women's lives. They collected data from fifteen females via unstructured personal accounts, two weeks' worth of clothing diaries and semi-structured wardrobe interviews focusing on women's current clothing collections. The methodological details were omitted from the paper; however, the authors stated that they used software to thematically analyse the transcribed text as an indexed database. The paper concluded that women use their clothing to express one of three co-existing self-representations: 'The woman I want to be; The woman I fear I could be; The woman I am most of the time'. These three selves are continuously evaluated and presented to the world. The authors established that women use clothing to expose, as well as conceal, some identity characteristics (Guy & Banim, 2000) to balance the co-existing self-representations. However, identity can be assessed by observing a variety of cues and it has been established that people can accurately judge others based on the pair of shoes they most often wear (Gillath et al., 2012). The authors asked 208 undergraduate students to provide a picture of their typical shoes and to answer online questionnaires on demographics, personality traits and attachment style. Without an overlap a further 63 undergraduate students were recruited as observers. The observers then looked at a set of ten pictures of shoes provided by the wearers. The results showed significant positive correlations in the accuracy of the observers' judgments and the wearers' self-reports on demographic information such as gender, age and income, attachment anxiety and agreeability in personality traits. But the authors reported low accuracy on other personality traits: conscientiousness, openness to experience and extraversion. Thus, if the shoes can be a great source of information for accurate assessment of the wearer' identity, it may be important to explore attire in more detail than previously considered. Taken from a perspective of counselling psychology, whilst seeing clients is not a 'special occasion' as in Woodward's (2005) research, it is an occurrence where perceived social expectations mould the daily dressing routine. It becomes second nature, in other words common sense to consider attire through our own system of values and through the eyes of others. Consequently, by accentuating some and concealing other identity markers,

CoPs can manipulate a client's initial perception. But at the present state of therapy orientated research, it is only an assumption.

Hayfield (2011) used and defined the term 'visual identity' as 'the way in which we express our broader identities through how we dress and appear' (Hayfield, 2011, p.5). While the term visual identity was used in some studies without explicit definition (e.g. Clarke & Spence, 2013; Clarke & Smith, 2015), it is understood in a similar fashion to Hayfield's definition. The term offers a way to communicate individual identity through attire and overall appearance. Hayfield (2011) follows a social constructionist tradition of conceptualising identity as never-ending negotiations of individual and social identities, therefore visual identity can become a representation of our broader identities. Existing research focuses primarily on non-heterosexual visual identity (Hayfield, 2011; Clarke & Smith, 2015). Visual identity seems to encompass various aspects of identity, whether it is sexual orientation, career, or religion. As identity is seen as fluid (Riessman, 2008; Hayfield, 2011), it is continuously changing by making sense of acquired knowledge and experience. Consequently, visual identities may reflect changing aspects of our identity via clothing and appearance. In research on the construction of Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual (LGB) identity, Clarke and Turner (2007) applied thematic analysis to nine interviews from three lesbian women, four gay men and two bisexual women. The authors identified a number of themes. One of them: 'Looking good and conforming to "the look" ' (Clarke & Turner, 2007, p. 269) explained that the apparent freedom of appearance on the gay scene is highly constrained by conformity to gay looks. The participants suggested that clothes need to fit the person and the person needs to fit the clothes because any discrepancy is obvious, and observable, thus assessable via visual presentations. Similarly, Clarke and Smith (2015) used a qualitative survey of gay men's clothing and appearance and recruited twenty gay and bisexual men. Using Thematic Analysis, they developed an overarching theme: 'not shouting, not hiding, just me' (Clarke & Smith, 2015, p. 4), reflecting an authenticity of identity which is mature and integrated; including gay identity. The findings illustrate that the topic of identity is becoming ever more complex and Entwistle (2015) recognised that research on attire and identity is moving away from individual aspects of identity to intersectionality. Thus, if the existing research on non-heterosexual visual identities is transferred into counselling psychology, then CoPs would have the freedom to be authentic, using clothing to communicate their personal and professional identity. At the same time, they would be constrained by societal expectations (Woodward, 2005) to fit their role of a helping professional, as well as the expectations of professional practice in order to 'consider at all

times their responsibilities to the wider world' (BPS, 2006, p. 8). It appears that everyday decisions to conform to social expectations and presentation of public and private selves through dress (Rudd & Lennon, 2001) may impact on negotiation of people's visual presentations. This connects well with the research question to possibly uncover specific clothing practices, but most importantly, in moving towards the understanding of the processes behind the attire of CoPs. To conclude, it is to be expected that counselling psychologists maintain their professional identity when in contact with clients and that clothing may be chosen to hide or accentuate some aspects of their identity.

1.9 What Do Psychologists Look Like?

Existing research addressing this question explored clients' views and preferences and this will be discussed subsequently. However, my previous research (Henzelova, 2015) explored practitioners' views. Due to a lack of research, I drew on papers from related disciplines and included research which focused on counsellors, therapists and experimenters. Why research clothing in psychology? The therapist is a dynamic factor in therapeutic change and 'it is the 'whole' package' (Sexton, 2007, p.107); who the therapist is and how they can adapt to clients' needs.

It has been established that first impressions are quickly formed (Bar, Neta & Linz, 2006) and can be influenced by subtle changes in attire (Howlett et al., 2013) and that shoes can also be a source of information about the wearer (Gillath et al., 2012). In a medical environment, participants ascertained the lab coat as the most professional means of attire, but in contact with their physiotherapist, patients preferred them to be dressed smartly, in tailored-style dress and not in a lab coat or jeans (Mercer et al., 2008). In a meta-analysis of perceived therapist credibility, attire was included in 'Characteristics associated with the therapist' (Hoyt, 1996, p. 433). These characteristics stood as a cue to form clients' impressions of the therapist (Hoyt, 1996). The importance of practitioners' attire was recognised and approached empirically by quantifying clients' preferences. For example, Hubble and Gelso (1978) found that clients desired their therapist have a more formal level of attire than they themselves had. All 54 participants were female students and the three counsellors were male doctoral students, thus counsellors in training. Each counsellor counselled six participants in each of the attire levels - formal, casual and highly casual. Only the initial 45-minute-long interview was taken into account. After the session, participants answered a number of questionnaires assessing levels of anxiety, willingness

to self-disclose, preference to be seen by the same practitioner and participants' personal clothing styles. Whilst the authors approached the topic of generalisation of the outcomes critically, they did not discuss the potential preferences of the student group, effects of the university environment or gender differences. Nevertheless, they pose an important question, as to whether the effects of attire can be disregarded; as once a rapport is established attire may not be a significant factor anymore.

In Stillman and Resnick's research (1972) a counsellor's attire had no significant effect on a client's disclosure or on the perception of a therapist's attractiveness in the initial twenty-minute-long interview. This was carried out by five male trainee counselling psychologists on fifty male students. Research conducted in the 1970s inevitably focused on a jacket and tie being the most appropriate attire for the counselling sessions. Clearly, this cannot be generalised to present times, when females dominate counselling psychology as well as related professions, and norms for clothing have shifted for both genders. In other research, the perception of expertise was partially connected to professional attire, but no connection was established for casual attire (Kerr & Dell, 1976). The results were based on ten-minute-long interviews, carried out by two undergraduate females, who were trained by the researchers to perform their roles as interviewers. The terms 'interviewer' and 'counsellor' were used interchangeably. This particular study seems to enhance females' self-objectification via linking professional looks and attractive dress, despite the intention to explore a very new topic. When approaching this research, one needs to be especially careful to consider the political and cultural background of the era. Research by Schmidt and Strong (1976) aimed to determine which behaviours associated with counsellors are perceived as signs of expertness and inexpertness. Thirty-seven undergraduate students watched a short video of six people each interviewing one person. The experience levels of the interviewers ranged from first year counselling student to experienced counselling psychologist. Whilst this research did not focus on clothing, some cues were grouped around clothing as indicators of expertness. The appearance of experts was perceived as 'neat but not stuffy' (Schmidt & Strong, 1976, p. 116) and the perception of inexpertness was connected to casual clothing. In research by Dacy and Brodsky (1992), the participants were students who, this time, engaged with pictures of three male and three female models. Each gender included informal, casual and formal attire. Those who partook were asked to imagine the models as therapists who they were going to see professionally. They rated the therapists on skills and relationship characteristics. Formal clothing and female gender were associated with the positive responses. The authors concluded that psychotherapists should

consider the impact their attire may have on clients' perceptions. In more contemporary research, student participants followed video instructions more accurately if these were given by an experimenter dressed in a casual manner rather than a professional manner (Damon et al. 2010). Perhaps the outcomes were influenced by the fact that the participants were undergraduate students watching a seemingly young person as a researcher.

The research findings on clients' preferences for therapists' appearance, discussed above, are highly equivocal. The terms counselling and therapy, in these studies, refer to a variety of methodological approaches: 10-minute-long interviews with undergraduate female students, trained by the researchers to perform their roles of interviewers (Kerr & Dell, 1976), 20-minute-long interviews with counselling psychology trainees (Stillman & Resnick, 1972), and a 45-minute-long initial interview (Hubble & Gelso, 1978), as well as video instructions given by an experimenter (Damon et al., 2010), and support given by bereavement counsellors (Henzelova, 2015). It is becoming clear, that predicting client preferences for psychologist's attire is problematic; especially, when most of the research is conducted with undergraduate students as participants, watching short pre-recorded interactions between a counsellor and a client. In addition, this research paradigm is steeped in the epistemological positions of essentialism and logical-positivism. However, a recent study by King (2016) deterred from the inclination to define the preferred appearance and explored the importance of the therapists' appearance from the clients' perspective using grounded theory. Based on data from 16 participants, the author concluded that as clients, participants monitored practitioners' appearance and it was an important element in establishing trust and maintaining the therapeutic relationship. Additionally, appearance could be a source of rupture and detachment in the therapeutic relationship. Nonetheless, the question of practitioners' views of their own attire is still fundamentally unanswered. Therefore, in line with growing arguments in favour of qualitative research in counselling psychology, I turned my attention to the bereavement counsellors' experience of choosing attire when working with clients (Henzelova, 2015). Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was used to analyse four semi-structured interviews with a focus on experiences of clothing in one-to-one sessions. I identified some objective functions of attire as reflecting genuineness, creating a safe environment, keeping the focus on the client and the communication of messages about counsellors' abilities and skills. However, the individual meanings of specific garments were so varied, as well as context and audience dependant, that generalisation was compromised and only the overall outfit was considered to have these functions. I concluded that the appropriateness and formality of attire, although

subjective, exists on a continuum, rather than dichotomous extremes; dependent on social and individual identities. This is similar to Freitas et al.'s (1997) conclusion that selected clothing is an outcome of constant discourse between who one is and who one is not, which are more than binary opposites.

It is particularly interesting that when searching for guidance online, a variety of blogs are available. As valuable as they are, these are anecdotal, based on individuals' beliefs, preferences and opinions, possibly steered by training modality and lacking research-based arguments. Generally, this advice stresses wearing darker colours, consistency in style, not revealing flesh, clean and also includes basic personal hygiene (Nicholls, 2014; LoFrisco 2013a; LoFrisco 2013b; Morris, 2013). A common occurrence in these articles is a focus on females, while marginal references to male clothing and appearance practices are made. Another blog by Lee (2016) reflected on the diversity of attire amongst therapists. She asked non-therapists to share their views on how they wanted their therapist to dress. She concluded, similarly to other bloggers: comfortable, clean and not sexually suggestive attire is the most appropriate. This all seems to be common-sense advice, taken at face value. These blogs, as well as the research, focus on the clients and ignore the other half of the equation, the practitioner.

I have, by no means, been able to answer the question in the title of this section, as the research discussed so far was not actually carried out with psychologists; with the exception of Schmidt and Strong (1976), which included counsellors as well as counselling psychologists. The presented literature review aimed to illustrate the gap in existing research. My argument is on the paucity of research on attire within therapeutic research. The next section explores counselling psychology and attire within counselling psychology.

1.10 Counselling Psychology and Attire

Counselling Psychology (CoP) is a relatively new profession in the UK. The British Psychological Society (BPS) established the Section of Counselling Psychology in December 1982. Initially, counselling psychology was pre-occupied with itself, finding its place within psychology, exploring the differences and similarities with other well-established disciplines such as clinical psychology or psychotherapy (Pugh & Coyle, 2000). Since then, counselling psychology has continued to develop and produce qualitative research; finding its voice and making strong links to humanistic values, enabling

engagement with subjectivity and inter-subjectivity (BPS, 2006; Strawbridge & Woolfe, 2006; Orlans & Van Scoyoc, 2009). Counselling psychology navigates the great tensions caused by the puzzle of the philosophical understanding of human experiences, psychotherapeutic approaches, subjectivity and more recently, performance focused work such as that within the NHS (Woolfe, 2016). However, counselling psychology is so flexible, because it encompasses a variety of psychological and therapeutic paradigms. A humanistic paradigm is long recognised as one of the pillars of counselling psychology. The principles of a person-centred approach in counselling psychology are based on Roger's non-directive approach (Gillon, 2007). Perhaps simplistic views, but the commonly known core conditions of person-centred therapy are identified as: empathy, unconditional positive regard and congruence. Gillon (2007) stipulates, that each condition is different but important to enable change. The importance of the therapeutic relationship also arose from the humanistic paradigm and is firmly lodged within counselling psychology to focus 'on optimal functioning' (McLeod, 2003b, p.140) and it has been discussed in a number of publications (e.g. BPS, 2006; Strawbridge & Woolfe, 2006; Orlans & Van Scoyoc, 2009). However, other humanistic concepts are drawn on; such as the human ability of reflexivity, the importance of personal experiences (McLeod, 2003b) and engaging with clients as completely unique human beings with respect and appreciation (Cooper, 2009).

Relational dynamics and psychodynamic meaning may be also at play. The psychodynamic paradigm in counselling psychology is based on psychoanalysis developed by Sigmund Freud and his followers, with the idea of unconscious processes present in clients' lives and the therapeutic room alike. However, detailed description of diversity within the psychodynamic approach is not the purpose of this section and only a brief insight will be offered. Traditionally, the psychoanalyst is the expert, offering interpretations, working long-term, open ended and during sessions clients are often lying down on a couch, facing away from the professional, with focus on unconscious and conscious motives in relating to others and possible developmental arrest. The British psychodynamic tradition of object relations focuses on the importance of early relationships - with others, objects and within the self (Jacobs, 2010) - that are reworked through the relationship with the therapist (Burton and Davey, 2003). But how does this fit with the research of practitioner's attire? The therapist's role is understood as much more active than old-fashioned neutrality and expertness, but most literature plainly overlooks the ever-shared presence of attire. From the psychodynamic perspective, attire may hold some power to elicit highly subjective experiences for the client, based on their own history. Additionally, some psychodynamic

concepts such as mentalisation, transference and symbolic meaning can become important in relation to CoPs' attire. It is expected that as professionals, counselling psychologists are highly skilled in the process of mentalisation – the ability to have an insight into their own and other people's state of mind, feelings, the reasons these are existing, the impact on behaviours, and to reflect upon all of it, as a means of emotional regulation (Fonagy & Allison, 2011). Clothing is present in the space between psychologist and client; as such it can hold some power to provoke unconscious material. It is entirely possible that CoPs assess the probable impact of their clothed self through mentalisation and adjust their appearance if deemed necessary. Transference is understood as the client's unconscious process and feelings enacting past relationships and unmet needs in the relationship with the therapist in the present. Whilst a variety of transference types exist, these can be used as interpretations of a client's difficulties, as well as informing and supporting the therapeutic process. In relation to attire, transference can be reality based (Levy and Scala, 2012), where clients may react to CoPs' clothing that reminds them of primary care-givers, important figures or trauma in their lives, and they may re-enact those relationships. For example, seeing a therapist wearing certain clothing can evoke unconscious reactions and the same feelings they felt towards the person of whom they are reminded. Freud believed that some subconscious processes – mostly repressed desires - were available to clients and communicated to the psychoanalyst in the form of symbols. Counselling psychology uses this premise more loosely than psychoanalysis, but in relation to attire, clothing is saturated with symbols. Clients' and CoPs' understanding of attire symbols may not match, nevertheless, symbolic meaning can be triggered irrespective of mutual understanding. It is valuable for the therapist to be aware of these possibilities and minimise the impact where possible. Thus, attire can be used and understood as a bridge between initial impressions, symbolic meaning and transferential experiences.

Ethical codes and guidelines, relevant for counselling psychologists (e.g. BPS, 2017; BPS, 2018; HCPC, 2015), promote principles, guiding practitioners to make ethically sound decisions, and guide behaviours in order to practice safely and represent the profession. These principles then support the ethos of counselling psychology, the importance of the therapeutic relationship, reflexivity, facilitating clients' wellbeing within their context and developing research informed practice (e.g. Orlans & Van Scoyoc, 2009; Woolfe, 2016). When CoPs embark on their training, certain levels of professional maturity are anticipated (e.g. UWE, 2018) with an implicit expectation to have an established professional appearance. During their training, CoPs will gain clinical experience in the NHS. Many NHS

Trusts have a dress code policy in place for their employees (e.g. Royal United Hospital, Bath NHS Trust, 2009) emphasising the importance of presenting a professional image to clients. Thus, cultural influences, literature, academia, placements and role models for counselling psychologists such as tutors, supervisors, fellow students etc. play an important role in the socialisation of CoPs' to their role, creating the meaning that is usually shared by other CoPs. In counselling psychology textbooks, dress is mentioned marginally as an example (e.g. Eleftheriadou, 2002) or it is omitted altogether (e.g. Miller, 2006). Nevertheless, 'it is not as if [people] have the option *not* to appear' (Frith, 2003, p.4). Clients consider CoPs' clothing during therapeutic contact (King, 2016) and the visual presentation can be considered a form of self-disclosure (Kaiser, 1990). Nonetheless, the importance of practitioners' attire and appearance within the therapeutic room is continuously omitted. While attire choices are intimate, happening behind the closed doors (Woodward, 2005), they are outcomes of complex decision processes.

Following Woodward's (2005) premise of exploring clothing practices away from theatrical costumes, high end fashion or marginalised groups, this research will focus on counselling psychologists; professionals with a very specific set of skills, but whose clothing may not be immediately different to the rest of the society. It has been suggested that the field of counselling psychology strives to enhance the body of research-informed practice and link theory, practice and research (Orlans & Van Scoyoc, 2009). Thus, the current research will aim to contribute to this goal and to address the identified gap in literature, by exploring the views of counselling psychologists as professionals with the 'capacity for choice and personal responsibility' (Strawbridge & Woolfe, 2003, p.10). Clearly, it is an thought-provoking subject to research and turning our attention to the topic of attire is a timely venture.

1.11 Research aims

Available research does not allow for conclusions to be drawn regarding what a contemporary psychologist's attire consists of, or how decisions to dress professionally are managed by diverse practitioners working in various therapeutic contexts. Considering that attire is often used as non-verbal communication, it can influence the wearer's behaviours, mood, cognitions, and also the observers' first impressions. The fact that CoPs engage with their attire daily, is appropriate to consider when addressing the paucity in research within counselling psychology. Quantification of clients' preferences for practitioners' attire and

ambiguous findings, highlight the need for the qualitative exploration of attire from the practitioners' perspective, as no research exists on this topic that is specific to counselling psychology. The main purpose of this study is to explore how CoPs view and negotiate their attire, and in due course to outline additional research questions with regard to the attire of counselling psychologists. Following on from this, it will be considered whether clothing can perform as an additional locus of information regarding both the self and the profession, and whether the findings can have a positive impact on therapy-orientated research as a whole.

2. METHOD AND METHODOLOGY

2. 1 Introduction

Historically, psychology has striven to become a hard science by using quantitative research. However, qualitative research is particularly well-suited to under-researched topics which would benefit from non-positivist scholarly attention. In qualitative research, data is collected within a specific context (Braun & Clarke, 2013), thus enabling me to closely engage with data, and to explore meanings and understandings. Braun and Clarke (2013) urge scholars to plan their research design to fit the purpose of the research and to generate new knowledge. Where research is lacking or is strongly positivistic, a qualitative approach can produce unanticipated insight and understanding (McLeod, 2003a) and promote more scientist-practitioner (Strawbridge & Wolfe, 2003) activity within counselling psychology. Thus, counselling psychologists are best placed to research and practise within the 'no man's land' of inter-subjectivity while being informed by and producing valid research.

The main aim of Section Two is to introduce the methodology, and to inform the reader about the design, recruitment, analysis and outcomes of the current research. One of the criticisms of qualitative research is an underpinning lack of philosophical transparency. Thus, ontology and epistemology will be discussed first to illuminate decision making during the later stages. The fully developed research, the process of participant selection and the development of an interview schedule are described in detail.

2.2 Philosophical Stance (Ontology and Epistemology)

The presented study employed a method that is now widely used in psychology (Clarke, Braun & Hayfield, 2015), namely Thematic Analysis (TA), as developed by Braun and Clarke (2006). TA embraces the researcher's subjectivity. For this reason, the researchers should specify their research paradigms (Ponterotto, 2005). The stance of critical realist was chosen to develop the presented research as it sits between empiricism (objective) and postmodernism (subjective) (Pilgrim, 2016). In qualitative research within psychology critical realism is based on three philosophical pillars: epistemological relativism, ontological realism and judgmental rationality (Archer, 2002 in Pilgrim, 2016). Ontological realism means the researcher believes that whilst true reality exists, it can be accessed only

partially and imperfectly (Pontoretto, 2005) as it is beyond "our immediate grasp" (Pilgrim, 2016, p.176). Hence, reality is not fixed as seen in positivism; it is existent but in constant fluctuation. Epistemologically, critical realism is a non-positivistic, relativist stance where knowledge is created through research (Braun & Clarke, 2013) but it is not necessarily seen as universal because acquired knowledge can be fallible. Thus, knowledge is always critically approached. Finally, critical realism also acknowledges that the researcher holds certain values and viewpoints which will inevitably influence the developed knowledge.

Critical realism is a fitting framework to conceptualise, design, and analyse the data of this study. It is beyond doubt that professional attire is a cultural activity influenced by historical, economic, as well as social forces operating at a macro (i.e. national and global) and micro (more local communities) level. As a result, a naïve realist framework would be doing a disservice to the fluidity of clothing practices and meanings associated with them. At the same time, this project does not engage with concerns typically associated with social constructionist research (Harper & Thompson, 2012). Critical realism acknowledges the importance of discourse, latent meanings, and that all knowledge is context bound and provisional, thus allowing me to be epistemologically flexible (Braun & Clarke, 2013) and answer the research questions in the most fitting way.

The relationship between ontology and epistemology dictates the specific methodologies and methods used in the presented research. The meaning is not context free and I had 'an obviously active role in designing [my] TA study' (Clarke, Braun & Hayfield, 2015, p. 226), thus the following sections will explain the active choices I made in answering the research questions in the most fitting way.

2.3 Research Questions

Qualitative research starts with a research question, but unlike quantitative hypotheses, these are flexible and may be developed during the research process (Braun, Clarke & Rance, 2014). The main research question has evolved significantly since it was explored in my earlier research (Henzelova, 2015). Originally, I set out to investigate the 'visual identity' of counselling psychologists. However, it proved to be a broad term that included physical appearance, hairstyles, facial expressions and body modifications such as tattoos and piercings. Narrowing the focus of the research to clothes allowed me to respond to the gap in the literature in a more precise manner. Furthermore, it enabled me to explore the topic in more depth within the context of doctorate research. The decision was taken to

shift the focus onto clothing/attire only and a more specific research question was asked: 'How do counselling psychologists view and make sense of their attire in clinical work?' in order to allow the participants to engage with the topic during interviews. The following research questions were developed whilst reviewing existing literature, interviewing and during analysis:

- How do counselling psychologists view and make sense of their attire in clinical work?
- What do counselling psychologists understand about the role of attire in professional practice?
- What factors influence the way counselling psychologists dress for their job?
- How do counselling psychologists view their clothing practices?
- How is discussion about attire viewed by counselling psychologists?

2.4 Data Collection: Interviews

Interviewing is the single most commonly used form of data collection in qualitative research (King & Horrocks, 2010; Deakin & Wakefield, 2014). Interviews for research purposes are highly confidential, focused on the interviewees' personal experiences and participants have a right to withdraw (King & Horrocks, 2010). In this research, the interviews were conducted face-to-face or remotely via Skype calls. For the purpose of this study, I did not differentiate between information obtained via face-to-face or Skype interviews. The interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim at a later stage and checked against the recordings for inaccuracies. As Braun and Clarke (2013) made clear, transcribing one's own interviews can be overwhelming for the interviewer as spoken language is far more complicated than written. To some extent, verbatim transcriptions may reduce spoken words, as in an interview one is not as precise as in written language. However, the first transcriptions in particular helped me to articulate some thoughts better during subsequent interviews.

2.5 Development of Interview Schedules

Semi-structured interviews were an appropriate form of data collection for TA. Methodologically, this research required the rigorous development of an interview schedule.

Experience and knowledge questions (King & Horrocks, 2010) were employed to explore the issue of attire. In order to obtain in depth information about participants' experiences and understanding, it was reasonable to expect that prompts may be needed (King & Horrocks, 2010). A number of probes were devised for the interview schedule. Further prompts and probes were formulated during the interviews to enable interviewees to clarify or expand on their answers. The demographic questionnaire included questions on age, gender, employment status, number of years lapsed since training, number of years in private practice and racial/ethnic background. This data was used to better understand the identity of the participants (Hughes, Camden & Yangchen, 2016) and this will be discussed in more detail in section 2.6.

The first interview schedule which was submitted with the initial research proposal, exposed a lack of meaningful links between the individual questions. e.g. moving from assumptions about clothing to the preferred clothing style in private life. The second interview schedule was developed for ethical scrutiny of the project. The changes included an easier introduction into the interview. However, it highlighted the potential risks of unclear terminology, which was used in an interchangeable manner. It emphasised the need for conversational questions which would invite the participants to share their views and understanding. The fourth version of the interview schedule was developed and used for piloting. Blichfeldt and Heldbjerg (2011) considered that interviewing acquaintances can help the researcher to be more sensitive with other interviewees especially if not acquainted. The final interview schedule (appendix A) was developed via piloting with a peer and a group of colleagues. Piloting was very useful as it permitted the asking of refined questions, developing them further and receiving feedback on the interview schedule and interviewing style. The opening questions aimed to ease participants into the discussion about the topic e.g. 'What has interested you in this research?'. Personal questions were introduced at the later stages of the interview e.g. 'Which aspects of your appearance do you consider to be important when seeing clients?'. Research was occasionally quoted to stimulate further discussion through agreement or disagreement. Fully formulated questions and probes were used to avoid leading questions (King & Horrocks, 2010). At the end of each interview participants were encouraged to raise issues or topics that were not discussed (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Three interviews were conducted with the version of the interview schedule as part of the visual identity research. Following the first progression viva in February 2017, the decision was made to focus the research on clothing only. In a discussion with my supervisor, three collected interviews were deemed sufficient to use for the refined research

topic. This decision was made as the interview schedule fundamentally explored the negotiations of clothing and attire.

The development of the interview schedule proved to be helpful in enabling me to think about the research topic in greater detail and to refine the research questions.

2.6 Selection of Participants and Sample

The study aimed to recruit between six and fifteen qualified CoPs working in private practice. Eleven participants were recruited for the study. This sample size is appropriate for the scope of research for a Professional Doctorate (Terry, Hayfield, Clarke & Braun, 2017).

Miovský (2006) acknowledged that at times, it may be difficult to distinguish between different sampling strategies and frequently these are used in combination, as was the case in this research. For convenience, recruitment was completed through the official websites of the BPS, the BPS Facebook page and by an advertisement placed in the Division of Counselling Psychology's E-Letter, delivered as an email to all members twice (appendix B). The first advert yielded three participants and the second advert brought in two participants. Recruitment via my and supervisor's personal contacts and sampling through snow-balling (Braun & Clarke, 2013) was used, as those recruited were asked to use their contacts to forward the participation invitation. Snowballing brought in three people, who were not eligible to participate. Six participants were recruited through personal contacts. In this research, initial contact with the acquainted participants was made via e-mail with a clear statement informing the recipient that they were not obliged to respond. Blichfeldt and Heldbjerg, (2011) questioned the researchers' failings to clearly state this fact in the methodology section. The authors conclude that the more context relevant the research is, the more appropriate this recruitment style is. The stark difference between the authors' research and the current research is in the participants' past experiences of interviews. In my research, all of the participants are qualified counselling psychologists demonstrating that they too, at some point in the past, needed to conduct research. This, in combination with the profession itself can indicate that the participants had a reasonable understanding of the process and depth of questioning.

Each participant was given a choice of either a face-to-face or a skype interview. As technology has advanced, Skype interviews enable the researchers to reach geographically dispersed participants (Lo Iacono, Symonds & Brown, 2016). The option of face-to-face

interviews eliminated the exclusion of technologically less competent participants (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014) or those unwilling to participate using technological means.

Seven interviews were conducted face-to-face and four interviews via Skype calls. The difference being that the interviewer and the interviewee were not physically in the same space, thus while cues of facial expressions were present, only the top half of the body was visible. Therefore, some non-verbal cues may have been missed. The next challenge was sound quality. Whilst not necessarily a problem during the interview, recording was of a poorer quality and transcribing took considerably longer in comparison to other interviews.

Demographics were collected to better understand and situate the sample (Tab. 2.6.1). While many demographic questions are rigid and offer little space for nuance, a space for self-definition of background, working status and gender was offered. No participant used this option. The rest of the questions were open, where participants wrote only a number. Eleven participants were recruited; seven females and four males with an age range of 33 to 91. The participants varied in years of private practice between one year and thirteen years. No participants withdrew from the research and no-one dropped out. Participants did not gain financially by partaking in this research.

Table 2.6.1 - Participants' demographic information

Age range	33- 91	
Years since training	1 – 19	
Years in private practice	1 – 30	
Gender	Male	4
	Female	7
Background	White British/Irish/Travellers	5
	Black British/Caribbean/ African	1
	Asian/ Asian British	1
	White other background	4
Working status	Fulltime self-employed	6
	Private practice and employed	5

Table 2.6.2 - Participants' identification numbers changed to names

F1	Andrea

M2	David
M3	Aidan
F4	Issana
M5	Daniel
F6	Maya
F7	Kath
F8	Nina
M9	Georgios
F10	Bianca
F11	Tamara

In the analysis, the original personal identification numbers were changed to names (Tab. 2.6.2) to improve the reading and flow of the analysis. Furthermore, in qualitative research, this reflects the importance of seeing participants as individuals and not only as numbers.

2.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethics Approval

Following thorough supervision and adherence to the Code of Human Research Ethics (BPS, 2014), ethical approval was pursued. Initially the research was approved with conditions that were met by amendments to the submitted materials. Subsequently, this research was approved by the University's Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC) (Appendix C).

Informed consent

Informed consent was sought for participation in the interviews, whether face-to-face or via a Skype account created for the purpose of the study. Informed consent was part of the overall document 'Information for Participants' (Appendix D). A printed copy of the informed consent form was ready for participants to sign during face-to-face contact. This allowed me to ensure participants' complete understanding of the process of withdrawal, confidentiality and anonymity. In the case of Skype interviews, the information pack was emailed to each participant and the informed consent form with the participant's name in

capital letters was taken as a signature as set out in the information sheet. Following the delivery of the email, participants were informed prior to the interview start that it would be recorded. The participants were asked during the Skype interview if they understood everything and verbally agreed to the informed consent form. An option of receiving a printed copy of the information pack by post was offered, with a prepaid envelope enclosed, in which to return the signed informed consent form to me. However, no participant requested a printed 'Information for Participants' pack to be sent.

Withdrawal process

The 'Information for Participants' document (Appendix D) included details of the withdrawal process. This was possible within five days of signing the informed consent form, as any later would have made it difficult to extract the answers from the research. Any participant wishing to withdraw did not need to provide a reason and there was no penalty for doing so. This was clearly stated in the provided document.

Confidentiality

For all email contact, my student email address was used, which is protected by the university security system and any further online communication was conducted using this email address. In some instances, telephone conversations were arranged to discuss the details of the agreed interviews.

The recordings and transcripts were stored under the participants' identification numbers in password protected electronic files in a computer that required login information. These files were encrypted according to University of the West of England (UWE) Research Data Protection and Data Security: Guidelines for Staff and Students (2012) in compliance with Data Protection Act (1998). Furthermore, the antivirus database was updated on a regular basis. Any hard copies of the verbatim transcripts, printed for the supervisor or for my needs were stored in a locked cabinet. The verbatim transcripts were available to the Director of Studies as required.

The data was anonymised and pseudonymised. The sheet with personal information connecting a specific participant to a specific identification number was kept away from the rest of the data in a locked cabinet. This data was accessible only by me. Each participant had a personal identification number assigned to them. This was based on gender and position in the interview process with abbreviations: F for females, M for males with a

number added to reflect the position they were interviewed in. E.g. F3 meant that the participant was female and was the third participant to be interviewed.

2.8 Method: Thematic Analysis

Thematic Analysis (TA) identifies themes within data in relation to the research question and offers the potential for a coherent and meaningful story to be told by data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Initially it was introduced by Gerald Horton in the 1970s but lacking in a systematic approach until 2006 when Victoria Clarke and Virginia Braun 'named and claimed' TA within psychology (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p.178). TA is a flexible method that is suitable to use where existing research is scarce (Braun & Clarke, 2006). TA allows for social and psychological interpretations and can potentially generate unexpected insights whilst underlining and reporting common themes across the data set. It often goes beyond explicit meanings as it analyses and interprets the identified themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006) by engaging the researcher's interpretative skills. As TA is a method and not a methodology, it does not come with a pre-assembled philosophical framework. Therefore, in order to produce a high-quality thematic analysis, a researcher needs to define their philosophical position and explicitly state their design decisions for TA. Not doing so is one of the main critiques Clarke and Braun (2018) find problematic in counselling and psychotherapy research.

The research was approached from the stance of critical realism. This research was intended as 'Big Q' qualitative research where researcher subjectivity and reflexivity, as well as context, were integral parts of the research (Clarke and Braun, 2018), whilst at the same time the research question was quite broad. Therefore, a rich description of data was pursued to uncover potentially complex information. The themes were identified by employing inductive TA, as the analysis was shaped by the meaning in the data (Clarke, Braun & Hayfield, 2015), not any existing theory. Inductive TA or data-driven, determined the initial coding for anything and everything, as apparent in Appendix E. This way, strong links between the data and the themes were created (Braun & Clarke, 2006) via the researcher's closeness and interactions with the data. Additionally, it enabled the development of further research questions. In this research, the focus was on the active exploration of the participants' understanding and meaning attached to the concept of attire. This helped to shape the research question during the analytical process. The main goal was not only to

provide descriptive accounts of participants' understanding of attire but also to allow for social and psychological interpretations of their accounts.

Braun and Clarke (2006) developed a step-by-step guide for conducting TA, but they emphasised that these are not rules to be strictly followed but used to inform about the procedure. The analysis was a continuous engagement with the data set, codes and produced analysis, moving between the recommended phases rather than followed linearly. The write up was an integrative part of each step and supported finalising the analysis. To minimise incongruous and imprecise analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) supervision and a reflective diary were used during analysis to identify problematic codes, themes and assumptions.

The first step comprised familiarisation with the data set. While interviewing, some notes were taken to inform the interviewer as well as for analysis. Initial data transcriptions and reading helped with familiarisation and the noting of initial codes; an informal level of coding by observing preliminary ideas that informed analysis (Appendix E). This stage generated analytical ideas by noting patterns or differences and writing margin notes, illustrating the importance of subjectivity in qualitative research (Terry, Hayfield, Clarke & Braun, 2017).

The second stage was to generate initial semantic codes across the whole data set. Coding was completed manually for the whole data set. The aim was to code inclusively for as many codes as possible (Braun & Clarke, 2006) with relevance to the research question (Terry, Hayfield, Clarke & Braun, 2017). The intention was to develop self-explanatory codes. Some ambiguities emerged from the data and these were included in the coding process (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A list of codes was generated for each individual interview. Some initial notes were hand-written and some were digital. The initial margin notes were followed and some codes were written in the margins too. These were then copied and pasted into a separate word document that was more of a 'code map' – a section of data and more codes were developed based on the notes – Appendix F is a shortened version.

The third phase can be seen as a formal start of the theme development (Terry, Hayfield, Clarke and Braun, 2017). From the critical realist perspective, I did not discover the themes but constructed them from active engagement with the codes. It included searching for broader themes and their relationships, and reconsideration of the codes from the preceding phase. The codes were compared, collated, combined or split. In my experience, a variety of codes were combined as they pointed to similar meanings. While

initial coding was inductive, this was the stage where coding started to capture implicit meanings, thus moved to latent coding. For this part of the analysis, I used the guidance of Braun & Clarke (2013) 'Good Questions to ask yourself in developing themes' (p. 226), as well as supervision. As the authors highlighted; the identified themes were temporary – candidate themes – and necessitated further improvement. The notion was that it is easier to code for everything and anything, than revisit codes and data extracts later and re-code the original data again. When developing candidate themes, these were considered in relation to the research question. However, themes required reinforcement by a 'central organising concept' (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 224) – a fundamental idea underpinning the inclusion and exclusion of codes (Terry, Hayfield, Clarke and Braun, 2017). While some codes were clustered under candidate themes, others were rejected into miscellaneous categories and revisited at later stages. Clarke and Braun (2006) recommended visual aids e.g. a thematic map to enable organising the codes into themes. This technique was employed to map the relationship between the developed themes and to ensure the themes were individually distinctive, self-explanatory, and mutually coherent (see Figure 4.1). Following this, a table of candidate themes with fitting codes was generated and reviewed in relation to the research question. Appendix G illustrates a candidate theme, that was rejected at a later stage. A good theme was not based on an occurrence frequency but on the meaning it captured. Essentially, the themes were to 'tell a story' (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p.233).

Here, the fourth stage was entered, by reviewing the candidate themes in relation to the collated data for particular themes and their codes, choosing data extracts clearly related to the central organising concept of the candidate theme. The focus was on the coherence of identified patterns. The second level was to repeat the process in relation to the whole data set for two main purposes. Firstly, it could determine the validity of the identified themes within the data set. Secondly, I had the opportunity to re-code potentially missed data excerpts. At this stage, if after the review, candidate themes fitted the data excerpts, formed meaningful patterns and fitted well within the whole data set, I moved onto another stage. If the candidate themes did not form a good fit, then they were reviewed and revised again. However, Braun and Clarke (2006) cautioned about endless coding and reasoned that if themes fit the data well, then it is appropriate to stop coding.

The fifth step was to name, 'define and refine' (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.92) the themes to capture their importance and to connect them to the overall story. In the case of a complex theme such as 'I am a Counselling Psychologist who observes', this was developed as an overall theme 'I am a Counselling Psychologist who: observes; is observed; imagines

the meaning of the observed' which represented the hierarchy of significance. Furthermore, the themes were considered in relation to each other. One of these documents was created for the progression exam (Appendix H) but further refined at a later date. The results of this step were evident in the clear definition of the themes, and the working titles were refined to more 'punchy' final names.

The sixth step was to produce a report. Any report of TA includes data extracts and tells the story of the data in a 'concise, coherent, logical, non-repetitive and interesting' manner. (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.93). The final stage required a developed thematic map, supervision and creative thinking. The report was a flexible process following the development of themes based on code descriptions to ensure a fit. Initial extracts were grouped together to explore the fit between the themes and the subthemes. This stage included the selection of illuminating quotes and avoided focusing on a hand-full of participants. The chosen examples were edited for readability, including punctuation and omitting hesitations or repetitions. The quotes were used analytically in the analysis, to illuminate the story of the data as experienced by me. At this stage, some subthemes were omitted and one theme *'The Clothed Life of Counselling Psychologists'* was refocused as: '*Underneath Our Clothes'* to reflect on the story of how clothing facilitates the therapeutic process. Nevertheless, the write up uncovered weaknesses in some examples, which were replaced with more compelling quotes.

3. REFLEXIVITY

‘I rolled up my sleeves and put my thinking hat on’ - My Research Journey

Contrary to other writers (e.g. Pine, 2014) I have never been interested in fashion. Clothing in my family was functional for a working farm and recycled as much as possible. The best clothes were worn to look presentable at school and once outgrown they were handed down to younger family members or friends. If clothes were too worn-out, their function changed and they were used for outdoor activities such as playing or labour. Once they outlived this stage, fabrics were reinvented as ‘new’ clothes or cloths, and buttons and zips reused. To some extent I still follow this cycle of life with my garments. Clothing is either fixed or recycled in clothes banks, but it is always purposeful - a good fit for the occasion. Thus, my attire usually reflects my perception of social norms, expectations attached to the occasion and my personal comfort. I shop purposefully, for quality and timeless garments that I will own for years.

The topic of attire first interested me when I realised that I dressed differently to others I encountered within a certain group of practitioners. At the same time, I was working with a client for whom, my casual attire was a negative influence our therapeutic relationship. At one point, I wore shorts and flip-flops to the session; moving the professional relationship to friendship. ‘I put my thinking hat on’ and reflected on my attire and considered the way I dressed. However, I was not prepared to dress like everyone else; in long skirts and flowery blouses, in order to ‘visually fit’ the group. I started to discuss clothing choices with colleagues and it transpired that many have considered this issue at some point and indeed welcomed the dialogue. To take the discussion further, I ‘rolled up my sleeves’ and researched available literature and internet resources. Along the way I learned about the limited research-based information applicable to counselling psychology, thus I considered a study in this area. While I was developing the interview and piloting schedule, the variety of my own assumptions about CoPs attire became apparent. I founded the greatest assumption i.e. Counselling Psychologists should dress ‘appropriately’, on my own collection of clothes. I deemed my garments ‘safe’ for clinical work: a certain hem line and neck line, while including colours and high heels, with the main criteria of being physically comfortable and minimising sexualisation. Furthermore, an assumption, that this is a ‘female issue only’ transpired through informal discussions with colleagues and peers. While piloting the interview schedule, pre-specified prompts were used only to stimulate the

initial discussion. As a result, I felt reassured that the research was inspiring to participants, boosting my confidence before interviewing.

Early on in the research, I considered more unusual ways of data collection – for example the use of paper dolls. I researched free online prints but thought them to be too constraining in their uniformity of illustrations. While a variety of prints is available, these are intended for children and thus the attire options were too playful with a narrow selection of smart clothing. Through this, I realised that my clothing practices are based on having 'two wardrobes': professional and leisure. I was drawn to these references in the interviews, thus I reread some interviews to tease out the omitted elements; those that did not fit my belief of two wardrobes. Over time, this translated to formulating a subtheme around congruence, which felt like an important dimension of my participants' experience that also tallied up with a very recognisable term from person-centred therapy.

A reflective diary included my reflections on the chosen outfit before and after each conducted interview; with exception of interviews F8 and M9 as these happened back to back. I included my experience of the interview, comments and observations. However, I deemed these reflections too personal for me and the participants, to append an example in the thesis. Nevertheless, it helped me to reflect on some areas. For instance, one participant commented on the bold coloured blouse I wore for the interview, remarking on my bravery. This made me think the colour was inappropriate and I decided to tone it down for future interviews. Consequently, I wore a black outfit to my next interview, however, this outfit was also commented on. This time, the participant voiced their assumption that my interest in research of attire stems from my fear of wearing colours and that I hide behind dark outfits. Inevitably, the reflective diary helped me to uncover my assumption: 'I should be neutral' and that I would fail my research objectives if participants noticed me. I realised that regardless of my actual outfit for the interviews, it was likely to be used by the participants as a reference point, to illustrate their opinions and beliefs during the interview. Also, I now perceived this as an achievement in stimulating the discussion, not as a failure to deliver good quality research.

One of the major difficulties I faced during the analytical process, was letting go of some ideas, codes and candidate themes as so much effort went into coding and recoding. My supervisor's input here was unparalleled, mostly because I only moved the code to a different candidate theme, without making a good fit. Reflection on the 'story I want to tell' created a platform for enhanced understanding of the fit between the codes, central organising concepts and research questions.

Writing in English as a Second Language

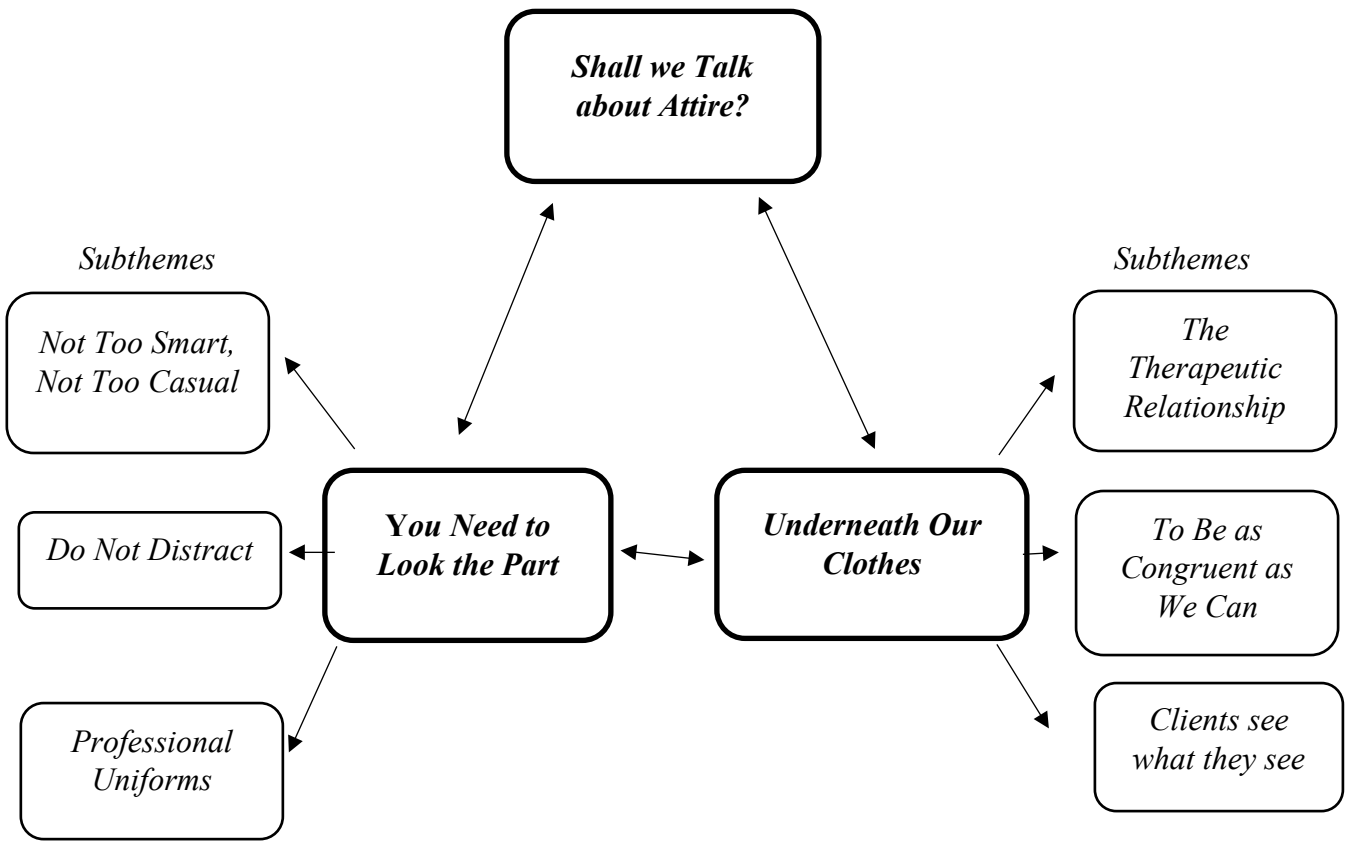
A few instances of difficulty in deciphering spoken words occurred when transcribing. Braun and Clarke (2013) identified the possibility of the impact upon meaning within the data. In those instances, I marked the inaudible part of the interview and returned to it later. I often listened to the interviews in the car, in order to understand the problematic parts as well as to enhance my familiarisation with the data set.

Furthermore, I experienced incorrect transcription with Andrea, when initially, I transcribed the words as ‘every woman’ rather than ‘Everywoman’. While in my mind this would not have a great impact on misunderstanding the quote, it reflected the problems a non-English speaker may encounter when interviewing and transcribing. However, one of the main struggles was writing in English as a second language. It meant repetitions, searching for synonyms, editing, reediting and most importantly, proofreading. This incurred an extra cost, that I had not considered before taking on the professional doctorate, which has caused frustration.

4. ANALYSIS

This section reports the detailed analysis of each developed theme, based on central organising concepts. The process of analysis developed three themes and corresponding subthemes (Figure 4.1), highlighting the varied understanding of attire in therapeutic session. The themes overlap to a certain degree, but they are distinctively individual, whilst also interconnected.

Figure 4.1 – Final Thematic Map



Each theme and subtheme is illustrated through participants' quotations and then explained further. Three themes were identified. '*Shall We Talk About Attire*?' illustrated the ambivalence surrounding the topic of attire. The second theme: **'***You Need to Look the Part';* echoed clothing practices beyond specific garments within three further subthemes, which grapple with what this part might actually look like. The last theme, '*Underneath our clothes'*, pointed to attire being used beyond simply being clothed, as a way to enhance the therapeutic relationship, reflect congruence and acknowledge that clients notice us.

4. 1 First Theme: *Shall We Talk About Attire*?

The first theme '*Shall We Talk About Attire*?' points to an emergent interest and need to talk about attire. The theme name, formulated as a question, is to highlight the ambivalence of the topic and to point out a lack of discussion about attire within counselling psychology. Some participants had the opportunity to use supervision or peer support to explore it. Most participants welcomed structured discussion and used the interviews to reflect upon how they dress and to uncover assumptions that aided insight into their own self-presentation. In spite of this, the significance of the matter was at times dismissed based on implied triviality. Indeed, the significance of a discussion about attire proved to be more complex than it first appeared.

> *"I think this is an absent area, while I don't think it's important to have any special lecture on this, I think it would be helpful for trainees and supervisors if there was a space to discuss such a basic issue. I don't think there is a much debate about what we should wear and how should we appear." [Tamara]*

The participant above argued towards the helpfulness of a space to debate or discuss attire for both trainees and supervisors. For this participant, a lecture, which is the typical way of delivering academic content in universities, would not be an appropriate format to talk about attire. This raises two questions: what prevents us from having these conversations and what is the most appropriate place and format for discussions around attire?

> *"[It] is a kind of contested issue actually and it has sort of personal relevance actually, because it is something I have always struggled with, and it is still a contested issue, I think, and I don't think it will ever necessarily be resolved one way or the other!" [Daniel]*

The struggle with attire was both real and personal for Daniel. He expressed his doubt in achieving a common agreement about attire. He indicated ambiguity within the topic. Despite its daily occurrence, the topic of attire seems elusive, maybe even controversial to discuss. Perhaps, Daniel indicates the difficulties any attire research may face as the issue of attire may not actually be resolved definitively. Perhaps, he indicated the need to explore the

topic in greater depth to establish the role of clothing, both within the profession and on an individual level.

> *"If you are interested in your appearance then you are a bit … not just shallow but less intelligent, not having anything better to do, lack of interest in more important issues such as politics, equality, global warming etc. but thinking about it, appearance and clothing is very important for politicians… our MPs wear pretty expensive suits and clothing, and no-one questions it." [Tamara]*

Later, Tamara offered an explanation as to why counselling psychology does not talk about attire. Firstly, she introduced, possibly a common assumption that fashion conscious people are lacking self-reflection and intelligence. Secondly, by detailed more meaningful topics of interest for the applied sciences, she inevitably implied the triviality of a discussion about attire and omitted attire research. Furthermore, a politician's value of appearance is not perceived negatively, possibly because this engagement is expected with regard to the important issues they deal with. Here, we see a construction of counselling psychologists as more substantive and less preoccupied with superficial appearance than other professionals.

> *"I think, you could just buy [a book] and read up on it, if you are that seriously unsure … you could definitely find someone who could have a look at your wardrobe and you could tell them that you are a psychotherapist, you know, they might help you. Because they may realise it's a difficult job you are doing. And you know, make recommendations. Personally, I think it's not too difficult, dressing properly… so if you think you want to dress properly, you go out in world, look at people who work in City. If they turn up going to City dressed in the same suit, maybe a different coloured shirt, there is a reason for that. It's smart, it's uhm, not distracting." [Issana]*

Issana illustrated the triviality of the topic when commenting "if you are that seriously unsure", suggesting that some levels of uncertainty are common and can be resolved quickly; but that delving further into the theme is unnecessary. The presumption that attire should not be an issue for practitioners. Subsequently, it can be understood as an indication of the topic to be common sense. Issana recognised that our jobs are challenging at times and demand proper appearance. She suggested self-education and a discussion with a professional to

resolve insecurities. Nonetheless, she believed that uncertainty about clothing is manageable and can be resolved effortlessly by observing others. Essentially, Issana implied that such a trivial matter is to be settled by engaging common sense, through observation, reading and discussion. Inevitably suggesting that self-reflection is a sufficient enough way to deal with any raised issues and that discussion is not necessary.

> *"Initially I thought 'oh no I won't have much to say about it' but then I was thinking about how my attitude towards my clothes has changed over the time I have been working, because I started off in the NHS in a placement and also at a university placement and eventually went to private practice and over time my clothing has changed and my idea of what it means has changed. So yeah, it raised some questions for me" [Georgios]*

In the above extract, the participant illustrated something very common about how counselling psychologists contemplate their attire: There is more to say about this topic than one initially might think. For this participant, attire was linked to a process of change. Beyond the inevitable change in clothing practices that comes with growing older, the participant mentioned the changing contexts of therapeutic work, such as the NHS, the mental health service of a university, and private practice. As a result, they took the opportunity to talk about their attire by participating in this study, which presumably stimulated their interest to reflect further on how they dress.

> "I *have made quite a dramatic change to my haircut, to my hairstyle and also a bit in just how I dress, as well. I think in this line of work I am just more conscious of it and have been warier of what people might think, so I thought it was quite interesting to talk about and to reflect on." [Maya]*

Maya echoes the tendency to use the interview for reflection on attire and appearance. The quote demonstrated that some appearance changes are visible to clients and that CoPs are aware of this. Possibly, because dramatic appearance modifications have the potential to unsettle the equilibrium for the participants as well as for their clients. Maya seemed to use the interview to gain insight into her experience of appearance. The above extract also illustrates how closely clothing is linked to other aspects of appearance, such as hairstyles.

> *"My supervisor was pretty quick to say, that I shouldn't wear loud colours…while I don't think these colours are loud. There was not a discussion about it, I was told not to. Actually, I'd prefer to have a discussion about it." [Tamara]*

The quote illustrates the tension clothing can cause for a practitioner. While the supervisor's input is necessary for guidance and support, Tamara revealed that there was a striking lack of dialogue. More importantly, while participant's and supervisor's opinions may differ at times, discussion could be employed to diffuse tension. Instead, Tamara stated that the supervisor's opinion was imposed; suggesting a certain level of rigidity of opinions about attire and the need for dialogue. While it is not clear whether this incident happened during training, Tamara's experience illustrates a power dynamic involved in policing professional attire, thus lending support to the view that trainees would benefit from discussions about appropriate clothing during their training.

> *"I had a male client […] someone who has presented with OCD and one of his intrusions was that he is going to cheat on his wife and being a female therapist, I had this' Do not wear a dress' thought with this man. I was really aware that I just won't wear a dress. I took it to my supervisor […] I said 'I have noticed that this man is really worried, really obsesses about the potential to be inappropriate with other women and cheat on his wife … that is his fear. And I have noticed that … I am not wearing dresses' and he was like 'What would it be like to wear a dress?' and I said 'I don't know, I never tried it with him'. When I did it, it kind of broke that … that strange feeling was not there. I think it was helpful for him as well as he saw me more as a woman and it led on to more exposure work as well because our relationship deepened." [Maya]*

On the other hand, Maya illustrated the benefits of having a discussion about clothes during supervision. She highlighted how self-reflection uncovered but did not resolve an issue regarding attire in the therapy room. Therefore, taken to supervision, it became an opportunity to explore, hypothesise and develop a new perspective on her clothing. The quote also suggests that at times, clothing can be highly relevant in clinical work. Through honesty, open discussion and a space to reflect, Maya's attire became a means for deepened trust and further therapeutic work.

> *"We had a trainee, I remember that it was in training and she used to dress in a sexy way. So, she was with us in her placement and she was wearing high heels, tight clothes, you know, quite sexy and I remember a group of us were commenting but I thought I would never go around like that but I don't judge anyone." [Nina]*

Nina demonstrated a different way of discussing clothing. She indicated that a group of colleagues remarked upon the attire of another colleague. Nina spoke of comments, something done in passing, not a discussion or constructive feedback. This approach is perhaps more common than not and pushes the topic to be almost taboo, discussed in secret and inviting judgments. Importantly, Nina used these comments to confirm the appropriateness of her own clothing style.

> *I just feel they [clients] are not expecting to come and see you looking raggedy. The emphasis become about how you are looking. So, I think there is something about neutrality, so while they don't teach it on training, we do assume that most therapy or counselling psychology courses would only admit you on the training when you have a level of maturity". [Isaana]*

Isaana indirectly validated the consideration for the discussion about clothing further. Her explanation that clients want their therapists to look presentable and that of assumed maturity being mirrored in clothing, may just give us that extra argument for discussing the attire of counselling psychologists during training. Further, Isaana's quote illustrates how in the absence of discussion about attire, people rely on assumptions about how to dress, in this case, perceived maturity.

The interviews enabled the counselling psychologists to share their stories of the importance as well as the triviality of attire. Counselling psychology, whilst equipped to challenge important political and professional issues, may perceive the research of attire as too rudimentary. An interest in attire is generally assumed to be an indication of low intellect and superficiality, which by default is not pertinent to counselling psychology. It is clear from the data that a systematic consideration of professional attire is not a prominent feature of counselling psychologists' views and experiences. If existent, the discussion about attire is rather disjointed. Only a few participants recalled constructive conversations about attire. However, recollection of hushed conversations or examples of inappropriate attire were

remembered, illustrating some ambivalence regarding the significance of the topic. For many, uncertainty about attire was resolved through self-reflection. The way participants used the interviews to reflect on their own attire and appearance, suggests a need to discuss attire in a more sustained and explicit way, even if it remains unclear when and how to do it. It transpired that self-reflection and debate about attire have the potential to yield unexpected insights and learnings. The topic of attire is assumption laden and these assumptions will be explored further.

4. 2. Second Theme: '*You Need to Look the Part'*

The second theme develops around the rules of appearance to which CoPs adhere. Initially 'looking the part' was a code, that was upgraded to a subtheme. Later analysis and reflection allowed this to become a theme. The answer is that attire needs to be appropriate and the appropriateness of clothing is seen as a spectrum rather than dichotomous. Looking the part then means not venturing into extremes in attire choices. While the extremes of the spectrum are clearly defined: business smart or overly casual - the balance in-between is more difficult to define, and two subthemes were developed: 'Not too…' and 'Do not distract clients'. From this, the third subtheme of 'Uniforms' was developed to encompass the practicalities adhering to rules.

> *"I think you can't wear whatever you like. I think therapists define what is appropriate but with no hard rules. I think some sit fine with it. But I think there is an assumption that a professional shouldn't look very sexy and be decent … smart casual. Again, it's hard to define it but to be decent, decently dressed and not too provocative" [Nina]*

Nina exemplified the difficulty in defining the rules of appearance. Consequently, she described the real struggles of adhering to rules with a certain level of interpretative flexibility. Participants generally described the appropriateness of attire to exist on a spectrum. The following paragraphs will explore the theme of 'looking the part' aiming for a balanced visual presentation.

4. 2. 1 'Not Too Smart, Not Too Casual'

> *"I've always thought carefully: 'Don't be too smart, don't be too corporate'. I've never ever worn a jacket, for example, for therapy because I think that can be off-putting. I think it disrupts the balance as a sort of power suggestion, you know, which I don't like. I think, if you put on a jacket, it's almost akin to putting on a white coat, which says: I'm in charge here, I will tell you." [Andrea]*

'Not too smart' was focused on the signs of authority. Andrea identified business smart clothing as power dressing, which conveys expertise. Power dressing may be overbearing and can be suggestive of being the only expert in the room. She perceived suits as the equivalent of a medicalised approach, where the wearer is to solve the observer's problems. As Andrea implied, to her, the purpose of clothing choice is to diffuse the view of the practitioner's expert knowledge and the clients' passive approach to the therapy.

> *"I think as a psychologist in private [practice] or the NHS you need to look the part, you know. We're qualified people giving advice so you need to. Yeah … turning up in a tracksuit as far as I can see would be far too casual and your position may not be taken as seriously as the client may be expecting" [Kath]*

For Kath, the other extreme: casual clothing, is rejected too. Kath advised that regardless of the working environment, casual clothing may be perceived for CoPs as not professional enough. Thus,' clothing needs to fit the clients' expectations of professionalism.

> *"I do not want to look too official, having that kind of look that you are quite office-based, as that could put up some barriers… somewhere in between being serious – 'I am interested in you' and knowing they can count on me – so not be too relaxed." [Maya]*

Maya's quote greatly illustrates the struggle many experienced in describing clothing that is appropriate for them to wear for sessions. She described the extremes as inept. Her clothing style was equidistant from extremes achieving 'somewhere in-between'. She implied that a fine balance is achieved by not crossing over to extremes in clothing. Yet, the subtheme, 'not too' is not only about expertise or informality.

> *"I wouldn't want to obviously buy something that was branded when people can get hold of the value of it … so if you are wearing, let's say if you've got a Gucci bag and it's got Gucci right across it, it means people can go home and they can Google it and say gosh that was £3000. If you've got a nice handbag that doesn't have a label people know it's nice but they don't know what you've spent on it, you might have spent £3000 or you might have spent £30 or you might have spent £6000. What they are getting is that it is smart, it is the right thing for work and it is well presented. I think when you put logos and brands out for people to see they can then make judgements about how much you have spent and if they make judgements about how much you have spent on something then they can also make judgements on how you might view them, whether you are up for them, whether you are making too much money out of them. "[Bianca]*

Bianca considered the existence of a number of wealth indicators that are continuously assessed by clients. She stressed the importance of avoiding branded clothing as to not invite judgments about affluence. Bianca suggested that the demonstration of wealth can cause tension for some clients as they are charged for the sessions. Most importantly, she went as far as suggesting that an inconsiderate display of wealth may mean the mistreatment of clients. She preferred clothing and accessories that work well in overall self-presentation.

> *"I like skirts that go above my knee, I like that. But as I get older maybe I wear more tights and things. If it is summer, I wear a denim skirt of that kind of length and shorts but obviously not with clients because I just do not want to be inappropriate in any way or what I don't want to do is to sexualise myself in front of the clients." [Maya]*

Evoking sexual feelings was a problem only for the female participants in this research. Maya aimed to avoid sexualisation of herself during sessions, despite her personal preferences of wearing a certain skirt length. She refrained from her clothing preferences as some clients may perceive the exposed flesh as insinuating sexually charged messages. The quote indicated that attire may become a problem in the therapy room, thus precautions are taken to avoid discomfort and the risk of being sexually provocative.

It seems that counselling psychologists reject the idea of smart business clothing so often seen in the medicalised approach as well as clothing which is too casual. Attire is

chosen to reflect professionalism and fulfil the perceived expectations of clients. Clothing practices and preferred style generally pre-empt possible dissonance. However, if a conflict arises, it is dealt with by considering the boundary of 'not too'.

4. 2. 2 'Do Not Distract'

From all that has been written above it may appear that 'not too' is the only rule. However, the appropriateness of clothing is judged on another rule: such as not distracting the client and being consistent in visual presentation. This seems to work in conjunction with the previous subtheme.

> *"For me it's about not distracting the client from their story, because they are presenting you a story so perhaps, if you, as a therapist, are presenting the story of poverty, then you know, the client would …the client would [feel] wretched … if the client is distracted, they are not able to do their own work" [Issana].*

Issana explained that she follows her own rules so as not to be distractive for the clients. She explained that distraction can impact on the therapeutic process and can prevent clients from focussing on important work. She implied that the clients' attention should be on themselves not her.

> *"I think it invites speculation about you. Which, as I say, if we were psychodynamic psychotherapists, then yes, of course, you want that countertransference stuff going on. The way I work it's less helpful and more of a distraction. I don't want people sitting there wondering: 'oh, I wonder if she had lovely day, I wonder if she doesn't feel well... or oh her hair looks nice' or something. If they're focusing on me they are not focusing on. It's a distraction. (…) I don't want to be a distraction, it's the same thing, and also it says something about you. It's personal." [Andrea]*

Andrea explained that in her clinical approach, distraction does not have a therapeutic purpose. Quite the opposite, distraction is an interruption to the clients' focus on the self. She pressed on even further and suggested that distraction is personal as it invites speculation. Thus, it could be seen as a form of unwelcome and unhelpful self-disclosure.

> "*So, clothing would be a means of making the therapist sort of almost invisible. I think I mean we are back to that old contested idea aren't we, of … you know, whether the therapist can truly be opaque to the patient." [Daniel]*

If distraction is understood as self-disclosure, then Daniel's being 'almost invisible', would be translated as not giving away personal information. His clothing would almost be camouflage in the sessions. If we fit the environment, expectations and our role, then we do not distract the client and enable them to do what they came to do in our sessions together.

> *"So, a fairly nondescript neither scruffy nor particularly dandy person, sitting across, whose attire is not particularly memorable after all, nothing special in my presence, not visually in my presence." [Aidan]*

In line with the boundaries of self-disclosure, Aidan described his clothing as non-descript, not a memorable visual presentation. He did not elaborate on the reasons, but the quote illustrated how clothing facilitates this invisibility, translated as no distractions for clients.

> *"I have met one therapist, who has quite really developed his look so he is like a punk hero but I suppose that is his thing, you know the hair shaved is dyed blonde in the middle, tons of piercings, tattoos, huge shoes, very elaborate clothing as well lots of layers - he looks like he has taken ages to get ready and with him I feel like that is very much about him and he is … like it is very important for him for this whole thing and it's almost like it has gone too far now to tone it down. But that's just him you know so in that case I think – 'ok fair enough, the clients are going to see you like that throughout'. So, from the first meeting its going to be quite consistent. On the other hand, and they will be able to choose whether they feel like it's kind of right for them" [Georgios]*

Georgios described a therapist with an unusual visual presentation. Georgios recognised that the presentation is likely to be consistent and that clients can make a choice to attend the sessions or not. Furthermore, Georgios talked about venturing into an extreme, where distraction is almost always present as it is deemed to be self-disclosure. Through this, he implied, that if a counselling psychologist is not aware of the distractions, they may not be aware of clients' needs. Georgios wondered whether the referenced therapist maintained this

image out of consistency. Nonetheless, he concluded that whatever the preferred clothing style is, it ought to be as consistent as possible over time.

> *"So, in the summer when it is boiling hot in the office and they arrive in shorts and t-shirts and sandals I will still be wearing maybe lighter clothes but still smart casual". [Aidan]*

For Aidan clothing consistency was important. He avoided extremes and stayed consistent as much as possible. He may change clothing fabrics to be more comfortable during hot weather but adhered to a smart-casual clothing style. Ultimately, Aidan illustrated consistency in appearance and how distraction is managed for clients, but by changing to lighter fabrics, he effectively manages his own distraction by being comfortable in his own clothes.

The subtheme is arranged around the need not to distract clients from important therapeutic work. Participants also expressed their preference for a certain level of consistency in their appearance, as changes can be distractive.

4. 2. 3 'Professional Uniforms'

To resolve the tension of appropriateness, distractions and extremes, many talked about their usual clothing. Firstly, counselling psychology was compared to vastly different professions such as lawyers or doctors.

> *"There is something about dressing to say that you are professional enough. And there are certain professional uniforms; you look at solicitors, you know, solicitors of a certain age all wear dark suits, black Churches lace up shoes, they all wear the round sort of New York glasses; you know these are the ones in London or they might wear braces and that would be it and the women would all wear navy blue, black or grey straight dresses with short sleeves and sort of black stockings and black shoes. Similar type of uniform". [Bianca]*

Bianca explained that there is a stereotypical picture of a male and a female solicitor, a uniform conveying messages of professionalism. By this, she implied that counselling

psychologists are expected to have a certain status within society that is linked to high levels of expertise.

However, some turned their attention to those professions with which counselling psychology often gets compared or confused, for instance, clinical psychology, counselling or psychotherapy. The attire of a representative of the profession was generalised and described as a uniform.

> *"The people that I would bump into in the evenings are the same who are working for the counselling charity through the day so there is more evidence of jeans - more casual than I would wear." [Aidan]*

Here Aidan suggested that counsellors may choose more casual clothing than counselling psychologists, certainly compared to his personal preferences.

> *"[I] was actually going to meetings and meeting clinical psychologists, and so, I'd see clinical psychologists, social workers and doctors. And psychologists always stood out for me, they were well presented. So, the older people like Dr. Karen … she looks very immaculate, she looks ready, done, always a nice matching handbag. And you know quite a nice picture." [Issana]*

Issana talked about being inspired by clinical psychologists being well presented, immaculate. She implied that psychologists' visual presentation was different to those of doctors and social workers; well-dressed and presentable. Perhaps seeing these professions side-by-side, allowed for the comparison of typical attire and for building up a picture of psychologists' self-presentation.

> *"Going back to that era when psychotherapists wore black if I had an image in mind it would be a kind of unfitted black dress down to sort of calf level with black boots, no make-up, hair pulled back into a bun" [Bianca]*

Bianca described her image of psychotherapists, where the uniform would be based on a black colour, with no personal touch. It would be fairly unassuming, neutral, modest and without much creativity. This image alludes to psychoanalytic psychotherapy's early

insistence in maintaining analytic neutrality and cannot be generalised to all psychotherapists.

All three quotes reflect the reality of having been exposed to other professions. Naturally, we create an image of a typical professional represented mostly through clothing. Nevertheless, many struggled to think about what a counselling psychologist should look like, and many described their usual clothing style for work.

> *"I suppose in terms of presentation it is something about being approachable, so I wouldn't go into a therapy session wearing a suit and tie and generally I wouldn't go in wearing jeans and a t-shirt so in terms of attire, smart casual erm presentation" [Aidan]*

Aidan started the description by defining what he would not wear and concluded the balanced self-presentation as middle ground: smart-casual attire. The smart-casual dress code is an ambiguous label in itself. Unsurprisingly, it eliminates business smart e.g. suit and tie- and too casual appearance: jeans and a t-shirt.

> *"I like wearing colourful clothing. I don't get crazy, black trousers with nice pink or yellow blouse. Or the other way around. Green trousers with dark green or black blouse." [Tamara]*

The quote above illustrates what a number of participants described, some combination of colour, trousers and a blouse/shirt - essentially taking the safe option and rejecting extremes by not getting 'crazy'.

Counselling psychologists then aim for respectful, appropriate clothing that is not distractive for the clients, creating uniforms that do not venture into a category of extremes. Thus, by adhering to societal expectations of what is seen as appropriate clothing, we become invisible in the session and minimise unwanted self-disclosure.

The theme of 'Looking the Part' includes a variety of extremes. Table 4.2.1 shows an extract from a list of inappropriate appearance to illustrate the wide range it reaches and it includes anything from clothing to facial hair. The most important observation is that appropriate attire according to counselling psychologists is not necessarily about specific garments, it is about the clusters of clothing and adjectives – such as ripped jeans or dirty

clothes. These are not given succinctly enough for a clear conclusion of belonging to smart-casual, but it tells us that they do not look the part for counselling psychologists.

Table 4.2.1 - List of inappropriate appearance for each participant

Andrea	Smart jackets, flip-flops, low cut tops, religious symbols, bright colours
David	Shorts, patterned shirts
Aidan	Floral shirts, paisley shirts, being unshaven
Issana	Low cut tops, dirty and/or creased clothes
Daniel	Suit and tie, jeans
Maya	Clothing with slogans or ripped, shorts, short skirts, tracksuits
Kath	Too tight clothing, revealing, showing cleavage
Nina	Ripped jeans, high heels, formal shoes, colourful
Georgios	Hoodie, sandals, sporty trainers
Bianca	Dirty, scruffy, floral skirts, faded jeans,
Tamara	high or kitten heel, t-shirts, low cut tops and dresses, skirts

Looking the part is about the way we assume we will be perceived by clients. We want to convey care and approachability whilst appearing professional. Through the ambiguity of the smart-casual dress code, extremes of the spectrum of appropriateness and the difficulty in defining what is ‘not too’ far from neutrality towards extremes, it can be concluded that creating ‘the look’ is a fine balance. This fine balance is often a part of our common sense, we do not necessarily constantly ponder on it and if everything else is aligned in the right combination, then some individualised appearance is tolerable.

4.3 Third Theme *'Underneath Our Clothes'*

The third theme explores the way clothing operates beyond simply being clothed, looking into its role within the profession during the process of psychotherapy, and how it takes on meaning within an intersubjective and often symbolic context. The analysis of data developed a story of clothing facilitating the therapeutic relationship and maintaining the practitioner's state of congruence.

4. 3. 1 The Therapeutic Relationship

This particular subtheme aims to explain how clothing is used to enhance the emerging therapeutic relationship. The therapeutic relationship is understood as the relationship between the practitioner and the client, formed in order to achieve a helpful change in the client (Haugh & Paul, 2008). Practitioners believe that clothing may have some impact on the strength of the early therapeutic bond and use their clothing to facilitate therapeutic relationships.

> *"You want something neutral, so that they [clients] just think, OK this is Everywoman. This is somebody who can relate to me, because I do think ... people - in my experience anyway ... of therapy - I do think, people notice you" [Andrea]*

The above quote illustrates the importance of the choice of clothing so as to appear generic because CoPs are observed and noticed. Andrea's 'Everywoman' is aimed to appear neutral to represent all people in some way. This way, she said, clients can relate to her better. It is apparent that she intended for her clothing to facilitate and enhance the therapeutic relationship. Elsewhere, she continued:

> *"Make a good impression, you know. I think you want to be what people are expecting. I think that if you're going to put people at their ease and make them feel comfortable with coming, you do have to manipulate slightly, you know. If my outfit helps it, then I'm happy to do it." [Andrea]*

Andrea aimed for good impressions as she recognised clients' probable expectations about her appearance. The importance of the therapeutic relationship was reflected in Andrea's ability to anticipate clients' needs. She felt content to accommodate them in order to facilitate the initial development of the therapeutic relationship and most importantly, she considered the impact of her clothing on the clients.

> *"now what I realised over the first year or two was that the way I was dressed was more like an office worker. And some of the GP's would dress like this and I started to wonder if they were really the right type of clothes for a therapeutic relationship because it was a bit like I could be anywhere… you know I could be working at a bank in those clothes." [Georgios]*

Initially Georgios followed an example of other professionals within the work setting. However, gradually, he concluded that his occupation was not adequately expressed through his clothing. He emphasised that he could be any office worker working in any office. Consequently, it implied that his clothing could influence the quality and uniqueness of the therapeutic relationships he aspired to build.

> *"I guess automatically my general dress style is one that is transferable across the widest range of client groups presentations. So that they get a sense about calmness about me; so they get a sense of confidence about me, um … openness honesty and that's something that is continually reinforced … um I guess what I want them to get from my presentation is, this is a person who will be able to contain my emotions when I am opening myself up to them and um if you think of where my specialism lies some of the stories that are brought to me this is somebody that is able to be contained and be containing to them." [Aidan]*

Aidan described a range of messages he would like to convey to clients such as understanding, containment of difficult emotions and calmness; all of which are important in building a strong therapeutic alliance. The explanation he provided indicated that his general clothing style facilitates these messages. He described the depth of the therapeutic relationship and the importance of self-presentation to suggest the ability to contain one's self and others. He anticipated that his clothing style is appropriate and fulfils the

expectations of a variety of clients. Essentially, Aidan habitually used his clothing as a form of non-verbal communication to continuously empower the therapeutic relationship.

> *"She said [returning client] 'I come to you because I know you can look after me (...) 'because you always look as though you have taken care of yourself, you look well fed, you don't look exhausted you don't look overly tired but she said you always look available for me you know, your hair is always done you're always clean and neat and tidy and you don't look tired and you smile a lot, your clothes are nice,' she said 'it makes me feel that however ill I am or bad I am you will always be available to take care of me because you look like you take care of yourself'." [Bianca]*

Bianca used an example of a client returning to her for further sessions. The client explained why she felt comfortable with Bianca, who enabled a robust therapeutic relationship and consequent work that stayed with the client beyond the sessions. Overall, Bianca's clothing and self-presentation conveyed messages of self-care, resilience and the ability to do the same for the client, thus enhancing their rapport. Nevertheless, this illustrates how the therapeutic relationship plays out in the real world and how the real world plays out in the therapeutic relationship.

The subtheme highlights the relational aspect reflected in clothing. It may be somewhat surprising that participants viewed their clothing as a vehicle to generate the best possible conditions for forming a strong therapeutic bond with clients by empathically considering their previous and possibly diverse experiences.

4. 3. 2 'To Be as Congruent as We Can'

The second subtheme within 'Under our clothes' was developed on the basis of the codes, in which CoPs' concerns were highlighted as a result of their own sense of self when working with clients. A state of congruence in this research encompasses being a professional counselling psychologist and being one's self at the same time. Actually, in order to be a counselling psychologist, one needs to allow the self to be part of therapeutic contact in an appropriate manner. One way of enabling this to happen is through individualised appearance, where the presented self is in congruence with the current self.

> "*I just think we need to be as congruent as we possibly can be. I think we need to wear clothes that make us feel confident, I think we have to have in our minds an idea about what social norms are, not what we are going to adhere to, but so we have an understanding about what our perception would be from a patients' perspective, but we need to still be congruent and I think we have to look as though we are the sort of person that can do the job that they are employing us to do so because we are professional men and women doing the job. I think we need to dress as though we are professionals*." *[Bianca]*

Bianca identified the importance of congruence in the opening of the quote. She summarised the need to appear professional whilst being a congruent practitioner. For Bianca, congruence is about adhering to social expectations of appearing professional, but, by the same token, feeling confident in our own clothes. However, this is not only for our own benefit. Bianca implied that by being congruent we inherently become better practitioners.

> *"I am a big fan of Camper shoes (...) I tend to like shoes like that erm ... and if there is anything that is more sort of quirky if that's the right word about what I wear it expresses itself as a pair of shoes erm ... so you know, not that these are wildly distractive or anything like that but it would be quite normal you know this is quite typical for me" [Daniel]*

Daniel made his appearance his own, through the quirky shoes he likes. The shoes individualise his appearance and he suggested the shoes allow him to express himself, thus achieve congruence. Perhaps the importance of clothing lies in facilitating the presence of the practitioner's self, as quirky Camper brand shoes help him to express his individuality.

> *"I found a more authentic style and so I became more… yeah, kind of everyday in my language, in my manner you know. I was using all of my knowledge in a more subtle way so it was less visible to clients so I started to loosen up a bit so they started to loosen up a bit too and I wanted to have clothing that was much more everyday so I was wearing a jumper, not like a hoodie, but like a, you know, like a fleece type. Yeah and erm and erm... yeah cotton trousers rather than linen rather than all other trousers, you know… and then boots rather than shoes, you know, like softer clothing." [Georgios]*

Georgios then described a clear shift within himself where he became more comfortable in his knowledge and professionalism but where his clothing did not match his confidence. With an increase in skill confidence, Georgios became more flexible with his clothing, describing congruence as a process. He reported a consequent change in clothing representing his authentic style. However, this was a gradual change, presumably through trying out different fabrics and garments. Clothing became more every day style, rather than work clothes. Potentially, this may fit with how clothing mirrors the change in the therapeutic relationship.

> *"I always used to have this thing about work – having 'work clothes' and 'normal clothes' to get me kind of in a work mood but then I think I would not choose to wear what I'd call 'work clothes' I would not go out and buy them anymore. As I have more of my kind of clothes that I wear (...) It started like that when I first started working in the field of a talking therapist but I think the more it went along, not sure if it's just because I ran out of clothes, but I just got used to wearing a bit more normal stuff and I feel a bit more comfortable in myself maybe" [Maya]*

Maya suggested that she ran out of formal clothes but explored this further and concluded that her inner confidence was reflected in her less formal clothing. Almost suggesting that her previous clothing became constraining and was too rigid within the softened approach in her clinical work. The ideal self, matched through clothing; with the current self on the inside matching that reflected on the outside. Thus, she did not run out of formal clothing, but this clothing no longer expressed her current self.

> *"I wear simple clothes so when my clothes are very simple you can put something to make the clothes a bit more special like earrings." [Nina]*

Nina preferred simple clothing but described how she can make it special e.g. by wearing earrings. She adhered to her simple clothing style, while essentially making herself feel unique through her own appearance. The clothing represented the self.

> *"I like my clothing to be as versatile in use as possible. I will buy trousers that I know I can use for work as well as for social situations. I buy t-shirts I can wear to social situations or for leisure time. I buy shoes I can wear most of the time." [Tamara]*

This quote echoed what a number of participants explained. For Tamara clothing needed to be transferable to a variety of occasions. Thus, clothing is bought to be used in other parts of Tamara's life. Transferability is a very practical element of congruence. Participants do not necessarily distinguish between clothing for their private and professional lives. There is the potential that one morphs into another and while it is difficult to say where one starts and another finishes, it is a spectrum with some garments belonging to both lives, while others are exclusively for one or the other.

To conclude the subthemes of looking at what lies beneath our clothes, participants discussed the importance our attire has in the possible facilitation of the therapeutic relationship. Moreover, attire allows for a state of congruence with the inner self, while enabling different parts of one's life to come together in the transferability of separate garments. Being congruent is being more believable and when we are believed we are more likely to establish a good working relationship with clients. After all, counselling psychology is about the quality of the therapeutic relationship.

4. 3. 3 'The clients See What They See'

For the participants, clothing played an important role in developing the therapeutic relationship. Equally, CoPs understood that the intent of their attire may be misread based on clients' experiences; valuing individual experiences of the world and therapeutic processes.

> *"What I wear, what that represents in my mind would be quite naturally utterly different to what it would represent in someone else's mind. To some extent it doesn't really matter what it represents in my mind actually. (...) I would say that what the client sees is what the client sees. (…) I think what I am trying to say is that what it represents in a client's mind is going to move back and forth quite naturally… erm you know there are times when I can be the good object uh benign helpful figure who can be helpful to them and there are times when I can be a frustrating figure that's not available at the end of session, that kind of thing and um and a figure that will*

> *not step outside of a particular type of relationship and that can be completely frustrating and some patients at times, I think, spend a great deal of time trying in their own minds to get to know who they think you are… of course one of the ways they do that is to look at what you wear and of course they make huge assumptions about who you are based on what you wear" [Daniel]*

Daniel clearly discriminated between the meaning of his clothing for clients and for himself. He broadened it by explaining that clients perceive us in a way that fits them and that it should be expected. Daniel essentially talked about projection, when clients may be attributing their own repressed thoughts, emotions or characteristics to others, namely their practitioner. However, sometimes, projection means that clients assume that everyone else is the same as them. As therapists, we create a safe space for clients to project onto us. However, clients engage in observing the practitioner. Based on very limited information about the practitioner, clients will read into clothing to build an image of us. They will imagine the practitioner to be whatever they need the practitioner to become. Through assumptions based on our visual presentation, clients may fantasise about their therapist.

> *"clients will notice what is important for them and they will create an image of me in their own mind. I cannot stop them, you know, I cannot stop them forming impressions of me. but I think … I think, I can be consistent in my beliefs, my styles and, and approach to them while minimising, you know, the wrong messages." [Tamara]*

As a practitioner, Tamara understood that she cannot stop people from forming impressions about her, but she can support the process by adhering to her clothing style. Tamara echoed the notion of clients building an image of their therapist based on their clothing, thus the psycholoigst's role is to minimise distractions. CoPs are inevitably observed but manage the available information for observation through appearance. We can then see that clothing holds the ability to manipulate impressions in our favour. Thus, as Tamara implied, through consistency we minimise the wrong messages. However, it inevitably leads to the question: what are these wrong messages? Perhaps for Tamara, the answer lies in exploring the right messages, such as the importance of consistency.

> *"Really, I sort of treat it [attire] as a non-issue and that you know it is obviously there and uh it would make a different impression on different clients um for some it is very very important, I think 'um oh here's somebody who knows what they are talking about because they been doing it for a long time'." [David]*

While David did not perceive attire to be an important aspect in therapy, he anticipated that not all clients perceive his clothing in the same way. He acknowledged that attire is ever present in the sessions. While clothing can give certain impressions, he hoped he conveyed the message of his confidence in his capability of supporting clients. His claim that he treats it as a non-issue may be more to do with presentation of the said confidence.

> *"I guess it [clothing] might say different things to different people ... and some people wouldn't really notice it (...) so I am thinking of some younger people, people on the younger end of the continuum of what I see. It may be completely unremarkable whereas older people might think oh that's a little bit conventional." [Aidan]*

Aidan took it even further, when he introduced another important aspect of our clothing. As previously observed, clothing may be perceived differently by different people but according to Aidan, some clients may not even notice it, perhaps due to holding their own stress during sessions. Despite that, even being unremarkable holds the potential for being understood by the clients in a specific way. Furthermore, he suggested that people within the same age group, may share similar opinions on clothing.

As attire is ever present, the participants used their clothing to convey important messages about themselves such as being relatable, calm, capable of delivering therapy and holding clients' distress. However, this does not mean clients will read them as such, because clients will see what they see for a variety of reasons. They are individuals and will notice what is important to them. Sometimes not noticing practitioner's clothing is equally as important in conveying these messages.

5. DISCUSSION

This chapter seeks to locate findings within existing research and discuss the implications of the study for counselling psychology. The strengths and limitations of the study will be critically evaluated, and further research considered. The chapter will conclude in a more reflective tone.

5.1 Links with Existing Research

It has been discussed elsewhere (see section 1.10) that practitioners' experiences of attire are an under-researched topic. To my knowledge, only my previous small research project (Henzelova, 2015) focuses on the clinician's experience of clothing, as most of the research found within the helping profession concentrates on client preferences and experiences (e.g. Stillman & Resnick, 1972; Hubble & Gelso, 1978; King, 2016). Nevertheless, the developed themes of practitioners' views on attire will be examined in relation to the 'next best' available literature that informed the development of my research questions.

The '*Shall We Talk About Attire*?' theme illustrated the potential importance the topic holds for individuals and answers the research question: 'How is discussion about attire viewed by counselling psychologists?'. Formulating this theme name as a question was deliberate, aimed at capturing both ambivalence and the fluctuation of interest in the subject matter. The analysis showed that participants spoke about attire in a way that highlighted both interest and hesitation in treating the topic as worthy of discussion, problematisation and research. The conflicting messages clustered around the need to discuss attire with regards to clinical practice, but that there is a lack of the structured opportunity to do so. Firstly, the participants felt the topic to be too basic or trivial to research, but nonetheless, they agreed to be interviewed and used this time to consider the topic; inevitably exemplifying the tension of the triviality of the exercise and need to discuss attire, whilst simultaneously reflecting the 'value conflict' (Strawbridge & Woolfe, 2003, p.6) in counselling psychology. Ambivalence was also displayed by participants conveying a 'common sense' approach to resolve the attire issues. Yet self-reflection, which is understood by Hammersley (2003) as a form of knowledge, based on awareness and

curiosity about one's own experiencing, was required to identify and resolve the problematic areas. Also, many were open to in-depth discussion about attire and contemplated whether it is possible to resolve the issue of attire definitively but recognised the lack of dedicated space for this to take place.

Secondly, the fluctuation of interest was signified by the daily engagement with clothing, that was not always problematic. In addition, as Woodward (2005) indicated, attire is visible to others, but assembling an outfit is largely an intimate act and participants found it difficult to clearly describe the decision processes involved. Whilst attire is an important part of visual presentation for some professions (Haynes, 2012), CoPs struggled to discuss it as a single element of the self in clinical work, possibly because good therapy outcomes are achieved by a combination of factors and dynamics (Sexton, 2007). Thus, the interviews clearly brought attire to the participants' consciousness and revealed the lack of directed discussion. By the same token, participants were uncertain about the appropriate proceedings to enable this dialogue. In the current research, attire reflects a constant presence of conflicting propensities which are never fully resolved, whilst at the same time representing a transitory balance between social norms and personal preferences in appearance. As the first theme '*Shall We Talk About Attire*?' was further developed, it substantiated its importance as a research topic through the lived experience, views and complexity of clothing practices. When considering the research question: 'How is discussion about attire viewed by counselling psychologists?', it becomes clear that discussion about clothing holds fluctuating importance; being rich in conflicting and ambivalent experiences which may, at times, require exploration.

Ambady and Rosenthal (1992) established that people can form instantaneous but accurate conclusions from the shortest interactions, based on verbal as well as non-verbal cues, thus the theme: 'Y*ou Need to Look the Part'* quickly became the focus of the analysis, as it represented the practicalities of attire choices. Being a psychologist is a high-status job (Lippa, Preston & Penner, 2014) and CoPs are seen as experts who meet clients in need of a particular set of skills (Woolfe, 2016). Yet participants turned to other high-status professions to approximate what might be thought of as a 'uniform' for CoPs: a uniform which would reflect professionalism, a unique meeting point and the relationship between psychologist and client. Firstly, business-smart attire was considered preferential in high-status jobs, in order to enhance the sense of professionalism and credibility within accounting and law (e.g. Haynes, 2012), but also in medical settings where patients preferred smartly dressed physiotherapists (Mercer et al. 2008). Howlett et al. (2013) established that

men wearing tailored, rather than off-the-peg suits, were rated positively on confidence, salary and flexibility, but not on trustworthiness. Whilst the job of CoPs might be perceived as high-status, the work is collaborative, and trustworthiness is an essential part of therapeutic contact. This would account for the participants in this research rejecting power-dressing within the *'Not Too Smart, Not Too Casual'* subtheme.

Other extremes were also excluded, for example not too casual, not too sexualised and not too conspicuous. Existing research on clients' preferences for casual or professional attire is equivocal, but it transpired in my previous research (Henzelova, 2015) that the casual vs smart attire, is best thought of as a continuum, rather than a dichotomy. In research, casual clothing was preferred by students (Damon et al., 2010), but was perceived as a sign of counsellors' inexpertness elsewhere (Schmidt & Strong, 1976). In Kerr and Dell's (1976) research, professional attire was connected to perceived expertise, but casual clothing did not link with inexpertness. Indeed, the practitioners in this research echoed the above as they identified clothing which was considered either too casual or smart as inappropriate for sessions. It was noted that in this research, evoking sexualised feelings through clothing was only a problem for female participants. Indeed, Glick et al., (2005) suggested that corresponding sexualised clothing for professional men does not exist. The demands on attire and presentation for females in a work environment have been identified as far greater and more difficult to navigate than those for men (Howlett et al., 2015). This can possibly be explained through the theory of sexual objectification, where women are perceived to be an object existing for male sexual desires as identified by Frederickson et al. (1998). Tiggemann and Andrew (2012) concluded that attire induced self-objectification impacted on the women's emotional experiences. Thus, female participants in this research aimed to avoid objectification by adhering to a professional image, through clothing that could not be easily sexualised. Also, by doing so, they avoided negative feelings about themselves, essentially managing their professional role and distractions.

The subtheme: *'Do Not Distract'* was based on the perception of distractions through clothing as inviting speculation about CoPs, moving the practitioner, rather than the client, into the focus of the sessions and preventing clients from engaging with therapeutic processes. This notion echoed King's (2016) conclusions that participants less distracted by the therapist' appearance, were able to engage with their own material better. Subsequently, participants perceived distractions as a form of self-disclosure, as clothing reflects our inner processes, identity and attitude to clothing (Woodward, 2005). While it is known that verbal disclosure can, at times, impinge on therapeutic boundaries and the therapist's perceived

credibility (Audet, 2011), participants were noticeably aware that some clothing has the potential to divert the client's attention and consequently impact on the quality of the therapeutic relationship. It needs to be said that it is almost impossible to prevent disclosure through clothing. However, the CoPs' role is to keep the focus on the client, something that can be facilitated through non-distracting attire. Also, the therapists applied the same rule of 'no distraction' onto themselves as they often choose attire that was comfortable, to manage self-distractions and to ensure that they were fully present during the sessions.

The fact that that participants 'look the part' for themselves as well as for their clients, resonated with an observation by Woodward (2005) that attire needs to be adequate for the wearer, as well as the occasion. The clothing style that fitted with the unwritten rules of what a therapist should look like was identified as smart-casual, which was difficult to pinpoint and translate into a specific set of clothes. Based on this data set, it is safe to argue that smart-casual meant avoiding extremes (i.e. the 'not too' caveats discussed above), essentially delineating identities which are unbefitting to the practitioners. This is similar to Freitas et al. (1997), who clarified that people also define their identity through definition of who they are not. Individually, participants described their tendency to wear certain style of clothing and specific garments; whereby they essentially created an individual, relatively fixed professional uniform, which was dependent on their broader clothing style. Thus, each practitioner created uniform that enabled them to define their professional identity and appear consistent, as preferred by the clients in King's research (2016). With this in mind, it is likely that practitioners use *'uniforms'* in their clinical work to visually present the self which fits both the occasion and their own self-perception. However, as a group, they struggled to define attire that would clearly distinguish CoPs from other professions or identify them as members of a certain profession, as it is in medicine or law. The second theme *'You Need to Look the Part'* can also be connected to emotional regulation (Fonagy & Allison, 2011) through mentalisation. Mentalisation was strongly present across the analysis. Psychologist's clothing is shared with clients as it is immediately visible to them. Based on the insight CoPs have into both their own and their clients' states of mind, CoPs sought to avoid venturing into extremes of clothing practices in order to ensure the emotional regulation of their clients. CoPs' clothing, being immediately visible to clients, was understood as a source of self-disclosure. Thus, awareness of self-presentation as the visible clothed self, minimises negative emotions which can develop during therapeutic contact. Clothing, at times, plays an important role. Firstly, in not distracting CoPs from working with the client, but more importantly in not distracting the clients from this work. Clothing

can become a facilitator of the process by not being distractive. If attire becomes distractive for the practitioner, this experience is remembered, and clothing adjusted in the future. If a psychologist's attire becomes problematic for the client and this is expressed, it has the potential to be converted into a source of information about the client's experiences, beliefs and views, and to facilitate the healing process.

The main contribution of the second theme 'Y*ou Need to Look the Part'* is to enable readers to observe the complex negotiations of attire within the helping professions. This theme answers the following research question: 'How do counselling psychologists view their clothing practices?'. Visual presentations are conveyed by creating a personal clothing style that is subtly evaluated by the individual to match the most current self. Comparable to the research by Clarke and Turner (2007), where gay men had a considerable freedom to express themselves via their appearance but were expected to conform to the expectations within the community; it appears that counselling psychology offers some freedom in visual presentation, as long as the restrictions of *'looking the part'* are adhered to. Thus, being a counselling psychologist and working with people in a vulnerable position, creates a level of responsibility that is met through implicit constraints, in order to 'fit the image' of a helping professional. The practitioners' responsibility is to fulfil the expectations of putting clients' needs first, not distracting clients from deeply intimate work and keeping the focus on their issues. Despite these existing constraints, one advantage is quite apparent, namely the space in between the boundaries; the wide spectrum of garments, clothing and flexibility which make the current visual presentation authentic.

The two themes: 'Y*ou Need to Look the Part'* and '*Underneath Our Clothes'* answer the following research question: 'What factors influence the way counselling psychologists dress for their job?' through the concept of 'enclothed cognition'. The concept was developed by Adam and Galinsky (2012), where clothes convey symbolic meaning to the wearer, which is activated by wearing them. Based on Pine's (2014) research, where participants wearing superman T-shirt felt different to those wearing a plain t-shirt or their own clothes; it is possible to conclude that participants in the current study used their attire in a similar way. As such, adhering to the rules and developing a uniform consistent clothing style, has the potential to hold the symbolic meaning of being a congruent practitioner with certain skills, behaviours and cognitive processes, which are activated by wearing such attire. Enclothed cognition, a cognitive psychology concept, can be explored within the psychodynamic paradigm. It goes beyond the language of specific garments for observers. Clothing holds highly subjective symbolic meaning for CoPs too. Consequently, clothing

becomes symbols read subconsciously by clients and possibly more consciously by CoPs about availability, state of mind or attention. However, it is important to reflect on the clothed practitioner as being a part of a dynamic process. It is constantly observed, constructed and shifted through external reactions and internal first-person experiences to select the current preferred clothing mode or style. It can also be understood as a two-way street. CoPs do not wear clothing with symbolic meaning that does not suit the role. Equally, they choose clothing that they believe will make them more approachable, relatable or warm as established in my previous research (Henzelova, 2015). Thus, CoPs attribute a certain symbolic meaning to their clothing, that may potentially hold cues for them to behave in a specific way, similar to Frank and Gilovich's (1988) research findings linking black uniforms and increase in aggression in contact sports.

The third theme '*Underneath Our Clothes'* represents the professionalism and humanistic values of counselling psychology interwoven with self-presentation and the psychodynamic paradigm. It largely answers the research question developed during process of initial analysis: 'What do counselling psychologists understand about the role of attire in professional practice?' The findings documented the role of attire far beyond that of just being dressed for sessions. Clothing matters in the therapeutic relationship as CoPs are clothed during contact with their clients. Whether therapists are aware of it or not, they, as many other people, have certain expectations of how they want to be perceived. Thus, they adjust their appearance, including clothing, to fulfil this expectation and create harmony between the ideal and presented self.

The theme supports the notion of attire as being consciously used to influence the therapeutic relationship and build up the image of a helping professional. In addition, clothing enables congruent self-presentation. Thus, CoPs draw heavily on their self-reflections, past experiences and empathy to evaluate their clothing practices in order to become better practitioners (Jennings & Skovholt, 1999). The analysis shifted from negotiation of visible clothing practices to teasing out underlying forces and relational dynamics. The findings accentuate the importance of the therapeutic relationship as one of the hallmarks of counselling psychology, explored in a number of papers (e.g. BPS, 2006; Strawbridge & Woolfe, 2006; Orlans & Van Scoyoc, 2009). Clothing became a subtle mean of minimising a sense of otherness in the therapeutic relationship, by managing ambiguity, and consequently enhancing the therapeutic relationship. As Milton (2016) stressed that a good therapeutic rapport is important to achieve change, the emphasis on the therapeutic relationship was evident, throughout the analysis. The participants took responsibility for the

therapeutic relationship and used their appearance to impact on the quality of the therapeutic rapport. Most importantly, they dressed in a way that was less likely to impact negatively on the therapeutic relationship, and to suit a diverse clientele.

The second subtheme: *'To Be as Congruent as We Can',* illustrated the importance of congruence in contact with clients, highlighting the strong connections of counselling psychology to a humanistic approach, discussed by a number of scholars (e.g. Strawbridge & Woolfe, 2003; Orlans & Van Scoyoc, 2009). As Gillon (2007) explained, congruence is a state of being in therapeutic relationships, where the therapist is aware of their feelings and these are clearly and appropriately communicated to the client. In a person-centred approach the more congruent the therapist is in the relationship with the client, the better the chances of facilitating therapeutic change and clients' personal growth. In the presented research, congruence referred to visual presentations corresponding with the participants' understanding of their counselling psychologist role and at the same time, about the therapist's ability to be authentic during contact. Regardless of specific garments, participants demonstrated that attire was experienced as a match between the self and the self that was communicated to clients, signifying Barnard's (2002) views of attire being a form of non-verbal communication. The role of attire was to manage the individual and professional self-presentations in a manner that was cohesive, congruent and evoked safety. The transferability of individual garments between personal and professional lives, appeared to be an important element of congruence for many participants. It can be understood as representing congruence between different identities.

The subtheme *'The Clients See What They See'* links clients' past experiences and CoPs' attire and could be explained through symbolic meanings and transference; where CoPs understood that regardless of their best intentions, clients may react to the reality-based trigger of clothing (Levy & Scala, 2012). Equally, CoPs are aware that some symbolic meaning can be understood more universally than others but are prepared to influence this by *'looking the part'*. From the practitioners' point of view, the subtheme valued the power of individuals' transferential feelings and symbolic meaning present in the therapeutic room. It is understood as a reminiscence of early relationships with others, objects and within the self (Jacobs, 2010); thus, if communicated to CoPs, these can become an important source of information about client's inner experiences and processes. Correspondingly, this could explain the inconsistent findings across research on clients' preferences of the therapist' attire as presented earlier (see chapter 1.9) and the results of King's (2016) research, that

established that clients actively observe their therapists and search for cues of safety and inconsistencies in appearance.

The main contribution of the third theme *'Underneath Our Clothes'* is demonstrated in championing and appreciating the clients' subjectivity; 'to respect first person accounts as valid in their own terms' (BPS, 2006, p. 1), experiencing that which reflects the client's past (McLeod, 2003b) and engaging with the client as a completely unique human being, who cannot be reduced to a scientific object (Cooper, 2009). However, the story of this research goes even further, as clothing can potentially enable or stimulate projective identification (Waska, 1999) during the sessions, in informing the therapeutic process and any subsequent changes. Based on the Kleinian projective identification, attire can play a role in communication as well as being a defence mechanism for CoPs. By creating the sense of congruence, the practitioner distances themselves from the unwanted parts of identity, or those that are undesirable in the clinical work. Additionally, as Waska (1999) explained, inducing feelings of congruence in clients can be a form of communication used to facilitate therapeutic change.

It is important to briefly summarise the outcomes to fulfil the main aim of the research in answering the main research question: 'How do counselling psychologists view and make sense of their attire in clinical work?'. CoPs described ambiguity about attire discussion. Additionally, CoPs reported that there were practicalities involved in choosing attire for therapeutic settings, such as adhering to implicit rules. However, the main contribution of the research lies in the understanding that CoPs consider their attire far beyond the obvious and visible, in line with the psychodynamic and humanistic paradigms of counselling psychology.

5.2 Implications for Counselling Psychology

Interest in research participation may be a consolidating point for those who argue that attire research is important (e.g. Entwistle & Wilson, 2001; Barnard, 2002; Woodward, 2005). The participants expressed uncertainty about the importance of the focus on their own attire, yet they volunteered to be interviewed and the interviews ran for at least 45 minutes each; signifying that the topic has some interest and relevance for them. Possibly, this makes it less exciting to research, as other issues in counselling psychology seem more important and worthier of scholarly attention, for example the therapeutic relationship (e.g. Milton, 2016), professional development (e.g. Hammersley, 2003), skills (e.g. Jennings & Skovholt,

1999) or the location of counselling psychologists within the NHS (e.g. Woolfe, 2016). Furthermore, the interest in research participation is an indicator of the topic being relevant and worthy of research (Tracy, 2010), validating the need to focus on CoPs' views on attire which have been omitted in published literature. In a broader sense, the topic can be moved beyond the boundaries of counselling psychology to recognise the probable strains that trainees, practitioners and supervisors in other mental health professions may experience during their attempts to forge a 'therapeutic self'.

The findings are a tentative invitation to discuss CoPs' professional attire, whilst also signifying an ambivalence surrounding the topic. Whereas choosing clothes and getting dressed is a regular occurrence, for the majority of people it is not a daily struggle. The findings of the study suggest that clothing in therapeutic contact is less about a fashion statement and more about the intersectionality of personal and professional identity, managed through attire. The analysis illustrated that participants rely on assumptions in the absence of discussion on how to dress for practice. So, where might those discussions most fruitfully take place?

Questions about appropriate attire, are often satisfactorily resolved through self-reflection and self-awareness, as it is an important aspect of being a Counselling Psychologist (e.g. Woolfe, 2016). Conversely, the BPS requires the CoPs to recognise their own limitations in self-reflection as per ethical code (BPS, 2018) and subsequently participants reported taking the issue to supervision or peer support to facilitate the process of recognising and challenging their beliefs and biases (Parritt, 2016). To minimise the struggle and maximise reflexivity, the topic can be included in supervision and also in teaching during training. One of the requirements during training in Counselling Psychology is to be in personal therapy. Various themes and topics are brought up during training to enable trainees to become aware of their blind spots, however, appearance is not usually one of them. Thus, personal therapy may be an appropriate space to explore one's relationship with clothing, as we are encouraged to explore our relationship for example with money (Mearns & Thorne, 2007). Another option would be a discussion within academic lectures. Many training programs include a module similar to 'Professional Issues in Counselling Psychology' (UWE, 2018), where attire and its importance, could be explored further. The argument to include the topic within teaching curricula, is supported by the theme *'Underneath Our Clothes'*, which captured the importance of congruence and its potential to influence therapeutic rapport. The therapeutic relationship is a building block of the therapeutic process in achieving changes for the client. The relational aspect of clothing and

its ability to support congruence has been recognised as important, consequently including attire in teaching is well-placed. Furthermore, participants explained, that clothing reflects their journey to becoming counselling psychologists today. Perhaps, within the module 'Personal and Professional Development' (UWE, 2018) the topic of attire may be explored to facilitate trainees' personal and professional growth. Thus, the presented study can inform the teaching of counselling psychology.

The findings are parallel with the development of counselling psychology. Pugh and Coyle (2000) argued that initially counselling psychology was constructed using comparisons to other well-established professions, such as clinical psychology, with attempts to define counselling psychology as a reputable applied science. Similarly, participants first compared their attire to those professions to which they were exposed like psychiatrists, clinical psychologists and psychotherapists. Later, participants moved on to descriptions of their own clothing styles – individual *'uniforms'*- that may represent the focus of counselling psychology on its uniqueness and finding its voice (Orlans & Van Scoyoc, 2009). Better yet, the fact that participants did not agree on a general outfit, encompasses the CoPs' professional identity as maverick with a 'a high degree of [professional] freedom' (Moore & Rae, 2009, p. 387). The varying paradigms in Counselling Psychology reflect its theoretical flexibility and perhaps, this attracts practitioners from diverse backgrounds; consequently, producing the wide spectrum of 'appropriate' attire as reported through the findings of the presented research. Indeed, some participants explicitly said that their clothing evolved in tandem with their therapeutic competences, aligning the professional and personal identities. Thus, attire can be understood as shifting together with professional and personal development; a visual representation of one's current identity, that is presentable to the wider world.

A further implication is that the presented thesis has the potential to transfer the findings into related professions, such as counselling, schools of psychotherapy, clinical psychology and social work. The literature review was dedicated to existing research and literature from a variety of vocations. It is reasonable to expect that attire in other helping professions is also rarely considered. The commonalities such as individual support, the need to establish rapport, continuing professional development and the likely exposure to dress codes suggest the findings of this study are applicable to other helping professions. The implications focus on the stimulation of deliberation, as well as self-reflection and possibly further research.

Nevertheless, reading Cooper's (2009) suggestions regarding the future orientation of counselling psychology, this particular thesis fulfils at least two of them; becoming more responsive practitioners through the enhancement of understanding of our own implementation in therapy settings and also, developing an evidence base. Overall, therapy practitioners represent the profession through professional identity, which is instantaneously observable by others through attire choices. Equally, attire represents the individual practitioner. As interest in clothing has historically been perceived as frivolous, my research bridges the gap between everyday decisions taken by practitioners and the values and principles of CoP. Echoing participants' views that there is not a single right answer to the question of clothing in therapy rooms, this research offers the next best option: up-to-date research and a narrowing of the gap in literature. The fashion industry grows exponentially and so does fashion-focused research. Thus, as scientist-practitioners we ought to maintain current knowledge, with research based in practice and regularly explore our own experiences, including our clothing.

5.3 The Consideration of Quality in Qualitative Research

It is important to acknowledge some strengths and limitations of the study in order to demonstrate the quality of the project and consider ways in which it could be improved.

The topic is original and embedded in professional practice (Kasket, 2016) with a sample adequate for a professional doctorate (Terry, Hayfield, Clarke & Braun, 2017). Six participants were recruited through personal contacts and connections. It may be questionable, whether participants recruited through my personal networks were interested in the topic or felt that they ought to help for one reason or another. The interviewing of acquaintances can present a number of ethical implications, for example interviewees may not feel comfortable with declining the interview or with disclosing sensitive information during the interview (Magnusson & Marecek, 2015). However, the fact that the topic did not necessitate the disclosure of sensitive information and robust recruitment procedures were followed, lends support to the rationale of allowing personal contacts to be included in the sample.

The research design itself is important when exploring the topic of attire. Using face to face and Skype interviews, as opposed to another data collection strategy (i.e. qualitative surveys, story-completion tasks, focus groups, e-mail interviews), allowed me to probe in depth and explore the topic co-operatively with the participants. Using TA allowed for

epistemological flexibility that was necessary to develop a priori themes within the novel topic of attire in counselling psychology. Furthermore, when assessing the quality of qualitative research, my own subjectivity was considered with regard to its impact on the choice of method and analysis, as well as the dissemination of results. The research was driven by my personal interests in the topic, which Tracy (2010) deemed to be an important factor in pursuing a quality in research. In Chapter 3, I reflected on my own assumptions on attire as required by qualitative research (e.g. Braun & Clarke, 2006; Lorelli et al., 2017; Clarke & Braun, 2018), and rather than bracketing these off, I used them to guide me through the analytical process and question the developed analysis at every stage of the process. Thus, as a scientist-practitioner, I own the analysis as my personal take on the data.

A variety of data analysis methods were considered. My first piece of research in this area (Henzelova, 2015) used Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). IPA was rejected for the presented research as it is an idiographic methodology with a strong allegiance to the detailed analysis of lived experience (Smith, 2011). When the project was developing, it was unclear whether it would be possible to adhere to the predetermined hermeneutic framework of IPA, and TA offered me the theoretical flexibility that allowed for the identification of common themes. IPA necessitates clear bracketing of the researcher's own assumptions and experiences when approaching the data. Furthermore, IPA would require a close focus on the individual and unique characteristics of each participant, whilst paying attention to their gender, sexuality, and age, as well as other characteristics, which would have cast their interviews in a different light. TA allows for a step back and the exploration of patterns and their underlying concepts in the whole data-set, as well as the reconnection with existing literature and knowledge. Narrative analysis (NA) was also considered; however, this proved to be too far from my main focus on CoPs' understanding of the issue of attire.

According to Tracy (2010) and Kasket (2016) quality is also judged on providing details of ethical considerations and procedures, that were discussed in the methodology chapter. The study was rigorously designed. I engaged with the limited literature on attire from a broad background (e.g. Entwistle, 2000; Rumsey & Harcourt, 2005; Wales, 2012), as well as literature on TA (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2013; Clarke & Braun, 2018; Clarke, Braun & Hayfield, 2015; Terry, Hayfield, Clarke & Braun, 2017). Repeated refinement of the themes to encapsulate the story I wanted to tell about the data, was a laborious, although satisfying process. As discussed elsewhere, (see chapter 2.5) the interview was piloted with a peer and in a discussion with a group of colleagues; including questions from the interview

schedule. Piloting is an example of rigour and enabled me to reflect on hidden assumptions (Tracy, 2010) and develop my interview style in a safe environment. Peer piloting uncovered the usual issues of problematic interviewing; rigid adherence to the interview schedule, moving from topic to topic rather than being empathetic and use of leading questions, also my non-verbal communication was noticed and reflected on. However, the most important outcome of the pilot interview, was a need to tease out and explore relevant examples of problematic attire and attitudes. Further supervision and reflective diaries were employed regularly, to consider progress, as recommended by Lorelli et al. (2017). Also, the refinement of the research questions enabled a sharp analytical focus on the data. As discussed elsewhere (see 2.8), some research questions were developed during the analytical process and during close interaction with data.

Skype audio and video call technology allows for reaching participants who are located in regions where the researcher could not realistically travel (Lo Iacono, Symonds & Brown, 2016). It is an inherently cheaper and less time-consuming option, where logistics are more flexible and attainable by both parties. Lack of wholesome non-verbal clues is a prominent issue in Skype interviews, as the video is limited to the upper body and face, thus missing out on important body-posture expressions. However, Lo Iacono, Symonds nd Brown (2016) argued that this can be overcome by directing attention to shoulders, facial expressions, hand gestures and eye contact, in order to compensate. Furthermore, technology is improving at a speed that has not been seen before and while King and Horrocks (2010) discussed the unreliability of electronic devices, internet connection or poor quality of recording, today, these are rarely problematic. However, some differences between face-to-face and online interviews were considered by Deakin and Wakefield (2014). The authors suggested that building rapport may be problematic in internet-based interviews. In my experience of conducting the interviews, previous email and/or telephone conversations supported the relationship and the occasional loss of internet connection or poorer sound did not affect the quality of the rapport or interviews. In fact, prior to the interviews, communication was more frequent with those who opted for Skype interviews. Skype interviews restricted the view of the attire of both parties, something which is perhaps ironic given the topic of the research. However, the Skype participants often reflected on their clothing and described what they were wearing during the interviews. Thus, I concluded, that in this instance using online interviews with videos did not negatively impact on the quality of collected data.

Trustworthiness in qualitative research is defined as the disclosure of enough detail to demonstrate that data analysis was conducted in ‘a precise, consistent, and exhaustive manner, through recording, systematising, and disclosing the methods of analysis’ (Lorelli et al., 2017, p. 1). To do so, decisions on method, analysis and central organising concepts were detailed in the Method and Methodology chapter. Furthermore, Braun and Clarke’s (2013) ‘15-point checklist for good TA’ was used to assess the quality of the research. I believe I conducted both transparent and trustworthy research by providing enough detail for readers to evaluate it and to understand my rationale and process throughout the completion of my thesis.

5.4 Limitations and Further Research

The presented research included some shortcomings that necessitate acknowledgment. Due to the nature of the research project, previous knowledge of existing literature was part of the research registration and examination process, as both required a literature review. This was in stark contrast to the common understanding of inductive TA. However, in practice deductive and inductive TA or data driven vs theory driven TA are often used in combination (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Nonetheless, my interest in the topic inevitably conveyed my previous knowledge and understanding of the issue, long before the final analysis and the write-up. The impact of previous knowledge and private assumptions were dealt with in supervision and regular reflection via a reflective diary. I was reassured to know that subjectivity is welcomed in qualitative research completed through the prism of critical realism.

The particular demographic details can shed more light on the group of participants (see Tab 2.6.1). The age range (33-91) and years worked in private practice (1-19) suggest that the recruitment scope was wide and inclusive. This meant that older people could contribute, as they are often omitted from research dedicated to clothing (Twigg, 2009) and that the topic was of interest for the newly trained as well as for more experienced CoPs. Gender representation came as surprise to me as I expected very little interest from males. However, men contributed greatly to the development of all the themes. This could be an indication, that the topic of clothing may carry a certain seriousness for practitioners regardless of gender identity. Five participants identified as White British/Irish/Travellers and six as not, and I interpreted this as a reflection of diversity within counselling psychology, which values individualism. However, this would be too simplistic for

understanding diversity within the presented research. I would not like to minimise limited background diversity. In reality one participant identified as Black British/Caribbean/ African and one as Asian/ Asian British. The rest identified as white. This may be an important insight, as culturally-based clothing is an indicator of background, strengths of cultural ties and conceivably also of congruence. Perhaps, the current research was not as inclusive as I would have wanted it to be and did not appeal to those who regularly negotiate cultural clothing practices which are different to mainstream, western clothing. I focused on the Western understanding of clothing and attire. This was not to undermine or disregard the importance of other cultures, especially in Great Britain, but to accentuate that the society we live in is based on Western values and life principles. It is likely that aspects of other cultures and customs are regularly incorporated by today's society at both individual and global levels. The study's findings have limited transferability to counselling psychologists, or indeed other therapeutic practitioners, living and working in non-Western cultures and contexts.

Furthermore, the interview schedules could have been refined before the first interviews were carried out in order to ensure my confidence in pursuing the interview information. Secondly, perhaps, the interviews were focused too narrowly on attire in clinical practice, which could potentially obscure and omit information on clothing practises for other professional activities such as training or consultations. Diversity factors such as gender, religion, or disability and their impact on attire and clothing practises were not considered when analysing the data. Nor have I addressed possible effects of social class on clothing. On a more personal level, both conducting the research and writing in a foreign language has brought its own challenges.

This research identified some difficulties in understanding the clothing practices of therapeutic practitioners. It highlighted the lack of a typical professional representation that could be defined through attire, as it is, for example, in law or medicine. It almost seems that I came full circle and the next sensible step in the research may be to explore clients' experiences. I do not aim to minimise the importance of clients' experiences. I would urge future researchers to stay connected to the topic within themselves and the profession in order to promote the ethos of counselling psychology. Can attire help us to understand and define the profession?

As asserted previously, it may be that counselling psychology attracts people from a variety of cultural backgrounds, thus further research could explore the needs of those who negotiate a variety of cultural differences and congruence within these practices, in order to

address the omitted issues of diversity. It is conceivable that a feminist approach to the topic could yield additional understanding of clothing practices.

One direction that future research on the topic could take would be to observe CoPs' clothing practices rather than just verbalise their views within a short space of time. For example, researchers could observe shopping or the assembling of attire using those garments that may be closer to rejected extremes e.g. clothing with logos or more casual clothing. In addition, other topics such as self-disclosure through clothing or self-objectification in the sessions could be explored and data could be collected via surveys, written or photographic diaries, or indeed a combination of a number of data collection methods. Also, reflecting on childhood attire experiences and early relationship with clothing may be a fruitful avenue to pursue in further research of wearers' experiences and views.

6. CONCLUSIONS

This research highlights the importance of researching diverse attire practices, views and experiences in the helping professions. The literature review revealed a gap in therapy orientated research on clothing, attributing research into the perception of attire as superficial. Whilst it is known that clothing can impact on the wearer's mood and behaviours, existing research based on observers' preferences of therapists' attire yielded ambiguous outcomes. This research has contributed significantly to understanding counselling psychologists' views of their attire. The outcomes are also transferable to other related disciplines such as psychotherapy or counselling.

Throughout the interviews, ambivalence about the topic was almost tangible, where even those engaged in the interviews were uncertain of the importance of the topic; suggesting that attire is usually a non-issue, but undoubtedly, there is little support when it becomes an issue. It transpired that unwritten rules exist to help with the practicalities of attire choices, as individuals developed certain clothing styles. My research demonstrated the difficulty of the task to create a definitive guide to appropriate clothing but highlighted the need to explore the topic in more depth, for example, the value practitioners place on their clothes, conforming to perceived appropriate clothing, the sacrifice of individuality to uniforms and the process of transgression. Additionally, the findings clearly illustrate that practitioners consider their clothing in therapeutic contact as far beyond simply covering the naked body. Furthermore, on an individual level, attire is approached by considering the ethos of humanistic values and philosophy of counselling psychology, suggesting that being a counselling psychologist is an internalised identity, that guides the deliberation of professional issues. As such, perhaps the most salient implication of my study is to highlight the ways it can be explored within supervision and during counselling psychology training. The importance of this research lies in empowering practitioners to explore the topic of attire from their point of view and discuss it in the same way as any other pertinent area for delivering excellent therapeutic interventions.

I would like to end on a reflective note. What started as an observation of my own clothing style grew into a whole new topic. It was an ongoing process for four years; to use the dress parallel; I drew sketches, chose materials, cut the fabric, saw and arranged it to

create an appealing, original and innovative product, until it gained its current form – the thesis. It has been a roller-coaster of experiences, where I experimented with my own clothing. I noticed that my professional attire naturally spilled into my personal life, as my clothing became more modest and smart-casual for a variety of occasions outside of my professional life. I went through stages when I was uncertain of the project focus, methodology or even myself. During the development of the thesis, I felt alone, overwhelmed and at times I doubted the importance of the research. However, through academic and personal support I have been able to bring it to a close. In turn, I have become a more observant therapist. I notice clients' clothing and see it as cues about their wellbeing, as well as paying attention to my own clothing practices. I have never been interested in fashion, but, despite, this I have developed my own clothing style, which enhances my identity as a counselling psychologist. I am myself, I am congruent, and I am there for my clients; after all, even if I *'look the part'* they will *'see what they will see'*.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interview Schedule

Appendix B: Research Requests

Appendix C: Ethical Approval

Appendix D: Consent Form and Information for Participants

Appendix E: Example of Transcript and Coding – Participant F1

Appendix F: Example of Codes and Sections of Data

Appendix G: Example of a Candidate Theme

Appendix H: Defined and Refined Themes for Progression Exam

Appendix I: Research Article

Appendix A: Interview Schedule

Thematic Analysis of counselling psychologists' negotiation of their attire in private practice

The research question: How do counselling psychologists understand and negotiate their attire?

Opening questions

1. Clarify the information about the private practice and other employment if applicable. I have noticed that you are employed and have a private practice as well. May I ask what type of employment are you in? I would like to ask where is your private practice based? (home, offices, health centre).
2. I can see that you trained x years ago. What type of therapeutic modality were you trained in?
3. What has interested you in this research?

General Questions about Attire

4. What does clothes shopping mean to you?
5. What aspects of your attire are important for you?

General questions about attire of therapeutic practitioners and CoPs

6. What kind of expectations and assumptions about attire are you aware of?
7. Are you aware of any stereotypes about attire of therapeutic practitioners/ psychologists?
8. How do you think this applies to counselling psychologists? What do you think, makes it distinguishable from other therapeutic practitioners?
9. When meeting other counselling psychologists, have you ever thought to yourself, that their attire is (in)appropriate or notable? If so, can you recall any details? What made them to stand out for you?
10. When I was a child, I imagined that psychologists would wear a white coat and polished black shoes regardless their gender. As a child or teenager, do you remember, whether you had some ideas about what a psychologist should look like and what would they wear? If so, can you describe them?

Attire in private practice

11. Do you recall any discussions focused on CoPs' attire during your training?
12. Do you think your appearance altered during or after the training/ start of the private practice? What do you think influenced your professional appearance? (specific event/ experience/ role model/preferred style).
13. Can you recall someone, who's appearance impacted on the way you aim to visually present yourself to your clients and how?
14. How do you perceive influences of your profession on your day to day appearance? How do you assemble your outfit/ attire when seeing clients in private practice?
15. How does your today's outfit differ from what you would wear for work? Compare current outfit to outfit when seeing clients or when off/ in other job?
16. Which aspects of your appearance do you consider to be important when seeing clients in private practice? How does it impact on your professional appearance?
17. Is there anything that you are particularly aware of when choosing your attire for the private practice sessions? Is there anything particular you avoid or choose to wear when seeing clients? - Do you dress differently when you see your clients to when you are out and about/ in your other job/ role?
18. How do you manage your make-up/jewellery/ tattoos/ piercings in your sessions? Can you describe any specific situations when these were problematic? Were these helpful at some point in your private practice?
19. Is there any aspect of your apperance that you make a conscious effort to adjust for? (e.g. hair, glasses, make-up, body shape/size, religion, marital status, sexual preferences, sexual signal)
20. Has your appearance been ever commented on by clients or colleagues (including your body modifications or other parts of your presence)? Can you recall any details?
21. From all the has been discussed so far, how would you summarise your attire/appearance when seeing clients for one-to-one sessions?

Salience of Counselling Psychologist Identity

22. I am aware that you have years of experience as a CoP and potentially other trainings. When you look back at the interview, how salient was your identity as a CoP during this interview? Have you been shifting from a role to a role?

Closing question

23. Anything that you would like to tell me or add to this interview?

Appendix B: Research Requests

First research request:

Negotiation of attire of counselling psychologists in Private Practice.

By Martina Henzelova

As a Trainee Counselling Psychologist, I aim to explore understanding and perception of Counselling Psychologists' visual identities, thus how we visually present to our clients and how we understand it.

I am looking for fully trained Counselling Psychologists in private practice that would be willing to participate in completion of a short demographic questionnaire and interview either face-to-face in a location convenient to you or via Skype.

If you would like to participate in this study or would like to receive more information, please do not hesitate to contact me via phone 07807903764 or at Martina2.Henzelova@live.uwe.ac.uk .

This research has received ethical approval from the University of the West of England's Ethics Committee and is being supervised by Dr Miltos Hadjiosif.

Second Research Request:

Counselling Psychologists' Attire.

By Martina Henzelova

Would you like to share your insight or explore the topic of counselling psychologists' attire?

Please click the link below to watch the request for research participants in full.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dDMLdiSQroc&feature=youtu.be

If you are a fully trained Counselling Psychologist in private practice and you would like to participate or receive more information, please contact me via e-mail Martina2.Henzelova@live.uwe.ac.uk . Your participation is completely voluntary and will be kept confidential.

This research has received ethical approval from the University of the West of England's Ethics Committee as is being supervised by Dr Miltos Hadjiosif.

Appendix C: Ethical Approval

Faculty of Health & Applied Sciences
Glenside Campus
Blackberry Hill
Stapleton
Bristol BS16 1DD

Tel: 0117 328 1170

UWE REC REF No: HAS.16.06.170

2nd August 2016

Martina Henzelova
28 Longleat Avenue

Tuffley

Gloucester

Gloucestershire

GL4 0SG

Dear Martina

Application title: Thematic Analysis of counselling psychologists' negotiation of their visual identities in private practice

I am writing to confirm that the Faculty Research Ethics Committee are satisfied that you have addressed all the conditions relating to our previous letter sent on 14th July 2016 and the study has been given ethical approval to proceed.

Please note that any information sheets and consent forms should have the UWE logo. Further guidance is available on the web: https://intranet.uwe.ac.uk/tasks-guides/Guide/writing-and-creating-documents-in-the-uwe-bristol-brand

The following standard conditions also apply to all research given ethical approval by a UWE Research Ethics Committee:

1. You must notify the relevant UWE Research Ethics Committee in advance if you wish to make significant amendments to the original application: these include any changes to the study protocol which have an ethical dimension. Please note that any changes approved by an external research ethics committee must also be communicated to the relevant UWE committee. http://www1.uwe.ac.uk/research/researchethics/applyingforapproval.aspx

2. You must notify the University Research Ethics Committee if you terminate your research before completion;

3. You must notify the University Research Ethics Committee if there are any serious events or developments in the research that have an ethical dimension.

Please note: The UREC is required to monitor and audit the ethical conduct of research involving human participants, data and tissue conducted by academic staff, students and researchers. Your project may be selected for audit from the research projects submitted to and approved by the UREC and its committees.

We wish you well with your research.

Yours sincerely

Julie J Woodley

Dr Julie Woodley

Chair

Faculty Research Ethics Committee

c.c. Dr Miltiades Hadjiosif

Appendix D: Consent Form and Information for Participants

Counselling psychologists' negotiation of their attire

Consent Form

Thank you for agreeing to take part in the research 'Counselling psychologists' negotiation of their attire'.

My name is Martina Henzelova and I am a psychology postgraduate student in the Department of Health and Social Sciences, University of the West of England, Bristol. I am collecting this data for my research project.

My research is supervised by Dr Miltos Hadjiosif (for contact details, see p.3). He can be contacted if you have any queries about the research.

Before we begin I would like to emphasise that:

- your participation is entirely voluntary

- you are free to refuse to answer any question

- you are free to withdraw at any time [within the limits specified on the information sheet] without giving a reason.

You are also the 'expert'. There are no right or wrong answers and I am interested in everything you have to say.

Please sign this form to show that you have read the contents of this form and of the participant information sheet and you consent to take part in the research.

If you received this form via email, please type your name in CAPITALS, date it and email it back to the main researcher. Consequently, this will be followed by recorded verbal agreement. In case you would prefer a printed copy, please request this from the main researcher.

_____ (Signed)

_____ (Printed)

_____ (Date)

Please return the signed copy of this form to me.

This research has been approved by the Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC)

Counselling psychologists' negotiation of their visual presentations

Participant Information Sheet

Who are the researchers and what is the research about?

Thank you for your interest in this research. My name is Martina Henzelova and I am a psychology postgraduate student in the Department of Health and Social Sciences, University of the West of England, Bristol. My research is supervised by Dr Miltos Hadjiosif. (see below for his contact details).

This research will help us to better understand how counselling psychologists in private practice negotiate their visual identities.

You will get the opportunity to participate in a research project on an important social and psychological issue. Understanding of the topic will enable us to identify any needs for further training and raising awareness of the issues that can be identified.

What does participation involve?

You will be invited to an interview with the main researcher – Martina Henzelova. The interview can be conducted in your home/office or by arrangement this can be conducted via Skype and may take about 60 minutes. The information pack can be emailed to you or if required, this can be posted as a hard copy including a prepaid envelope for the return of the signed informed consent.

I am interested in the range of opinions and thoughts that people have. The interview will be focused on your understanding of visual identity. You will be asked to complete some *demographic questions* (see below, p.4). This is for me to gain a sense of who is taking part in the research. I would be grateful if you could answer a consent question, to confirm that you agree to participate, before beginning the interview.

Who can participate?

Any fully qualified Counselling Psychologist working in private practice, who is interested in taking part in this research.

How will the data be used?

The data will be anonymised (i.e., any information that can identify you will be removed) and analysed for my thesis. This means extracts from your interview responses may be quoted in my thesis and in any publications and presentations arising from the research. The demographic data for all of the participants will be compiled and included in my thesis and in any publications or presentations arising from the research. The information you provide will be treated confidentially and personally identifiable details will be stored separately from the data. The data will be stored in hard copies and electronic copies for twelve months after receiving the final marking. After that, these will be securely destroyed.

How do I withdraw from the research?

If you decide you want to withdraw from the research, *you do not need to give a reason*. Please contact me via email martina2.henzelova@live.uwe.ac.uk quoting the unique participant code that you can find in right top corner on all the provided hard copy sheets. Please note that there are certain points beyond which it will be impossible to withdraw from the research –

for instance, when I have submitted my thesis. Therefore, I strongly encourage you to contact me within 5 days from the date this form is signed.

Are there any risks involved?

No particular risks to you are anticipated when participating in this research; however, there is always a potential for research participation to raise uncomfortable and distressing issues. For this reason, information about some of the different resources which are available to you are provided below.

The following websites list refer to free or low cost counselling services as well as search for BACP accredited therapists:

http://www.southeastlondoncounselling.org.uk/lowcost.htm

http://www.bacp.co.uk/seeking_therapist/right_therapist.php

If you have any questions about this research, please contact my research supervisor:

Dr. Miltos Hadjiosif. He can be contacted at the Department of Health and Social Sciences, University of the West of England, Frenchay Campus, Coldharbour Lane, Bristol BS16 1QY

Tel: (0117) 9656261

Email: Miltos.Hadjiosif@uwe.ac.uk

This research has been approved by the Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC)

Counselling psychologists' negotiation of their visual presentations

Some questions about you

In order for me to learn about the range of people taking part in this research, I would be grateful if you could answer the following questions. All information provided is anonymous.

Please either write your answer in the space provided or underline your answer, or answers, that best apply to you.

Age	
Sex	• Male • Female • Prefer not to say
Working status	• Full time self-employed in private practice • Self-employed in private practice and employed • Semi-retired, still working in private practice • Other (please specify)_____
When did you qualify as a Counselling Psychologists? (Write a year)	
How many years do you work in private practice?	
How would you describe your racial/ethnic background? (e.g., White; Black; Mixed)	• White British/Irish/Travellers • White other background • Black / African / Caribbean / Black British • Asian / Asian British • Mixed / multiple ethnic groups • Other (please specify)_____

Thank you!

Appendix E: Example of Transcript and Coding – Participant F1

I: so that's quite interesting example, so what do you think, how important is your uhm.. appearance to you?	Neutral appearance – training
F1: (inhale) well, I was always trained, sorry my appearance to me? or my the importance to me in therapy?	
I: that's a good point, so let's start with you training. I guess, that's a good start.	Focus on clients, not disclose anything, be invisible
F1: I was always trained as a therapist to be as neutral as possible.	
so that you didn't in some way, overwhelmed the issues that the client was bringing. So I was always trained for example, that actually, wearing the wedding ring for example, I know I keep using this, was actually quite tricky.	Accessories give some information away – wedding ring – difficult
because it says something, or did then. perhaps it's less so now	Assumptions – congruence my personal life and professional work.
you know, it says something about you, it says I'm married, I'm in a relationship.	
aaaa, I don't know about you, but if, sometimes, you will meet people, who are dealing with their children and say "do you have children"	Clients will collect information about their therapist via observation, they can observe only attire and appearance,
and I, again, I don't respond to that either in a direct way, but they are clearly think it's important. I mean, there is nothing about me that says I have children, I don't wear an open locket with the pictures of my children, you know	
whereas the wedding ring is a clear statement, isn't it about, it says something about you	We make choices on what we wear and what we want/ do not want to disclose through our appearance
and I think, things like, I don't know, the, the, the style of dress you wear, is also.. it says something about you. But I'm a firm believer that the therapy .. a lot runs what the other people think of you, what the patient think of you, who they think you are, how do they think and relate to them,	Therapy runs on clients relating to us Identity markers = assumptions
I don't, I don't necessarily, think this is true for every style of therapy,	Clothing as self-disclosure – clients will build up a picture of you
you know, For example, if I'm, I am not doing it very often, but if I'm practising pure CBT approach, say, I think they're listening far more, to the (laughs), you know, to the kind of structures in the kind of medical, advise, educational sounding stuff, therefore, they	Different therapeutic approach = assumption different importance of clothing

might expect somebody to be professionally dressed or	CBT – professionally dressed Systemic - neutral
but you know, if , If, if they coming to me as a systemic therapist, I think how I appear to them is really important. so, again, I was trained to be as neutral as possible	
I, I've always thought very, uhm, not very carefully, but I've always thought carefully: "Don't be too smart, don't be too corporate". I've never ever worn a jacket, for example, for therapy	Exclusion –not too smart, not too corporate Jacket – off-putting- power struggle
because I think that can be off-putting.	Not too (what does it say) not dichotomous, yes or no – but fluid. One think can be ok once but too much on other occasion.
I think it disrupts the balance as a sort of power suggestion	
you know, about it, which I don't like. Equally, I never ever would dream, used to , wearing jeans. for therapy, now, I wear nothing but jeans	Jeans – shift of perspective, experience, 6:22 ish Jeans: moulding the professional identity, visual identity and personal and public identity?? Maturing as a CoP?
I: uhm. Ok. So, thinking about that jacket, I guess, you are talking about two different things. the power balance	
which obviously, is not what you wanna kind of.. uhm.. I guess you are saying that you don't want to be dominant	My own perception of professionalism = smartly dressed
F1: that doesn't sit comfortably with me (over I) to have some kind of expertise is different from power. I don't like the idea of the power imbalance in the therapy at all.	Being professional means smart clothing
I: uhm and then with the jeans, why you used to wear different trousers rather than jeans	
F1: I know exactly why it is, when I was younger, less experienced, I think I felt, that the way of,.. uh. Not necessarily portraying professionalism, but my feeling professionalism was quite smartly dressed .. not, not as jacket, not, it's too much, but quite smartly dressed. Now, I think I have other means of knowing that I'm a professional	Enclothed cognition **Not too** smartly, not jackets but quite smartly –fine balance
and acting in a professional way, so it doesn't matter about the jeans any more. They're irrelevant now. I think that's what it is.	Internalised sense of professionalism, freedom of clothing – clothing becomes irrelevant
I**: and do you think that you wearing jeans might empower some patients or clients?**	
F1: maybe. I think I depends on who they are, I think some people, love the idea.. often people say to me, ohh, you know, you're warm, you're approachable,	

or when I sat down with you I felt comfortable. All those kinds of things. Which for me I think, facilitates the kind of therapy I do.	My clothing reflects my approach
and if wearing pair of jeans contributes to that, then I'm I'm, happy to do it. but, but again, I wouldn't want to go too far the other way. I wouldn't want to go in, you know, flip-flops, or something	Fine balance – not too far – no flip-flops – illustrating the extremes
you know, there is a certain level of,.. you know… of, of a how you present yourself, professionally.	Level of professional presentation – how is this defined? Where do the rules come from?
I: uhm, so, what did the jeans used to say to people, or when you started, when you trained, initially,	Jeans = not professional enough, too casual, unexperienced, less serious
F1: too casual	Belief – serious attire communicates interest in clients
not professional, uhm… something about your levels of qualifications.	Attire boosted confidence
something important about how seriously…. You…. Took it, how much they can trust you, those kind of issues	
I: ok. How has that changed over the years?	I am less self-conscious, I have clients to look after, I am myself – CoP identity
F1: I think I'm much more confident about.. uhm.. knowing that I'm professional	Clothing - firstly used as a toll for re-assurance for CoP and clients that one is a professional.
it's a bit like, you know, it's a bit like learning to drive.	Initially clothing was a conscious issues, now it is not – only on occasions – compared to driving
when you first learn, you're conscious of every last uhm.. thing. clutch down, into gear, look into mirror. And now, you kinda you do exactly same thing, you're doing exactly same thing but in much more self-conscious way at the start. Now, you can get in the car and you've driven across the town and you don't even remember how you've got there. Right? Because , I , I , it's receded , I supposed anxiety about feeling professional and seeming professional it's receded because I know I can do it, you know?	Initial anxiety about seeming professional and feeling professional managed through clothing – no need for this crutch anymore
I know I can do it. so it's not about being conscious of jeans and stuff.	
I: ok. Uhm.. that's why, this is interesting. Do you think, when you walk on street, they could guess you profession?	

F1: (laughs) uhm… (2 seconds pause). I don't know (still smiling). (pause). No.	
I: what do you think they might think? What would they guess?	
F1: (5 seconds pause, inhaled deeply) I'm too scruffy. to be professional. So..that's Actually, just to go back to the jeans thing.	
you know, the jeans thing is partly two fingers up the whole thing as well. you know what? I can be scruffy, I can have my own style and I can still do this job (upbeat)	Maverick (handbook of CoP)
so if I go back to what people think, I think they think, I was, uhm, I don't know, you know, att… atttte. A lecturer, something scruffy, not a, not a health care professional.	Breaking rules (assumed rules)
which actually I don't really feel like I am. But something more casual,	Rebellion Clothing style does not impact my ability to do my job Some professions have uniforms
I: uhm, so, people would, I guess, generally, people don't really think about counselling psychologists as such	Not CoP= historically difficult to define
F1: no	
I: uh, do you think that , uhm, I guess the question is there are any assumptions around how we should look like?	
F1: well, there are aren't there? There are stereotypes.	
I: so you've already said about professionalism.	
F1: there are stereotypes. And when I was thinking about your research and the different aspects of visual identity clearly one of the things is (3 seconds pause) your (tentatively) self, your appearance, if you'd like.	Appearance – clothes, make-up, hair
hair, the amount of make-up you wear, the clothes you choose, that kind of thing. the other is also about .. you may ask about it later. There is also something about,	
Uhm.. the expressions almost that you project to somebody, the facial expressions, what you look, what you're saying, that's the visual identity to mine mind. uhm.. I don't want to swear on your tape, but I've been told, that my resting face is a resting bitch face (laughs)	Facial expressions
I always look really cross and angry, so I'm conscious of kinda, arranging my face when I'm in	

therapy, so it doesn't look frowny, but to go back to your point about "what do you think about the professionalism". (11 seconds pause). I think there is an assumption, I think this is where I am coming at this from. I think we generally have an assumption, maybe an assumption of mine, that the fat people are considered less intelligent.	Fat and lazy
somehow bit stupid.	Fat and less intelligent = stupid
and therefore	Fat person has no drive, does not make the right choices
somebody walking down the street, looking at me, wouldn't automatically think: "uhhh, she could be a professional person, she can't be that, she must work in a shop or you, know do something else".	
I: I', genuinely surprised by this	
F1: OK (smiles) perhaps it's a British thing.	
I: because I've never heard this, I've never heard, I've never came across this assumption about overweight people.	
F: I've read something recently, at the weekend, in the newspaper about it. fat and lazy is the thing, you see, because if you're lazy, and fat and lazy, oh no sorry, let's take the continuation.	
if you are fat, you must be lazy.	
because otherwise you'd do something about your weight, right? And if you're lazy, that means you don't have any kind of drive	
and if.. or, or, the intelligence to make the right choices for yourself	
I think, that's where it kind of arise	
I: so, I'm aware of fat and lazy, but I would not quite arrive on less intelligent, I guess. Uhm,do we need to balance that by our appearance? or what we wear or how we wear it?	
F1: (sniffs) How do you dress to look intelligent? (laughs). I do think there is a stereotype of, it's an old one, I think and it's different now. But, before, the profession of counselling psychology became established, there were, certainly in the UK, there were psychiatrists, and there were counsellors and psychiatrists, medical doctors usually men, and the counsellors were often, I'm saying this because I probably, am one, now, you know, women of a certain age, who wore caftans and crystals and had	Dress to appear intelligent Counselling Psychology background Psychiatry vs counselling – not defined

dreamcatchers and wore lots of floaty, ethnicky, kind of gear.	Counsellors – middle aged women, ethicky, floaty clothes, caftans – uniform – ultra casual (?)
and (2 seconds pause) I think I, I couldn't bear to be associated with .. that	
I: but that wouldn't be .. be who you are	Reflection on gender and age typically seen as counsellors – but we are CoP? Does a lay person understand the difference?
F1: no	
I: no… OK. So it's quite interesting how we moved from what specific garments mean for you, assumptions around appearance and I guess, it's not just about what we wear but actually about our bodies as well	
F1: yes, of course	
I: so it's quite an embodiment as well so when you meet other counselling psychologists or throughout your training or throughout supervision, has this ever been discussed? In a group or with other peers? What should I wear? How should I present myself?	
F: no, not that I recall. As I said, only, just brief things when we were training about being as neutral as possible, so you could.. (3seconds pause) not to think people, just not uhm… alienate people, I suppose.	
I: uhm,. So what did it mean for you? What did it used to mean for you to be neutral?	Training assumed that you know what it means to be neutral – short discussion
F: you mean how did I do it, what did I ..	
I: yeah, how did you understand that, how did you go about it?	What to wear, how to go about it
F1: (2 seconds pause) tss. Well, I would've never dreamt of wearing anything loud.	
brightly coloured, earth patterned, a bit, for therapy, maybe. Yeah, I'm not sure I'd wear orange into the therapy, even now.	
black, yes. Of course	Neutral - Defined by exclusion
(laughs) yes, anyway. Black, neutral things, I would never wear anything with patterns,	
just, just something quite, you know, nothing that would draw attention.	Some colours are acceptable, some are not
I: so it's black, any other colours? You obviously wear darker colours.	Some patterns are acceptable, some are not

F1: navy, white, dark beige, dark green, plain, plain things. And nothing, and certainly nothing low cut or short on my legs	Black became neutral – is black colour neutral?
nothing like that… and that's not only because I wouldn't wear that because of my shape. I wouldn't wear that even if I wear size 8, I wouldn't. this is got… I think it's really important that as a therapist, you don't draw attention to anything about yourself.	Not drawing attention to the self. Some clothing has ability to do that – low cut, short on legs, loud colours Therapist's responsibility not to draw attention to the self
I: and you're saying, when I did the previous research, this was coming through as kind of not giving out the wrong message.	
so what messages are you trying to give off? What do you, what would you say? F1: I think that you are not the focus. I think that's important. the way I do it anyway.	
uhm, that you are not the distraction, that it's not about you. Actually	Ensure that the client is the focus/ the most important
it's the client or the patient that's the most important	
I: Have anyone ever, has any client ever uhm. talked about what you wear? F1: yes	
very occasionally, not very occasionally, every five weeks I get my hair done and when they colour my hair, they straighten it and I very occasionally see somebody with straight hair and I look quite different with straightened hair. And people will comment. And they'll usually say (in high pitch voice): "ohh it looks lovely, it suits you" and I don't like it. not because I don't like, I don't mind if my friends say that my hair looks nice, but I think in that situation I really don't like when the focus of the… because it becomes something different than… I think the work becomes different.	Clients are humans and will comment on drastic changes – curly vs straight hair OK for friends to notice, not clients Distraction impacts on the therapeutic work
I: because you are not consistent?	
F1: yeah, maybe. I think, what it does is when something about you, which is noteworthy, which is noticeable, whether it's your weight, what you're wearing or you know anything about you and that can include, when I go back to the colour thing, the facial expressions. It can include looking tired or looking pale, you know, something like that you know. I think it invites speculations about you.	We should be invisible, not noticeable, not distractive as it invites speculations.

Which, as I say, if we were psychodynamic psychotherapists, then yes, of course, you want that countertransference stuff going on. The way I work it's less helpful and more of a distraction. I don't want people sitting there wondering: "ohhh I wonder if she had lovely (inaudible) I wonder if she doesn't feel well.. or ohh her hair looks nice or something. if they're focusing on me they are not focusing on.. they're not... it's a distraction.	Focus on the clients, clothing can facilitate this Clothing not to be distractive Unwritten rule of therapeutic contact – minimise distractions, clothing can facilitate this
I: uhm. and that's quite unhelpful for the clients F1: for the way I work. It's unhelpful for the client, yes	Responsibility on CoP
I: right. Thank you very much. So. What you're wearing right now, how would that be different to your uhm.. to the times when you are actually seeing the clients. F1: I came from work like this. not in my slippers interestingly. It is a good point, because I came from work.. tss… but if am wearing this, which is smarter than it looks, when you are sort of standing	
I have a pair of really smart, really sharp pointed shiny boots. Because it kind of lifts it up it makes it more professional, it makes more striking looking. I don't want to look like a bag lady, obviously, when I'm in therapy	Clients first see us standing – take in the whole impression. It looks smarter when standing and when wearing my smart bots
so, I would wear my boots. But you see, that's unusual, you may not know this, but for a fat person, this is very common thing too, shoes and bags. You can always wear shoes and bags, whatever weight you are, you can always buy shoes and bags. So shoes take on a particular thing for overweight people. you know	Rebellion – boots, sharp and pointy Striking look – not just neutral
did you realise that? I: (laughs) **yes, but uhm… what I'm noticing is uhm. how you don't want to bring that attention to you, yet those bags and shoes or boots is something that you can relinquish or, that's not the right word, you can really enjoy**	Shoes and bags fit you regardless of your weight
F1: tss. Yes. I think I, I think It's interesting, now you're asking me that. Now you're drilling me down on this. I think I realised, that I shouldn't wear jeans at work.	Shoes as a sign of the self

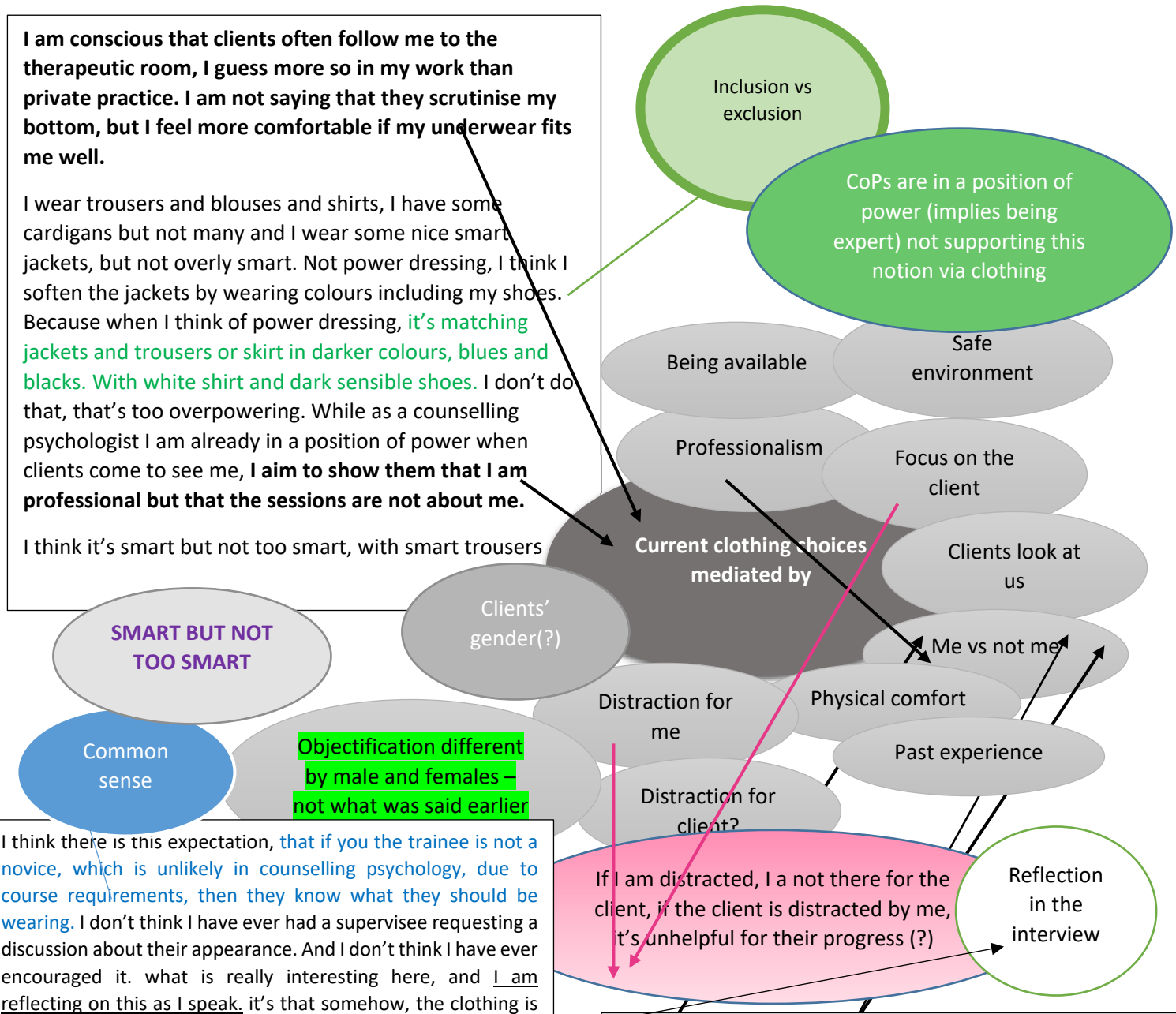
and so to wear a really smart boots, kind of compensate for that.	
but I like to. (laughs) so I do, you know. But I think if I were advising somebody what would I wear for work, I would say don't wear jeans (quietly). But I do it every day (whispering).	Casual jeans and smart boots compensate one for another and average as appropriate.
So it's kind of compensation thing.	I wear jeans, but I wouldn't advise others to.
I**: so have a smart, really shiny pointy shoes, is compensating jeans.**	
F1: uhm. but also, I think, shoes are important to therapist. Uhm. I do recall.. uhm.. I can't remember who said this. But somebody said while you are in therapy, and obviously, we had our own therapy, right, the therapist I've seen over the years, I always notice their shoes.	Clients often look at the CoP's shoes when in 1:1 –safe space.
maybe because it's maybe because it's a place to look, right, it's a safe place. To look down	Based on own experience of personal therapy (a requirement for CoP training)
every single therapist I've ever had, had a really interesting shoes. So everybody must be on the same page. Everybody must know the drill (laughs)	Personal therapy is a model for own practice – bettering myself, check out clothing.
I: **because I'm just thinking is where we can get wild?**	When does this become your own? – experience
F1: freedom	Reading own therapists, to model ourselves on them
I: in fairly safe, within boundaries	
F1: maybe.	Footwear as area of freedom – CoP needs some are where they can still be themselves - boots

Appendix F: Example of Codes and Sections of Data

I am conscious that clients often follow me to the therapeutic room, I guess more so in my work than private practice. I am not saying that they scrutinise my bottom, but I feel more comfortable if my underwear fits me well.

I wear trousers and blouses and shirts, I have some cardigans but not many and I wear some nice smart jackets, but not overly smart. Not power dressing, I think I soften the jackets by wearing colours including my shoes. Because when I think of power dressing, it's matching jackets and trousers or skirt in darker colours, blues and blacks. With white shirt and dark sensible shoes. I don't do that, that's too overpowering. While as a counselling psychologist I am already in a position of power when clients come to see me, **I aim to show them that I am professional but that the sessions are not about me.**

I think it's smart but not too smart, with smart trousers



I think there is this expectation, that if you the trainee is not a novice, which is unlikely in counselling psychology, due to course requirements, then they know what they should be wearing. I don't think I have ever had a supervisee requesting a discussion about their appearance. And I don't think I have ever encouraged it. what is really interesting here, and I am reflecting on this as I speak. it's that somehow, the clothing is not seen as important, despite that we are in our clothing all the time

when you look into my wardrobe, all of the garments are "me" (shows with her hands). While I have garments I wouldn't wear to a session, these are still "me". you know, when I shop with someone else, they may show me a pair of trousers that's "me" or I put a blouse or a cardigan on in the fitting room and they may say it's not "me". I think it depends on what occasion I am shopping for. **If we stay with work, it might not be "me" as a professional, but it may still be "me" in my leisure time**

I think **colours**, while I like say orange, there are some shades of orange I wouldn't wear to a session and some that I don't like. But you know colours can be cold or warm, **warm colours suit me better** and I learnt that only recently (laughs). **Shape, cut and length, I think these are very specific elements that suit me. like a specific trouser cut,** I spoke about that before. These qualities enhance my shape, cover problematic areas. Well, problematic for me. we sit for a prolonged periods of time. I need to be comfortable.

I bought the dress and actually I wore it to work in the NHS. **It was OK with the first client as it was a female, but suddenly, when seeing the next, a male, I realised that the dress is not long enough, once I sat down, it came above my knees and no matter how much I tried to pull it down, it wasn't happening. I ended up putting a scarf over my knees explaining to the client that I am feeling a bit cold. To be honest, I am not sure if he even noticed, but it was a distraction for me**. I never wore that dress to a session again.

I was distracted, thus I wasn't there for the client. By being distracted, **I wasn't creating the safe environment, I wasn't in the listening mode, I wasn't the professional the stable figure in the relationship**. **perhaps, I felt I ought to be available.** Hm.. thinking about it, I would do the same for any client. **it's about looking after them, being there for them and being available, while congruent.** I don't think it would have any therapeutic weight me bringing attention to my discomfort or knees for that matter. I think I handled it with the consideration given to client's needs. If I were to turn the attention to myself, it wouldn't be therapeutic.

Appendix G: Example of a Candidate Theme

Invisible clothing – I am every person

Normal clothing, being invisible to clients

Simple presentation of the self and the therapeutic space to facilitate a difficult/complicated therapy process? non-distractive visual presentation to allow for difficult therapeutic process?

If I am comfortable, then I can offer my clients what they need on a better level.

F1	I know for example, you know, in psychotherapy tradition or psychodynamic tradition, the relationship with therapist is everything and what they are is clearly an important point. I wouldn't go that far. You know, but, but I do raise it. **I: so that's quite interesting example, so what do you think, how important is your uhm.. appearance to you?** F1: (inhale) well, I was always trained, sorry my appearance to me? or my the importance to me in therapy? **I: that's a good point, so let's start with you training. I guess, that's a good start.** F1: I was always trained as a therapist to be as neutral as possible. so that you didn't in some way, overwhelmed the issues that the client was bringing. So I was always trained for example, that actually, wearing the wedding ring for example, I know I keep using this, was actually quite tricky. because it says something, or did then. perhaps it's less so now you know, it says something about you, it says I'm married, I'm in a relationship.
M2 Today is same as contact with client – no difference, same clothing Clean and tidy 0 laughing – common sense. No need to talk about/explain(?) Nothing telling – invisible Not outstanding, not out of ordinary "just a normal guy" No difference between work and free time clothing.	**what would you say, how important is your, your appearance in contact with your clients in private practice?** M2: appearance? Yes, yes, no I take care of it, uhm.. this is how I dress today (points at himself). : uhm.. it's always quite uhm… respectable, not not terribly formal.. uhm… but always sort of clean and tidy (laughs) uhm.. caughs… uhm… so… I don't like suits, so. Or anything like that.. so.. uhm.. I don't own a suit **So when people see you on the street and see you wearing the clothes you are wearing to private session with a client what do you think they would guess you might be doing?** M2: I don't think they would have much to go on Nothing out of the ordinary, nothing very extreme, nothing very outstanding I would just see him as like a normal guy I: Just making a few notes as well. **Right and what do you think, when you think about what we should be wearing to sessions are you aware of any sanctions that you, or things that guide your decisions?** M2: Yes i think it should be professional in a sense that it doesn't cause question marks to arise and who is this weirdo or something like that

I wear same clothes all day, not getting changed Unusual – wearing shorts in winter – who would do that? Assumption that everyone is same Would not make difference what I am doing – is this kind of uniform? After many years of practice, do we fall into habit/trap/ that we do not differentiate the clothing? Do we grow confident? Not distracting Weekend shirts vs ordinary shirts – can be generalised? Weekend/ free time clothing vs work clothing? Ok to wear work clothes in free time, not ok to wear free time clothes for work	i thought no this is my area, this is what i do, you know, this is me and uh so i think there is quite a range of possibilities for counselling psychologists so they can sort of take liberties in certain aspects but i don't really take any liberties i just want to appear quite ordinary (inaudible) not attracting any particular attention being unusual or weird. **you kind of talked about this client would you consider weird or unusual for yourself to wear in sessions with clients?** M2: Um, the thing that comes to mind is wearing shorts in the winter I don't really know who would wear shorts in the winter **I: Well would you wear shorts to a session through the summer then?** M2: Sometimes yes : If it is too hot, um, I wouldn't think that was extraordinary or weird But it would be rare it wouldn't be frequent Not really, no I, no when i get up in the morning I am usually thinking I am going to be seeing a client Probably that day and um, so I would dress in such a way that it was accessible, acceptable I wouldn't normally dress in any other way Well i would like the client to think i was serious and not frivolous and taking whatever seriously um so it would be sort of quite tidy well considered and not (inaudible) and not over formal either and you can see what i am wearing today i have seen 2 clients today and so this is what i would be wearing you know, a nice warm cardigan thing and quite a bold shirt. i wouldn't wear any patterns I thought it would be distracting, i wear plain colours not pictures or design Well as i say there are weekend shirts and (inaudible) my ordinary shirt is quite bright it is not to dull and uh it is quite bright really and um so i think that is ok and i think that is normal
M3 Low key An average person – invisible, not	I think it is probably different in terms of the type of work that different psychologists might be doing in private practice so very occasionally I would be asked to do an assessment for some sort of legal report or as I know a lot of clinical psychologists who do a lot of report assessment for report writing there is probably a much more formal setting in fact I know it to be I was approached a little while ago about doing some other work on a more regular basis and it is very much more business like which i guess i try to be as low key in that respect as possible um so i guess it is the type of private work you are doing will determine

eye catching, not taking notice of me, not a clear indicator of profession Privately and professionally, this is my taste Aging – more adventurous privately in colours, but not include these in work wardrobe No distraction achieved through nondescript clothing, not scruffy, - unremarkable, My style, my clothing taste = being average, discreet, nondescript	I am not sure people would necessarily take that much notice of me to be doing that and the way i would dress the way i would look i mean at weekends i tend to not shave and things like that so i think it would be difficult for people to imagine people who know me keep being surprised that i am a psychologist I don't tend to dress in flamboyant colours generally so it tends to be a very narrow range of colours you see me in um you know various blues **I: Ok has this always been the case?** M3: Um I think yes but not just professionally that is just that's my style or my taste or what I am comfortable in **I: So how does it private move into professional preferences in clothing what would you say?** M3: Um I suppose there if anything as I have got older I have maybe been more adventurous in the colour range that I would use and I wear in private if I was going out for the evening or something like that and there are still colours that I would exclude from this work setting or in my private practice **a number of times distraction whatever you appear like you don't want it to be distractive to your clients?** M3: Yeah um so a fairly nondescript neither scruffy or particularly dandy person sitting across whose attire is not particularly rememberable after (inaudible) presence nor (inaudible) in my presence i am just personally somebody who wouldn't be inclined to have a very memorable dress sense anyway its fairly anonymous anyway well i think it is fairly anonymous um yeah
F4 Distraction – difficult work in therapy room/ non distractive clothing Not to be noticed – not to be a distraction, wear neutral colours, clothing that's not drawing attention the me..	if the client is distracted : they are not able to do their own work, so I think that's .. and similarly, if the clients come to me, I'm not distracted, but I make a note: "ohh, you look, you know, different today" for me it's about not distracting the client from their story, because they are presenting you a story so perhaps, if you, as a therapist, are presenting the story of poverty, than you know, the client would, the day of the client would be going ratchet and you, for example, I'm very warry about make-up yeah, I wouldn't **, wear certain colours, when I'm going to work, because the idea is for me not to be noticed by my clients.** so, I don't know if my client meet me outside, whether they can actually recognise me, because I may look totally different to when I've met him at work.
M5	No I don't think it does, because um what I mean by that is that is simply another thing in the environment that is associated with you the

	therapist, me the therapist, which my clients and patients can make use of to make communications to me about me **I: I guess what I was asking um some people in whether in these interviews or whether in private discussion with them would kind of say I need to be a (inaudible) I need to be neutral and they would dress in that way to allow clients or patients to project whatever it is on to them they need to and they would actually use the clothing to do that** M5: So the clothing would be a means of making them the therapist sort of almost invisible I: Exactly, neutral M5: Yeah I think I mean we are back to that old contested idea aren't we, of um you know whether the therapist can truly be opaque to the patient and I think that um I mean you know the thing is actually there isn't a simple answer to that question because we are working at different levels of the mind
F6	*I guess I would want to wear normal clothes that I'd wear, I know I always used to have this thing about work – having 'work clothes' and 'normal clothes' to get me kind of work mood but then I think I would not choose to wear what I'd call 'work clothes' I would not go out and buy them. As I have more of my kind of clothes that I wear..*
F7 Therapy work is hard work for clients – we want to facilitate that, sometimes through looking the part I need to be comfortable to offer what client comes for Not displaying wealth – e aware of what this may mean to clients	because it's sort of you know obviously coming here as well to talk about you know sometimes quite serious issues and to come across too casual to um summery and you know that kind of thing they may wonder if they can take you seriously as a therapist. That's again I would probably put in my own kind of perspective on to other people but I would, personally I think if somebody was dressed sort of really summery and casual I might kind of wonder if you know is that suitable for the subject we might be talking about but then you need to take the other persons personality into account as well **I: So it's about you in the room rather than the client isn't it?** F: I think so, yeah I think it's more um about how I feel and that um just clothing wise if I am confident in what I am wearing then I am confident in my job and therefore I know then that the client is going to get everything that they need I think actually yeah a lot of my clients do come from, some of them are wealthy but I would say maybe that would fall into I don't know a quarter or a third maybe not that much and then the rest I feel come from a very um hate using the word normal but in brackets normal background or regular background and I think that um yeah if you show off a bit too much with what you're wearing it could be um looked at in a different way, you might not be showing off you might just be wearing what you regularly wear but I think you need to be aware of um how that might impact the client all I want to do is make clients feel relaxed and comfortable and I feel if I am comfortable then hopefully they will be so it's about setting up the I suppose the atmosphere or the you know the non its non-formal but it is formal so it I suppose that's why I like to be straight down the middle with it

	it's a serious topic they've got a lot of things to talk about and they need to know that it is all going to be taken seriously but it still needs to done in a semi relaxed environment
F8 I am comfortable, I can do a better job Tune to expectations, clients backgrounds Not too different to clients Too out there – too much focus on the client – males and females would be distracted (?)	I noticed that um at the NHS I was much more relaxed in what I was wearing because um maybe it was the blazer they wore at work in A BIG CITY, But if it was quite a deprived area so the clients that they used to see they would come from poorer backgrounds so I felt very comfortable because i used to dress very simply, I don't really take care of how i dress in general so you know like professional but very simple and casual and i felt very comfortable to do that while i thought in private practice because um the people would be definitely from different backgrounds from the people i was seeing at that specific service i found that there was a bit more caution in what i was wearing um to be a little bit more smart casual Not too much but a little bit more i guess For example at the NHS i would feel um, there was a psychiatrist lady who dressed really really not in a posh way but very well dressed and she could support that because it was her style but you know being in a deprived area, seeing deprived clients i just feel it would be too much of a difference we had a trainee yes I remember that it was in training and um (inaudible) and she was quite, she used to dress in a sexy way so she was (inaudible) in her placement not in a day (inaudible) and she was wearing high heels, tight clothes you know quite sexy and I remember a group of us were commenting (inaudible) but I thought I would never go like that but I don't (inaudible) anyone F8: And she didn't go to see clients but the girl was so sexy I thought it was, I don't know what the word, maybe it wasn't appropriate to go in for an interview it was um like that

M9 Invisible Can be anyone Fit the work Fit with the rest of the environment Modelling	At least at this practice the GP's tend to wear shirt and trousers, where at my course at the NHS the counselling psychologist he used to wear usually a shirt yes and trousers and some kind of shoes not exactly overly smart so I kind of followed his example but also he you know would comment if something wasn't right now what I realise over the first year or two was that the way I was dressed was more like an office worker. Um and some of the GP's would dress like this and I started to wonder if that was really the right type of clothes for a therapeutic relationship because it was a bit like I could be any you know I could be working at a bank in those clothes
It's not professional, it draws attention to me	I wouldn't wear something that has like a logo I always try to avoid any clothing with a logo so there goes some of the clothing that I couldn't wear, not that I have tons of clothing with logos but some of them do have, because I don't know it just seems a bit inappropriate you know a logo is both fashion statement and a bit of an advertisement so it is a bit strange to wear that in a professional setting. Also I think of it as not professional
Approachable No power imbalance Lightened the atmosphere Less expert position Still professional	I noticed in the summer because as you know in the UK the summer brings a different feeling to people and me and I felt more (inaudible) and more open and I wore more kind of clothing lighter sort of you know a light t-shirt, pale cream trousers and people would comment like clients oh nice clothing or whatever but I think what I realised then was this could be well firstly it could have an impact on the relationship and secondly kind of it also changed my um kind of feeling at work as well so that it lightened the atmosphere for me if I was wearing more kind of um colourful clothing and less serious clothing, then the shift it moved then to still at the NHS to being more approachable I felt that if my clothing changed I could be more approachable to clients less of a professional less of expert position with expert clothing, yeah reducing the power balance
We can try to be invisible, but clients will notice not only clothing, but the context, our habits,	: I think in a long time private practice self-disclosure becomes more normalised um it's I mean there when i found this relationship through the setting um you give away a little bit more information you have a website with more detailed information that clients can see you might have a website that clients can see or Facebook although they can't go into it um and they see me chatting with other people other therapists in the building they might see me in the cafe having a coffee i mean all this can happen in the NHS as well but it's a little bit more, it's a bit more unlikely So clients start to pick up stuff or they bump into me near my home because the practice isn't so far from my home um so they start to make lots of, build a picture I find so um it's inevitable that there is a bit more self-disclosure and then I think also with the setting being less official there is a little bit more of it that creeps into the work to the long term client I might feel later in the workplace a little bit more appropriate a bit of self-disclosure in way that I think it might be particularly helpful so

Not invisible, Introducing extra stuff Work with it Clients can make a decision	I have met one therapist who um who has quite really developed his look so he is like a punk hero but I suppose that is his thing you know the hair shaved is dyed blonde in the middle, tons of piercings, tattoos huge shoes very elaborate clothing as well lots of layers he looks like he has taken ages to get ready and with him I feel like that is very much about him and his, like it is very important for him for this whole thing and it's almost like it has gone too far now to tone it down um but that's just him you know so in that case I think ok fair enough the clients are going to see you like that throughout so it's not going to be, from the first meeting its going to be at least it will probably be quite consistent um on the other hand, and they will be able to choose whether they feel like its um kind of um kind of right for them but certainly I feel my guess is he is introducing a whole lot of stuff there which is going to influence the work but I mean I suppose he probably brings that to the work so it's how you work with

F10 Critised by being different to the colleagues Not to adjust to the clientele Participant didn't think that's necessary Being congruent Fit with the rest Not invisible, but not giving out information that are unnecessary – signs of wealth	the other criticism that I had was you dress too smartly for work you just dress too smartly for work these kids are going to trash your clothes and I was like no I am honouring them by wearing the same clothes to work as I would at home for the UK psychotherapists the UK psychologists there is almost a snobbery around not looking to how can I put it really its almost seen as crass wearing to much colour or too much make-up or too much jewellery, a bit like the tribal costumes it seems a little bit of tribal it's not intellectual if that makes sense but when you're smart enough you don't have to do that anymore because your intellect shines out that's my take on it because it is the words that you use I think because your clients probably get a sense of the overall picture anyway I wouldn't want it to be obvious I wouldn't want to obviously buy something that was branded when people can get hold of the value of it so if you are wearing let's say if you've got a Gucci bag and it's got Gucci right across it, it means people can go home and they can google it and say gosh that was £3000 if you've got a nice handbag that doesn't have a label people know it's nice but they don't know what you've spent on it, you might have spent £3000 or you might have spent £30 or you might have spent £6000 what they are getting is that it is smart, it is the right thing for work and it is well presented I think when you put logos and brands out for people to see they can then make judgements about how much you have spent and if they make judgements about how much you have spent on something then they can also make judgements on how you might view them whether they are up for them whether you are making too much money out of them there's all those things about whether toning it down as well because I mean at the end of the day we are providing a service that is professional but also about people's emotions and thoughts and you are working with people at the margin sometimes so I think to go in to go in very ostentatious where people can work out what it is and actually cars would be the same kind of thing I have always resisted not that I can bothered with them but I have always resisted having a very very very smart car that is brand new because I think the people that can only just about afford to come and see you what does it say to them when you've got a brand new Mercedes on your drive

Appendix H: Defined and Refined Themes for Progression Exam

Attire as a topic to be discussed

it's been a bit of a temperamental with clothing [F7]

"I do think it is an overlooked aspect of therapy and it is something that I'm conscious, that I'm bringing to the therapy, deliberately. if I think it's relevant." [F1]

How do participants understand their attire in private practice? Internalised image of appropriate attire - Research Q: how do participants talk about attire? – as appropriate attire

What should a CoP look like?/ Appropriate clothing

"*I think you can't wear whatever you like um so yes I don't know I think therapists define what is appropriate but with no hard rules. [F8]*

Portraying myself in a specific way

"I would like the client to think I was serious and not frivolous and taking whatever seriously um so it would be sort of quite tidy well considered and not (inaudible) and not overly formal." [M2]

Past experiences

Critisism "Many of us trained within the NHS anyway, so I think this must have influenced us. I had one of my colleagues commenting on my clothing as I like wearing colourful clothing. I don't get crazy, black trousers with nice pink or yellow blouse. Or the other way around. Green trousers with dark green or black blouse. I didn't agree with this particular colleague. She was much older than me and worked in the service for many years wearing mostly grey. I dislike grey, I think this really sucks life out of everything." [F11]

How do CoPs present themselves to clients? Presentation to clients Fine Balance

"I like to be straight down the middle with it" [F7]

'Not too' – identity not

"I've always thought carefully: "Don't be too smart, don't be too corporate".[F1]

'Space for Projection

"what I wear what that represents in my mind would be quite naturally utterly different to what it would represent in someone else's mind to some extent it doesn't really matter what it represents in my mind actually." [M5]

Invisible vs Authentic

"I was always trained as a therapist to be as neutral as possible. so that you didn't in some way, overwhelmed the issues that the client was bringing." [F1]

Vs "you know, the jeans thing is partly two fingers up the whole thing as well. you know what? I can be scruffy, I can have my own style and I can still do this job". [F1]

No extreme changes - consistency

"I have met one therapist who um who has quite really developed his look so he is like a punk hero but I suppose that is his thing you know the hair shaved is dyed blonde in the middle, tons of piercings, tattoos huge shoes very elaborate clothing as well lots of layers (..), from the first meeting its going to be at least it will probably be quite consistent." M9

Uniforms – not a specific style, but individualised appearance becomes a uniform

"I think counselling psychologists are probably the most eclectic group and I think because they draw on a wider cultural range of people, so the black counselling psychologists generally are the most flamboyant they are the most flamboyant and I think I like that because I think counselling psychologists draw from a wider audience and so there is a real acceptance of being who you are and from where you are from and the uniform is congruent so there is a uniform that says be confident with who you are" [F10]

Appendix I: Research Article as intended to submit for Therapy Today

"Looking the Part": A Qualitative study on How Counselling Psychologists make sense of their professional attire.

Authors: Martina Halmagyi, Miltos Hadjiosif and Amy Slater
The authors declare that all participants agreed to and signed informed consent statements. Ethical approval for this study was granted by the University of the West of England Faculty Research Ethics Committee on 2nd August 2016.

Abstract

Background and Aims - Whilst clothing oneself is an everyday practice, its ubiquity has rendered it almost invisible as a focus of psychotherapy research. Clients' preferences regarding therapists' clothing have been researched with highly inconclusive results. The main aim was to address the existing gap in literature and explore the views around the professional attire of counselling psychologists and to answer the question 'How do counselling psychologists view and make sense of their attire in clinical work?'.

Methodology - A qualitative research design was employed. A variety of sampling strategies were used to recruit participants. Inductive thematic analysis was chosen to analyse the semi-structured interviews, conducted with eleven qualified counselling psychologists in the UK. The interviewees' ages ranged from 33 to 91, with their experience of private practice ranging from 1 to 13 years.

Finding - Three themes were identified. '*Shall we talk about attire?*' illustrated the ambivalence surrounding the topic of attire. The second theme: '*You need to look the part';* echoed clothing practices past specific garments within three further subthemes which grapple with what this part might actually look like. The last theme, '*Underneath Our Clothes',* pointed to attire being used beyond simply being clothed, as a way to enhance the therapeutic relationship, reflect congruence and acknowledge that clients notice us.

Conclusion - This study is unique in empirically investigating the issue of counselling psychologists' attire and its findings are transferable to other helping professions. Further implications for counselling psychology and avenues for additional research are discussed.

Keywords: Attire, Counselling Psychology, Thematic Analysis, Therapeutic Relationship.

Purpose

Attire is a part of our daily routine, even without an interest in fashion (Twigg, 2009), it is understood as lived experience. Social interactions are riddled with wearers and observers of attire (Kaiser, 1990). Yet, clothing and fashion are often perceived as superficial subjects for research (Barnard, 2002; Woodward, 2005). Clothing occupies the liminal space between internal and external experiences; which is also the main focus of counselling psychology (CoP). This research focuses on the rarely investigated wearer's understanding of their own attire. It is undisputed that clothing is often used as non-verbal communication and represents a variety of meanings (Barnard, 2002). It is known that attire influences the wearer's behaviour (e.g. Adam & Galinsky, 2012), mood (e.g. Moody, Kinderman & Sinha, 2010) and cognitions (Frederickson et al., 1998). Also, observers form certain impressions based on minor variations of attire. (e.g. Howlett et al., 2015). However, direct research of practitioner's attire is scarce and inconclusive, often focused on the observer's preferences. Casual clothing was preferred by students (Damon et al., 2010), but was perceived as a sign of counsellors' inexpertness elsewhere (Schmidt & Strong, 1976). In Kerr and Dell's (1976) research, professional attire was connected to perceived expertise, but casual clothing did not link with perceived inexpertness. Quantification of the clients' outlook on practitioners' attire highlights the need for the qualitative exploration of attire from the practitioners' perspective. In line with growing arguments in favour of qualitative research in CoP, Henzelova (2015) turned her attention to the therapist's experience of attire and concluded that the appropriateness and formality of attire, although subjective, exists on a continuum, rather than dichotomous extremes. To our knowledge, no research on attire exists within counselling psychology despite that counselling psychologists (CoPs) wear clothes and present themselves to clients. Thus, after three decades of defining Counselling Psychology as a respectable profession, turning our attention to the seemingly insignificant topic of attire is a timely venture to link theory, practice and research (Orlans & Van Scoyoc, 2009) and gain insight into the topic. The main purpose of this study is to explore CoPs' understanding of attire and to add knowledge to the existing body of research in psychology.

Methodology

Participants

Recruitment was completed using an advertisement placed in the Division of Counselling Psychology's E-Letter, delivered as an email to all members. The advert attracted five

participants. Sampling via the researcher's personal contacts and snow-balling (Braun & Clarke, 2013) were also employed. Following contact from potential participants, the first researcher provided an 'Information for Participants' pack, including details of the study and the withdrawal process. Eleven participants, seven females and four males with an age range of 33 to 91 took part. The length of time participants had been working in private practice ranged from one to thirteen years.

Ethics

Observing the British Psychological Society's Code of Human Research Ethics (2014), ethical approval for this study was granted by the University of the West of England Faculty Research Ethics Committee.

Procedure

After obtaining informed consent, the first researcher conducted semi-structured interviews. An interview schedule was developed through piloting with one peer and a group peer discussion. Seven face-to-face interviews were conducted and four interviews via Skype calls. Each ran for at least 45 minutes. Participants were assigned a unique personal identification number. For readability, these were later changed to names. A reflective diary was employed to reflect on the interviews, identify assumptions and inform the analytical process.

Design and Analysis

A qualitative approach was chosen to illuminate an under-researched topic. This project sought to answer the research question: 'How do counselling psychologists view and make sense of their attire in clinical work?' from a critical realist stance, underlined by relativist epistemology. Thematic Analysis (TA) (Braun & Clarke, 2006), was chosen for epistemological flexibility, which was necessary to develop a priori theme within the novel topic of attire in CoP. A rich description of data was pursued to uncover potentially complex information. The themes were identified by employing inductive TA, as the analysis was shaped by the meaning in the data (Clarke, Braun & Hayfield, 2015), rather than existing theory and strong links were created between the data and the themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006) via the researcher's closeness to and interactions with the data.

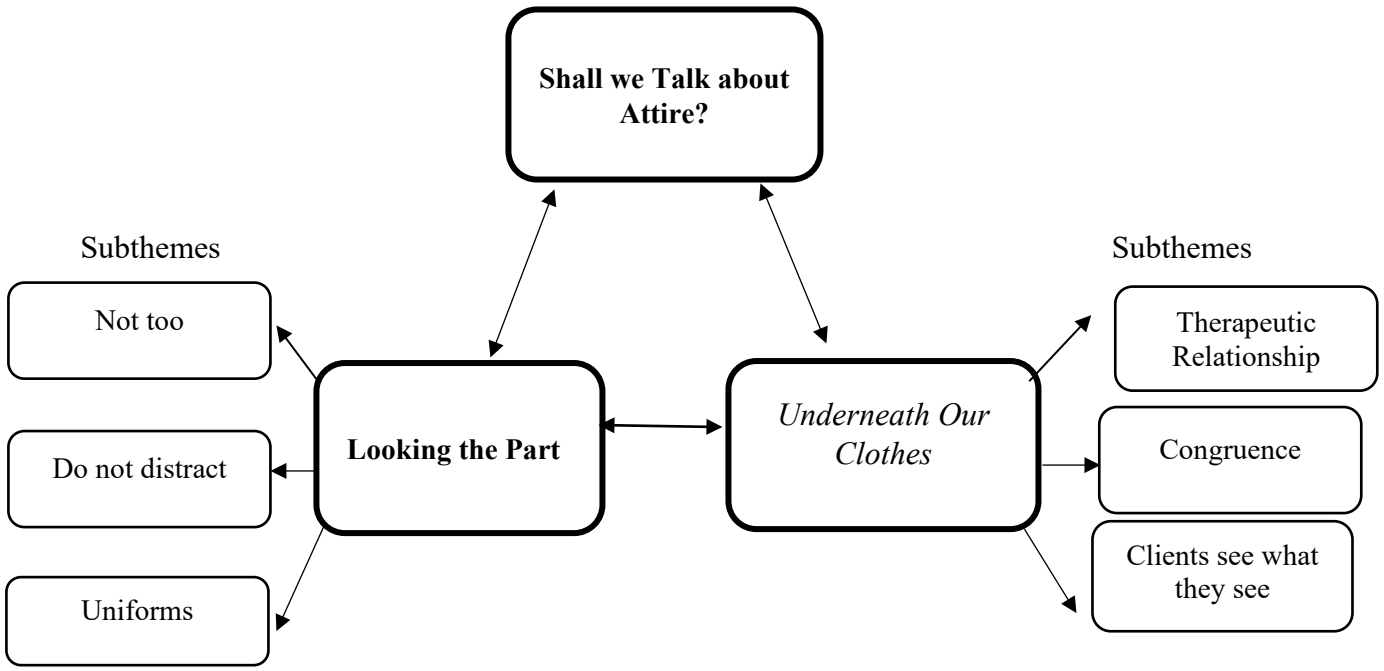
Reflective Statement (first researcher)

I became interested in the topic, when I noticed a stark difference between my own attire and that of other practitioners. I kept a reflective diary and uncovered that, for me, clothing is functional, purposeful and I do not greatly engage with fast changing fashion styles.

Results

Three themes were developed from the analysis and corresponding subthemes (Figure 1), highlighting the varied understanding of attire in therapeutic sessions.

Figure 1: Final Thematic Map



First Theme: 'Shall We Talk About Attire?'

The first theme, formulated as a question, is to highlight the ambivalence of the topic and to point out a lack of discussion about attire within counselling psychology. Some participants had the opportunity to use supervision or peer support to explore it. Most participants welcomed the interviews to reflect upon how they dress and to uncover assumptions that aided insight into their own self-presentation. In spite of this, the significance of the matter was, at times, dismissed, based on implied triviality and proved to be more complex than it first appeared. As Tamara said: "*I don't think there is much debate about what we should wear and how should we appear"*. This raises two questions: what

prevents us from having these conversations and what is the most appropriate place and format for discussions around attire?

"[It] is a kind of contested issue actually and it has sort of personal relevance actually, because it is something I have always struggled with, and it is still a contested issue, I think, and I don't think it will ever necessarily be resolved one way or the other!" [Daniel]

The struggle with attire was both real and personal for Daniel, demonstrating the difficulties in resolving the issue of attire definitively. He indicated the need to explore the topic in greater depth to establish the role of clothing, both within the profession and on an individual level.

"Initially I thought 'oh no I won't have much to say about it' but then I was thinking about how my attitude towards my clothes has changed over the time I have been working, because I started off in the NHS, in a placement and also at a university placement and eventually went to private practice and over time my clothing has changed and my idea of what it means has changed. So yeah, it raised some questions for me" [Georgios]

The above extract illustrated something very common about how CoPs contemplate their attire i.e. there is more to say about this topic than one initially might think. For Georgios, attire was linked to a process of change. Beyond the inevitable change in clothing practices that comes with growing older, the participant mentioned the changing contexts of therapeutic work, such as the NHS, the mental health service of a university, and private practice. As a result, participants took the opportunity to talk about their attire by contributing to this study, which presumably stimulated their interest to further reflect on their clothing styles.

The interviews enabled counselling psychologists to share their stories about the importance, as well as the triviality, of attire. For many, uncertainty about attire was resolved through self-reflection. The way participants used the interviews to reflect on their own attire and appearance highlights a need to discuss attire in a more sustained and explicit way, even if for now, the means by which to do it remain unclear.

Second Theme: 'You Need to Look the Part'

The second theme developed around the rules of appearance to which CoPs adhere. Participants negotiate the appropriateness of clothing which is seen as a spectrum rather than dichotomous. Looking the part then means not venturing into extremes in attire choices.

Subtheme: 'Not Too Smart, Not Too Casual'

Most participants identified an extreme which they intend to avoid, as extremes were perceived as incompatible with therapeutic work. Although some needed to make a conscious decision, most reported a certain easiness in adhering to this unwritten rule, as Andrea explained: "*I've always thought carefully: 'Don't be too smart, don't be too corporate'. I've never ever worn a jacket, for example, for therapy because I think that can be off-putting"*.

The majority of participants rejected power dressing as problematic and equated it to a medicalised approach, where the professional is to solve the client's problems. Many used clothing to diffuse the view of the CoP's expert position and the client's passive approach in the therapy.

"I think as a psychologist in private [practice] or the NHS you need to look the part, you know. We're qualified people giving advice so you need to. Yeah … turning up in a tracksuit, as far as I can see, would be far too casual and your position may not be taken as seriously as the client may be expecting" [Kath].

For Kath, the other extreme; casual clothing, is rejected too. Kath advised that regardless of the working environment, casual clothing may be perceived for CoPs as not professional enough. Thus, clothing needs to fit the clients' expectations of professionalism.

Attire is chosen to reflect professionalism and fulfil the perceived expectations of clients. Clothing practices and preferred style, generally pre-empt possible dissonance. However, if a conflict arises, it is dealt with by considering the boundary of 'not too'.

Subtheme: 'Do not Distract'

The subtheme is arranged around the need not to distract clients from important therapeutic work. Participants also expressed their preferences for a certain level of consistency in their appearance, as they perceived changes as distractive. Participants acknowledged the purpose of therapy to be focused on clients and their needs. Thus, the appropriateness of clothing is

judged on another rule: not distracting the client or the self. It seems to work in conjunction with the previous subtheme. As Issana explained: "*if the client is distracted, they are not able to do their own work".* Participants believed that distraction can impact on the therapeutic process and can prevent clients from focussing on themselves.

"*Clothing would be a means of making the therapist sort of almost invisible. I think I mean we are back to that old contested idea aren't we, of ... you know, whether the therapist can truly be opaque to the patient." [*Daniel*]*

Daniel's being 'almost invisible' can be understood as self-disclosure, translated as not giving away personal information. His clothing performs as camouflage during sessions, as he fits the expectations and the role to assist the clients' therapeutic processes.

*"So, in the summer when it is boiling hot in the office and they arrive in shorts and t-shirts and sandals I will still be wearing maybe lighter clothes but still smart casual". [*Aidan*]*

Aidan illustrated consistency in appearance, recognised by many to be an important element of not distracting clients. Also, he exemplified how self-distraction is managed by being consistent in appearance, but by using lighter fabrics, he effectively eliminated his own distraction.

Subtheme: 'Professional Uniforms'

To resolve the tension of appropriateness, distractions and extremes, many talked about their usual clothing. Firstly, CoPs were compared to vastly different professions such as lawyers or doctors. Some participants also reflected on exposure to those professions with which being a CoP is often compared or confused, for instance, clinical psychology, counselling or psychotherapy. The attire of a representative of the profession was generalised and described as a uniform, illustrated by Bianca: "*psychotherapists wore black. If I had an image in mind it would be a kind of unfitted black dress down to sort of calf level with black boots, no make-up, hair pulled back into a bun".* Perhaps seeing these professions side-by-side, allowed for the comparison of typical attire and for building up a picture of psychologists' self-presentation. Nevertheless, many struggled to think about what a counselling psychologist should look like, and many described their usual clothing choices for work.

"I suppose in terms of presentation it is something about being approachable, so I wouldn't go into a therapy session wearing a suit and tie and generally I wouldn't go in wearing jeans and a t-shirt so in terms of attire, smart casual presentation" [Aidan].

Aidan started the description by defining what he would not wear and concluded the balanced self-presentation as middle ground: smart-casual attire. The smart-casual dress code is an ambiguous label in itself. Unsurprisingly, it eliminates business smart e.g. suit and tie, and too casual appearance: jeans and a t-shirt.

"I like wearing colourful clothing. I don't get crazy, black trousers with nice pink or yellow blouse. Or the other way around. Green trousers with dark green or black blouse." [Tamara]

The quote above illustrates what a number of participants described, some combination of colour, trousers and a blouse/shirt - essentially taking the safe option and rejecting extremes by not getting 'crazy'.

It can be concluded that 'looking the part' is a fine balance. This fine balance is often part of our common sense, not necessarily constantly pondered upon and if everything else is aligned in the right combination, then some individualised appearance is tolerable.

Third Theme 'Underneath Our Clothes'

The analysis of data developed a story of clothing facilitating the therapeutic relationship and maintaining the practitioner's state of congruence, whilst acknowledging that clients will make what they will of practitioners' attire.

Subtheme: The Therapeutic Relationship

Practitioners believe that clothing may have some impact on the strength of the early therapeutic bond and use their clothing to facilitate therapeutic relationships.

"You want something neutral, so that they [clients] just think, OK this is Everywoman. This is somebody who can relate to me, because I do think ... people - in my experience anyway ... of therapy - I do think, people notice you" [Andrea]

The above quote illustrates the importance of the choice of clothing so as to appear generic because CoPs are observed and noticed. Andrea's 'Everywoman' is aimed to appear neutral;

to represent all people in some way. This way, she said, clients can relate to her better. It is apparent that she intended for her clothing to facilitate and enhance the therapeutic relationship.

"now what I realised over the first year or two was that the way I was dressed was more like an office worker. And some of the GP's would dress like this and I started to wonder if they were really the right type of clothes for a therapeutic relationship because it was a bit like I could be anywhere… you know I could be working at a bank in those clothes." [Georgios]

Initially Georgios followed an example of other professionals within the work setting. However, gradually, he concluded that his occupation was not adequately expressed through his clothing. He emphasised that he could be any office worker working in any office. Consequently, it implied that his clothing could influence the quality and uniqueness of the therapeutic relationships he aspired to build. Many highlighted habitual use of clothing as a form of non-verbal communication to continuously empower the therapeutic relationship, as Aidan explained: *"I guess automatically my general dress style is one that is transferable across the widest range of client-group presentations".* It may be somewhat surprising that the subtheme highlights the relational aspect reflected in clothing. It seems that by considering clients' diverse experiences, practitioners' clothing practices aim to generate the best possible conditions for forming a strong therapeutic bond.

Subtheme: 'Be as Congruent as I Can'

One view that came through strongly was that attire facilitates congruence. In order to be a CoP, one needs to allow the self to be part of therapeutic contact in an appropriate manner. One way of enabling this to happen is through individualised appearance, where the ideal self is in congruence with the current self.

"*I just think we need to be as congruent as we possibly can be. I think we need to wear clothes that make us feel confident, I think we have to have in our minds an idea about what social norms are, not what we are going to adhere to, but so we have an understanding about what our perception would be from a patients' perspective, but we need to still be congruent and I think we have to look as though we are the sort of person that can do the job that they are employing us to do, because we are professional men and women doing the job. I think we need to dress as though we are professionals*." *[Bianca]*

Bianca identified the importance of congruence in the opening of the quote. She summarised the need to appear professional whilst being a congruent practitioner. For Bianca, congruence is about adhering to social expectations of appearing professional, but, by the same token, feeling comfortable in our own clothes. However, this is not only for our own benefit. Bianca implied that by being congruent we inherently become better practitioners.

"I found a more authentic style and so I became more, kind of everyday in my language, in my manner. I was using all of my knowledge in a more subtle way so it was less visible to clients. I started to loosen up a bit, so they started to loosen up a bit too and I wanted to have clothing that was much more everyday so I was wearing a jumper, like a fleece type, cotton trousers rather than linen, rather than all other trousers, and then boots rather than shoes, like softer clothing." [Georgios]

Georgios then described a clear shift within himself where he became more comfortable in his knowledge and professionalism but where his clothing did not match his confidence. With an increase in skills confidence, Georgios became more flexible with his clothing, describing congruence in the process. He reported a consequent change in clothing which represented him more authentically. However, this was a gradual change, presumably through trying out different fabrics and garments. Clothing became a more every-day style, rather than work clothes. Potentially, this process may reflect internalising the role of counselling psychologist. Congruence is likely to facilitate a good working relationship with clients. After all, the role of a CoP is about the quality of the therapeutic relationship.

Subtheme: 'The client Sees What They See'

Despite the participants' tendency to maintain a professional look, they identified the possibility that their intentions could be misinterpreted or misunderstood, based on clients' experiences. The subtheme demonstrates the ethos of a CoP in recognising and valuing the importance of individual experiences.

"What I wear, what that represents in my mind would be quite naturally utterly different to what it would represent in someone else's mind. To some extent it doesn't really matter what it represents in my mind actually. (...) I would say that what the client sees is what the client sees. (...) I think, [clients] spend a great deal of time trying, in their own minds, to get to know who they think you are… of course one of the ways they do that is to look at what you

wear and of course they make huge assumptions about who you are based on what you wear." [Daniel]

Daniel clearly discriminated between the meaning his clothing holds for clients and for him. He broadened it by explaining that clients perceive us in a way that fits them and that it should be expected. Clients observe the therapist and clothing is initially the most accessible source of information about the practitioner. Daniel essentially described the construct of projection, when clients may be attributing their own repressed thoughts, emotions or characteristics onto others, namely their practitioner. As therapists, we create a safe space for clients to project onto us. They will imagine the practitioner to be whatever they need the practitioner to become. Through assumptions based on our visual presentation, clients may fantasise about their therapist. As Tamara explained: "*clients will notice what is important for them and they will create an image of me in their own mind".* Nevertheless, not everyone considered attire to be an issue.

"Really, I sort of treat it [attire] as a non-issue and that you know it is obviously there and it would make a different impression on different clients, for some it is very very important, I think 'um oh here's somebody who knows what they are talking about because they been doing it for a long time' ". [David]

While David did not perceive attire to be an important aspect in therapy, he anticipated that clients perceive his clothing in a variety of ways. While clothing can give certain impressions, he hoped he conveyed the message of his confidence in his capability to support clients. His claim that he treats it as a non-issue may be more to do with the presentation of the said confidence. But he acknowledged that attire is ever present in the sessions.

Discussion and Conclusions

The findings reflect the uncharted depths of deliberations about attire during therapeutic encounters, which are rarely discussed. Additionally, it identified some difficulties in understanding the clothing practices of therapeutic practitioners. The participants displayed the salient identity of CoPs throughout the discussed themes.

'Shall we talk about attire?' The theme illustrated the potential importance the topic holds for individuals, whilst simultaneously highlighting its ambivalence. The theme substantiated

its importance as a research topic through the lived negotiations and complexity of clothing practices, suggesting that attire is usually a non-issue, but undoubtedly, there is little support when it becomes an issue. Questions about appropriate attire were often sufficiently resolved through self-reflection and self-awareness, as being a reflective practitioner is an important aspect of being a Counselling Psychologist (e.g. Woolfe, 2016). To minimise the struggle and maximise reflexivity, the topic could be included in supervision and also in teaching during training. The relational aspect of clothing and its ability to support congruence has been recognised as important, thus it would be well placed in teaching curricula, in a module similar to 'Professional Issues in Counselling Psychology' (UWE, 2018).

'Looking the Part'. Participants highlighted the lack of typical professional representation in CoP, that could be easily defined through attire, as it is, for example, in law or medicine; signifying the futility of existing research on clients' preferences about therapists' clothing (e.g. Kerr & Dell, 1976; Schmidt & Strong, 1976). However, certain boundaries of visual self-presentation were clearly identified. These could operate individually or in combination to determine clothing appropriate for therapeutic contact. The practitioners' collective view of appropriate attire sits within a smart-casual style, which is non-distractive to both clients and practitioners. It appears that each practitioner has a relatively fixed professional visual presentation, depending on their broader clothing style. Despite existing constraints, one advantage is quite apparent, namely, flexibility between boundaries, enabling the current visual presentation to be authentic.

'Underneath the clothes'. The third theme represents the professionalism and humanistic values within CoP, which are interwoven with self-presentation. The findings recognise the role of attire far beyond that of just being dressed for sessions. The theme supports the notion of attire as being consciously used to influence the therapeutic relationship and the image of the CoP. In addition, clothing enables congruent self-presentation. Thus, CoPs actively use self-reflection, past experiences and empathy to develop their clothing practices to, in turn, become better practitioners (Jennings & Skovholt, 1999).

Limitations and Future Research

The research focused on the Western understanding of clothing and attire. Thus, the study's findings have limited transferability to CoPs, or indeed other therapeutic practitioners, living and working in non-Western cultures and contexts. One direction that future research on the

topic could take, is to observe practitioners' clothing practices rather than just asking them to talk about them within a short space of time.

Implication for Practice

The findings from this study contribute to the body of literature on attire from the perspective of counselling psychology, embedded in professional practice (Kasket, 2016). This can be particularly useful for practitioners considering their own experience of attire. The findings suggest that clothing for therapeutic contact is less about fashion statements and more about the intersectionality of personal and professional identity, managed through attire. I hope this research increases awareness about the topic and helps to create an appropriate space to discuss attire as an issue. Thus, it can be said, attire can model the respect we have for clients and the issues they bring to us, balancing between conveying competence and upholding the importance of 'subjectivity and intersubjectivity, values and beliefs' (Division of Counselling Psychology, 2006, p. 1) for which CoPs strive.

Concluding Comment

The research illustrated the difficulty of the task in creating a definitive guide to appropriate clothing, but highlighted the need to explore the topic in more depth, for example, the value practitioners place on their clothes, conforming to perceived appropriate clothing, and the sacrifice of individuality to uniforms. The importance of an open space in which to consider attire was highlighted, such as during supervision or reflective practice. Additionally, for CoPs as scientist-practitioners, this research offers the next best option: up-to-date research, based in practice.

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