SPECIAL SECTION ARTICLE

"She was on my side, and grounded me when I needed it:" Research supervision in the field of therapy, based on counsellors' and psychotherapists' views on their engagement with research

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Abstract

Research-supported practice is increasingly emphasised within counselling and psychotherapy at all stages of training. Guided by an interest in how to support therapists in their efforts to develop research knowledge during doctoral training, this paper focuses on research supervision. Research supervision is a surprisingly under-researched area. Little is known to date about how supervisors "go about their supervision" (Bruce & Stoodley, 2013, p. 5), despite the fact that "high failure rates for research dissertations in the social sciences have been partly attributed to student dissatisfaction with supervision and poor student–supervisor relationships" (Armstrong, 2004, p. 134). Between 2016 and 2019, we explored accredited counsellors' and 'psychotherapists engagement with research during or after their doctoral training. This paper explores research supervision with these two previous studies serving as the backdrop (Bager-Charleson et al., 2018a; Bager-Charleson et al., 2018b), together with a literature review into research supervision within social sciences and psychotherapy. Supervision is discussed as a crucial coping/support strategy to (a) link research with practice in therapy work, practically and epistemologically; (b) contain and make sense of the use of transformative learning; (c) balance "enculturation" with critical thinking and emancipation; and (d) support reflective and reflexive development. This paper discusses an adaptive research supervision model, akin to a "holding bond" (Stevens, 2016) which supports the student to reflexively position her/himself personally, intersubjectively, theoretically and socio-culturally, whilst "negotiating the tension" (Lee, 2008) during a process of enculturation into the discipline, and also fostering critical thinking and emancipation to contribute to new knowledge.

KEYWORDS
counselling research, epistemology, practice-based research, psychotherapy research, research supervision

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1 | INTRODUCTION

Research is an increasingly emphasised aspect of counselling and psychotherapy, permeating different stages of training. Guided by an interest in how to support therapists in their efforts to develop research knowledge, this paper focuses on research supervision during doctoral research training. Research supervision is explored with two earlier studies into "therapists engagement in research" (Bager-Charleson, du Plock, & McBeath, 2018a; Bager-Charleson, McBeath, & du Plock, 2018b) as the backdrop and with reference to a literature review into research supervision suggesting that "little is known to date how supervisors go about their supervision" (Bruce & Stoodley, 2013, p.5). The research supervisory process tends to be accepted to rely on a process "naturally built on the supervisor's own experience" (Lee, 2008), despite, as Armstrong (2004) suggests, the fact that "high failure rates for research dissertations in the social sciences have been partly attributed to student dissatisfaction with supervision and poor student–supervisor relationships" (p.134). Our own two earlier studies began with literature reviews, which reflected a critique of counsellors' and psychotherapists' research knowledge. It was described as patchy, unstructured and often more informed by personal interests, clinical experience, supervision, personal therapy, general literature and discussions with colleagues than by research findings (Castonguay et al., 2010; Morrow-Bradley & Elliott, 1986; Norcross & Prochaska, 1983; Safran, Abreu, Ogilvie, & DeMaria, 2011). Further studies echoed the idea of therapists seldom reading research or instigating research (Beutler, Williams, Wakefield, & Entwistle, 1995; Boisvert & Faust, 2006; Morrow-Bradley & Elliott, 1986; Norcross & Prochaska, 1983).

Our subsequent studies aimed for a deeper understanding based on counsellors' and psychotherapists' own accounts; Between 2016 and 2019, we explored the area of "therapists and research", focusing on accredited counsellors and psychotherapists engaged in doctoral research. The first study (Bager-Charleson, et al., 2018a) was titled "Therapists have a lot to add to the field of research, but many don't make it there" in response to the findings. The second study was titled "The Relationship Between Psychotherapy Practice and Research: A Mixed-Method Exploration of Practitioners Views" (Bager-Charleson, et al., 2018b), reflecting an interest in both novice and senior therapists' general experiences from research, across different training programmes within and outside the UK.

This paper will explore the implications on research supervision from the findings of the two studies. It discusses an adaptive research supervision model, reflecting a "holding bond" (Stevens, 2015) to support the student to reflexively position her/himself in a personal, intersubjective, theoretical and socio-cultural sense, whilst "negotiating the tension" (Lee, 2008) between a functional aim, a process of enculturation into the discipline, and also fostering critical thinking and emancipation to contribute new knowledge.

2 | RESEARCH SUPERVISION IS A SURPRISINGLY UNDER-RESEARCHED AREA

Little is known to date how supervisors "go about their supervision", as Bruce and Stoodley (2013) suggest. The process tends to be accepted as a process "naturally built on the supervisor's own experience" (Lee, 2008), despite the fact that, as Armstrong (2004) suggests, "high failure rates for research dissertations in the social sciences have been partly attributed to student dissatisfaction with supervision and poor student–supervisor relationships" (p.134). As a programme leader, trainer, and research supervisor for over thirty years, on Educational, Counselling, Psychotherapy and Counselling Psychology programmes, I resonate with the suggested absence of theory in the field of research supervision, both across disciplines but particularly within the field of counselling and psychotherapy.

3 | LITERATURE REVIEW ABOUT RESEARCH SUPERVISION

When approaching the topic via the collective search engine EBSCO leading onto PsychINFO, PsycARTICLES/Psychology and Behavioral Sciences Collection, the term "Research Supervision" received 28 responses about *research* supervision, with the rest referring to articles about *clinical* supervision. Out of the 28 research supervision-related responses, only four texts related to psychotherapy (Jervis, 2012; Walker, 2009). Out of these four responses, only Jervis (2012) represented a peer-reviewed journal article.

Jervis (2012) explores the psychoanalytic concept of "parallel processes" as part of the research development:

> Describing how my own supervision while I was studying for a PhD informed my research, I suggest that reflexivity can be usefully applied to academic supervisory relationships. By regularly reflecting on everything that happens between them, especially anything unusual, psycho-social researchers and their supervisors might discover previously unrecognized material, enhancing research findings.
>
> (p. 296)

Moving beyond the EBSCO search leads to further relevant research. Stevens' (2015) study into research supervisors' experience is particularly relevant, as it focuses on Professional doctorates in Psychotherapy for accredited counsellors and psychotherapists, which is the focus of this paper. Stevens' (2015) findings suggest an alliance or "bond" between supervisor and supervisee: "with the advisee holding the goal of completing their project, and the advisor supporting and guiding … within a relational contract" (p. 45). The supervisors refer to their "primary role [as] to support the candidate in developing and pursuing their own particular area of [practice-related] concern." (p. 38)

Returning to the intial search, the remaining articles accessed via EBSCO referred to education (23) and medical health (1) studies. An

overriding theme was the quality of the relationship between academic research supervisors and their students. Armstrong (2004) refers to research supervision as an important determinant of successful and timely postgraduate degree completion. Many functions have been deemed important in facilitating this alliance. Roach, Christensen and Rieger's (2019) study draws from 570 postgraduate students who completed 10 choice tasks comprising 16 attributes, each with three levels, using a partial profile design. Results revealed three key findings: (a) students valued academic integrity, constructive feedback, open communication, and bonding as the most preferred supervisory attributes; (b) student preferences were similar regardless of background differences; and (c) students preferred supervisors who fostered caring/supportive relationships over those who focused more strictly on instrumental functions. Roach et al. concluded that the results suggest"that supervisors and training programs should focus on the interpersonal aspects of supervision and supporting the psychosocial needs of students". Lee (2008) also emphasises the importance of a quality relationship. She refers to research supervision as containing the tension between different phases ranging from "enculturation" with the student becoming a member of the disciplinary community, whilst at the same time developing critical thinking and emancipation to gradually develop towards new knowledge. This implies that the stages follow a kind of research life cycle, starting with immersion in the discipline and gradually moving across literature review, methodology, participants, ethics, analysis and write-up, whilst balancing enculturation with emancipation.

Nultya et al. (2009) offer a good overview of research in the field, suggesting that "experience, an ongoing professional commitment to development, and engagement with reflective and reflexive practice, all represent hallmarks of excellence" (p. 696). Kleijn, Meijer, Brekelmans, and Pilot (2015) refer to the importance of "adaptive research supervision" to describe support strategies to meet students' needs in light of the goals of their different tasks. The notion of "adaptivity" is explored by interviewing supervisors about diagnosing student characteristics in order to determine students' needs and concurrent adaptive support strategies. The findings suggest that support strategies can be adapted to the needs of students by "explicating standards, quality or consequences, division of responsibilities, providing more/less critical feedback and sympathising" (p. 123).

4 | THERAPISTS AND RESEARCH

As suggested through the upcoming references in the literature review, whilst clinical supervision is an intrinsic element of therapist development, research supervision tends to be a neglected area. References have in fact been made to a discernible tension between psychotherapy practice and research. Goldfried and Wolfe (1996) described the relationship as a "strained alliance". Tasca (2015) refers to a "practice–research divide, which is widely acknowledged as a problem in psychotherapy" and Henton (2012) has suggested

that psychotherapy and research are often characterised as "opposing domains". An almost dichotomous relationship between psychotherapy practice and research is also identified by Darlington and Scott (2002). In referencing what they called the "researcher–practitioner split", they note the different language that is used to describe psychotherapy and research. In a word-association experiment, practitioners described research as "objective, hard, cold, scientific, factual, time-consuming, difficult, prestigious, tedious, expert", whereas practice was seen as "subjective, busy, messy, difficult, soft, warm, pressured, flexible" (Darlington & Scott, 2002, p. 4). Taubner, Klasen, and Munder (2016) suggest that the relationship between clinical research and practice is "compromised by reciprocal criticism and prejudice". A problematic dynamic between psychotherapy practice and research has been also voiced in terms of therapists historically having rarely initiated research (Norcross & Prochaska, 1983), or that therapists do read research "but not as often as researchers do" (Boisvert and Faust 2005; Beutler et al., 1995; Morrow-Bradley & Elliott, 1986). Others have suggested that therapists rely more on discussions with colleagues than on research (Norcross & Prochaska, 1983) and that their research often stems from a seemingly unstructured integration of knowledge gained from workshops, books, and theoretical articles (Beutler et al., 1995) so that therapists' knowledge around research can be described as "patchy" and is often associated with topics of personal interest and that therapists are more informed by clinical experience, supervision, personal therapy and literature than by research findings (Morrow-Bradley & Elliott, 1986; Safran et al., 2011). To sum up, from studies particularly represented by researchers with a background in psychology and psychiatry it has, as Castonguay et al. (2010) put it, been "well established that the practice of many full-time psychotherapists is rarely or non-substantially influenced by research" (p. 349). This resonates with what Bondi (2013) refers to as a "gap between" therapeutic practice and research. There are many angles to this "gap", but the focus on how to draw from embodied responses as sources of knowledge illustrate one form of overlap. There is relatively little written about therapists' relational, emotional or embodied response during research. Takhar (2009) emphasises the value or "emotional entanglement" in research. Etherington (2004), Tordes (2007), Anderson and Braud (2011), Josselson (2013), Willig (2012), Hollway & Jefferson (2000), Finlay (2016) and Gendlin (1997) are also contrbuting to theory in this field. Finlay refers, for instance, to data analysis as an "attuned inquiry" (Finlay, 2016, p. 30), characterised by stages of "empathic dwelling" (p. 30). She draws on "bodily experience as a way of tuning into ... participants to achieve both a kinaesthetic and emotional sensing of the other" (p. 23). Gendlin (1997) refers in similar ways to the process of "staying with" the "body-feel" as a significant means of generating new understandings:

> by letting it come, I allow my body-feel to stir, to move, to do whatever it does independently of my deliberate control, while I do employ by deliberate control to keep the situation, the relevance [...] Once it has shifted, one can speak or act not just in the countless

unsatisfying ways always available, but in a focused way that will carry forward what it implies...

(p. 123)

Ellis and Tucker (2015) suggest that striving for a "disentanglement" of emotions—rather than including "emotional entanglement" as part of the enquiry, reflects a "scientisation of psychology which has to some extent repressed its emotional history" (p. 180). Boden, Gibson, Owen and Benson (2016) suggest that "[w]ithout the emotional dimension of a personal story, understanding becomes difficult, spoken words become separated from what the listener understands [...] to understand human experience, we must understand emotional experience ..." (p. 178). These more constructivist approaches to embodied and emotional knowledge are complemented by social constructionist perspectives such as Ellington's (2017) feminist and post-structuralist study into "embodiment in qualitative research." She writes: "Research begins with the body. Although some researchers remain unconscious of it (or deny it) embodiment is an integral aspect of all research... I am a body-self making sense with, of, and through other embodied people and our social worlds" (p. 196). The autoethnographic researcher Spry (2001) has offered a strong critique of a historic dualist approach in the process of knowledge acquisition where "we still sever the body from academic scholarship" (p. 724). Spry adopts a feminist outlook with an emphasis on "enfleshment" and asserts that the "the living body/subjective self of the researcher ... as a salient part of the research process to study the world from the perspective of the interacting individuals" (p. 711).

5 | THERAPISTS' EXPERIENCE OF RESEARCH

This discussion about therapists' positioning and involvement in research prompted our own enquires into therapists' own experiences of research field. Between 2016 and 2019, we conducted, as mentioned, two studies into the area of "therapists and research," focusing on accredited counsellors' and psychotherapists' views about doing research. This paper explores the implications on research supervision from the findings of the two studies.

> Therapists have a lot to add to research, but many don't make it there...

Our first study (Bager-Charleson, et al., 2018a) was titled "Therapists have a lot to add to the field of research, but many don't make it there" in response to the findings. The study was conducted within a Narrative Research framework, based on dissertations (n = 50), interviews (n = 7) and research journals (n = 20) across 19 cohorts and years. It identified three stages of therapists' engagement with research including "feeling overwhelmed", "developing coping strategies" and "feeling illuminated, personally and professionally" through research. Focusing on the stages generally referred to as "data analysis" revealed a high level of stress, often coupled with shame and confusion; "I underestimated the data-analysis" said one therapist, "you're desperately trying to find themes and codes and things but, actually, this is somebody's life". Most therapists aimed to keep a relational focus and to draw from their embodied and emotional responses as sources of knowledge, as in clinical practice, and supervision supported this reflexive process. Many expressed surprise over how little value this epistemic positioning appeared to have in the general discourse about "research", for instance in regular research textbooks and journals. Research supervision was referred to as a crucial aspect of the turning point from negative to positive. One therapist stated that, "I certainly had not expected this experience when I embarked on the research and was taken completely by surprise [...] not only did I need supervision in dealing with writing a doctorate, working with challenging material, but also I needed personal therapy to separate out my issues from those of the victims". The study gave a broad pool of data, but was limited to one doctoral programme. The following study reflected the interest in a broader view and was titled "The Relationship Between Psychotherapy Practice and Research: A Mixed-Method Exploration of Practitioners Views" (Bager-Charleson, et al., 2018b). It reflected an expansion of previous study with its interest in both novice and senior therapists' general experiences of research, across different training programmes within and outside the UK. This study included a survey (n=92) and interviews with volunteers from the study (n=9). Some key questions in the study were; How do therapists describe their relationship to research?; To what extent do therapists feel that their own research is valued?; To what extent does research inform therapists' clinical practice? In summary, not feeling encouraged at work to do research was a recurring theme. One therapists who worked in the NHS said "The scientists and researchers I work with; they know they have a career in research—you get rewarded and promoted. That kind of recognition doesn't exist in therapy".

Research supervision was described as a crucial coping/support strategy, and for at least four reasons:

1. Supervision helps to link research with practice in therapy work, practically and epistemologically.
2. Supervision "contains" and helps to make sense of and use transformative learning as part of the findings.
3. Supervision supports the balance between "enculturation" and critical thinking and emancipation.
4. Supervision supports the integration of and reflexivity in personal and professional development, aligned with requirements for personal, theoretical and socio-cultural self-awareness and use of self in therapeutic practice.

1. Supervision helps to link research with practice in therapy work, practically and epistemologically.

Findings from both our studies (Bager-Charleson, et al., 2018b; Bager-Charleson, et al., 2018a) suggested that therapists often felt misunderstood and unsupported at work in their research.

Some worked in the NHS and reported feeling "disconnected with evidence-based research", suggesting a distinction between their clinical and their research-based epistemological positionings. One therapist (Peter, in Bager-Charleson, et al., 2018a) said;

> I work in the NHS. Being a psychotherapist can feel like being a second-class citizen within the NHS [...] Cognitive, neuro, biological, outcome measures – there's a whole bunch of people I can contact and speak to at work. But I'm not working within those approaches … I struggle with the idea that emotions are measurable, and that I need a scientific practice differently. I work relationally, phenomenologically, and psycho-dynamically.

Others reported how, in charities for instance, research was regarded as a luxury or means of "showing off" and would become their "guilty hobby". Therapists referred to stereotypes among colleagues about researchers as selfish, detached and removed, highlighting how they, as counsellors, felt "caught in a race to the bottom to help the disadvantaged" expected to be "nurturing, giving, sacrificial". One therapist reported being told by her manager to "stop taking courses" because she "was already overqualified" in her work as a counsellor. Research became something to hide, exaggerating a sense of loneliness and "lost-ness". Supervision played a significant role to "enculturate", the process where the student becomes a part of the disciplinary community Lee (2008).

2. Supervision "contains" and helps to make sense of and use transformative learning as part of the findings.

The process of enculturation develops in tension (Lee, 2008) with the development of critical thinking. To adopt new perspectives - from the literature review onwards, were often quite literally referred to as a painful experience. Research involves transformative learning which prompts the researcher to "let go" of prior certainties. One therapist (Peter) described the "far-from-easy letting go of aspect of life which have felt like certainties" and how, during stages involving "pain and fear":

> …undertaking research into areas which are deeply meaningful and important to us as people, not just as academics, lays us open to challenge and struggle at very deep levels. To my mind, they represent an existential struggle with fundamental concepts or building-blocks of what it means to be human; a far-from-easy letting go of aspect of life which have felt like certainties and an opening up to anxiety and learning to live with it without the need to simply resolve it. Fundamentally, my embodied experience – the pain and the fear – have left me much more

> aware of how easily we/I seek solid ground to live on, when actually there may be no such solidity. Learning to live with uncertainty and possibility is potentially liberating.

3. Supervision supports the balance between "enculturation" and critical thinking and emancipation.
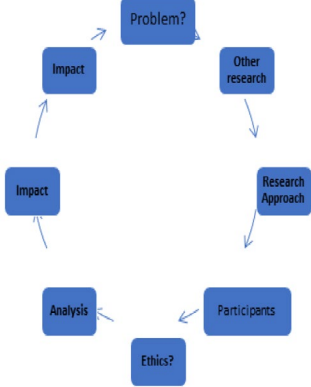
Continuing on the theme of how transformative learning can cause pain, our findings showed how many experience confusion with regards to the "sheer amount of information". One therapist said, "I was sat in my study, with hundreds of quotes/cards strewn across the floor, and a deep sense of foreboding [with] literally had no idea of how I was going to shape to a coherent, elegant, 'whole'". He described: "I began to feel overwhelmed by the material coming in, by its sheer volume …I would sit up in bed and feel panic. The sensation of my heart skipping a beat, or suddenly racing, was very scary. [I]t was also shaming – something I didn't talk to with anyone in case they would think I was being ridiculous, or that I should give the research up if simply reading books was giving me such high levels of stress". Being trained to observe self-awareness and adopt responsible self-care (Adams, 2012; Adams, 2014), research responses seemed to take therapists by surprise. Several therapists reflected on a lack of framework to understand their emotional responses to their attempts to analyse participant interviews. One therapist stressed that "the impact of the written word" could be "very disorientating". Therapists referred to a sense of desorienation with regards to their emotional involvement. One therapist said:

> To read verbal words on the written page as you read particularly when they're very personal… so rife with emotional content and splitting, and you know, polarities and mess and shame, and, you know… What do you do with that? How do you find an expression?

Supervision was essential here. One therapist said, "My immersion in their stories [made it] difficult to 'let go'. I was overwhelmed by mixed emotions. I found myself laughing at some and crying at others".

Some noted a sense of "binging" or sense of deliberate "self-harm" when engaging with an overwhelming amount of data, with symptoms ranging from sleep deprivation to palpitations and anxiety attacks. One therapist stated that "I really did eat, sleep and breathe the research". Many therapists described losing a sense of self. As one therapist described, "I became stuck at the structural level of data analysis. I had played in the words so much I lost sight of the body". Supervision was described as a crucial coping/support strategy both for an understanding about what to anticipate during doctoral studies in terms of work load and planning, but also as an opportunity to explore the emotional aspects of their research work. Many referred to valuable support for reflection and reflexivity (Finlay, 2016; Wright, 2018). One therapist

FIGURE 1 Stages and roles of supervision

Supervisory relationship - cared for	Functional – establishing project management	Supervisory relationship - enthused
Emancipation - where the student is encouraged to question and develop themselves	Research 'life-cycle', including personal, theoretical, intersubjective and socio-cultural reflexivity.	Enculturation – entering into a disciplinary community;
Supervisory relationship inspired and cared for	Critical thinking - questioning and analysing the work	Supervisory relationship - inspired

felt encouraged to work creatively in her research, to access both her own and participants' lived experiences. Others adopted a personal development angle, and aimed to learn about their own responses, as in clincial practice (Adams, 2014; Wright, 2018). One therapist captured its value with these words, "The research tapped into my fears around failing, and supervision helped me to understand and contain those feelings". Another therapists said

> I was crying, and my supervisor totally got me; she'd tell me to go and hug a tree on the common. She was on my side, and grounded me when I needed it.

A fear and vulnerability around failure was, however, articulated by a substantial number of therapists who avoided talking about their somatic responses. Transformative learning includes critical thinking, with increased expectations to contribute with new knowledge (as typical for doctoral level research). This was often described as overwhelming, and as something where supervision played a significant role – to contain, but also to open up up for indendence and change.

4. Supervision supports the integration of reflection and reflexivity in personal and professional development, aligned with requirements for personal, theoretical and socio-cultural self-awareness and use of self in therapeutic practice.

The accredited therapists approached in this sense often research in a for clinical training and practice congruent way, retaining a focus on self-awareness. One therapist said; "The research tapped into my fears around failing, and supervision helped me to understand and contain those

feelings". Many referred, as mentioned, to the importance of both personal therapists and research supervisors to understand more deepseated obstacles. One therapist stated, as mentioned in the previous section, that, " I now realised that not only did I need supervision in dealing with writing a doctorate, working with challenging material, but also I needed personal therapy to separate out my issues from those of the victims". This links into the previously mentioned "grounding" kind of support, which is also referred in the title of this paper in terms of "[M]y supervisor totally got me... she was on my side, and grounded me when I needed it".

6 | DISCUSSION: SUPPORT WHEN RESEARCHING THE LIVED EXPERIENCE

The practitioner-researcher often tends to grapple with the meaning of evidence in evidence-based theory and practice. As mentioned, one NHS practitioner grappled with outcome research opportunities at work and often felt lonely: "Being a psychotherapist can feel like being a second-class citizen within the NHS [...]I work relationally, phenomenologically, and psycho-dynamically [...] Cognitive, neuro, biological, outcome measures—there's a whole bunch of people I can contact and speak to at work. But I'm not working within those approaches". Other therapists echoed uncertainties surrounding epistemological overlaps and differences between practice and research, and research supervision could both support enculturation and emancipation to contribute to new knowledge. Kleijn, Meijer, Brekelmans, and Pilot (2015) refer to the importance of "adaptive research supervision" to describe support strategies which meet students' needs in light of the goals of their different tasks. The findings

in our studies resonate with the need for "adaptive" research supervision, guided by what Stevens (2015) refers to as a "holding bond" to link and develop practice through the research—both in a practical and an epistemological sense. The research supervision can support the student in positioning her/himself reflexively in both an academic, theoretical sense but also in a personal, intersubjective and socio- cultural sense during different stages of the research. The data analysis phase tended to benefit from attention to all facets of reflexive use of self. Lee's (2008) "aspects of tension" create a helpful framework to conceptualise the research process from the formulation of a practice-related problem to the completion of a study. The formulation and the anchoring of the research problem in practice, followed by systematic exploration of research literature, a broad consideration of research "lenses" or methodological lenses to consider the question through, ethical thinking, engagement with participants, data analysis and the write-up; these are aspects which put different reflexive foci to the forefront. As suggested in Figure 1 the supervision supports this reflexive development whilst "negotiating the tension" (Lee, 2008) between functional aims, enculturation, critical thinking and emancipation where the student is encouraged to both analyse systematically and synthesise creatively with a contribution of new knowledge in mind.

7 | LIMITATIONS

Whilst supervision is an intrinsic, obligatory component of clinical practice, research supervision is a less-discussed aspect of therapist development. The two studies discussed here do not expand on the relationship between practitioner–researchers and research supervision *directly*, for instance, in the context of actual research progress or completion. The concerns practitioners discussed generally related to doing research, with research supervision discussed indirectly. Armstrong (2004) asserts, as mentioned, that "high failure rates for research dissertations in the social sciences have been partly attributed to student dissatisfaction with supervision and poor student-supervisor relationships" (p. 134). We would be interested in exploring this further through research focusing specifically on research supervision from the start. Our aim for future studies would be to explore the relationship between research progression and research supervisory relationships during different stages and across different doctorates for counsellors and psychotherapists, for instance, as part of theory-building research in this still under-researched field.

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