“Financial Advice or Emotional Containment? Exploring the Real Role of the Financial Advisor”

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ABSTRACT:

The role of financial advisers has conventionally been viewed as delivering efficient financial recommendations in the pursuit of economic maximisation for clients. However, the literature observes that the investment decision process is fuelled with anxiety, with retail investors experiencing various behavioural and emotional influences often hindering the ability or desire to take appropriate financial decisions (Bilias et al., 2010). We use interpretative phenomenological analysis to study semi-structured interviews with advised individuals. Our research calls upon psychoanalytic theory to examine an additional role of the financial adviser: An ‘Emotional Container' for his/her clients’ anxiety.

We find that advised investors experience anxieties – both in respect of their adviser relationship and with personal financial matters more broadly. Participants seek the emotional support from their advisers through emotional containment and relational holding in order to alleviate these anxieties and to effectively develop their own interactions with financial matters.

Our results contribute to existing theory by providing a rich insight to support existing theory within the personal finance domain and applying psychoanalytic theory to better understand the lived experience of financial advice.

Keywords: financial advice, individual investors, portfolio recommendations, anxiety, containment.
1. INTRODUCTION

Do individual investors turn to financial advisors for financial advice or emotional containment? This is an important consideration because the theoretical purpose of financial advisors is conventionally viewed as existing to guide individuals through the complex investment landscape and recommend how best to invest their wealth to secure their financial futures.

However, for many, the investment decision process is fuelled with anxiety (Loewenstein et al., 2001) and inertia sees people refraining from making active investment decisions or investing all together (Bilias et al., 2010). There is an inevitable tension between ‘rational’ analysis and ‘irrational’ emotional influences making people inherently biased in their investment decision-making behaviour (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974) to the detriment of portfolio returns (Barber & Odean, 2001) and retirement income (Madrian & Shea, 2001).

These people may turn to financial advisors with the expectation that they improve the investment decisions they would have made on their own. However, the research evidence suggests that, in practice this expectation can be illusional. There is a dearth of evidence that the returns on the investment portfolio recommended by financial advisors are greater than those that investors manage by themselves (Hoechle, Ruenzi, Schaub, and Schmid, 2017). Professional advisors are no more successful at managing their own investments. Instead, they hold similarly underperforming mutual funds as those they recommend to their clients (Foerster et al., 2017).

In an entertaining story, Kahneman (2011) describes his experiences analysing the annual returns over eight years of portfolios managed by twenty financial advisors for wealthy individual investors.¹ Specifically, Kahneman describes the (intertemporal) total lack of correlation in return from one year to the next of the portfolios that their clients hold to the astonishment (disbelief / denial) of the advisors.

¹
Therefore, individual investors and financial advisors alike are at best inconsistent and at worst incompetent at selecting investments. This is despite how financial advisors have access to portfolio modelling tools, receive training on portfolio theory and optimisation and in contrast with the beliefs of their employers, financial markets regulators and clients about their abilities to create optimised portfolios that earn superior returns.

On this basis then, financial advisors appear to underperform in their conventionally understood purpose. However, the conventional view ignores the importance of the interpersonal relationship between the financial advisor and their client. This is implicitly recognised in the finance literature. The mere presence of a social relational interaction encourages increased stock market participation (Guiso et al., 2008; Hong, Kubik, and Stein, 2004; Lu and Tang, 2019), investment in new asset classes (Hong et al., 2004), and where trust is present investors are able to hold assets with a higher risk and return profile (Gennaioli, Shleifer, and Vishny, 2015).

The ability to hold close trusting relationships is fundamental for people’s psychological wellbeing. In psychoanalytic theory the ability to trust derives from the experience of the capacity that the primary caregiver has to make their infant feel safe, i.e., the ontology of relational holding (Winnicott, 1965), and the caregiver’s ability to act as container for the infant’s incoherent unconscious thoughts and feelings (Bion, 1962).

Anxiety is endemic to the human condition. Paradoxically, investors who are anxious about their (financial) futures might be just as concerned with being held in a relationship that can contain their difficult feelings as they are in investment returns, and the most successful advisors may be those who provide a safe space holding environment and deliver sound portfolio recommendations. Therefore, and similar to the relationship between a psychotherapist and the patient, it might be difficult for investors to receive and follow advice unless they feel that they can trust their advisors to hold safe their innermost anxieties.

To date, financial advice has been examined in relation to its effectiveness in evaluating the investment needs and the personal risk tolerance of individual investors and how it improves the investment decisions they would otherwise have made in isolation. According to economic theory financial advice is an agency relationship (Ross, 1973), where the investor, i.e., the principal, engages the advisor, i.e., the agent, to who they pay a fee for receiving investment information and recommendations. The effectiveness of financial advice has thus been
considered in relation to how well the principal – agent relationships is working with regards to maximising the economic utility of the investor (i.e., the principal) and the economic utility of the advisor (i.e., the agent).

The advisor is required by the financial markets regulator to demonstrate the suitability of the recommendations that they make (REF). The normative understanding of financial advice is therefore rational, and it is considered axiomatic that the advisor’s role is to guide their clients through the investment decision making process following prescribed metrics and portfolio theory. This approach is followed by advisors for attracting new clients, a process in which they lure prospective clients by demonstrating their investment product range and their fee adjusted portfolio returns relative to other advisors and benchmark portfolios. Rationally, this is of interest to their clients because it is by converting cash into investment portfolios which generate the highest level of fee adjusted return for their given level of risk, that investor gain the opportunity to increase their future wealth positions. Perhaps because of this, it is widely believed that this information is exactly what prospective clients value from their advisors. It is also to through this lens that the literature has tended to evaluate financial advice in relation to how it improves or worsens portfolio diversification (Kaustia, Alho, and Puttonen, 2008) and performance (Hackethal, Haliassos, and Jappelli, 2012) within a rational economic framework.

Therefore, to a large extent, the psychological aspects of the relationship between financial advisors and their clients remain underexplored. However, studies show how individuals with lower levels of confidence in their investment abilities are more likely to seek advice than those with high levels of confidence (Kramer 2016) and that trust in the social interaction is beneficial to investor decision making (Guiso, Sapienza, and Zingales, 2008) by increasing stock market participation and encouraging investment in new asset classes (Hong et al., 2004). It is therefore possible that individuals turn to advisors for emotional support as well as to receive investment recommendations.

Therefore, it is possible that the role of the financial advisor as a rational agent is an illusion, akin to how Kahneman (2017) describes how financial advisor portfolio manager skills as illusive. The role might fit better as an affective relationship that deals with client anxiety. We inform our study on the psychoanalytic theories from Bion and Winnicott about relationships as psychological containers that provide safe holding environments to manage difficult feelings
about uncertainty. In this light we think about how the financial advisor relationship is not merely an agency relationship and that clients are not only interested in returns but want to be held and therefore the relationship needs to satisfy a broader range of needs. Instead of managing their own investments - and perhaps the difficult feelings associated with making investment decisions - individuals may turn to financial advisors for assistance.

Relationships between people are complex processes which involve feelings and projections, studied in depth in psychoanalytic theories (Clulow, 2007). Yet, despite their presence in the interactions between investors and advisors, how clients experience the relationship with their financial advisor remains unexplored in the literature about financial advice which is more usually informed by agency theory.

Therefore, drawing on psychoanalytic theory and building on recent work about how professional relationships in fund management can act as a container for managing financial anxiety and feelings of being understood by Taffler et al., (2017), the present study makes an important contribution to the literature by exploring the first-hand experiential accounts of use advised clients when talking about the relationships that they have with their financial advisors.

We investigate the tension between the financial advice as a rational agent relationship and financial anxiety. We explain our findings by drawing on psychoanalytic theories about trusting relationships as psychological containers that can hold and alleviate anxiety, i.e., Bion and Winnicott and provide the client centric perspective on this relationship.

We conduct our study by undertaking in-depth interviews with a unique sample of 19 individual investors who are clients of a medium sized UK wealth management institution. The UK is the fourth largest host to millionaires globally, 73% of who engage financial advisors and is therefore a suitable market in which to study the financial advice needs of wealthy individuals with relevance to other jurisdictions where with rife wealth inequality (Credit Suisse, 2020; Financial Conduct Authority, 2018). With previous research about financial advice focusing on mass affluent investors individuals with less than US$100,000 to invest (Bhattacharya et al., 2012; Foerster et al., 2017; (Hoechle, Ruenzi, Schaub, and Schmid, 2017), we provide insight into an important, yet understudied demographic of wealthy advised investors in the UK who have at least £500,000 in investable assets.
Using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) of semi-structured interviews, we investigate if individual investors turn to financial advisors for their portfolio management skills or for emotional support.

We contribute to the literature about financial advice by introducing a client-centric view of financial advice which extends current knowledge beyond the assumptions that clients merely seek financial advice which produced portfolios with the optimal fee adjusted returns given their personal risk tolerance. Our results highlight that the investor – financial advisor relationship is more complex than previously thought with evidence that the support that clients seek from their advisors go well beyond portfolio recommendations and cognitive processing of financial information which follows rational economic theory.

Our findings make an important contribution to the literature about financial advice … Furthermore, our study bears relevance to the wealth management industry that needs to increase its emphasis on the ‘soft’, relationship management skills of the financial advisors who they employ.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Financial Advice

Financial advice exists as an intervention to guide individual investors through the complex investment landscape. In return for their services advisors charge their clients a fee, often estimated as a percentage of the amount of assets under their management. The financial markets regulator, i.e., the Financial Conduct Authority (‘FCA’), regulates the activities of financial advisors in the UK. In these situations, an agency relationship is formed where the principal, i.e., the investor, delegates decision-making authority to the agent, i.e., the advisor, who is expected to apply rational decision-making criteria in order to recommend optimal portfolios suitable for the client’s risk tolerance and personal goals (Sappington 1991). Advisors therefore have the important responsibility of ensuring that their clients invest their wealth to secure their retirements and, for their wealthier client to secure the financial wellbeing of future generations and other endeavours available only to those with excess wealth.

It is accepted by regulators and more generally that, based on prudent investment principles derived from Markowitz (1952), Merton (1969) and Samuelson (1989), observable individual
characteristics contribute to the risk preferences of an investor. Risk, often expressed as standard deviation, is the possibility that returns can be positive or negative and is something that investors need to withstand in their quest to increase their final wealth position. Investment portfolios are diversified, often using financial modelling tools (Markowitz 2010), by combining securities (e.g., stocks, bonds and cash) with different standard deviation to decrease the overall portfolio risk. In like with theory, rational clients and their advisors evaluate their own risk tolerance and return requirements to allocate sufficient funds into an optimised portfolio from the efficient frontier (Campbell and Viceira 2003) which has the highest return potential given the level of risk that they are prepared to take. Their investments may be placed in tax efficient wrappers, such as pensions, and are designed to see them through their retirement.

Individuals who turn to advisors to assist with planning their financial affairs and retirement savings do so with the expectation that they will improve the investment decisions that they would have made in isolation. Since advisors possess superior knowledge relative to the investor, they have the ability to influence the risk tolerance of their clients and also the self-directed decision investment that the individual would have made if they were left to their own devices. Through the social interactions with their clients, advisors therefore have the important role to positively influence investor behaviour, e.g., increase their stock market participation (Hong, Kubik, and Stein, 2004) and reduce the biased investment decision making of their clients, to give them the opportunity to increase their future wealth position.

Despite the assumption by the financial regulator and the industry that advisors apply metrics and rational judgments to provide suitable investment recommendations, the literature demonstrates how advisors, just like their clients, deviate from rational decision making and provide biased advice (Glaser, Langer and Weber 2010). Advisors’ expertise, experience, and access to information ought to predispose them to rational decision-making behaviour (Feng and Seasholes, 2005; List, 2011). Nonetheless, although advised portfolio may see a reduction in the investment decision-making bias (Kaustia 2012; Kaustia, Alho, and Puttonen 2008), advisors are shown to be more overconfident than individual investors (Glaser, Weber, and Langer 2010) and to chase returns (De Bondt 1998). Although some research suggest that advisors increase portfolio diversification (Kramer 2012), others show that advised portfolios may carry higher fees, risk and have lower returns (Chalmers & Reuter, 2012) compared to self-directed portfolios. There is naturally a conflict between the economic utility of advisors
and their clients whereby the advisor benefits from increasing their fee income, whilst the
investor stands to gain from optimal portfolio performance. This renders conflicted advisors to
vary their recommendations to maximise their fee income (Sappington, 1991), encourage
overtrading and may make unsuitable investment recommendations (Inderst & Ottaviani,
2009) to their clients for their own economic gain. Other conflicts of interest mean that, instead
of always evaluating which investments are most suitable for their clients, advisors propose
investment funds that they themselves hold in their personal portfolios (Foerster et al., 2017)
and therefore have a high level of familiarity with. These conflicts include a gender bias
whereby advisors judge equivalent male investors to have more control over their investments
than women, and have a tendency to recommend lower risk investments to their female clients
(Baeckström et al., 2018).

Stakeholder goals are incompatible (S. P. Shapiro, 2005) and the measurement of these
incompatibilities has been the main focus in researchers to date. Illustrations of how advisors
take advantage of information asymmetry to provide unsuitable investment recommendations
for their own economic gain (Inderst and Ottaviani, 2012) are plentiful.

Financial advising therefore is not without its problems as it appears that advisors tend to
misjudge the needs of their clients to give biased recommendations. Its benefits may be limited
to encouraging reluctant individuals to increase their future wealth position by investing more
(Gennaioli, Shleifer, and Vishny 2015). Although important for the underinvested
demographic of UK adults, an increased understanding of what wealthy, and therefore usually
advised, investors seek from their financial advisors will aid the development of the financial
dvice model as this continues to extend to different interaction methods and start to be build
up to cater for excluded customer groups is useful.

Few researchers, with a recent exception of Baeckstrom et al. (2021) who document how the
investor-advisor gender combination matter for self-perceived investment knowledge,
confidence and risk tolerance among wealthy women, there is a lack of research that
investigates the client side in the financial advice relationship. Such investigations are
important because trust in financial institutions and financial advice are linked to behavioural
differences among investors who invest less in financial assets when trust levels are low (Guiso
et al., 2008; Agnew et al., 2012).
Wealth inequality extends to financial advice, while a mere 9% of the UK adult population as a whole engage in financial advice this increases to 73% for individuals who are millionaires (Credit Suisse, 2019; Financial Conduct Authority, 2018). Therefore, although such inequality is inequitable and problematic in a society where large segments of the population do not take sufficient responsibility or indeed cannot afford to save for their retirements, wealthy advised investors is a fitting demographic to increase extant understanding of the financial advice process.

2.2. Trust

In financial decision making, trust in the financial advisor – investor relationship act as a barometer for the likelihood of individuals receiving and following advice (Burke & Hung, 2015)

Trust is also shown to be of importance in relationships within the professional domain. For example, the psychological contracts in the buyer-supplier relationships of large corporates are sensitive to breakdown in trust (Hill et al., 2009), trusted leaders have more effective teams and ethical practices (Caldwell et al., 2008) and trust in the patient-physician relationship contributes to improves patient outcomes (Rosser & Kasperski, 2001).

These interpersonal trusting relationships closely related to the concept of Psychological Safety, which was originally introduced in organisational literature to define the security and confidence individuals feel in embracing change (E. H. Schein & Bennis, 1965). Individuals are more likely to feel psychologically safe when the experience trusting and supportive interpersonal relationships, where individuals could fail without fearing the consequences (Kahn, 1990). This relational environment is an important element of one’s ability to develop trust. In turn, a sense of secure attachment to trusted others facilitates one’s ability to become self-reliant (Bowlby, 1988).

2.3. Anxiety and Financial Anxiety

Investor behaviour can be partly understood by how investment risk attitudes may be identified as based on emotions, rather than rational evaluations (Loewenstein et al. 2001), with complexity and uncertainty likely increasing the strength of the emotional experience (Forgas 1995).
Investment risk can be associated with feelings of danger, anger and anxiety (Loewenstein et al. 2001). These feelings are found to be time horizon dependent whereby individuals experience greater anxiety relating to risks that occur in the near relative to the longer term (Eisenbach and Schmalz, 2016), anxiety which increases with perceived complexity (Forgas 1995) and high levels of which are linked to unstable investment preferences (Eisenbach & Schmalz, 2016). Investment decision making inertia pervades society (Kim et al., 2016) and in the UK alone 55% of adults do not feel they understand enough about pensions to make investment decisions (Money and Pensions Service, 2019). These are factors which contribute to a persistent avoidance among people to take responsibility for their personal finances and when they do invest, hold portfolios with less than optimal returns. This has a detrimental impact on retirement income and underfunded retirement provisions are common among many segments of societies for example among women who can have retirement savings that are up to 40% smaller compared to men.\(^2\)

When individuals do engage in investment activity, they are often subject to behavioural influences, which lead them to deviate from selecting investments based on their risk adjusted return following expected utility theory (Köbberling & Wakker, 2005). For example, they tend to be more sensitive to losses than gains (Tversky & Kahneman, 1992). Individual investors may misjudge their own needs and make ‘irrational’ decisions about available investment options (von Gaudecker, 2015) to the detriment of the returns in their investment portfolios.

Research shows that the receipt of financial advice may help individuals overcome anxieties. Using the Financial Anxiety Scale (FAS) and the Emotional Stroop Test (EST), Shapiro and Burchell (2012) link financial anxiety to the avoidance of financial information. Anxiety lowers self-confidence, which increases advice seeking and reliance upon advice. Kramer (2016) documents how individuals who lack confidence in their investment abilities are more likely to seek advice than those with high levels of confidence. Shapiro and Burchell (2012) link high levels of financial stress with an increased likelihood to seek financial advice. Financial advice

\(^2\) See: https://www.pensions-expert.com/DB-Derisking/Pensions-gender-pay-gap-reaches-40-per-cent
therefore can be an important emotional coping mechanism for individuals who are feel unsure and anxious about their financial abilities (Grable & Joo, 1999).

However, the relationship between the emotions individuals experience and their subsequent behaviours is a complex one. Anxiety can provoke individuals to take action, as well as to avoid it. Reflecting on this paradox in change and learning situations, Schein (1993) introduced two types of anxiety; termed Anxiety 1 and Anxiety 2. To embrace change, an individual must experience enough anxiety to necessitate that change to happen (Anxiety 2). Paradoxically, though, change itself provokes anxiety (Anxiety 1). Individuals must overcome this anxiety for effective change to occur. Gerrans et al’s (2017) research may support the notion of Anxiety 2 – finding that people experience anxiety in relation to meeting with financial advisors, which may deter them from seeking advice in the first place.

In experiments exploring non-financial advice seeking, social psychology researchers find that compared to non-anxious individuals, those who are anxious are more likely to seek outside counsel and follow the advice they receive with anxiety dampening self-confidence (Gino et al., 2012). Further, Gino, Brooks and Schweitzer (2012) show that high anxiety levels attenuate information processing and the ability for participating students to recognise conflicts of interest and judge what is good and what is bad advice.

**2.4. Containment and Holding**

Prior research has analysed how fund managers “offload their anxiety” they feel making investment decisions (Taffler et al., 2017). The concept of anxiety can be further examined by calling upon the psychoanalytic theories of emotional containment (Bion, 1962) and holding (Winnicott, 1960).

Winnicott’s notion of a ‘holding environment’ describes the mother-infant relationship, in which the mother provides a physical and emotional setting for, “the infant to live and develop in spite of his being not yet able to control, or to feel responsible for, what is good and bad in the environment.” (1960, p. 585). This creation of a safe place was used within clinical psychology settings do provide a setting conducive to patient development (Winnicott, 1965).
Wilfred Bion (1962, p. 308) introduced the role of emotional containment, which describes the mechanism in which a “well-balanced mother” helps an infant manage their fears by experiencing them in a way that they can tolerate.

Although the principles of emotional containment and holding were established through caregiver-infant relationships, the concepts have been proposed to hold broader applications. Kahn (2001) argues the importance of a workplace holding environment for organisations to meet the needs of security and protection of its employees. French (1997) considers its role within teacher-learner relationships and the requirement for the role of teacher to extend beyond that which imply disseminates information. In his discourse on psychotherapeutic work with couples, Colman describes (1993) marriage itself as providing emotional containment for the parties involved (or the or a marital psychotherapist providing this containment in the absence of a suitable environment existing between marital partners). Krantz (2006) references the important of the containment of anxiety of organisational members for the avoidance of the “destructive consequences” of organisational change.

The containment dynamic involves an object (the container) external to another object (the contained), which influences the contained in some way. The contained also alters the qualities of the container (Cartwright, 2010, p. 9). In the context of this paper, the ‘container’ can be considered as the financial adviser, who contains the client.

The lack of control experienced by financial market participants, where individual actors are not in control of market outcomes, may be considered somewhat analogous to the uncertain, anxiety-inducing environment, which is perceived by the infants, learners and employees identified in previous literature.

3. RESEARCH QUESTION

Theory postulates that financial advisors have a role to encourage individuals to; engage with investments, invest more and to correct the errors (biases) in the investment decisions made by self-directed individuals. However, at the same time the literature shows how the investment decision making process, or avoidance thereof, is fuelled with emotions such as anxiety and fear and that advisors akin to individual investors are prone to biased investing and advice behaviour.
This growing body of literature makes a convincing argument that individuals experience anxiety in relation to a) engaging with their finances, b) making investment decisions, and c) seeking financial advice. With related literature indicating behavioural difference in advice non-financial seeking behaviour and processing of advice and the importance of relational containment in holding anxiety and difficult feelings, motivate the need to further understand the emotional experience of individuals in financial advice settings. It is possible that the investor - advisor relationship acts as a psychological container for difficult feelings associated with making investment decisions.

Therefore, whilst it might be considered axiomatic that the advisor’s role is to guide their clients through the investment decision making process, it is possible that individuals also seek emotional support from their financial advisors.

The unconscious mind responds to uncertainty by trying to get rid of it, project it onto someone else. Babies and children project to the primary caregiver who can contain the difficult feelings. Perhaps investors project to their financial advisors. Your ability to relate to others related to your ability to relate during the early stage of infancy.

We thus investigate the possibility that, despite how the role is understood within this rational framework, the financial advisor - client relationship might, like other close personal relationships, also act as emotional containers that help alleviate clients of some of the anxiety they experience in relation to managing and delegating the management of their investment portfolios. We investigate the tension between the financial advice as a rational agent relationship and financial anxiety. We do so by drawing on psychoanalytic theories about trusting relationships as psychological containers that can hold and alleviate anxiety, i.e., Bion and Winnicott and provide the client centric perspective on this relationship.

Drawing from the psychology literature and related research that document how relationships can act as psychological containers for difficult feelings and how investors experience anxiety and other conflicting emotions in relation to managing their finances we formulate the following research questions:

How do high net worth investors experience the relationship with their financial adviser?
Do individual investors turn to financial advisors for financial advice or emotional containment?

4. METHODOLOGY

We are interested in understanding the underlying – often unconscious – influences of participants’ decisions and experiences. As French (1997) notes, “Those who experience anxiety do not necessarily chose that word to describe their experience”. As such, a linguistic of content analysis was inappropriate, as the richer context within transcripts needed to be captured. Where some qualitative techniques, such as discourse analysis, seek to understand how subjects are describing their experiences, we focus our examinations on how individuals make sense of the experiences.

To align with this key concept in our research, we opted for an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) approach (Smith, 1996) – an established qualitative method informed by phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography (Smith et al., 2009, p. 11), which is particularly suited to examine personal lived experiences. We are also attracted by IPA’s ability to observe how participants’ desires and motivations “manifest themselves or not in behaviour and action” (Eatough & Smith, 2012, p. 181)

Although this approach established itself within the health psychology literature (Smith, 2011), it has since been used in the fields of entrepreneurship (Cope, 2011), occupational and organisational psychology (Millward, 2006) and social psychology (Johnston & Morrison, 2007).

4.1. Sampling and Methodology

The primary researcher worked alongside a medium sized UK-based financial adviser firm to attain access to its clients as research participants.

As in most IPA studies, participants were selected purposely to ensure provide varied examples within an otherwise homogenous group (J. A. Smith & Osborn, 2003). We sought to include voices of a diverse range of clients and hence, wanted our sample to include males and females as well as different employment status and age groups. 19 research participants were selected – all who had at least one year of experience in working with financial advisors.
13 participants were male and six were female. Ten participants were retired and nine were in employment (two part-time, seven full-time). Most participants (12) were between 55 and 64, five participants were under 55 and two were over 65. As illustrated in Table 2, the financial wealth upon which the participants sought advice also varied.

**Table 1: Participant Summary**

An overview of the descriptive information for the 19 participants interviewed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>No. previous advisers</th>
<th>Employment Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Retired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Employed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Retired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Employed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P5</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Employed - part time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P6</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Employed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P7</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Retired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P8</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Employed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P9</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Employed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P10</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Retired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P11</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Retired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P12</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Retired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P13</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Employed - part time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P14</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Employed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P15</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Retired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P16</td>
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<td>Employed</td>
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<tr>
<td>P17</td>
<td>Male</td>
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<td>Retired</td>
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<td>P18</td>
<td>Male</td>
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<td>Retired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P19</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Retired</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2. Methodology and Data

IPA’s roots within symbolic interactionism, which posits that “the meanings an individual ascribes to events are of central concern but are only accessible through an interpretative process” (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008, p. 215), are evidently important – as this epistemological frame aligns with our desire to understand the unconscious experiences of participants. As Eatough and Smith (2012) highlight, interviews afford the researcher with the flexibility to help the participant further explore their lived experiences. As such, a semi-structured interview approach (Gaskell, 2000) was used, as is common in interpretative phenomenological analysis (Howitt, 2016).

18 face-to-face interviews were held with the 19 participants (one interview had two participants (P10 and P11)). These interviews were 60 minutes long on average. These interviews took place during 2016.

Interviews were loosely structured to enable participants to lead discussion and to avoid projection of the interviewers own interpretation. Questions broadly covered; participants’ experience with financial advice and advice-seeking motivations; their perceptions towards financial matters; their relationship with their financial adviser; and their value perception of financial advice.

The first and final questions were consistent amongst participants. Interviews began with the prompt, “Would you mind just talking about your experience with wealth management in
general and how long you’ve been with your current wealth manager?” (interview with P14). Each interview finished with the question, “on this topic of you know, ‘what really matters to clients of wealth advisors?’; is there anything we haven’t covered that you think actually that’s important to you or that might, that might help that we’ve missed off?” (interview with P12). This ensured that participants had the opportunity for further reflection. This final question provided additional insight in a number of cases, including many of the extracts from P14 included in the Results section.

Smith (2011, p. 10) describes IPA as a “double hermeneutic”, whereby the researcher is seeking to make sense of the participant making sense of their experience. To ensure this sense-making process could be effectively facilitated, appropriate interview technique was vital. Biggerstaff and Thompson (2008, p. 217) reference Husserl’s (1999) practice of “bracketing” when analysing transcript data to suspend judgment about the meaning of the text and instead focus on what is actually presented. This principle was also applied within the data collection process by clarifying participant responses during interviews. For example, in interview 1, the researcher queried the P1’s use of a particular metaphor: “You just used the word “cushion”. What do you mean by “cushion”?” The same approach was taken in the interview with P18, where the researcher clarified, “Can you talk about what that, what that means to you in terms of ‘surrendering that control’?” The ability for this process to facilitate participants own sense-making was evident in numerous interviews where individuals explicitly reflected on, and in some cases challenges, their own observations.

4.3. Methods of analysis

IPA is idiographic in nature, where the researcher seeks to understand individual cases in-depth and then extends this analysis to other cases in order to generalise theory. This contrasts with Nomothetic approaches, which identify themes and patterns in the data across multiple cases or data sets (Howitt, 2016, p. 347). This distinction has implications for the analysis process, whereby IPA research considers and interprets each case sequentially before deriving commonalities between them. Figure 1 describes the analysis process undertaken.
**Figure 1: Analysis approach.** Adapted from Cope (2011) and Howitt (2016)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process of analysis</th>
<th>Description of analysis</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Familiarisation</td>
<td>We recorded the interviews with participants’ permission. Each audio recording was manually transcribed by the researcher, which, in support of Bird’s (2005) view, formed a key element of the interpretation process within our analysis. Each transcript was reviewed a number of times in their verbatim form – with the researcher aiming to adopt the participant’s perspective.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immersion and sense-making</td>
<td>Cases were interpreted on an individual basis. As the analysis was performed, short memos were recorded in relation to specific extracts of the text to describe their perceived meaning. The memos were translated into “emerging themes” (Shinebourne, 2011, p. 58). A reflective interpretation of the whole interview was recorded, which generalised themes as well as highlighting any inconsistencies, as suggested by Howitt (2016, p. 353). This enabled the researcher to consider individual themes in the context of the overall experience of the individual, to help validate themes and improve overall understanding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Association/pattern recognition</td>
<td>An analysis of themes across interviews was undertaken to identify common occurrences. A systematic table of themes was produced to facilitate the meta level analysis. Related themes were abstracted to create superordinate categories (J. A Smith et al., 1999). It should be noted that the IPA process is iterative and thus a re-examination of individual transcripts was undertaken to assess whether abstracted themes were common amongst participants or confined to specific cases.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explanation and abstraction</td>
<td>Themes were represented within the inclusion of exact quotations – provided with sufficient context for the reader to make a clear connection between the participants’ own experiences and the identified themes. Building the principles within Smith’s (2011) IPA quality evaluation guide, we ensured that extracts from at least three participants were presented for each theme, alongside a measurement of theme prevalence across the participant base.</td>
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5. RESULTS

Through the iterative analysis of individual cases, combined with the observation of patterns across cases, we were able to distil the client-adviser experiences of participants into three superordinate themes and three subordinate themes, which are discussed within this section.

5.1. Emotions in conflict

To understand the role of emotion in advice engagement, we must acknowledge the complex ways that emotions appear to manifest themselves. We begin by recognising the underlying tensions regarding participants’ experiences. The tensions can be considered as suggestive extracts (J. A. Smith, 2011), by which the participant may not wholly appreciate the meaning they are conveying. However, these examples are conceptually important to our understanding, as they highlight a gap in extant literature and provide the reader with useful context to understand the participants’ experiences.

As discussed, the conventional role of a financial adviser is one of economic maximisation for his or her client through a principal-agent relationship. For economic value to be created above and beyond that which the principal could achieve without advice, the agent must make different financial decisions than would otherwise be made by the principal. After all, if the principal was to make the same decisions without agency intervention, there would be no economic value from this relationship. However, we observe that individuals were willing to pay for advice from those who shared the same views as them. For example, P8 described his desire for advice from “people that probably have quite like-minded views to me, ’cos you buy into people with views that you have”. P13 referenced a related conflict to the conventional economic when considering the measurements of value he derived from financial advice:

“[measuring value is] quite hard to do it in terms of pure financial return, so I don’t do that. I obviously look at the returns I’ve got each year and I’m either pleased or disappointed or whatever, that’s just human nature, but generally speaking, although I’m disappointed it’s not generally disappointed with [my adviser]”
There also appeared to be some form of dissonance amongst participants when acknowledging their own experiences of personal finances. P12 observed that “…the FTSE is, stocks and shares are, basically gambling…” – seemingly acknowledging the uncertainly and uncontrollability of financial markets. However, they also noted that, “what I don’t like seeing as I say, is the thing going down all the time”. Their cognitive awareness appeared to be somewhat in conflict with their emotional preferences.

Another related tension was observed in relation to the concept of emotions as a factor in financial decisions. In P7’s interview, we observed conflicting assessments of the adviser-client dynamic. Towards the beginning of the conversation, P7 clearly stating the emotional needs she experienced and needed to be addressed through engagement with her adviser:

“I think I need a lot more reassurance and that’s probably just me ‘cos I’m on my own, I need the money for income so, I think I’m a little bit more anxious than maybe some other clients are, maybe I need a little bit more reassurance and I should actually probably say that…”

However, she proceeded to describe their client-adviser dynamic as more economically based: “I’m paying a financial advisor to make me money... so that’s what I want them to do. It’s a simple as that. It’s a transaction”.

P1 was more explicit when reflecting upon this tension. She contrasted her professional decision-making ability with her ability to make personal decisions: “I don’t know what it is, it’s like *gasping noise* when it comes to our own money. I don’t know, it’s completely irrational.”. This attributed difficulty was proposed as being “…linked to risks and getting it wrong... and knowing that I’m not very good at just moving on. So you know, for God’s sake, you get some right and some not, just move on. So I don’t want to have to deal with this ‘might have been’ stuff going on”.

5.2. Undercurrent of anxiety

Anxiety, experienced in one form or another, underpinned a number of participants’ experiences with financial advice – either relating to personal finances or relating to their
adviser relationship. In fact, all but three of the participants (P3, 15 and 17) directly referenced some form of anxiety, worry, fear or concern about personal finances (such as P5: “I’m now on my own without any children and so I’ve got to manage my own finances and, yeah, I think it’s quite a scary area”), or indirectly implied it by referencing the opposite emotional state achieved through advice (such as P16, who measured value from their adviser by “being able to sleep at night”)

5.2.1. Multiple forms of anxiety

Although the anxiety undertone was a key theme of the majority of interviews, there were differences in the influences of this emotion. P12 described how she was “worried” at the prospect of getting “to a hundred I won’t have any money left for my own care home or whatever”. Similarly, P11 spoke of his “deep concern on not drawing down too much to make sure we have enough”, arising from a responsibility to make sure that his wife was “looked after, after I’ve passed away”. The role an anxiety here provided a key motivation for seeking financial advice.

We also observed a subjective interpretation of reality resulting in varying levels of anxiety within this joint interview with P10 and P11, where financial wealth was shared between the two individuals. Although in an objectively similar financial position, their experiences were markedly different. References to anxious feelings that P11 made were juxtaposed with a more analytical perspective observed P10, who described her feelings around market movements as “not something we can lose sleep on because we have no power to control world events so fortunately it’s too esoteric to worry about really”. Although the underlying lack of control was experienced, the ramifications of this were subdued compared to their partner. P8 made an interesting characterisation of his emotional relationship with personal finances, acknowledging his “fundamental need is the security.”, and revealing difficulties in fulfilling this need through a lack “emotional capacity” to deal with personal financial matters.

Other observations of the anxious undercurrent surrounding personal finances were less obvious. For example, P1 made interesting reflections on her own motivations for financial advice engagement. The participant questioned the value of paying for advice on her pension assets, considering that she, “could mark up pensions myself, it’s not that complicated. It isn’t really.”. Upon reflection, her engagement with advice appeared to be rationalised in judging
that “...actually, maybe paying... maybe an insurance policy of paying someone for a second opinion, having a backup, having someone to talk it through with...” was worth paying for. This reflection surfaced the direct identifications of the emotional motivation for this ‘insurance policy’, noting that “...it’s quite scary on your own really, actually with no backup”. This example also emphasises the hermeneutic nature of IPA, where the process encourages individuals to make sense of their own experiences. These statements also appear to run counter to the economic maximisation principle discussed in the literature and shows a level of non-economic (emotional) value that the individual receives through advice engagement relationship.

Within the broader context of anxiety, we identify a number of specific references to the adviser relationship. This dynamic appeared to create a tension for participants when engaging in advice. For example, P7 considered the balance between the anxiety they felt engaging in financial advice against the anxiety they felt in relation to broader financial matters without advice.

P7: I’d probably feel more anxious doing it that way [investing on their own] than relying on [CAF], so I sort of reassure myself that way....
... It’s sort of the lesser of two evils”

This state of discomfort was echoed by P8, who questioned, “how do I know the person is real? And how do I know that they’re really ‘gonna look after me?’” and P14, who depicted engagement with an adviser as a “real leap in the dark”.

Some references to anxiety within the adviser relationship were more. For example, although not directly describing their anxiety towards the adviser relationship, P4 described how they had their trust “hard won” by their adviser; implying that the relationship has begun from a position of at least neutrality, if not mistrust. This is understandable, noting that they described feeling “cheated” by their previous adviser.

In addition to anxieties surrounding the specific relationship between client and adviser, we also observed anxiety concerning financial advice engagement more generally. The exhibition of these anxieties differed, but appeared to be based upon common principles about how one should interact with their personal finances. For example, P9 described the responsibility his felt around finances, noting, “I can’t just walk away I think, if I’m not looking after my own
money, that’s not really very dutiful of me to myself”. P12 stated that, “investments and finance and everything else, it’s a terrible confession, are quite, you know, mind, not mind blowing, but I haven’t really taken the time to understand them.”. This “confession” shows the emotional impact that these beliefs can have. In the interview with P18, this belief appeared to be driven by association between social perceptions, reflecting that “at the back of my mind is an element of professional pride. I am a chartered accountant, why the hell can’t I manage my own affairs?”. The contrasting outcome to the social financial responsibility narrative was presented by P16, who described a benefit of financial advice engagement as, “There’s a bit of saying “I don’t have to worry about the future, I’m doing...” It’s almost a bit like being a good schoolboy... I’m doing the right thing.”.

Once again, these emotions run contrary to the rational perspective of advice, which posits that the provision of domain expertise by the advisor to fill a gap in a client’s knowledge or ability would constitute a valid reason for engagement.

5.2.2. Anxiety induced through experience

13 participants (P1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 16) referenced direct or vicarious interaction with financial advice, which appeared to provoke anxiety. A number of these accounts related to their financial adviser or the financial advice industry. P11 described how they “had my fingers burnt” by their previous adviser, which reinforced their belief for holding cash (rather than engaging investment activities). They went on to appreciate how their adviser had “actually handled, you know, my attitude on that and given me the reassurances, and also the results, have demonstrated a successful strategy.”. These reassurances had helped alleviate the anxieties experience by the participant, resulting re-engagement with investing. This “burnt” metaphor was also used by P12, who had “arrived [at current advice firm] having been burnt, severely burnt [by previous adviser]” – resulting in their consideration to “take all my money out and all my pensions all my investments and stick them under the bed”.

In P9’s interview, their anxiety was caused by alternative means than direct advice experience. They suggested that “…one’s experience of wealth managers is generally through media...”. In their case, this mediated experience had caused them to perceived that adviser could be incentivised “…to make money for themselves, not looking after their
client...”. This seemed to form the foundation of their advice experiences references later in the Findings.

In these examples, the anxiety induced through previous experience appeared to discourage advice engagement. However, P5 reported how “there was something went on with Vodafone, and I missed it”. This perceived investment error that she considered herself responsible for was the catalyst for initially contacting her adviser. Thus, we observe some duality in the anxiety-advice engagement relationship.

5.3, Overcoming anxieties

The previous theme provided context for many of the participant experiences we reference. In this sub-section, we abstract how the client-adviser relationship supports the client in overcoming their anxieties.

P8 appeared comfortable with the acknowledgement that they were paying a fee for the alleviation of their felt anxieties. Having initially looked unfavourably at the cost of advice, they reflected that, “I’m actually paying for peace of mind.”. P1 also referenced a similar feeling of, “sleeping easy at night and not worrying about” financial matters through her engagement with advice – proposing that if an individual “they wanted to worry about it all the time they’d do it all themselves.”. Once again, we witness participants’ direct association between advice and emotional support.

Although not overly linking the fees paid with emotional support received, other participants made implicit reference to containment and relational holding experienced. P14 described a particularly volatile situation in which “currency was going crazy, markets were going up” and discussed their desire at that point for, “someone to put an arm round me and say ‘stay with it’”. This emotion management appears to imply an element of both emotional and behavioural value – with the alleviation of the anxiety experience potentially facilitating the participants’ actions of remaining invested.

The image of a holding environment was also conveyed by P16 who described how he felt “safe in [his adviser’s] hands” and P4 who illustrated their adviser relationship as “kind of an uncle looking after you but it isn’t a paternalistic thing, it’s really somebody who I feel a peer relationship with, who has my best interests at heart...”. 
The articulation of the holding environment appeared to have multiple facets. In addition to the holding relationship between adviser and client, which is created through direct interaction, we also observe other mechanisms, which contribute to the required holding environment to enable emotional containment to take place. For example, P8 described how receiving frequent communication allowed him to “stop worrying... ...I just want peace of mind, security, freedom from the detailed decision”. P7 referred how the lack of communication made them feel “a little bit at sea, a little bit at sea...”, which she proposed to be remedied by “a bit of a clearer update every two or three months. I just maybe need my hand held a bit more...”. P7 provided additional specificity to this notion, discussing the importance of her adviser asking appropriate questions and “having the patience to listen [to her responses]”, This supportive environment gave her the “confidence in investing my money with the company and with him”.

In addition to the role of communication in alleviating anxieties, other participants achieved reassurance through social norms. P14 described the uncertainty he felt by being “on your own, on your own little island”. He found it “reassuring” for his adviser to help him answer, “Am I in the pack? Am I out the pack? Am I doing something crazy?”. This was echoed by P16, who expressed, “it’s nice to have that feeling of other clients in a similar position” and noted that they felt comfort knowing they weren’t, “...too left field, too right field [in their financial decisions].”

It was clear that the adviser relationships were an evolutionary process for the majority of participants. Emotional development relating to how participants engaged in financial matters was achieved by through their interactions with their adviser. P12 discussed how she’d become “less afraid of investing in the market” with the help of their two financial advisers. This development was also found within the client-adviser dynamic, with P7 reflecting on their engagement as a “learning process”, which helped her to stop feeling, “you know, am I being stupid asking this question?”.

The nature of emotional supportive provision is of interest. In containment relationships, the Container must be empathic to the Contained’s emotions. This dynamic was indirectly described by P13, who recounted a story of a decision he had made against his adviser’s recommendation:
“And after the event I could see that I was wrong and I basically said, “that wasn’t the smartest move was it?” they didn’t sort of say “stupid idiot”, he sort of said “well, you know, that was you felt was right at the time”.”

This interaction was valued by the participant and enhanced his ability to express his thoughts and opinions to his adviser.

It would be remiss to avoid noting that not all participants depicted a close, personal, contained relationship with their advisor – in particular, participants 3, 5 and 9. P9 portrayed what appeared to be more analytical relationship with personal finances and with his financial adviser - experiencing trust as a facilitative tool of efficient transactions: “Any contract is all based on trust anything you do is effectively based on trust because if you had to go to court to enforce it then nothing would ever happen”. P9 had initially considered the “scandals” faced by the investment industry and notably referenced engaging with a financial advice when “it was necessary to get one” due to the complexity of financial information.

Although P3 did not reference his own underlying anxieties in relation to personal finances, he did describe his wife being “very exercised about very exercised about for example care costs and things like that (God forbid we ever need, but you just don’t know)” and anticipated she would “be very anxious if there was any sense we could possibly run out of money”, appearing to position himself as less emotionally-driven. This was also the case for P15, who, although not describing his own anxieties relating to financial matters, described finances as a “black hole” for his wife and questioned “how are my wife and family going to manage? You’ve got to have that trust.”

5.3.1. Defence mechanisms

In relation to the anxiety experiences is the notion of psychological defence. Various participants shared historic experiences or present attitudes, which appeared to highlight the mechanisms used to avoid anxiety-inducing situations. For example, P2 characterised himself as “not naturally someone who opens up to tell people [what’s important to him]”. P3 discussed the “unconscionable margins” and, later, “the lack of clarity and the lack of transparency” within the investment industry. It is perhaps not a surprise, therefore, that her shared examples of previous psychological defence mechanisms, which appeared to act as a form of protection against this anxiety or mistrust:
P3: I became much more comfortable with at least allowing [CA] sufficient knowledge to let him offer broader advice so that pension investments is a part of a much broader piece now.

Whereas P3 referred to how he became “more comfortable”, other participants clearly preserve psychological defences within their adviser relationship. P5 maintained a sense of control, through frequent communication with their adviser, stating that they would “…hate to hand it all over and say “just get on with it”. This sense of control was also important to P2, who projected a similar analytical tone throughout much of the interview - initially describing his motivation for seeking financial advice as a need to “think more strategically” and be “more efficient” managing finances. However, as the conversation went on, he described the value that his financial adviser provides as being able to ask, “what do I worry about, about the future? Is it about healthcare? Is it about having enough money to live on? Is it about having enough money to pass it onto my kids?”.

6. DISCUSSION

In this paper, we illustrate participants’ experiences in the financial advice-seeking process and examine the role of emotions in respect to personal finances and within client-adviser relationships. What clients really want from their financial advisor does not perfectly correlate with the conventional view of the financial advisor role. Instead, investors also seek emotional containment and anxiety relief, attributes which are not often associated with people in quantitative roles such as financial advice.

The majority of the participants demonstrated presence of affective influence, in a conscious or unconscious manner. This involved a prevalence of as anxiety - displayed in various forms.

The role of the financial adviser in surfacing or alleviating the anxieties that participants feel (particularly in the accounts where participants have a seemingly close adviser relationship) resonates with Bion’s (1962) concept of a container-contained relationship, in which the anxieties and fears of the individual are managed to further their development. In our case, this development culminates in the individual’s ability to invest and to continue to build a sense of trust in the relationship.
According to our research, it appears that the differentiating characteristics of advisors may be a factor of the quality of their interpersonal attributes which clients desire and how well they can contain the clients’ anxieties. This challenges extant assumptions that advisors, who like investors are found to be biased in their advice giving, should simply work on becoming more rational and move towards a ‘robot style’ approach with a sole focus is on providing optimal investment solutions.

Winnicott’s (1960) notion of a holding environment - a safe, physical space in which a mother would confine her child – provides insight to the desired role sought by a number of participants from their financial adviser. Good holding and containment experiences during the earliest development stages form the basis for a person’s ability to form close relationships throughout their lives and allow the relationship to contain their anxieties by placing trust in others. Participants evidenced how the development of trust had enabled them to change behaviours around personal finances and achieve a greater level of comfort with their financial situations, as well as within their adviser relationship.

The notion of anxiety is of “central importance in psychoanalysis” (Moore & Fine, 1990, p. 24). We observe anxieties at the broad level of personal finances, as well relating to the experiences within advice relationships. This aligns with the concept of financial adviser anxiety (Gerrans & Hershey, 2013, 2017). It appears that the anxiety participants feel about financial and/or life matters may motivate them to take advice but engaging in financial advice itself is anxiety inducing. This reflects Schein’s (1993) Anxiety 1 and Anxiety 2 concepts, where the presence of Anxiety 1 (relating to their adviser relationship) appears to reduce participants’ comfort in advice engagement. This is most saliently observed through P7’s reference to financial advice being “the lesser of two evils”.

Klontz and Britt (2012) discuss how the presence of “money scripts” – unconscious trans-generational beliefs about money – can influence individuals’ financial behaviours. A number of the participant experiences discussed appear to reflect this research – particularly referencing the “guilt” felt around personal finances, or the “confession” made at not having the level of financial sophistication that was perceived to be required. However, we also observe a related narratives driving experiences, which could perhaps be considered as ‘advice scripts’. Through multiple experiences, we identify the formation of particular beliefs about the financial advice
industry, incentive alignment, and various other factors, which support participants’ own behaviours in their adviser-client relationship.

The merits of an IPA approach were clear in the ability to make sense of the perhaps unconscious emotions participants experienced. As the findings evidence, we encounter numerous conflicting statements by participants when describing their motivations for advice seeking, the perceived benefits of advice and their relationship with their adviser. The analytical tone tended to evolve to a more emotionally influenced account as interviews progressed. As noted through Park & Sela’s (2018) research, individuals may feel an inherent discomfort when involving emotions in financial decisions. We witnessed examples of this – revealing itself in a form of cognitive dissonance in which participants contradicted their own statements.

7. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The combination of the IPA approach undertaken and the access to the high-net-worth individuals has enabled us to contribute additional insight and evidence to existing theory within the financial literature. We also explore theory from psychoanalysis, which has not been previously applied to this domain.

In contrast to quantitative studies or other forms of qualitative analysis, such as linguistic analysis or content analysis, IPA is more reliant on sense-making by the research. This can raise questions about the validity of the results. Unlike other qualitative methods, IPA tends to draw upon smaller sample sizes, which may raise criticisms. However, this is due to the idiographic nature of the approach and where purposive sampling is aimed at achieving theoretical, rather than empirical, generalisability. (J. A. Smith & Osborn, 2003)

Positionality should be highlighted within our analysis. It is noted that the participants in the sample were all advised by male financial advisors. The interviewer was also male, with a background in the financial advice industry.

Through the analysis in this study, we identify numerous conflicts between the rational economic view of the role of the financial adviser and the emotional support, which appears to
be sought by the majority of the high-net-worth interviewees. However, we posit that this research does not negate the role of the financial advisor as a rational agent, engaged to achieve financial returns for his/her clients. Rather, this role is supplemented by one in which the advisor provides emotional containment and relational holding to their clients to help alleviate their anxieties.

It is clear from the analysis that to address clients’ real needs, their unconscious influences must be understood. Advisors need to be aware of the many anxieties, which clients have shown to possess and be particularly sensitive to those, which may be repressed. It is just as important, if not more so, for advisors to listen to what clients are not talking about, as well as what they are.
8. REFERENCES


