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HOW MIGHT UNDERSTANDING THE COMPLEX DYNAMICS AND

TENSIONS BETWEEN RELATEDNESS AND AUTONOMY

DEVELOPMENT IN ADOLESCENCE INFORM COUNSELLING?

by

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ABSTRACT

HOW MIGHT UNDERSTANDING THE COMPLEX DYNAMICS AND TENSIONS BETWEEN RELATEDNESS AND AUTONOMY DEVELOPMENT IN ADOLESCENCE INFORM COUNSELLING?

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This dissertation explored a multi-layered conceptualisation of adolescent autonomy development and the significance of continued relatedness, particularly with parents and peers. Through exploring these complex processes it was suggested that autonomy and relatedness co-exist being intricately connected. Relatedness was posited as the optimum condition for the autonomy development which may be compromised without the social learning associated with relatedness. Therefore, rather than tension, there is 'duality' between autonomy and relatedness.

This was a non-empirical theory based project which introduces the concept of the Autonomy Triangle (AT) and the Field of Reflexive Contact (FRC). The author argued for professional awareness of the impact of continued relatedness and against traditional perspectives surrounding separation and individuation. Findings were discussed in terms of raised professional awareness, ethical practice and the potential implications for school-based counselling.

Key words: autonomy, school counselling, reflexivity, separation, relatedness, adolescent development,

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To my family for their love, support and encouragement.

And, most importantly, to the many young people

I have had the privilege to be alongside.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

As humankind, living in western society, we exist in a relentlessly busy world which emotionally demands high levels of attentiveness and connectivity through relationships within the family, with friends, through the workplace and through the wider environment. We are driven to be connected and communicating whilst also remaining individual, autonomous and at peace with ourselves and who we are; 'Social being constitutes an irreducible aspect of human existence: we live our lives both in connection with others, and alone within our own private awareness' (McLeod 2009, p.269). This indicates a duality of experience, that we exist alone but also in social connection, autonomous but also in relationship.

Adolescents develop, learn and change rapidly over a short period of time as their relational environment changes too 'It is the period of human development during which a young person must move from dependency to independence, autonomy and maturity' (Mabey and Sorensen, 1995 cited in Geldard & Geldard 2010, p.4). The ebb and flow of the dynamic between autonomy development and relatedness forms an integral part of the adolescents shifting web of connectedness which can have massive implications for positive adjustment.

The aim of this project is to explore and bring professional awareness to the processes by which adolescents develop autonomy and the potential impact of continued relatedness or when relatedness is interrupted. Arguably, autonomy has been largely professionally misrepresented and is given to

'general understanding' or cursory ethical commitment at times. And yet, as a central ethical principle for good practice (BACP 2010) perhaps a more complex consideration of autonomy might be professionally supportive.

Steinberg (2011) suggests simply that; 'Becoming an autonomous person – a self-governing person – is one of the fundamental developmental tasks of adolescence' (Steinberg 2011, p.278). This seems reasonable although autonomy appears infinitely more complex than this and there are so many different perspectives; '…some definitions emphasize *freedom from* the constraints of childhood dependence on others, whereas others focus on the *freedom to* make choices, pursue goals and regulate one's own behaviour, cognition and emotion' (Collins, Gleason & Sesma, 1997; Hill & Holmbeck, 1986, cited in Zimmer-Gembeck & Collins 2003, p.176). From a feminist perspective, Mackenzie & Stoljar (2000) suggest that '…despite the importance of the notion of individual autonomy within contemporary moral and political theory, there is no consensus about what the concept means or when it can be legitimately employed' (Mackenzie & Stoljar 2000, p.5). Thus, these references suggest there is much confusion and misinterpretation surrounding the concept of autonomy. Through this study I aim to bring a measure of clarity particularly surrounding adolescents and with school-based counselling in mind.

I aim to present an innovative approach to conceptualising adolescent autonomy which considers the quality of relational contact between adolescent, parent and peer, creating a theoretical model which may be useful to counsellors and other professionals working with children and young people; I will refer to this triad of relationships as the 'Autonomy Triangle' (AT). Of particular interest to me is the point of relational connection between the

adolescent and other, others or the environment; I refer to this as the 'Field of Reflexive Contact' (FRC). Both of these terms will be explored as an integral part of this dissertation as I defend the importance of remaining connected and in relationship with parents and peers whilst also discovering self, identity, separateness and independence. Thus I will be providing an argument for relatedness, along with professional direction surrounding the process of counselling adolescents whilst they are developing autonomy.

COUNSELLING ADOLESCENTS AND AUTONOMY IN CONTEXT

Working therapeutically with children and adolescents has undoubtedly grown in momentum particularly over the last 10 years. For example, The National Strategy for School-Based Counselling Services in Wales (Welsh Government, 2008), followed by the later evaluation of this strategy (Welsh Government, 2011), both chart the growing awareness of the benefits of accessing counselling. 'There is clear evidence from the outcome data that face-to-face school-based counselling, as implemented in the Welsh Strategy, is associated with significant reductions in psychological distress' (Welsh Government 2011, p.158).

With reference to the conflict within the family environment, the evaluation document highlighted a high prevalence for clients presenting with family based problems across Wales: The Evaluation of the Welsh School Based Counselling Strategy Final Report (BACP 2011, p.14) identified that 38.2% of Clients across Welsh schools had presented with family based issues over 3 years (2008-2011). Despite this being the largest results category there is no clear indication of how many explored issues surrounding adolescent

autonomy development. However, it has been noted that; 'Disagreements over autonomy-related concerns are at the top of the list of things that provoke quarrels between adolescents and parents' (Holmbeck & O'Donnell, 1991 cited in Steinberg 2011, p.278). Arguably then, adolescent autonomy development may give rise to increased friction within the family environment, issues which are then discussed frequently within the counselling relationship.

Few professionals would deny the complex nature of adolescent autonomy development; 'Autonomy in adolescence and across the lifespan is a multidimensional construct that has been conceptualized in a variety of ways over the last decades' (Zimmer-Gembeck & Collins 2006, p.197). The concept of autonomy and professional ethical awareness is clearly relevant to clients of all ages, but I believe these processes have particular relevance to the developing adolescent.

ETHICAL AWARENESS AND THE LAW

Kitchener (1984) identified five moral principles which he felt influenced most ethical thinking: autonomy, non-maleficence, beneficence, justice and fidelity (Kitchener 1984 cited in McLeod 2009 p.509). All five have been adopted as central to ethical practice in many professions including counselling. Remaining with my focus on autonomy, The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP), Ethical Framework for Good Practice in Counselling & Psychotherapy (2010, p.3) requires that members have 'Respect for the client's right to be Self-Governing', to adhere to their right for autonomy. 'This principle emphasises the importance of developing a client's ability to be self-directing within therapy and all aspects of life' (BACP 2010, p.3). This

statement forms an integral part of all counselling training and clearly promotes the support of independent choice and self-direction. Here autonomy is perceived as 'belonging to' the client being 'their ability' and 'their direction'. It is followed by a short description of how this principle can be achieved within ethical practice; how I might 'show' my intention to value my client's autonomy. This principle primarily promotes autonomy granting and fulfils the valuable purpose of promoting counsellor awareness for sound ethical practice but says very little about what autonomy actually is.

Alongside of this established ethical awareness is the consideration of autonomy within case law, highlighting the recognised ability of children and young people to make decisions which might have adverse implications to their lives. Peter Jenkins suggests that; 'Autonomy relates to respect for the client as a self-determining agent, freely capable of making choices and decisions' (Jenkins 2007, p.9). Jenkins follows this by discussing autonomy as '…excised through the concept of informed consent' (Jenkins 2007, p10). From a legal perspective this equates to making decisions about engaging in therapy or not, or choosing a particular therapist, whilst also being able to understand the full consequences of independent decision-making (Jenkins 2007, p.10). Case law now supports children and young people in choosing to be in a therapeutic relationship, as 'full participant status' (Daniels & Jenkins 2000, p.18), although '…the process of judging the child's level of understanding and their capacity to give informed consent remains a problematic judgement for therapists to make' (Daniels & Jenkins 2000, p.22). In other words, children and young people have a right to autonomous decision making as long as the

professionals around them decide they have the 'capacity' or the 'mature understanding' to do this.

This study is not focused specifically on law and ethics but I mention them in passing as they are aspects of autonomy which are most commonly understood by counsellors and they form important boundaries for professional ethical counselling practice. However, ethical awareness will intermittently continue to feature within this dissertation although the concept of 'autonomy' is not merely restrained by how we as professionals, or indeed, as a society perceive the capacity of children and young people in legal or ethical terms. It is far bigger than that and I believe connects with almost every aspect of who we are as individuals, how we choose to exist in the world and how we decide to connect with others.

THE THEORETICAL POSITION DEFENDED BY THIS STUDY

Development of autonomy is no longer arduously appreciated as being about attaining complete separation from the family as was presented in traditional theoretical perspectives. This study supports the relevance of continued relatedness, or continued relationship, and argues against the psychodynamic and later psychoanalytic perspectives of autonomy. This initially suggested that attaining independent functioning involved complete detachment from dependence on parents, often referred to as 'the second phase of separation-individuation' (Blos, 1979 cited in Van Petergem 2012, p.77). In opposition, contemporary research suggests that achieving independence does not '…necessitate severing the ties with parental figures. Instead, it rather involves a transformation of the relationship with the parents'

(Allen, Hauser, Bell & O'Connor 1994; Zimmer-Gembeck & Collins 2003 cited in Van Petergem 2012, p.77). The position I advocate for suggests that '…autonomy and connections to others coexist and influence each other bidirectionally' (Zimmer-Gembeck & Collins 2006, p.184). Being a more systemic, relational stance which recognises how we impact each other through relational contact, or through relatedness, and how we develop autonomously through the duality of simultaneously experiencing relatedness.

CHAPTER CONTENT

Chapter 2 sets the scene with appreciation of the enormity of adolescent transition and the potential place for counselling within this developmental process. This is followed by considering the main approaches to autonomy which are relevant to the expanding discussion. The chapter closes with the introduction of the Autonomy Triangle (AT), a concept which remains central to this dissertation and provides a framework on which theoretical perspectives relating to autonomy can be placed.

In Chapter 3 the relationships which are connected at the 'parent vertex' of the AT are explored including parent-adolescent relatedness and qualities of parenting styles which are supportive of adolescent autonomy development. Attachment, bereavement and loss through separation are also considered in the closing stages of this chapter along with how discussion potentially brings awareness to school based counselling.

Chapter 4 follows on with a discussion of relationships which meet at the 'adolescent vertex' of the AT. This is followed by a further exploration of adolescent relatedness along with themes surrounding developing identity,

both from an individual and a group perspective. Discussion then moves to the role of privacy and how young people make decisions surrounding what to keep to themselves and what to share. This chapter again rounds off with considerations for counselling practice as a result of this exploration.

Chapter 5 introduces the Field of Reflexive Contact (FRC) and explores integration of theory to weave an understanding of this concept. This includes an exploration of reflexivity and the relevance of social learning theories, along with an awareness of adolescent conflict and how this adds to the process of autonomy development.

Chapter 6 brings discussion together in order to address the research question by identifying and discussing implications for school-based counselling practice. These are addressed in three sections: Implications for individual therapy, implications for the counselling role and ethical implications. This dissertation concludes with a final consideration for critical awareness and recommendations for future research.

METHODOLOGY AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This is a non-empirical theory based project exploring different theoretical perspectives and research surrounding adolescent autonomy development and highlighting potential implications for counselling practice. A quantitative or qualitative study would not have been appropriate in this case as I am examining a broad base of literature to explore theoretical ideas in order to develop an informed argument. It is a conceptual exploration and debate which applies strands of theory to the AT, being a theoretical model promoting relatedness through the process of autonomy development. Further direction

for future empirical enquiry is identified, where the views of adolescents might be obtained directly. As this study was completely grounded in previous research and literature there were no direct participants and therefore no requirement for informed participant consent or to consider confidentiality or anonymity of participants.

REASONS FOR UNDERTAKING THIS STUDY

As a school based counsellor working in a number of schools across South Wales, I am drawn to the concept of autonomy and family relatedness after having worked with countless young people struggling to assert their independence whilst feeling troubled, confused, angry and even disillusioned by the quality and dynamics of close relationships. Although my role demands that I work independently with adolescents, it is impossible to view them as unconnected either to family or their peers, they are part of a systemic web of connectedness which informs their experience. 'The family systems perspective holds that individuals are best understood within the context of relationships and through assessing the interactions within an entire family' (Corey 2001, p.387). I believe peer relationships to be as significant as dynamics within the family as they also form an integral part of an individual's life experience.

Adolescent clients explore the chaos of their arguments at home, the complicated dynamics of changing families through breakup and reformation, along with a cacophony of feelings which they may find overwhelming. They often experience complex group dynamics and social difficulties at school and in wider society which can further complicate their experience. Home and

school are intricately connected and they seek a neutral space to explore and bring clarity to their lives. They hope to discover choices and strategies, both of which are opportunities for self-directed change. Thus I witness the significance of interrelatedness for adolescents as they strive to assert their autonomy. Therefore my aim, through completing this study, was to understand adolescent autonomy development more fully along with how the role of school-based counsellor may help facilitate this process.

CHAPTER 2

ADOLESCENCE, APPROACHES TO AUTONOMY

& THE AUTONOMY TRIANGLE

There is a wealth of literature and research surrounding the development of adolescent autonomy, this paper differs from many in that it discusses autonomy and relatedness whilst also considering implications to counselling adolescents particularly in the school environment. Themes are set against the framework of the Autonomy Triangle (AT), to help raise the awareness of counsellors and other professionals working with children and young people. Adolescence and a number of different approaches to autonomy are discussed within this chapter, along with introducing some of the key theoretical themes, which will be further developed in subsequent chapters.

ADOLESCENCE AND SCHOOL-BASED COUNSELLING

'Adolescence is recognised in western thinking as a transitional journey towards autonomy, where particular traits like non-conforming behaviour, mood swings and challenging of mores and values are regularly observed' (Lines, 2006, p.39). In other words, adolescence is appreciated as a transition towards independence (autonomy) with certain challenges in between, however, these challenges can become quite overwhelming for some. 'As adolescents develop the bodies and feelings of mature adults, their and their parents' expectations change… [They] expect to be treated in more adult ways, to be given more

autonomy and a greater say in family decision making…Conflict frequently results' (Cobb 2007 p.132). There is no doubt that conflict occurs within this transitional process, ideas surrounding this will be discussed more fully in subsequent chapters. However, the enormity of this developmental journey, on all levels, cannot be underestimated as they develop towards adult independence '...from being part of a family group to being part of a peer group and to standing alone as an adult' (Mabey and Sorensen 1995 cited in Geldard and Geldard 2010, p.4).

The onset of adolescence has not changed greatly over the last 50 years '...puberty starts at the same time and extends over the same period lasting for about 4 – 5 years (between the ages of 10 and 15); the period of transition to adulthood has lengthened significantly' (Briggs 2008, p.2). Gluckman and Hanson (2006), suggest that the age at which an adolescent completes their transition to becoming adult '…is as late as 29/30 today, against 23/24 in the middle of the twentieth century.' (Gluckman & Hanson, 2006 cited in Briggs 2008, p.2). This view contradicts traditional thinking which suggested adolescence came to an end at the close of teenage years.

As school-based counsellors we are therefore alongside these young people during this key process in their lives and able to offer therapeutic skills which invite reflection, a sense of choice and opportunity for change. From an interventionist approach 'adolescence is a vulnerable period, which requires intervention; just allowing maturation to take place would neglect the opportunities for intervening to reduce risks and at worst condemn the adolescent to long term problems' (Briggs 2008, p.5). This denies young people the sense of choice which counselling services advocate; the autonomy of

choice and '…to understand the full consequences of independent decision-making' (Jenkins 2007, p.10).

In opposition to the interventionists are the non-interventionists which suggest '…a greater willingness to tolerate adolescence, not to be made unduly anxious by it, nor 'phased' by the intense emotional impact adolescents can exert on anyone close to them' (Briggs 2008, pp. 4-5). This perspective presents as a more gentle approach, of tolerance and acceptance. Thus respecting the view that many young people survive their teenage years perfectly well without access to counselling. However, arguably, the view most respectful of both the counselling profession and adolescent autonomy sits in the middle of these approaches and offers intervention at the request of the child; by choice.

APPROACHES TO AUTONOMY

The concept of autonomy, and how a young person achieves a sense of it, is problematic to define '…explaining how individuals become autonomous – and why some either do not or do so only partially – varies, depending upon one's initial assumptions about the meaning and significance of autonomy' (Zimmer-Gembeck & Collins 2003, p.176). The following sections introduce approaches to autonomy which begin to build an understanding of this complex concept, perspectives which will be developed further in subsequent chapters.

1. MATURATIONAL VIEW

Zimmer-Gembeck & Collins (2006, pp.180 – 185) propose that there are three general perspectives on autonomy the first being the 'organismic-maturational view' which suggests that '… autonomy is defined as independent functioning, which is opposed to dependence or reliance on others, and on the parents in particular' (Blos, 1967, 1979 cited in Van Petergem 2012, p.77). This perspective suggests that autonomy development has an element of predictability about it, being achieved through a developmental process which Erikson (1963) recognised as continuing for the entire lifespan (Erikson, 1963 cited in Corey 2001, p.73). He viewed adolescence as an 'identity crisis', where successfully developing identity was '…essential for psychic survival' (Briggs 2008, p.11).

This study argues against separation as a maturational necessity concentrating more on the importance of social contact in bringing about social learning opportunities; making choices and exerting autonomy based on experience of social contact. On developing Freud's theories even Erikson began to recognise the significance of a more psychosocial perspective: 'His theory of development holds that psychosexual growth and psychosocial growth take place together, and that at each stage of life we face the task of establishing an equilibrium between ourselves and our social world' (Erikson, 1963 cited in Corey 2001, p.73). Although Erikson began to emphasise social factors he never quite let go of a developmental view of autonomy which stressed separation and individuation along with '…the role of intrapsychic conflict' (Corey 2001, p.74).

If we can only achieve autonomy through traditional separation and individuation, through '…the adolescent disengaging himself from infantile dependencies' (Blos 1979, p.412), then arguably, how come we clearly exist as social beings? I feel Josselson (1988) makes a valid point when he suggests: 'Any theory that emphasizes separation as developmentally more advanced gives a distorted view of development in which an autonomous self is accepted as the pinnacle of maturity' (Josselson, 1988 cited in Cobb 2007, p.163). These early theories do potentially distort the significance of separation, holding little relevance with a contemporary society that arguably appears characterised by connection to others and by shared learnt experience rather than separateness.

SEPARATION & INDIVIDUATION

As adolescents gradually discover who they are they begin '…critically examining the attitudes, beliefs, and values they acquired from their parents. This process of growth is termed individuation' (Josselson, 1980, 1988 cited in Cobb 2007, p.135). Through the process of separating they begin reviewing their beliefs, discover new abilities and recognise how they are different from others, '… they discover strengths that are uniquely theirs and that distinguish them from their parents' (Cobb 2007, p.133). Thus being a self-evaluation process that increases awareness of unique qualities and difference. Meeus et al. (2005) suggested that '… separation from the parents is not a precondition for individuation, but rather separation and individuation are two parallel processes of development during adolescence' (Meeus et al. 2005, p89). They believed that as adolescents become older and go through a separation

process then they gradually '…experience less parental support, while its importance for their emotional adjustment also declines' (Meeus et al. 2005, p.89). Therefore, adolescents gradually experience less support as the importance of parental support also becomes less significant to them.

Separation and individuation theory was first explored by Blos (1967, 1979) writing from the psychoanalytic perspective and drawing on the maturational themes previously discussed. Subsequent theoretical explorations of separation and individuation have shifted away from psychoanalytic theory and more towards emotional and relational views on autonomy. 'Research on individuation suggests that adolescents who achieve high levels of individuation can remain close to their parents without feeling a loss of their own distinctiveness. … parent-adolescent relationships continue to be close as they move toward greater mutuality' (Pinquart & Silbereisen, 2002; White, Speisman, & Costos, 1983; cited in Cobb 2007, p.137). I also suggest that, as we have previously appreciated, for individuation to occur the adolescent must develop awareness of self-difference through observations and experience of others. Therefore, logically, individuation and separation cannot occur without social contact or relatedness. Thus, it is not surprising that the contemporary perspective now favours the strength of relationship, being more closely associated to relational autonomy than traditional separateness; '…the goal of individuation is *relational autonomy*, whereby independence and self-governance are affirmed within the context of continuous, mutually validating relationships' (Josselson,1988 cited in Lapsley and Edgerton 2002, p.484).

The terminology 'separation and individuation' is often used generally and interchangeably when talking about autonomy by many professions. I have

shown how there has been a theoretical shift from traditional psychotherapeutic views to a more contemporary relational appreciation of separation and individuation. However, other theoretical positions have also widely adopted this terminology. Therefore I believe it is understandable that confusion and generalisations have arisen among professionals.

2. SELF & MOTIVATION

The next group of definitions considered by Zimmer-Gembeck & Collins (2006, pp.180 – 185) refer to autonomy from the perspective of 'self and motivation'. Of significance here is Self Determination theory in which autonomy is defined as '… the degree to which behaviours are enacted with a sense of volition' (Deci & Ryan, 2000 cited in Soenans et al. 2007, p.634), making choices which come from an internal place of individual self-will with no external influence. Ryan et al. (1995) suggest that autonomy is '…the extent that one is operating agentically, from one's core sense of self…To be autonomous thus means to be self-initiating and self-regulating' (Ryan et al 1995 cited in Zimmer-Gembeck & Collins 2006, p.182). Here autonomy is experienced as independent, self-focused thought accompanied by decision making and action, sitting more in line with elements of behavioral and cognitive autonomy (Zimmer-Gembeck & Collins 2006, p.182). Through counselling adolescents we encourage their sense of self-awareness to develop, to enable them to understand themselves and how they exist in the world and invite their awareness of choice. Thus we encourage our client's sense of agency and volitional thinking. Self and motivational approaches to autonomy align neatly

with the BACP ethical principle of autonomy (BACP 2010) and our ethical obligation to promote independent choice.

Ben Colburn (2010) suggests autonomy is: '...an ideal of people deciding for themselves what is a valuable life, and living their lives in accordance with that decision' (Colburn 2010, p.19). He attaches discussion on the concept of responsibility for acting on decisions; '...autonomy does not just consist in deciding what is valuable, but also in pursuing those decisions' (Colburn 2010, p.31). As client's recognise a variety of choices and decide on their own path it seems sensible to suggest there must be internal motivation for whatever choice is made. 'Autonomous choosing then, cannot be motivationally inert, but must result in the development and pursuit of a considered course of action that is pursuant of one's conception of what is worthwhile, however that is conceived' (Winch 2006, p.74).

From a more philosophical perspective Raz (1986) proposed that 'The ideal of personal autonomy is the vision of people controlling, to some degree, their own destiny' (Raz 1986 cited in Colburn 2010, p.2). Thus taking control of life and shaping the future. Kantian philosophy says simply 'a person is autonomous if he is self-ruling' (Kant cited in Colburn 2010, p.5). Kant suggested that in order to be self-ruling an individual needed to be 'efficient independently of alien causes determining it' (Kant translated by Gregor 1997 cited in Colburn 2010, p.5), he considered alien causes to be '...contingent circumstances of individuals: desires, impulses, adverse conditions and pressures, and so on' (Colburn 2010, p.5). Adolescents experience externally influential factors all around them at home, at school and in their wider social environment. From the Kantian perspective to be self-ruling meant to be able

to make decisions which weren't influenced by such factors and were therefore driven from pure self-will. When an adolescent works with a counsellor they are able to explore; likes and dislikes, values, aspirations, expectations and personal skills. Thus identifying their own sense of self from that which is externally influenced, counselling therefore aids development of self-awareness, self-determination and volitional thinking. The following section highlights how the same awareness can also be gained from '… a supportive, noncoercive family climate' (Grolnick, 2003; Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2005 cited in Soenans et al. 2007, p.634).

SELF DETERMINATION THEORY

When an individual agent is behaving with a sense of self-determination then they have '…high aspirations, persevere[s] in the face of obstacles, see[s] more and varied options for action, learn[s] from failures, and overall, has a greater sense of well-being' (Little et al., 2002 cited in Nota et al 2011, p.246). Adolescents who have a strong sense of autonomy will act according to their own values and goals and fully stand by their actions.

Deci and Ryan (2000) suggest that Self-determination theory brings together three psychological needs; competence, autonomy, and relatedness, and that they are '…either supported or challenged by social contexts (Deci & Ryan, 2000 cited in Nota et al 2011, p.247). According to Deci and Ryan achieving these psychological needs is of paramount importance in order to achieve 'most effective functioning' which they explore through the concept of intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan 2000, p.229). This relates to being motivated to take part in tasks which are not based on receiving rewards but are carried

out through personal interest. 'Intrinsically motivated activities were defined as those that individuals find interesting and would do in the absence of operationally separable consequences' (Deci & Ryan 2000, p.233). Deci and Ryan (2000) establish links between intrinsic motivation and improved emotional health which, along with other theorists, associate with '…better learning, performance, and well-being' (e.g. Benware & Deci, 1984; Deci, Schwartz, Sheinman & Ryan, 1981; Grolnick & Ryan 1987; Valas & Sovik, 1994 cited in Deci and Ryan 2000, p.233).

Self-determination is '…defined as possessing a sense of volition and choicefulness' (Ryan, LaGuardia, Solky-Butzel, Chirkov, & Kim, 2005; Vansteenkiste, Zhou, Lens, & Soenens, 2005 cited in Soenans et al. 2007, p.634). It suggests that true choices are formed independently and rise from inner volitional thought and self-experience but it is through relational contact with parents or significant adults that the right environment to encourage self-determination is formed. Thus, '…it has been found that self-determined functioning is promoted within a supportive, noncoercive family climate' (Grolnick, 2003; Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2005 cited in Soenans et al. 2007, p.634). Thus developing self-determination has been shown not only to improve a sense of 'choicefulness' but also to promote improved emotional wellbeing through relatedness.

Therefore, in opposition to psychodynamic traditions '…volitional functioning need not necessarily go hand in hand with distancing oneself from parents and with a worsening of the quality of the parent– child relationship' (Soenans et al. 2007, p.634) As with the previous section regarding maturational perspectives of autonomy, self-determination theory and self-

motivational considerations seem best promoted within an environment of social relatedness.

3. SOCIAL RELATEDNESS

Zimmer-Gembeck & Collins (2003, pp.180 – 185), also explore autonomy through the importance of social relationships and influences. Throughout this chapter theoretical movement away from traditional psychodynamic and psychoanalytic themes has been discussed, highlighting growing contemporary awareness for the significance of relatedness in the development of autonomy. There appears to exist a reciprocal element of relationship which invites mutual benefit and social learning, with autonomy and relatedness being inextricably linked; '…autonomy and connections to others coexist and influence each other bidirectionally' (Zimmer-Gembeck & Collins 2006, p.184). This suggests that through relationship there is a two way, influential process, arising from continued relational contact and the growth of autonomy '…interpersonal relationships serve to initiate and guide self-regulatory actions and capacities. Hence, connections with others and autonomous regulation of action are interrelated and mutually influential' (Zimmer-Gembeck & Collins 2006, p.184). For example, an adolescent responds to information received through interactions with another, through relatedness, in order to make internal adjustments which affect the autonomy development process. These interactions also serve to benefit the other person by being a mutually beneficial relational experience.

There are clear, empirically proven benefits to experiencing an environment characterised by mutually positive relational interaction. For

example, Beveridge and Berg (2007) researched the outcomes of collaborative communication between parent and adolescent and found that '…when adolescents display healthy autonomy by engaging in problem solving, confidently stating their own ideas, and yet still affirming their parent's autonomy, high levels of ego development, self-esteem, attachment security, and successful identity exploration are more likely' (Allen et al., 1994; Grotevant & Cooper, 1985 cited in Beveridge and Berg 2007, p.32). Thus showing the emotional benefits of working together collaboratively, reciprocally engaged in communication which is also beneficial to the parent.

Although the social relatedness approaches to autonomy explored in this chapter are given separate consideration, arguably, the self and motivational approaches are clearly influenced by external social relatedness.

Thus I suggest, although there are different qualities they appear to be intricately connected, with social relatedness providing the optimal environment for the internal autonomous processes to be inspired.

THE AUTONOMY TRIANGLE

Through exploring these three approaches to autonomy (maturational, self and motivation, social relatedness), debatably, it appears that all three have relational or social significance, even the more traditional theories have reluctantly recognised psychosocial influence. Therefore, there appears to be a connection between relatedness and striving for autonomy which is arguably under-represented in counselling texts but I suggest has particular significance in counselling adolescents. The quality of that relational connection appears to influence how adolescents develop autonomously and choose to exert their life

choices, 'Where a family atmosphere is supportive of independence and does not press for achievement, young people use their peer group as a source of emotional support without a strong need to conform to group pressure' (Shulman, 1995 cited in Geldard & Geldard 2010, p.41). So, evidence suggests young people make different autonomous choices based on relational experience.

Adolescent

The Autonomy Triangle (AT)

Counsellor

Illustrating potential impact of counselling relationship

Parent   **Peer**
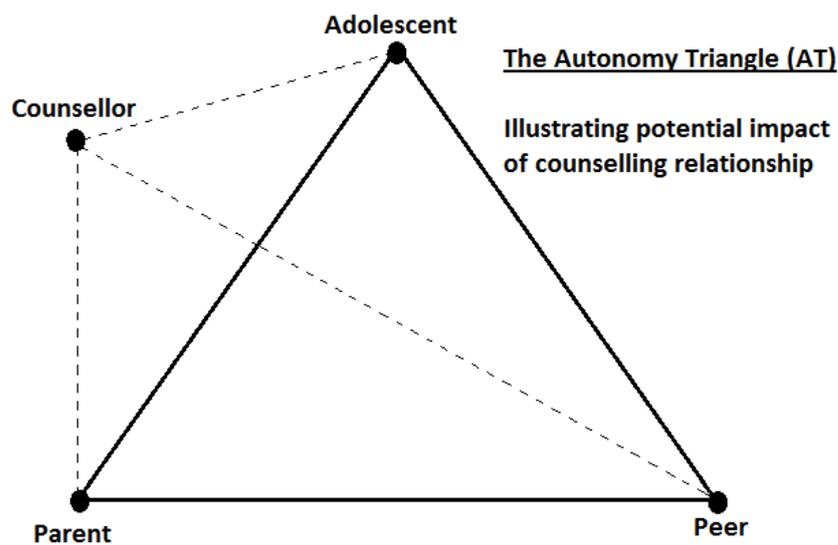
Figure 1.1

Thus, I am introducing the 'Autonomy Triangle' (AT) as a theoretical model to raise the awareness of adolescent autonomy development and the impact of continued relatedness (See figure 1.1). The AT is not a theoretical model prescribing a specific therapeutic intervention although there are implications for practice which are discussed in the closing chapter. However, it is more of a frame which integrates a number of theoretical concepts, and therefore supports the conceptualisation of autonomy as a multi-dimensional construct having '…behavioural, cognitive, and affective dimensions' (Sessa & Steinberg, 1991; Steinberg & Silverberg, 1986 cited in Zimmer-Gembeck &

Collins 2003, p.176). It blends theory into a multi-layered conceptualisation and consequently explores movement of relational dynamics between adolescent, parent and peer.

The AT also considers the impact of the school-based counsellor at each of the vertices. This involves awareness of the counsellor either from a distance, direct contact, or through one to one counselling. It may also represent group work from a psycho-educational perspective (e.g. Anger management groups, self-esteem groups or even parent contact), with students this may support PSE or SEAL programmes. Also, how counsellors connect with parents can be a controversial subject as many believe this can impact on the quality of the therapeutic relationship and put pressure on maintaining a confidential space. The school-based counsellor's role within the wider school community, along with other school based counselling models, will be discussed further in later chapters, however, interventions which promote relatedness sensitively, whilst maintaining therapeutic boundaries, can only be beneficial to client well-being.

The rest of this dissertation will be written with reference to the AT, advocating for relatedness whilst also respecting theories of self and agency, along with motivational concepts such as self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), and social domain theory (Nucci, 2001; Smetana, 1995, 2002; Turiel, 1983,1998). For each of the vertices I will explore the relevance of different perspectives and how outcomes for the development of adolescent autonomy may be affected by different relational circumstances.

EXISTING TRIANGULAR MODELS

It is not unusual for triangular models to be cited in order to 'show' a concept and there are many which relate to education or business for example. The following are more closely pertinent to the themes in this dissertation however there were no triangular models identified which replicate the themes in the AT or the Field of Reflexive Contact (FRC).

Schlenker et al. (1994) introduce the concept of the 'triangle model of responsibility' in which the three vertices are: 'prescriptions (i.e., what is supposed to be done), identity (i.e., the sense of self), and a situation or event (that is relevant to the prescription)' (Schlenker et al 1994, pp.634-635). They explore responsibility and present a further accountability pyramid positing that '…responsibility is the adhesive that connects an actor to an event and to relevant prescriptions that should govern conduct, and thus it provides a basis for judgment and sanctioning' (Schlenker et al. 1994, p.649). The concepts of responsibility taking and accountability arguably have a loose connection to conceptualisations of adolescent autonomy in that self-deterministic decision making, autonomy and freedom of choice logically come with a level of self-responsibility, accountability and the requirement for self-regulatory skill.

Sheldon & Schachtman (2007) explore Schlenker's triangle model of responsibility (Schlenker et al. 1994) by looking at the results which tested the '…presumed negative association between excuse making and responsibility taking' (Sheldon & Schachtman 2007, p.359) and comparing these variables to the concept of motivational internalization (Self-determination theory: Deci & Ryan, 2000). One of their findings, concerning the link between responsibility taking and felt guilt implied that the positive effects of responsibility taking may come at a cost '…taking responsibility creates a sense of remorse and negative

self-feeling…this finding may simply highlight why people would rather not take responsibility for failure: it can be painful' (Schlenker, 1997 cited in Sheldon & Schachtman 2007, p.379). When applied to the case of young people, arguably, taking responsibility for failure may imply a sense of negativity, guilt and shame which could impact the quality of relatedness possibly causing conflict.

Holmes (1997) triangle of attachment explores the three vertices: attachment, detachment and non-attachment. He looks at the application of Bowlby's attachment theory to contemporary psychotherapy and discusses the requirement for separation or detachment in order to achieve autonomy: 'Attachment, which arises out of a secure base, provides the starting point for intimacy; the capacity for healthy protest and therefore detachment is the basis of autonomy; from nonattachment comes the capacity to reflect on oneself and so to disidentify with painful or traumatic experience' (Holmes 1997, p.231). The AT does not replicate this model although Bowlby's attachment theory (Bowlby 1952) holds some relevance to this theoretical discussion and will be explored in the next chapter. In contrast to this model, the AT does not depict movement away or complete separation but advocates strength in continued connectedness. However, Holmes (1997) does recognise the reciprocal relationship between autonomy and intimacy along with the significance of a secure attachment (Holmes 1997, p.240).

Other triangular models include the therapeutically well-known Karpman triangle (Karpman, 1968), also known as the Drama triangle, which depicts the vertices of persecutor, rescuer and victim. In this paper Karpman (1968) uses diagrams of drama analysis of script within familiar examples of well-known fairy tales to bring understanding to conflict dynamics (Karpman 1968, p.1). The

Winner's Triangle (Choy, 1990) is discussed in conjunction with the Drama Triangle (Karpman, 1968) by Burgess (2005). The vertices are: assertive, caring and vulnerable. Burgess (2005) describes how these two triangles can work together to create awareness for working teams or colleagues: 'Collaboratively the model can provide colleagues with a common understanding and language with which to encourage one another out of destructive patterns into more constructive options' (Burgess 2005, p.111).

There are many other triangular models but these represent those most closely linked to the themes within the AT, none of them appear to express the same conceptual approach to autonomy and relatedness or use similar terminology to either the AT or the FRC.

CHAPTER 3

THE PARENT VERTEX OF THE AUTONOMY TRIANGLE

Leading on from the theoretical perspectives discussed in Chapter 2, the AT is an integrative approach to autonomy development, which blends theory to raise awareness for the impact of continued relatedness on adolescent autonomy development.
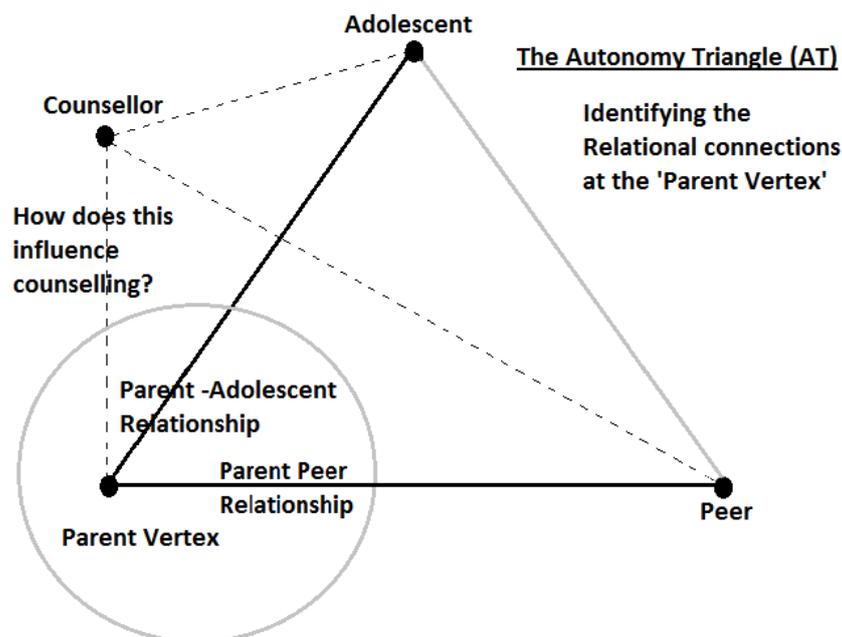
Figure 1.2

This chapter continues with exploration of this integrated approach by considering autonomy development and the impact of the parent-adolescent relationship and parent-peer relationship, as shown at the 'parent vertex' (See figure 1.2). How this information is helpful in the counselling of adolescents is considered throughout expansion of this discussion. Despite working largely independently with clients, it is important to maintain awareness of their social and family context; 'If change is to come about in a family or with individual

members of a family, there is a need to be aware of as many of the systems of influence as possible' (Corey 2001, p.445). With this in mind I move on to a consideration of parental relatedness.

PARENTAL RELATEDNESS

'Relatedness refers to feelings of connection to and from important others that are driven by the need to experience a sense of belonging within one's environment (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) and to establish consistent, nurturing, and protective relationships (Shahar, Henrich, Blatt, Ryan, & Little, 2003)' (Hutman et al., 2012, p.1). This definition suggests the need to belong in addition to experiencing connection to and from another but, as with autonomy, I believe relatedness extends further than this and can be characterised by a number of different elements.

Cherney (2010) uses the word 'nurturance' interchangeably with 'relatedness' (Cherney 2010, p.80) whilst Hutman et al. (2012) explore relatedness as rooted in attachment theory (Bowlby 1952) and object relations theory (Winnicott 1960, 1965). They define relatedness as '…feelings of connection to and from important others that are driven by the need to experience a sense of belonging within one's environment …and to establish consistent, nurturing, and protective relationships' (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Shahar, Henrich, Blatt, Ryan, & Little, 2003 cited in Hutman et al. 2012, p.1). Of interest to me here is the 'to and from', an element which suggests reciprocal relatedness, reminiscent of the mutually beneficial and interconnected social relatedness, previously discussed in Chapter 2. In addition, the term

'nurturance' (Cherney 2010) implies a sense of deep caring. Deci and Ryan (2002) conceptualise relatedness as: '… feeling connected to others, to caring for and being cared for by those others, to having a sense of belongingness both with other individuals and with one's community' (Reeve, Deci & Ryan, 2002 cited in Guay et al. 2008, p.623). Thus, my view of relatedness is developed from these perspectives to be a bi-directional and mutually beneficial relationship of caring, affection, belongingness, community, nurturance and connection with an other, either peer or adult, and can be extended to include community and environment.

Contemporary views around autonomy and relatedness advocate for continued but changing relationships. 'Changes in parent-adolescent relationships primarily reflect declining dependence on parents, rather than erosion in the importance of these relationships' (Allen & Land, 1999; Collins, 1995; Steinberg, 2001 cited in Collins & Roisman 2006, p.80). Therefore, as adolescence progresses dependence may decline (more autonomy) but the relationship remains significant (retained relatedness). Collins & Roisman (2006) suggest the continuing importance of parents who '…serve as major influences on children, even after puberty' (Collins & Roisman 2006, p.80). Thus the parental role retains significance and remains influential, something which the majority of parents may not realise.

Bell & Bell (2009) carried out a longitudinal study exploring individuation and connection in the family system. The numbers of participants were small however the authors felt the findings indicated '…the importance of the family environment throughout the life course, supporting the idea that the family system as experienced in adolescence can have life-long implications for well-

being' (Bell & Bell 2009, p.485). The focus here was on family relatedness, rather than purely parental relatedness however the results supported '… clear interpersonal boundaries in a family and validation of individuality' (Bell & Bell 2009, p.484) as being significant to the development of personal autonomy within children. This is clear support for the value of family relatedness as integral to the development of autonomy which was observed over an extended period of time (25 years).

Guay et al. (2008) conducted another longitudinal study, this time with 834 18 year old students, exploring the possible connection between an adolescent's experience of parental relatedness and their autonomous academic motivation. The results confirmed the hypothesis that continued relatedness with parents positively impacts academic motivation. In other words parental relatedness remains significant in supporting autonomous, self-motivational practices. Guay et al. (2008) also suggest the benefit of parents being informed of the influence they still have, proposing the use of autonomy-supportive parenting techniques to acknowledge '…feelings, providing choice and information, being interested and involved in his/her education, and providing positive feedback' (Guay et al. 2008, p.635). In short, when young people experience relationships which are '… understanding, supportive, genuine, and invested, they feel safe and secure…' (Ryan, 1995 cited in Hutman et al. 2012, p.2). These elements are aspects of parental relatedness which are evidenced as being a positive influence on the development of adolescent autonomy.

AUTONOMY SUPPORTIVE PARENTING

Autonomy supportive parenting alludes to the relationship and style of interaction between parent and adolescent which encourages autonomy development. This style of parenting is characterised by '…parents who are empathic to their children's perspective, who provide choices to their children whenever it is possible, who minimize the use of control and power assertion, and who help their offspring to explore and act upon their true personal values and interests' (Grolnick, 2003; Ryan et al., 1995 cited in Soenans et al. 2007, p.635). Autonomy supportive parenting includes provision of structure and involvement, taking into account the child's perspective, the aim being to '…foster autonomous self-regulation rather than mere compliance' (Joussemet et al. 2008, p.195). Through using developmentally appropriate involvement, structure and autonomy supportive parenting techniques, this is considered '…the ideal for fostering positive child development' (Grolnick, 2003 cited in Joussemet et al. 2008, p.195).

Within self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), autonomy is viewed as the development of 'volitional functioning', which Ryan et al. (1995) appreciate as '…enacting behaviors willingly on the basis of well-internalized values or true interests' (Ryan, Deci, & Grolnick, 1995). Following on from here, Soenens et al. (2007) found that autonomy supportive parenting, from the perspective of 'promotion of volitional functioning' (PVF), is more closely associated with adolescent well-being and academic functioning (Grolnick, Ryan, & Deci, 1995; Soenens et al. 2007, p.634).

In contrast, Joussemet et al. (2008) explore 'psychological control', which undermines internal motivation and pressurises the child to behave in a desired way '… using a variety of techniques, such as guilt induction, love withdrawal, and invalidation of feelings' (Assor, Roth, & Deci, 2004; Barber, Stolz, & Olsen, 2005 in cited in Joussemet et al. 2008, p.195). Therefore evidence suggests that autonomy supportive parenting facilitates development of positive approaches to autonomy and fosters continued parental relatedness whereas psychologically controlling parenting may have potentially damaging consequences '…the power assertion inherent to psychological control is detrimental for children' (Barber, 2002; Grolnick, 2003 cited in Joussemet et al. 2008, p.195).

PARENT-ADOLESCENT COLLABORATION

Beveridge & Berg (2007) investigated the reciprocal processes involved in parent-adolescent relatedness with collaboration being proposed as a conceptual tool. They explored both adolescent and parental development along with the mutual benefits of collaborative approaches to parenting, they notice that '…parent–adolescent interaction research acknowledges the likelihood of transactional processes in which adolescent and parental behaviors reciprocally influence one another' (Allen, et al., 1994b; Ge, Best, Conger, & Simons, 1995; Grossman, Brink, & Hauser, 1987; Hauser et al., 1984 cited in Beveridge & Berg 2007, p.26). Collaboration is therefore viewed as a transactional process which engages both adolescent and parent equally and invites a sense of mutual problem solving and working together. 'Collaboration

emphasizes mutual engagement, negotiation, brainstorming, and working as a team as important aspects of adaptive parent–adolescent interactions' (Meegan & Berg, 2002; Rogoff, 1998 cited in Beveridge & Berg 2007, pp.48-49). So through collaboration, both parent and child are drawn into a process of working things out and being together. Arguably, I believe that collaboration promotes parent-adolescent relatedness by encouraging mutually validating communication which in turn develops independent decision making and life skills; '…parents and adolescents who engage in friendly autonomous processes that display and encourage independence, and who provide appropriate levels of control characterized by warmth and guidance have adolescents who experience positive adaptation' (Beveridge & Berg 2007, p.48).

AUTHORATIVE PARENTING

Baumrind (1991) suggests that '…young people tend to be higher in competence and self-esteem in families where the parents are supportive, encourage positive, rational and interactive communication while they use firm and constant discipline. In other words, the parents are authoritative' (Baumrind, 1991 cited in Geldard & Geldard 2010, p.21). I struggle with the word 'authoritative' as it speaks of power and control, but when placed more within the context of a positive, supportive and encouraging relationship it seems more about boundaries and safe caring. Steinberg (2001) has explored Baumrind's conception of authoritative parenting extensively and concludes that adolescents raised in authoritative homes '…show the same advantages

in psychosocial development and mental health over their non-authoritatively raised peers that were apparent in studies of younger children' (Steinberg 2001, p.8). Therefore, despite my reluctance to accept this authoritative stance, evidence clearly suggests authoritative parenting promotes positive outcomes for young people as they '…achieve more in school, report less depression and anxiety, score higher on measures of self-reliance and self-esteem, and are less likely to engage in anti-social behaviour, including delinquency and drug use' (Steinberg 2001, p.8).

Thus I acknowledge that firm boundaries may create a sense of safety for young people, from which the parent-adolescent relationship will invite healthy development of skills of compromise and negotiation. Arguably this process may lead to conflict at times but I suggest may also be a significant part of autonomy development process; being a natural 'push and pull' dynamic within parent-adolescent relatedness where adolescents feel safe enough to push their expanding boundaries.

There is a parallel here with the counselling process, which has clear boundaries and yet separates us from being disciplinarians: 'Good practice involves clarifying and agreeing the rights and responsibilities of both the practitioner and client at appropriate points in their working relationship' (BACP 2002 cited in Lines 2006, p.25). Contracting enables the counsellor to state the legal and ethical boundaries of practice and yet provide a space which can be experienced as contained and safe by the client.

As counsellors, our role is not to parent although we clearly use collaborative and autonomy supportive techniques to reciprocally engage

clients in an interested enquiry. However we are not authoritative or engaged in delivering discipline. Particularly when working creatively, we may engage in a task together which requires a collaborative problem solving perspective. Geldard & Geldard (2010) suggest that '…an effective therapeutic alliance extends the relationship between the client and counsellor to enable them to work together collaboratively throughout the whole process of counselling' (Geldard & Geldard 2010, p.151). Our communication style, training and ethical approach are all autonomy supportive ways of connecting and inviting adolescents to begin exerting their own autonomous choices. As counsellors we naturally provide aspects of relatedness which may be absent in the adolescent's life experience and we model good communication styles which they may learn and continue to replicate throughout their lifetime.

THE CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF FAMILY AUTONOMY PROMOTION

In opposition to the relevance of relatedness Manzi et al. (2012) argue against the significance which professionals place on relatedness and autonomy supportive parenting practices and posit that: 'Practitioners need to be aware that parental behavior that may appear dysfunctional in some contexts may not be in other contexts where greater value is put on proximity and cognitive interdependence' (Manzi et al., 2006; Markus & Kitayama, 1991 cited in Manzi et al. 2012, p.297). Manzi et al. (2012) suggest that cultural context holds particular relevance and explored family promotion of autonomy from three established perspectives: promotion of autonomous thought, promotion of autonomous decision-making, and promotion of physical

separation. The participants included late adolescents from four nations: the US, Belgium, Italy and China.

Promotion of autonomous thought is of particular interest when reflecting on my previous discussion surrounding the undermining and pressurising effects of 'psychological control' (Joussemet et al. 2008) which uses a variety of techniques such as '… guilt induction, love withdrawal, and invalidation of feelings (Assor, Roth, & Deci, 2004; Barber, Stolz, & Olsen, 2005 in cited in Joussemet et al 2008, p.195). Manzi et al. (2012) suggest that the perception of control regarding decisions over one's own life may be '…universally considered negative' (Manzi et al. 2012, p.297). However, within the context of their results, they suggest '…the perception of control over time and space and cognition may not be negative at all nor perceived by the young adult as an intrusion' (Manzi et al. 2012, p.297).

Also physical separation is shown to have different meanings in different cultures, for instance in Italian culture '…it is most probable that a lack of promotion of physical separation is perceived as a positive indicator of family functioning'. (Manzi et al. 2012, p.297). The other three nations suggested a different approach, but for the Italians increased separation also revealed an increased prevalence for depressive symptoms '…higher levels of promotion of physical separation in the Italian sample were associated indirectly with higher levels of depression' (Manzi et al. 2012, p.296). This perhaps supports my argument for relatedness, autonomy development and psychological wellbeing but importantly, Manzi et al. (2012) did not establish the same results for the other three nations; the US, China and Belgium.

Therefore we cannot assume that young people across all cultures have the same views on what we perceive as autonomy supportive behaviours indeed, Mason et al. (2004) also suggest that '… youth from different cultural backgrounds ascribe different affective meanings to parental behavior' (Mason et al. 2004 cited in Manzi et al. 2012, p.297). In conclusion, Manzi et al. (2012) suggest that, although further empirical research is required, their study '…lends some support to the idea that the perception of some parental behaviors or parenting styles may be considered universally negative, whereas others are more likely to be influenced by cultural context'. (Manzi et al. 2012, p.297).

This has significance for the AT as there needs to be consideration for cultural context when exploring parent-adolescent relatedness and sensitivity surrounding parenting styles. If parental interventions such as workshops or parenting programmes are developed then careful thought needs to be applied to promotion of autonomy supportive parenting practices by school- based counsellors whilst remaining mindful of cultural differences.

PARENT-PEER RELATEDNESS

The parent-peer relationship is the hardest to explore as there appears to be limited associated research by comparison to parent-adolescent relatedness for example. Logically, as adolescents begin to invest more time in their friends the dynamic between parent and peers also becomes more significant; 'Adolescents spend increasing time in activities with peers without the supervision of adults such as parents or teachers' (Brown, 1990 cited in

Engels et al. 2002, p.3). Hypothetically, it is easier to grant autonomy (in the sense of freedom to explore, make decisions for self and spend more time engaged in peer group activities) if peers are well known to the parent. It also seems logical to suggest that relationships which are perceived as a positive influence are more likely to be encouraged by the parent than those which have a negative impact.

Soenens et al. (2009) completed a cross sectional study of 234 mid-adolescents to examine '…parents' styles of prohibition to test the hypothesis that an autonomy-supportive style would relate negatively, whereas a controlling style would relate positively, to deviant peer affiliation' (Soenens et al. 2009, p.507). Thus considering parenting styles, approach to prohibition and whether parents should intervene in problem relationships or not. Soenens et al. (2009) recognise that prohibition of friendships is a risky approach as it may '…enhance, rather than diminish, the likelihood of an adolescent further associating with deviant peers…' (Soenens et al. 2009, p.507).

Soenans et al. (2009) concluded that when adolescents experience their parent's interventions as 'pressuring' they adopt their parent's approaches to friendship because they feel they have to. This approach is unlikely to '…protect against the susceptibility to deviant peer affiliation' (Soenens et al. 2009, p.528). However, when adolescents experience their parents as autonomy supportive they are more likely to accept their parent's rules for friendships. 'The adaptive behavioral outcomes associated with this high-quality internalization may in turn leave room for parents to regulate their children's friendships in an autonomy-supportive manner' (Soenens et al. 2009, p.528). There appears to

be a delicate balance here between parental over involvement and supportive parenting.

Engels et al. (2002) examined data from a cross-sectional study of 508 12 to 18 year olds, specifically focusing on social skills as a mediator between characteristics of the parent-child relationship and peer relations. They note that, despite the understanding that peer relationships are seen to become particularly relevant in adolescence parents still retain influence, '…recent studies have documented that the influence of parents is not limited to children but that they maintain significant influence on the social functioning of their offspring in adolescence' (Parke & Ladd, 1992 cited in Engels et al. 2002, p.4). In other words the friendships our children make are influenced by aspects of the parent-adolescent relationship. Engels et al. (2002) suggest that 'Youngsters who grow up in a loving and warm family are inclined to seek more intensive peer relations; relations that are characterised by emotional bonding, disclosure and reciprocal support' (Kandel & Davies, 1982 cited in Engels et al. 2002, p.13). Therefore, the encouraging environment of a nurturing family may invite positive autonomous adolescent functioning through the resulting quality of peer contact. This process is acknowledged in the next section in connection with secure parent-child attachment styles. This is where the quality of attachment between parent and adolescent also appears influential in the formation of relationships with peers.

Attachment theory explores the development of autonomy through 'the context of secure attachments' (Ainsworth et al.,1978; Allen, Aber, & Leadbeater, 1990; cited in Bell & Bell 2009, p.475). Allen et al. (2004), in their study of stability and change in attachment security across adolescence, suggest that having a secure base (secure attachment) enables an adolescent to '…autonomously explore emotional and cognitive independence within the context of a strong relationship with parents…' (Allen et al, 2004, p.1794). In other words, if there is a strong secure attachment with parents then the adolescent can independently explore and feel safe. The absence of a secure attachment will compromise the adolescent's ability to exert appropriate autonomous functioning '…secure attachment has enormous consequences for adolescents completing the task of separation and autonomy' (Bowlby 1952; Ainsworth et al. 1978; cited in Lines 2006, p.40).

Evidence also suggests there is an association between the quality of parental attachment and the way adolescents build relationships with peers '…the secure adolescent tends to create relationships characterized by a balance of autonomy and relatedness – to create their own secure bases from which to explore – and to do this across relationships' (Crowell et al. 2002; cited in Allen et al. 2007, p.1235). These findings suggest that peer relationships are moulded by the adolescent experiencing secure attachments within the family of origin, and '…that those relationships are producing a teen's security' (Allen et al. 2007, p.1235). This suggests a cyclical process between adolescent, parent and peer in which the attachment style between parent and adolescent moulds the style of relationship with the peer. And it's that relationship with the

peer that provides adolescent security along with the potential for autonomous development.

BEREAVEMENT OR LOSS AND INTERUPTED RELATEDNESS

The death of a parent, sibling, friend or family member is enormously traumatic and the same strong emotions can be experienced through separation or other losses. Here I consider how these experiences potentially affect emotional wellbeing when relatedness is interrupted or ended.

When a parent dies the resulting bereavement experience may be overwhelming '...losing a parent is expected to be one of the most serious, stressful life events that can happen to a child or an adolescent' (Jakobsen & Christiansen 2011, p.176). Jakobsen & Christiansen (2011) studied the association between the death of a biological parent and subsequent suicide attempts by young people between the ages of 10 and 22 years. The findings suggest that losing one biological parent showed an increased risk of attempting suicide and that losing two parents almost doubled the risk (Jakobsen & Christiansen 2011, p.176). These findings indicate that loss of parental relatedness through death can have significant impact on the emotional wellbeing of young people. However, not all young people who experience this tragic loss will have increased suicidal ideation, in fact the numbers are small, however this does highlight the potential emotional impact of relatedness which has ended.

Experiencing parental separation has become a remarkably common life experience in western society over the last 50 years (Amato & Keith, 1991b;

Amato, 2001; Sentse et al. 2011, p.97). However, despite this, there appear to be conflicting ideas about the impact of separation on young people. Amato & Keith (1991a, 2001) concluded that '…the association between parental separation and offspring's well-being is small' (Amato & Keith 1991a, Amato 2001 cited in Sentse et al. 2011, p.97). Sentse et al. (2011) makes the valid point that when recognising pre-existing emotional or behavioural issues, then the measured effects of separation on the emotional wellbeing of children is usually reduced further. Also, '…children whose parents separate are generally exposed to conflict and distress long before and during the separation' (Amato, Loomis, & Booth, 1995 cited in Sentse et al. 2011, p.98). Therefore it is really hard to purely identify post separation adjustment. In contrast, Maier & Lachman (2000) believed that '… parental divorce leads to lower education and income attainment, an increase in drug use, and lower levels of family support which may result in a greater number of health problems later in life' (Maier & Lachman 2000, p.189).

However the evidence is viewed, it is clear that many survive the effects of divorce, separation and loss with little or no adverse effect. It is therefore extremely hard to say that when relatedness is interrupted positive adolescent adjustment may be compromised as every individual's circumstances are unique. It is only possible to note the likely benefits of continued relatedness and its significance to autonomy development but this could never be universally applicable.

THE PARENT VERTEX AND SCHOOL BASED COUNSELLING

Within this chapter I have explored the relationships at the parent vertex of the AT, with specific attention to what 'relatedness' is. This was explored within a social context as well as more specifically applied to the parent-adolescent relationship. How qualities of parent-adolescent relatedness impact the adolescent-peer relationship were also discussed. In exploring life transitions from adolescence through to young adulthood, Bucx et al. (2008) reported a closer bond between parents and adolescents which changed following departure from the parental home (Bucx et al. 2008, pp.7-8). From these results it could be argued that during adolescence parental relatedness is therefore at an optimum level, and perhaps, so is parental influence. Guay et al. (2008), along with other researchers, have suggested that informing parents of their continued influence during adolescence would be beneficial (Guay et al. 2008, p.635).

I suggest there may be a role for school-based counsellors to promote awareness for the connection between continued relatedness and autonomy development, supportive parenting styles and awareness of the influence that parents of adolescents still retain. Wong (2008) discusses the difficulties faced in trying to increase levels of parental involvement and autonomy supportive behaviours. Wong (2008) suggests that '…teachers, counsellors, or other adults can help adolescents develop self-regulation skills… These skills can be cultivated through individual and group programs' (Wong 2008, p.512). This is further support for raising awareness through parenting courses or workshops as suitable interventions for parents and families.

The AT identifies the potential connection with a school-based counsellor at each of the vertices. Due to the unusual nature of the school environment, it is possible to begin forming relationships on multiple levels. We provide an individual, confidential therapeutic space for our clients and yet we are also part of a wider school community. As a member of school staff, we also have connection with that wider community; through speaking in assemblies or at parent's evenings, through drop in services or even unofficial introductions in the corridor along with networking with teachers and other professionals. Sometimes we work with clients who are friends of friends or even siblings, occasionally we also work directly with parents or carers. However, the approach to parental interventions in particular varies significantly between counselling services with some, understandably, viewing this approach as particularly problematic.

Whatever the differences in service approach, this is a counselling environment like no other, indeed working with family members in other circumstances may be viewed as unethical, and yet there are some distinct positives which are not currently appreciated. 'As children's problems are often related to their family environment, counsellors working with children often need to work with the child's family in order to enable the family to make the necessary changes for the wellbeing of the child' (Geldard & Geldard 2010, p.66).

Einzig (1996) suggests that counsellors are '…recognising the importance of preventive intervention and are starting to explore areas of proactive work or 'psychoeducation'. One such area that is attracting their attention is the field of parenting education and support' (Einzig 1996, p.218).

Although writing over 15 years ago, parenting programmes were already being introduced by a huge variety of providers and 'The majority are run by organisations in the voluntary sector' (Einzig 1996, p.221), but their link with the particular skills a counsellor could bring has arguably been lost. Einzig (1996) argues that counsellors '…are and could be particularly appropriate facilitators if they can acquire the necessary group skills and relevant information' (Einzig 1996, p.224). I suggest that school-based counsellors would be ideal candidates to deliver well placed parenting courses focused on sensitive delivery of material, having an excellent training and awareness in child development as a firm foundation to this work. 'The parallels between running a counselling group and a parenting support group are very strong – indeed, where parents are distressed or in crisis, there may appear to be little distinction between the two' (Einzig 1996, p.224).

In America, school counsellors are at the centre of collaboration between major stakeholders:

> The American School Counseling Association (ASCA) National
> Model for school counseling programs emphasizes the need
> for all education stakeholders to become active in student
> welfare; students, parents, faculty and staff, administrators,
> and community members are all considered important
> education stakeholders. Collaboration between these
> individuals allows for multifaceted resources and interventions
> that support every student in achieving academic success.
> Middle school counselors coordinate and lead collaboration

and teamwork within the school and community environments. Middle school counselors are valuable resources to school stakeholders, as they provide developmentally appropriate services, comprehensive interventions and programs, and create links between all individuals involved in student's education, whether these individuals are in the school, home, or community. (ASCA 2005 cited in Cripps & Zyromski 2009, pp.1-13)

School based counselling in America is clearly regarded as central to pastoral provision in education however they do recognise the ethical pressure involved between providing wider welfare orientated services and maintaining individual confidentiality. Despite the difficulties, Griffin & Steen (2010) found that most American counsellors '… reported participating in community collaboration activities [which] is consistent with the current literature about school counselors and school-family-community collaboration' (e.g., Bemak, 2000; Bryan & Henry, 2008; Holcomb-McCoy, 2007; Palladino-Schultheiss, 2005 cited in Griffin & Steen 2010, pp. 218-226). Arguably, school counselling in America supports a more proactive approach to engaging with the wider school community as well as being sensitive to therapeutic confidentiality.

Whilst recognising the American school counsellor role has significant differences I believe there is a place for school counselling services in the UK to provide, at the very least, more communication and psycho-educational support for parents whilst also maintaining the boundaries of confidentiality. This approach could encourage culturally appropriate parenting strategies and

advice, thus building relatedness and improved wellbeing along with positive autonomy adjustment in adolescents. It may also break down barriers to therapy, with parents and other professionals becoming more understanding and supportive of the counselling process. The significance of interventions with parents will be further explored as integral to the implications from this study along with ethical considerations.

CHAPTER 4

THE ADOLESCENT VERTEX OF THE AUTONOMY TRIANGLE

Within the previous chapters I have presented a sense of relational movement around the framework of the AT, which represents interconnectedness (firmly linked together), fluidity (relatedness which flows, flexibly shifting and adapting) and reciprocity (bi-directional sharing which is of mutual benefit). With this interlinking of relatedness in place, adolescents can then develop their inner autonomous processes. I advocate for an interplay of perspectives between internal or intrinsic (Deci and Ryan 2000), agentic, self-motivated autonomy and external or extrinsic (Deci and Ryan 2000), externally motivated, psychosocial, relational approaches. I am particularly interested in how internally motivated autonomy (self-agency) and externally influenced autonomy (relational autonomy) interact. This is, in essence, the point where autonomy and relatedness meet and I further suggest that one cannot exist without the other. I am therefore developing my perspective to include the concept of duality; that the internal sense of self agency and autonomous existence can't exist without the social learning which comes from external relatedness. Therefore rather than 'tension' between autonomy and relatedness, there is duality and reciprocal interdependence.

In Chapter 5 I will be introducing and discussing a concept I call the 'Field of Reflexive Contact' (FRC) which explores and develops theories of internal decision making, choice and social learning as an integral part of the development of adolescent autonomy (encompassing the dynamic between internal self-motivation and external social influence). Before moving on to the

more complex nature of adolescent contact in relationship this chapter focuses on the 'adolescent vertex' of the AT (see Fig 1.3). The aim here is to explore adolescent-peer relatedness and intrinsic (Deci and Ryan 2000), self-motivational aspects of autonomy. Also relevant here are group relatedness and the development of individual identity and the role of privacy.
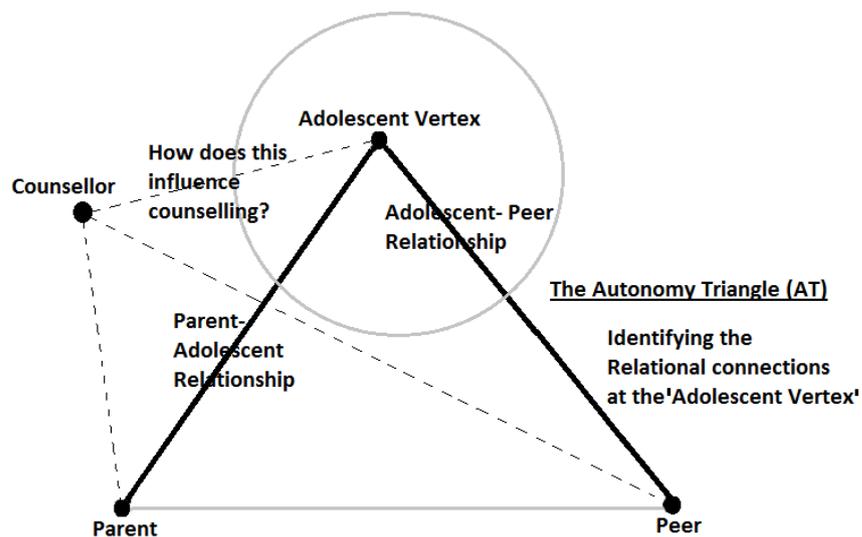
Figure 1.3

The quality of parent-adolescent relatedness is explored where appropriate and follows on from previous explorations in Chapter 3. I begin with a brief acknowledgement of the debate surrounding changed perceptions of parent-adolescent conflict.

STORM AND STRESS THEORIES

Traditional approaches to psychological development, as posited by Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) and later Peter Blos (1979), suggested an instinctual drive towards separation which was motivated by psychosexual stages of development. Erikson extended psychoanalytic thought by

introducing an awareness of significant psychosocial factors. During these early years of theoretical advance adolescence was identified as a time of '…acute identity crisis and turmoil' (Smith et al. 2003, p.291). Indeed, prior to as late as the 1970's parent-adolescent conflict was seen as indicative of the separation process and only through this turbulence could an adolescent successfully form their own identity. 'Parents were told to expect oppositionalism and defiance from their teenagers and to worry if these factors were not present' (Steinberg 2001, p.3). Adolescent 'storm and stress' was originally seen as derivative of the sexual and aggressive drives which developed out of puberty, as a result of this Anna Freud felt that adolescents were '…oscillating between childhood and adulthood' (Anna Freud 1937 cited in Jones 2009, p.8).

However attitudes gradually changed following a variety of research and in 1976 Rutter et al. found that 75% of families, and most of the other 25%, '…had histories of family difficulty that preceded their children's entry into adolescence' (Rutter et al. 1976 cited in Steinberg 2001, p.4). Therefore it became recognised that disturbance and conflict within adolescent households was more likely due to pre-existing family history rather than as a natural part of the maturational process. 'Most adolescents go through this period successfully without experiencing particular trauma and they report a satisfactory level of well-being' (Corsano et al. 2006 cited in Helseth & Misaer 2010, p.1454).

Despite the changing academic perspective, Steinberg suggests that society has found it hard to let go of storm and stress theory and teenagers continue to be portrayed in the media as '…puzzling, troublesome, angry and ungrateful. They are to be approached with fear and trepidation' (Steinberg

2001, p.4). Arguably however, conflict does still have a role during adolescence but it is academically more understood as a part of individual relationships than as a maturational necessity, 'Conflict rates and behaviours vary more as a function of type of relationships than of maturation' (Collins et al 1997, p.183).

Steinberg (2001) suggests, in considering the impact of parental emotional health, that researchers '…have not paid enough attention to the mental health or psychological needs of parents with teenagers' (Steinberg 2001, p.7). Suggesting the quality of parent-adolescent relationships may be more easily understood by recognising parental needs rather than automatically finding fault with the adolescent. However, I believe conflict is intricately linked to the autonomy development process and the movement of relationship around the AT, I also believe it to be both necessary and healthy, within reason, therefore this thread will be developed further in Chapter 5.

ADOLESCENT-PEER RELATEDNESS

As previously noted, Deci & Ryan (2002) conceptualise relatedness as: '… feeling connected to others, to caring for and being cared for by those others, to having a sense of belongingness both with other individuals and with one's community' (Deci & Ryan 2002 cited in Guay et al 2008, p.623). When applying an understanding of relatedness to the connection between adolescent and peer it seems reasonable to expect similar elements to those found within parental relatedness. However, Smith et al. (2003) suggest that the nature of relationships with peers is entirely different and propose that throughout childhood the relationship is characterised by 'unilateral authority'

(Smith et al. 2003, p.309). Suggesting that unlike in a parent-adolescent relationship, there is equal power or a shared authority between peers.

Smith et al (2003) suggest friendship '…is a form of mutually reciprocal relationship in which divergent opinions may be expressed and new ideas discussed' (Smith et al. 2003, p.309). I suggest that mutual reciprocity and the safety to express divergent opinion also apply to parental relatedness when appropriate reciprocal, autonomy supportive and collaborative attitudes to parenting are also present. The difference appears to be with the authoritative aspect and the balance of power within the relationship; 'While parent-child relations may become more mutual during adolescence, it is thought that they do not become as truly mutual or reciprocal as peer relationships' (Youniss, 1980 cited in Smith et al. 2003, p.309). Therefore, peers may be more likely to mutually negotiate aspects of authority within their own group dynamics and this is unlikely to replicate aspects of 'authoritative parenting' (Steinberg, 2001). This raises the question, is peer relatedness the same as 'friendship'?

'Friendship is defined at the dyadic level, often as the voluntary and reciprocal relationship between two individuals' (e.g., George & Hartmann, 1996; Hartup, 1992 cited in Waldrip 2008 p.835). The concept of friendship can therefore be viewed as separate to peer relatedness in that it applies to the individual relationship between two people which is 'determined by reciprocated nomination' (Waldrip 2008, p.835), that is, chosen by both parties. In contrast, peer relatedness implies, as I understand it, a more social conceptualisation of relatedness to the wider 'peer group' within which the adolescent may or may not hold close individual friendships.

Arguably, there seem to be discrepancies in how different research papers regard the concept of 'peer relatedness', some appear to recognise a wider social aspect of relatedness and some seem to address more individual relationships. But for the purposes of the AT it feels appropriate to suggest that the 'peer vertex' applies to either an individual peer or to the wider peer group, the appropriate definition emerges through discussion of individual contexts. However, importantly, I also note that qualities of friendship hold many similarities to autonomy supportive and reciprocal relatedness '…friendships do provide an environment for security and social support, learning problem-solving skills, sources of information for self-knowledge and esteem, a forum for the development of social competence, and practice for later relationships (Asher & Parker, 1989; Hartup, 1992; Hodges, Malone, & Perry, 1997 cited in Waldrip 2008, p.835). Therefore the peer vertex of the AT can be assessed as either a friend, an individual peer or the wider peer group, I acknowledge this could cause confusion as a clear context is required in order to apply the correct definition.

When peer relatedness is not firmly established there can be an impact on adolescent emotional health. A number of studies have linked '…depression to overall difficulties in peer relationships, whether assessed as rejection, lack of popularity, or lack of interpersonal support' (Galambos, Leadbeater & Barker 2004; Harter & Whitesell 1996; Henrich, Blatt, Kuperminc, Zohar & Leadbeater 2001; Nolan, Flynn & Garber 2003; Prinstein & Aikins 2004 cited in Allen 2006, p.56). When adolescent relatedness is a positive experience the outcomes reflect this; 'Children who enjoy positive peer relationships, such as reciprocated friendships, peer group acceptance, and high quality friendships,

also enjoy other indicators of well-being and are more likely to be socially adjusted' (Hartup & Stevens, 1997 cited in Waldrip 2008 p.832).

In Chapter 3 we saw how the impact of losing parental relatedness via separation or death can potentially impact negatively on the emotional adjustment of the adolescent. Here we gain awareness that difficulties within peer relatedness also impact adolescent wellbeing. In conclusion it appears that '…a balance between independent, self-confident action and positive relationships with others appears to be optimal for psychological adjustment and development' (Sessa & Steinberg, 1991 cited in Zimmer-Gembeck & Collins 2006, p.180).

GROUP IDENTITY

Coleman (1987) suggests that the adolescent can feel insecure whilst becoming less dependent resulting in more dependence on the peer group for '…reassurance in supporting the self-concept' (Coleman 1987, cited in Lines 2006, p.44). This sense of insecurity may provide some understanding as to why aligning with a peer group becomes so important during adolescence, however, where parents are autonomy supportive adolescents will '… use their peer group as a source of emotional support without a strong need to conform to group pressure' (Geldard & Geldard 2010, p.41). Dennis Lines (2006) discusses the importance of dominant sub-cultural identity within school peer groups which can provide an adolescent with a sense of safety '…as their social norms become ratified through membership, inner confusion and turmoil become shared and lessened through group discussion' (Lines 2006, p.46). As

the importance of peer relationships grow, along with 'group allegiance' parents can feel rejected (Lines 2006, p.53), however this change in relational balance appears part of the developmental process and the more '…the individual is engaged in healthy peer-group relations, the more communal group-identity will be formed and the more personal uniqueness will be shaped by commonality' (Lines 2006, p.54).

Newman and Newman (1976) suggest that, particularly in early adolescence, group identity can be a '…stepping stone toward a more individuated, autonomous sense of identity' (Newman & Newman, 1976 cited in Brown & Klute 2006, p.342) Therefore, through social group learning an adolescent has the opportunity to explore identity but by late adolescence they may have a more individualised sense of self which is less about external influence and more about intrinsically motivated (Deci and Ryan 2000) and autonomous identity decisions.

The literature often explores 'crowd psychology' but still within the perspective of peer group affiliation. Using this terminology another interesting point is the availability, through group or crowd awareness, for the variation of identity available; 'Crowds seem to embody this sense of group identity, giving young people a vocabulary for describing the distinctive categories of identity that are visible among peers, or the basic alternative lifestyles available in a given social system (Larkin, 1979 cited in Brown & Klute 2006, p.342). So, group identity raises awareness of identity choices through social contact and relatedness. By raising awareness of choice the adolescent goes through a process of internal decision making, thus supporting growth of self-identity and autonomy development. Successful peer relationships are therefore of

paramount importance, promoting sense of self through group identity, naturally supportive of autonomy whilst also promoting connectedness and social learning. Of interest here are also social learning theory (Bandura,1977) and social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1989) which encompass the a more cognitive approach to developmental psychology. I will explore these theories further in Chapter 5 through discussion surrounding the Field of Reflexive Contact (FRC).

AUTONOMY AND IDENTITY

Erikson believed that identity was important throughout the life cycle but during adolescence particular turmoil could be expected, he believed 'adolescents typically went through a psychological or psychosocial 'moratorium', in which they could try out different aspects of identity without finally committing themselves' (Smith et al. 2003, p.293). Erikson wrote about his moratorium as '… a 'playful' space for the consolidation of identity in the time gap between the development of biological maturity and taking up adult roles' (Erikson 1968 cited in Briggs 2008 p11). I find the idea of a 'playful space' illuminating, for me it implies the opportunity for experimentation, freedom of expression, choice, self-determined decision making and awareness of self. The space to choose. However, Erikson viewed this as a difficult, intense and pressured period which could have disastrous outcomes including '…the development of patterns of delinquency or promiscuity, which can become fixed as anti-social or self-destructive patterns of relating and behaving' (Briggs 2008, p.11).

Erikson appreciates developing identity as '… separating from others, becoming an individual and gaining a sense of self and other' (Briggs 2008,

p.11). Again, here we experience the tension associated with separation rather than considering relatedness, and yet, as we saw in the previous section young people are able to form identity through group affiliation. Briggs (2008) suggests Erikson is criticised for his focus on 'individualism, autonomy and achievement through his antipathy towards collectives rather than paying attention to the importance of relationships' (Sayers, 1991; Noam, 1999 cited in Briggs 2008, p.12). Contemporary feminist perspectives stand in opposition to this and suggest the importance of identity, autonomy and the relational context.

Feminist perspectives are based on '…a shared conviction, the conviction that persons are socially embedded and that agents' identities are formed within the context of social relationships and shaped by a complex of intersecting social determinants, such as race, class, gender, and ethnicity' (Mackensie & Stoljar 2000, p.4). Therefore, although there is a difference between the concept of individual identity and group identity, the individual and the collective, there is an argument here that relatedness and specifically the potency of peer group relatedness is an essential component of developing both autonomy and individual identity.

Côté (2000) advanced Erikson's developmental theory placing it within Beck's (1992) individualisation theory, he suggests there are two forms of individualisation: 'default individualisation…passive acceptance of mass-marketed and mass-educational pre-packaged identities' (Côté 2000 cited in Jones 2009, p.80) and that this phenomena can cause 'arrested development' (Côté 2000 cited in Jones 2009, p.80), due to the distraction and influence of this pre-packaged approach to identity formation. Côté believes for individualisation to occur then 'identity capital' is required (Côté 2000 cited in

Jones 2009, p.81). This is the collecting of skills and qualities from which the adolescent constructs their own self-identity and story: 'Identity capital refers to the personal resources which people may be able to develop and draw on to construct their biographies – for example, in abilities, appearance and interaction skills' (Côté 2002 cited in Jones 2009, p.81). This mass marketed perspective of identity formation arguably negatively influences the development of identity through intrinsically motivated, self-deterministic approaches to autonomy (Deci & Ryan, 2000). This alludes to immense societal peer pressure and the powerful materialistic influences of our environment which render the sensitive process of adolescent identity formation along with internal autonomous decision-making, extremely vulnerable.

Therefore I suggest that autonomy and individual identity formation are intricately connected, with social learning through relatedness being a significant factor. Self-deterministic, internal choices surrounding identity formation are fragile and vulnerable to negative influences. Counselling enables young people to review their self-concept and identity formation within a relationship supportive of autonomous decision making and accepting of difference; '…it is central to the conception of autonomy that the autonomous person has or is developing a conception of himself' (Raz 1986 cited in Colburn 2010, p.12).

THE ROLE OF PRIVACY

Within this chapter I have explored the complex interconnected and reciprocal relationships between adolescent and peer along with further

considerations of the benefits of relatedness in supporting a young person's quest for autonomy and identity. Now I turn to the internal, self-agentic, deterministic approaches to autonomy which include the right to express and retain personal boundaries, the right to secrecy and the desire to keep information private. 'Within this perspective, needs for autonomy are met when one perceives oneself as the origin of one's own actions (the agent; a perceived internal locus of causality)' (Zimmer-Gembeck & Collins 2006, p.183). And yet, can we ever be completely within ourselves with no external influence? Kantian philosophy suggested exactly that 'a person is autonomous if he is self-ruling' (Kant cited in Colburn 2010, p.5), in order to be self-ruling one needed to be 'efficient independently of alien causes determining it' (Kant *translated by Gregor 1997* cited in Colburn 2010 p.5). However, even when considering our innermost core self, it is hard to ignore that there are external influences, whether we like it or not; 'An innate need for autonomy energizes and motivates all individuals to seek their own course of behaviour, while a need for relatedness to others simultaneously promotes behaviours that maintain connections with others' (Zimmer-Gembeck & Collins 2006, p.183). Therefore, where there is a drive for autonomy in one direction, there appears a simultaneous and reciprocal desire to maintain connection too.

Bandura's (1989) social cognitive theory, developed from social learning theory and self-efficacy theory, suggests '…agency implies that actions, beliefs, emotions, and motivations arise from a continuous pattern of interaction between individuals and the environment' (Bandura 1989 cited in Zimmer-Gembeck & Collins 2006, p.183). He appreciated this as a learning process which invited self-regulation and reflection on these continual interactions. In

other words 'Individuals must engage in self-regulatory practices to develop autonomous functioning' (Zimmer-Gembeck & Collins 2006, p.183). With this process in mind, I now consider social domain theory (Nucci, 2001; Smetana, 1995, 2002; Turiel, 1983, 1998) and the way young people manage their personal domain in particular. The desire to keep things private and the personal choices surrounding this demonstrates, to some extent, the internal autonomy processes concerned with self-agency:

> Adolescents may choose to reveal or conceal information to parents for different reasons, including attempts to assert power or manipulate parents (Stattin, Kerr, & Ferrer-Wreder, 2000), avoid disapproval (Marshall, Tilton-Weaver, & Bosdet, 2005; Stattin et al., 2000), gain autonomy (Finkenauer, Engels, & Meeus, 2002; Marshall et al., 2005), or because they increasingly view some aspects of their behaviour as private matters and inappropriate to disclose to parents.
>
> (Smetana et al 2006, p.201)

Social domain theory suggests that individuals build social knowledge surrounding three domains: moral issues, conventional issues and personal issues (Nucci 2001; Smetana 1995a, 2002; Turiel 1983, 1998; cited in Smetana et al. 2005, p.32). Of the greatest significance to adolescent autonomy is the personal domain which relates to '…privacy, control over the body, and preferences and choices regarding such issues as appearance (clothes and hairstyle), friends, and activities' (Nucci, 1996, 2001; cited in Smetana et al. 2005, p.32). Being able to exert control over personal domains promotes

individual autonomy and parental interference here potentially damages '…the development of a healthy sense of self and identity (Nucci 1996; Nucci and Turiel 2000; cited in Smetana et al. 2005, p.37). Therefore Parents tread a delicate path of keeping their adolescents safe but respecting personal domains, and thus respecting autonomy. This has become known as 'precision parenting' (Mason, Cauce, Gonzales & Hiraga 1996, cited in Smetana et al. 2005, p.43). Thus it seems that the perceived boundary surrounding the personal domain is a significant one, controlled by the self-regulatory ability of the adolescent in conjunction with compromise and negotiation with the parent, resulting in a fragile balance.

Associated with social domain theory (Nucci, 2001; Smetana, 1995, 2002; Turiel, 1983,1998) is the concept of 'psychological control', conceptualised as '… parents' intrusiveness, love withdrawal, and guilt induction, [which] inhibits adolescent development by interfering with the development of a healthy sense of self and identity' (Barber, 2002; Barber, Olsen, and Shagle, 1994 cited in Smetana et al. 2005, p.37). So, trying to psychologically control adolescent domains is seen as damaging to both the young person's sense of self and their forming identity. Therefore there seems clear evidence that '…the psychological need for autonomy, personal agency, and effectance may be satisfied when individuals define an arena of control over personal issues' (Nucci, 1996; Nucci and Turiel, 2000 cited in Smetana et al. 2005 p.37).

However, interestingly, Kerr et al. (1999) discovered that adolescents who were more disclosing felt their parents were more trusting of them (Kerr et al cited in Smetana et al. 2006, p.201), suggesting that the quality of

relationship changed the personal domain boundaries. With this in mind Smetana et al. (2006) also found that mutual trust facilitated adolescent disclosure and increased secrecy was associated with less trust in the parent adolescent relationship (Smetana et al 2006 pp.212 -213). The findings from this study further, and quite surprisingly, suggested that '…greater parental psychological control was associated with more disclosure (and less secrecy) regarding personal issues and less secrecy regarding peer issues' (Smetana et al 2006, p.213).

Smetana et al. (2006) suggest that adolescents may feel more coerced to disclose personal issues when parents are psychologically controlling. As they also found that disclosure '…has positive implications and secrecy has negative implications for adjustment' (Smetana et al 2006 p.213), these findings seem to support the notion that a psychologically controlling element of parenting could actually have a positive influence on adolescent adjustment. These results also suggest that adolescents do consistently re-evaluate their '…actions, beliefs, emotions, and motivations [arising] from a continuous pattern of interaction between individuals and the environment' (Zimmer-Gembeck & Collins 2006, p.183).

Thus, research implies that relatedness, even when psychologically controlling, forms a part of that interactional, reflexive and reciprocal process which supports the adolescent sense of self-agency. As a part of the internal development of self-agency, privacy and how much personal information an adolescent chooses to share is a significant part of this process.

ADOLESCENT VERTEX AND SCHOOL BASED COUNSELLING

Within this chapter I have explored the relational connections at the adolescent vertex of the AT, taking into account storm and stress theory, peer relatedness, identity and finally privacy. Throughout this discussion I have explored evidence to suggest that reciprocal relatedness and development of autonomy in adolescence are intricately linked. The next chapter contains an exploration into the FRC and the internal autonomous processes of self-agency which further support this perspective. However, it would be vastly inappropriate to say that adolescents only achieve positive autonomous functioning when parental and peer relatedness exists, we can only say what is likely to be the case and that empirically there is evidence to suggest these conditions help.

When setting out on this project, I was unaware of where it would theoretically lead and find the concept of duality between relatedness and autonomy illuminating. From an ethical perspective, this implies that because relatedness appears to provide the optimum condition for autonomy to develop then surely, as counsellors, we have an ethical commitment to consciously encourage relatedness? From this, further ethical considerations also come into focus surrounding honouring a client's right to be self-directing in therapy, to follow 'their' agenda and that, as therapists we cannot impose our agenda on them. Thus, it would clearly be unethical to try to 'enforce' relatedness, however counsellors can respectfully and sensitively offer strategies as well-placed aspects of the therapeutic process, which may in turn encourage relatedness.

As school-based counsellors we are uniquely placed to be aware of a client's peer network, to recognise if they are alone or accepted by their peers,

to understand dynamics and to recognise the implications of this. The counsellor connection at the adolescent vertex of the AT encompasses this background awareness as an integral connection to the wider school community. As a result, we are able to invite growth in self-confidence, recognise bullying issues, explore blocks to friendship, thus encouraging social connectedness and inviting the duality of reciprocal, bi-directional relatedness to peers and subsequent development of autonomous functioning. School-based counsellors naturally and intuitively encourage relatedness and autonomy development anyway. However, I suggest, the AT raises professional awareness and invites proactive and conscious approaches to encouraging relatedness as an ethical priority.

Furthermore, as an expansion of this argument, I believe there is an argument to develop school counselling to encompass much more group work with adolescents. Groups which would encourage openly identified skills which link to promoting relatedness such as anger management, conflict resolution, de-escalation skills and self-esteem for instance. I suggest that sensitively managed, culturally aware group interventions of this nature would invite improved relatedness, awareness surrounding autonomy development and improved adolescent well-being.

CHAPTER 5

THE AUTONOMY TRIANGLE AND THE FIELD OF REFLEXIVE CONTACT

Having considered the relational connections around the AT, I now shift my focus to the point of contact where adolescent internal processes meet their immediate external environment. By 'external environment' I refer to anything external to self; so this could be relational contact with a single other, with a group, with society, or also with the physical environment. Within this chapter I will be exploring theories associated with internal learning as a result of social contact and the way the adolescent processes their experience to develop a sense of self and other, to develop as an autonomous agent.

I believe this 'place' of connection to be massively important in adolescent autonomy development, much more than a process of merely 'being together' with another. I argue that this point of connection is where reciprocal experiential learning takes place, where internal decision making and intrinsic motivation (Deci and Ryan, 2000) meet with external influences. Simplistically, the quality of this exchange may be characterised by anything from supportive and collaborative communication to more conflictual exchanges. The outcome is likely to be an exertion of autonomous expression informed by the quality of this communication along with internal values, historical experience, self-agency and developing identity. This psychological place of connection I have called the 'Field of Reflexive Contact' (FRC) and throughout this chapter I will be using theory to weave an understanding of what I mean by this concept.

There are many perspectives which influence the FRC, not least the work of Bandura (1989) and his social cognitive theory which will be discussed

more fully shortly but in essence he believes '…individuals construct the ability to regulate one's own cognitions, emotions, and behaviour from a history of transactions with the environment. Individuals must engage in self-regulatory practices to develop autonomous functioning' (Bandura 1989 cited in Zimmer-Gembeck & Collins 2006, p183). In other words, as a part of developing autonomy adolescents must acquire the ability to evaluate and to exert control over their environment thus developing autonomy.

Of particular relevance to the FRC, Baumeister et al. (1998) has explored the connection between self-regulation and autonomy. He describes three roots of selfhood which include: reflexive consciousness, interpersonal aspect of selfhood, and executive function (Baumeister et al. 1998 cited in Zimmer-Gembeck & Collins 2006, p.183). The interpersonal aspect of selfhood aligns well with the significance of relatedness and how we model ourselves through our social interactions with others. Baumeister (1998) viewed the 'executive function' as responsible for self-regulation and autonomous functioning (Baumeister et al. 1998 cited in Zimmer-Gembeck & Collins 2006, p.183). Baumeister (1998) saw his three roots of selfhood as '…powerful, prototypical patterns of experience in which people grasp the basic meaning of self' (Baumeister 1998, p.680), and as such they are considerably influential, here playing a key role in the integration of theory within the FRC. With that in mind I turn my attention to the concept of reflexivity, or as Baumeister called it 'reflexive consciousness' (Baumeister et al. 1998 cited in Zimmer-Gembeck & Collins 2006, p.183) followed by a detailed exploration of the FRC.

REFLEXIVITY

Archer (2010) begins by confirming the confusion about where the concept of 'reflexivity' originally came from: 'Though its importance is now accepted by contemporary theorists, there is no consensus about the human practice of reflexivity, its origins, operations, or outcomes' (Archer 2010, p1). Archer explores reflexivity in terms of an internal conversation, an aspect also acknowledged by Plato: 'I mean the conversation which the soul holds with herself in considering of anything. I speak of what I scarcely understand; but the soul when thinking appears to me to be just talking – asking questions of herself and answering them, affirming and denying' (Plato, 1992: 189E–190A cited in Archer 2010, p.1). Archer also confirms that reflexivity has often been referred to as 'introspection', something which Kant also had issues with as it had to assume '…a split within the self such that we could simultaneously be both the observer and the observed – subject and object at the same time' (Kant 1983 [1804] cited in Archer 2010, p.1). Kant found the concept of being both subject and object difficult to reconcile and yet he admitted there was truth behind it: 'How it might be possible for the I that I think to be an object (of intuition) for me, one that enables me to distinguish me from myself, is absolutely impossible to explain, even though it is an indubitable fact' (Kant, 1983 [1804] cited in Archer 2010 p.1).

In exploring reflexive consciousness, Baumeister (1998) suggests that 'The self cannot be known directly or observed in quiescent isolation, but one can form elaborate knowledge about the self based on observing it in action and knowing its thoughts and feelings' (Baumeister 1998, p.699). Therefore, Baumeister is suggesting we can know ourselves by observing our responses,

actions and impact within the environment and therefore gain self-awareness upon which we can choose to act or not.

Reflexivity has developed to be appreciated as an internal self-evaluative conversation characterised as '…active participation: into speaking, listening and responding' (Pierce 1994 cited in Archer 2010 p.2). In line with this, Nagata (2004) suggests that '…self-reflexivity can be understood as having an ongoing conversation with one's whole self about what one is experiencing as one is experiencing it. To be self-reflexive is to engage in this meta-level of feeling and thought while being in the moment' (Nagata 2004, p.141). However, there is a social aspect to reflexivity which is most aptly described by Strauss (1956):

> It is by means of reflexiveness—the turning-back of the experience of the individual upon himself—that the whole social process is thus brought into the experiences of the individuals involved in it… which enable the individual to take the attitude of the other toward himself, that the individual is consciously to adjust himself to that process, and to modify the resultant of that process in any given social act in terms of his adjustment to it. Reflexiveness, then, is the essential condition, within the social process, for the development of mind. (Strauss 1956 cited in Salzman 2002, p.805)

From this statement reflexivity is experienced when one looks back inside oneself and consciously decides on personal adjustments as a result of external social contact, making self-directed decisions as a result of raised self-

awareness; 'Awareness of self seems to be the very essence of reflexive consciousness' (Baumeister 1998, p.685). Self-awareness theory was originally proposed by Duval & Wicklund (1972) who explored it as a concept which was '… "binary" in the sense that it can be directed either inward or outward' (Duval & Wicklund 1972 cited in Baumeister 1998, p.685). They posited that self-awareness was a comparison of standard and as such it '…will generally be an aversive state, because people will usually fall short of standards against which they measure themselves' (Duval & Wicklund 1972 cited in Baumeister 1998, p.685). This aversive state then becomes motivational as individuals either 'improve so as to meet the standard, or escape from the aversive state of self-awareness' (Duval & Wicklund 1972 cited in Baumeister 1998, p.685). Thus reflexivity raises self-awareness inviting the opportunity for self-directed recognition of choice and change.

THE FIELD OF REFLEXIVE CONTRACT (FRC)

This next section identifies the three elements to the FRC which have been adapted and integrated from theoretical concepts previously discussed in this project. This is the psychological 'place' of adolescent contact in relationship and identifies how adolescents learn through relatedness, making self-motivated choices through reflexive process, which in turn invites adolescent autonomy development. These ideas form a hypothesis which may be useful to explore in future research.

FIELD

This is the container or space, where connection with other, others or environment takes place and is experientially 'captured'. I conceptualise this as

an external boundary, where relatedness impacts the adolescent, the reflexive processing and reworking of this captured information then becomes an internal process. In part, this is reminiscent of Erikson's psychosocial moratorium, being a 'playful space for the consolidation of identity' (Erikson 1968 cited in Briggs 2008 p11), however he saw this as a 'time gap' which enabled suspension of commitment and space for personal discovery (Erikson 1968 cited in Briggs 2008, p.11). In contrast I see this 'field' as a 'receptive boundary' which may allow experiential information including that of relatedness in, dependant on the willingness of the adolescent to engage. The adolescent's sense of agency is therefore acting as 'gatekeeper' (self-regulation) in enabling connection on a sliding scale between 'open' or 'receptive' and that of being 'closed'.

Social contructionist theory posits that in trying to make sense of our experience people form '…contructs which encapsulate their concepts about the world in which they live' (Geldard & Geldard 2010, p.76). Geldard & Geldard (2010) introduced the proactive approach to counselling young people which also explores the use of existential philosophy emphasising how '…human beings are free to choose and are therefore responsible for their choices and actions…..we are free to choose how to respond to unavoidable and unpredictable 'stimuli' which our world presents to us' (Spinelli 2003 cited in Geldard & Geldard 2010, p.75). Both existential and social constructionism bring a sense of choice, responsibility, discovery and continual reworking of experience to the field. The field is the container in which the internal processing takes place, however, there is a superficial level of decision making made here which might be for example: Whether to listen or not, whether to help or not, whether to speak or not, to be open or closed to others. The quality of these

decisions can appear selfish, quite 'black and white' and ego centric. The field can, in itself, become a barrier to contact under challenging social conditions.

Therefore this is a reactive boundary which enables the adolescent to be responsive to the social environment and their experience of relatedness. Thus this process, under positive nurturing conditions, creates the psychological environment to support reciprocal, bi-directional, collaborative communication. Under critically challenging, discounting and hostile conditions the adolescent may become 'closed' and difficult to communicate with. Of relevance here is also social domain theory (Nucci, 2001; Smetana, 1995, 2002; Turiel, 1983,1998) and being able to take control over the privacy of specific domains. Control over gatekeeping at the 'field' enables the adolescent to retain their privacy. The other two aspects of the FRC, 'reflexivity' and 'contact', invite the internal processing involved in deciding what information is private or not.

REFLEXIVE

Reflexivity, as already defined, alludes to the deep internal connection with our intrinsic self and self-discussion, enabling self-evaluation and self-management processes along with decision making aligned with thoughts, feelings, experience and values. Choices are made from within (intrinsic motivation: Deci & Ryan 2000) which support the development of autonomous functioning. I view this as largely a conscious process; 'The capacity of the human organism to be conscious of itself is a distinguishing feature and is vital to selfhood. Without it, people would not be able to grasp the meaning of self' (Baumeister 1998, p.683), however it requires practice. Through growing self-

awareness (Duval & Wicklund 1972 cited in Baumeister 1998, p.685) and relatedness the adolescent becomes more receptive to reciprocal, collaborative and supportive transactions which enable reflexivity. The more this process takes place, the more accomplished the adolescent will become at it, and the more self-aware. Reflexivity, as integral to the FRC, aligns closely with Baumeister's (1998) reflexive consciousness and executive function and also perspectives of autonomy emphasising self and motivation such as self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan 2000), social domain theory (Nucci, 2001; Smetana, 1995, 2002; Turiel, 1983,1998), Bandura's theory of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1982), social learning theory (Bandura,1977) and social cognitive theory (Bandura 1989).

CONTACT

This is the connection with other, others or the environment. Not to be confused with the 'field' being the container, 'contact' is about social relatedness, the quality to relational connection with another. This aspect of the FRC relates to perspectives of autonomy which Zimmer-Gembeck & Collins (2006) recognised as instigated through relationship, being socially influenced '…autonomy and connections to others coexist and influence each other bidirectionally' (Zimmer-Gembeck & Collins 2006, p.184). Baumeister's interpersonal aspect of selfhood (Baumeister et al. 1998) also emphasises the significance of development of self through relationship with others. Bandura is influential here too, through his theory of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1982), social learning theory (Bandura,1977) and social cognitive theory (Bandura 1989). So, 'contact' as an integral part of the FRC is about the quality of relatedness, it can

be how adolescents relate but also about how counsellors engage adolescents in more depth within the therapeutic relationship.

Together, the three elements of the FRC blend to create a fluid and responsive picture of the connection adolescents make with their external world. It illustrates how they learn from their social interactions and internally process information which invites intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan 2000) and autonomous decision making ability. This leads to external autonomous self-expression (behavioural autonomy), development of identity and subsequently their understanding of themselves and how they exist in the world.

THE RELEVANCE OF SOCIAL LEARNING THEORIES

Object relations theory, as initially posited by Freud (1856-1939), has mutated considerably as other theorists have rejected the connection with drive theory: '…some psychoanalytic theorists have retained the terms "object" and "object relations" although they have eliminated entirely the concept of drive in the classical Freudian sense' (Greenberg & Mitchell 1983, p.13). Greenberg & Mitchell (1983) adopt the approach that '…the term refers to individual's interactions with external and internal (real and imagined) other people, and to the relationship between their internal and external object worlds' (Greenberg & Mitchell 1983, pp.13-14). From this perspective object relations theory connects with the internal (reflexivity) and external (contact) process illustrated by the FRC, being a place of connection between the internal and external object worlds. The FRC and object relations theory explore the social learning

captured from the external object world and intrinsically rework experiential information.

Freud (1921) did explore social relationships from the perspective of 'the ties which bind us' however, for him, his drive model always remained significant 'The drive model is capable of telling us all that we need to know about people's lives as members of groups' (Freud 1921 cited in Greenberg & Mitchell 1983, p.46). In contrast, I believe we possess an essential desire to be in social connection with others as we appear to be bound by a web of social connectedness which is hard to deny. Choice theory (Glasser, 2000) suggests we are born with five genetically coded needs: survival, love and belonging, power, freedom and fun. Glasser believes that '…the need to love and belong is the primary need because we need people to satisfy the other needs' (Glasser, 2000 cited in Corey 2001, p.231). Therefore choice theory suggests not only do we have a primary need to love and belong, the desire for social relatedness, but that our other needs cannot be met without this social connection.

Social learning theory (Bandura 1977) posits that '…behaviour is influenced by stimulus events, by external reinforcement, and by cognitive mediational processes' (Bandura, 1977 cited in Corey 2001, p.258). This approach suggests the importance of external experience and the marriage of internal cognitive processes which potentially instigate a change in behaviour. 'Social learning theory gives prominence to the reciprocal interactions between an individual's behaviour and the environment' (Corey 2001, p.258), this was something Bandura also referred to as 'reciprocal determinism' (Bandura 1978 cited in Carlson et al. 2000 p.487) thus reflecting a marriage between reciprocal

processes and volitional functioning. Both of which are aspects of theory explored within the AT and particularly the FRC giving rise to social learning, self-awareness and autonomous choice.

Of interest here is also self-efficacy theory (Bandura 1982) '…self-efficacy is the individual's belief or expectation that he or she can master a situation and bring about desired change' (Bandura, 1982 cited in Corey 2001, p.258). This suggests a process of self-belief, taking control and taking action which ties in with the volitional thinking of self-determination theory and the intrinsically motivated autonomy development (Deci & Ryan, 2000) processes within the FRC. Bandura (2001) writes: 'The capacity to exercise control over the nature and quality of one's life is the essence of humanness' (Bandura 2001, p.1), a powerful statement which, for me, emphasises what it is to be alive, to make self-directed choice and to exert autonomy. Bandura's social cognitive theory considers three aspects of agency '…direct personal agency, proxy agency that relies on others to act on one's behest to secure desired outcomes, and collective agency exercised through socially coordinative and interdependent effort' (Bandura 2001, p.1). This again reflects the existence of social interrelatedness along with how we are inextricably linked to our social environment and able to pool our cognitive ability for social gain.

Vicarious or observational learning also holds significance here being '..a form of learning in which an expectancy about reinforcement is formed merely by observing another's behaviour and the consequences it produces' (Carlson et al 2000, p.487). By watching the outcome of a certain behaviour in another, one can decide if it would be advantageous to make the same decision or not. Therefore, with reference to the AT and the FRC, adolescents

experience relatedness and watch the behaviours of parents and peers whilst making internal decisions based on vicarious learning opportunities. Vicarious learning may deter or encourage aspects of behaviour but sadly not all social learning leads to positive outcomes for young people and therefore I move on to building an awareness of conflict and how this has relevance to the AT and the FRC.

AWARENESS OF CONFLICT

In chapter 4 I explored the changing academic view of storm and stress theory and how Steinberg suggests that society has found it hard to let go of it with teenagers continuing to be portrayed in the media as '…puzzling, troublesome, angry and ungrateful. They are to be approached with fear and trepidation' (Steinberg 2001, p.4). However there is no doubt that young people can become angry and during teenage years boundaries and relationships can come under pressure. This section aims to raise awareness for the continued existence of aggression and conflict whilst also re-emphasising 'Most adolescents go through this period successfully without experiencing particular trauma and they report a satisfactory level of well-being' (Corsano et al. 2006 cited in Helseth & Misaer 2010, p.1454).

However, '…social learning theorists consider aggression to be "learned by observation, imitation, direct experience, and rehearsal" ' (Goldstein, Glick, & Gibbs, 1998 cited in Feindler and Engel 2011 p.243). Some of this learning may occur in the context of families or could also be a part of peer group expression and the internal requirement to 'belong' (Glasser, 2000 cited in Corey 2001, p.231). Within schools the existence of bullying and peer

aggression is undeniable; 'Peer aggression and bullying in schools are significant worldwide problems with potentially devastating long-term negative consequences' (Hawker and Boulton, 2000; Rigby and Slee, 1999; Roland, 2002 cited in Barchia & Bussey 2011 p.107). Also, underdeveloped social skills can be a contributing factor to youth aggression and severely undermine the adolescent's ability to engage in connection with others: 'Aggressive youth often demonstrate underdeveloped social skills, which can lead to social alienation, withdrawal, and anxiety' (Glick, 2003 cited in Feindler and Engel 2011, p.244). Adolescent conflict may be about autonomous expression, testing boundaries or even negative learnt experience. However it can also promote discovery of compromise, negotiation and tolerance as well as learning ways of managing and safely expressing strong feelings. Through relatedness with peers and parents, healthy conflict can help to teach young people important life skills. Where the family or peers lack these skills then counselling can help to fill this gap in social learning experience.

Yau & Smetana (2003) explored the relationship between culture, development and conflict noticing that some research suggests '…moderate levels of adolescent-parent conflict, in the context of warm, accepting relationships with parents, are adaptive for development…and promote the development of adolescent autonomy' (Holmbeck, 1996; Smetana, 1995, 2002; Steinberg, 2001 cited in Yau & Smetana 2003, p.201). However, other research suggests '..the way individuals raise, negotiate, and resolve conflicts is culturally patterned' (Markus & Lin, 1999 cited in Yau & Smetana 2003 p.201). For example, American adolescent-parent conflict is typified by expressions of independence and achievement of personal goals, which are highly valued

(Oysermann, Coon, & Kemmelmeier, 2002; Rothbaum, Pott, Azuma, Miyake & Weisz, 2000; cited in Yau & Smetana 2003, p.201). Whereas in collectivist cultures such as China there is greater emphasis on maintaining harmony (Marcus & Lin, 1999 cited in Yau & Smetana 2003 p.201). Rothbaum et al. (2000) suggest that '…adolescent-parent conflict reflects a Western pattern of relatedness that emphasises generative tension, whereas Asian cultures emphasise symbiotic harmony' (Rothbaum et al. 2000 cited in Yau & Smetana 2003, p201).

From this exploration it can be appreciated that, much like the cultural differences surrounding autonomy supportive, collaborative parenting behaviours discussed in Chapter 3, there are cultural differences surrounding parent-adolescent conflict in the family.

CHAPTER 6

AUTONOMY, RELATEDNESS AND IMPLICATIONS
FOR COUNSELLING ADOLESCENTS

Within this dissertation I have brought awareness of the impact of relatedness on the adolescent autonomy development process and particularly how the relationships identified on the AT are influential. In addition my conceptualisation of the FRC explores how internal autonomy processes invite development of self-agency, personal values, identity, motivation and the expression of autonomy. Within this dissertation I have also suggested that, rather than tension between autonomy and relatedness, there exists duality with relatedness and autonomy inextricably linked and in process together; autonomy develops through the experiential learning associated with relatedness to an other, others or the social environment. I suggest there is a continuous fluid interplay between these two concepts, which exist in parallel and appear to function together. Qualities of bi-directional, reciprocal, mutually beneficial communication give rise to social learning which subsequently invites development of extrinsic and intrinsically motivated autonomous processes (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

DISCUSSION

This dissertation began with my own natural curiosity, as a school-based counsellor, surrounding the numbers of clients who present in therapy with significant family issues. 38.2% of clients across Welsh schools were shown to

have presented with family based issues over 3 years from 2008 – 2011 (BACP 2011, p.14). Also, client's presenting with difficulties associated with adolescent autonomy development may have an even greater impact on young people than this; 'Disagreements over autonomy-related concerns are at the top of the list of things that provoke quarrels between adolescents and parents' (Holmbeck & O'Donnell, 1991; Steinberg 2001 cited in Steinberg 2011, p.278). I suggest that this dissertation highlights how extensively the struggle to develop autonomy impacts on virtually every area of adolescent life; at home, in school, in the community, in society, in relating personally and socially, in how we understand our world and how we come to know ourselves.

This exploration of adolescent autonomy initially began with three broad perspectives: maturational, self and motivation, and social relatedness (Zimmer-Gembeck & Collins 2006, pp.180 – 185). Theoretically my awareness matured into conceiving of autonomy processes as either internal or external to self, but both having relational significance. External perspectives: Incorporating relational autonomy and social connectedness, both highlighting the significance of relatedness and encompassing social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) and social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1989). The alternative conception being internal self-process: Incorporating approaches to self-agency, self-motivation, self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), social domain theory (Nucci, 2001; Smetana, 1995, 2002; Turiel, 1983,1998) and theories of reflexivity as a response to relatedness, social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) and social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1989). Also, Baumeister's (1998) three roots of selfhood - reflexive consciousness, the interpersonal aspect of selfhood, and the executive function - have also been

identified to integrate with the AT and the FRC having both internal and external implications to autonomy development.

I argued against the traditional psychodynamic maturational perspectives of separation where '… autonomy is defined as independent functioning, which is opposed to dependence or reliance on others, and on the parents in particular' (Blos, 1967, 1979 cited in Van Petergem 2012 p.77). It became clear that even psychodynamic and later psychoanalytic perceptions of separation and individuation came to introduce psychosocial significance into theoretical understanding. Thus, even though traditional concepts retain awareness for maturation, drive theories and instinct, theorists seem unable to completely extract the significance of the social context from theory.

I have come to perceive the FRC as a relevant concept throughout life. I suggest it has particular relevance for adolescent development, as this is when so many developmental processes are converging such as physical, cognitive and emotional changes in conjunction with the relational and autonomous aspects discussed within this dissertation. Although the FRC may begin to emerge at an earlier age, I believe it gains significance within adolescence when some of the processes, such as reflexivity, have had the opportunity to develop. The FRC reflects how we process social information and begin building our intrinsic self-concept. This is not a process which ends at the conclusion of adolescence; we continue to re-evaluate ourselves throughout life and thus I suggest this is a continuously on going self-learning process with particular relevance during adolescence.

In contrast, I don't believe the AT continues to have the same level of significance throughout life. As evidenced by Bucx et al. (2008) who reported a closer bond between parents and adolescents which changed following departure from the parental home (Bucx et al. 2008, pp.7-8). Once the adolescent leaves home then the relationship evolves, relatedness is known to continue although it changes with parents becoming less influential. Therefore, I suggest the AT loses its relevance once the young person attains a degree of adult independence, whether they remain in close proximity or not. It is also logical to suggest that peer relatedness changes in significance too, once adult independence is achieved. Therefore the AT would no longer conceptualise the dynamics of these relationships beyond adolescence.

IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOOL-BASED COUNSELLING PRACTICE

The AT and the FRC identify and build professional awareness of the delicate processes involved in adolescent autonomy development. I suggest there are three sections for discussion around implications arising from this dissertation, there is also naturally some overlap involved: Implications relating to individual therapy, those which have relevance for the school-based counselling role and wider service provision and finally, ethical implications.

IMPLICATIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL THERAPY

As demonstrated within this text, many of the relational conditions which invite autonomy development can be recognised as already integral to professional ethical counselling and the therapeutic relationship. I have drawn parallels between positive autonomy supportive parenting styles, relatedness and aspects of the counselling relationship. Even authoritative approaches can arguably be aligned to some extent with the firm, contracted, ethical and safe boundaries which protect the therapeutic space in the sometimes chaotic environment of school.

School counsellors enable young people to explore choices, to understand their lives and to make their own autonomous decisions. We also invite awareness for recognising unhelpful or destructive dynamics and create learning opportunities through implementing psycho-educational strategies; '…provided that a sound therapeutic alliance is maintained psycho-educational strategies can be very helpful indeed with regard to gaining information, explaining relationships and behaviour, and in helping to change behaviour' (Geldard & Geldard 2010, p.251). We are ethically aware of the client's own agenda, we empower them, encourage their self-awareness, their ability to communicate effectively and ultimately encourage their autonomous functioning. Through all of this and more we are already attending to the autonomy development of adolescents by inviting receptive openness of the 'field' within the FRC.

However, what arises from this research is the professional 'awareness' gained which arguably has an ethical implication to individual practice which requires further explanation. Of significance here is the recognition that continued relatedness with parents and peers positively impacts adolescent

autonomy development and when relatedness is compromised this can have disastrous consequences for adolescent well-being. Counsellor 'awareness' of these themes may arguably appear an underwhelming research outcome with limited practical application to counselling practice, as already discussed, without any adjustment in practice we attend to so much already. However, the BACP Ethical Framework for Good Practice in Counselling and Psychotherapy (2010) emphasises to professional counsellors, when respecting autonomy, '…the importance of developing a client's ability to be self-directing within therapy and all aspects of life' (BACP 2010, p3). Therefore, now we are 'aware' of the duality between relatedness and autonomy, I consider we are ethically committed to support development of autonomy through encouraging relatedness, not just in therapy but '…all aspects of life' (BACP 2010, p3).

I therefore suggest, within an individual therapeutic setting, it to be beneficial for school counsellors to respond to this by becoming more proactive in consciously supporting continued relatedness whilst also remaining sensitive to the client's own agenda (also discussed under ethical implications). I also further suggest this ethical consideration to have a more systemic application with potential implications to the school-based counselling role.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNSELLING ROLE

With an ethical understanding of the requirement to invite development of autonomy in '…all aspects of life' (BACP 2010, p.3), it is therefore difficult,

as a counsellor myself, to ignore the systemic implications of recognising the duality between autonomy and relatedness. 'Relatedness' implies social connectedness and within the school environment we are arguably already a part of the web of social connection surrounding each client. However, as a result of professional awareness for duality, arguably, it may be relevant for school counsellors to become more proactive within the wider school community and particularly in their communication with parents.

Improving relatedness within the school community would require wider service provision such as a range of psycho-educational group work with adolescents, parenting programmes and workshops along with improved inter-agency collaboration and communication with teachers. As an example, school counselling models in America and Canada have developed to include such aspects along with many others, whilst I do not suggest this dissertation alone implies a massive change in direction there could be valuable learning in these approaches, particularly in respect of parental involvement.

'The American School Counseling Association (ASCA) National Model for School Counseling Programs emphasizes the need for all education stakeholders to become active in student welfare; students, parents, faculty and staff, administrators, and community members are all considered important education stakeholders' (ASCA, 2005 cited in Cripps & Zyromski 2009, pp.1-13). Thus counsellors have become central to collaborative working providing services, information, groups and workshops which very much include parental involvement. This approach has not been without its ethical difficulties, particularly surrounding confidentiality, but these have been successfully addressed. The role of a school counsellor, as stated by the British Columbia

School Counsellors Association, is an example of how the role has developed to include family, community, educational involvement as well as career counselling. The counsellor, amongst many other aspects, '…counsels students, their families and the community to foster growth in the students' self esteem individual responsibility, and in skills such as decision making and social skills' (www.bctf.ca/bcsca 05/04/2013).

Although I do not suggest school counselling in the UK should completely follow the example set by America and Canada, I do suggest psycho-educational support for parents, individually and in groups, as a useful implication for school-based counselling. Einzig (1996) suggests: 'The parallels between running a counselling group and a parenting support group are very strong – indeed, where parents are distressed or in crisis, there may appear to be little distinction between the two' (Einzig 1996, p.224). School counsellors are not only knowledgeable about systemic dynamics within the family but they have a useful knowledge surrounding child development and would therefore be well placed to undertake this approach.

There are limited numbers of UK counselling services currently offering parenting support however this is beginning to change. Through both group and individual approaches to communicating with parents, counsellors have the potential to not only help young people to make choices/changes for themselves but to affect change in their environment as well. Thus, counsellors would be encouraging continuing relatedness and inviting the opportunity for positive autonomy development whilst also meeting an ethical requirement to support the development of autonomy in '…all aspects of life' (BACP, 2010).

ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS

I consider duality between autonomy development and the requirement for relatedness at the core of how, as adolescents, we begin to shape our sense of selfhood, identity, morals and values along with learning how we connect with others and make sense of our existence. Autonomy development is therefore a massively significant process and yet it appears vastly underrepresented in both counselling literature and training. As ethical practitioners we hold awareness of our requirement to honour our client's autonomy and yet it extends far beyond representations in law, or how we honour autonomy in the counselling setting. As already stated, arguably I suggest we have an ethical obligation to encourage continued relatedness both in and outside of the therapy room, this does not mean we have previously discouraged it but I advocate for a more conscious, proactive involvement.

However, within individual therapy, ethically there is a balance to keep which is about sensitivity, intuition and careful placement of information whilst also honouring the client's right to be self-directive in therapy. Therefore, counsellors need to be mindful that by over prescriptively encouraging relatedness and autonomy development they may, inadvertently, contravene the ethical principle of autonomy. However, in defence of a more mindful application of this approach, counsellors are used to holding theoretical awareness and well-practiced in balancing and judging appropriate application of such knowledge.

In working more closely with parents and peers this also raises ethical awareness of boundaries and the pressure which may be placed on

confidentiality in particular. Clients may perceive their confidentiality to be threatened even when it is not. Boundaries surrounding any communication with parents would need to be firm and that would apply to group work too. Protecting the individual confidential therapeutic space of each young person has to be a central concern however it is clear, from exploring models in Canada, America, and the UK, that it is possible to engage with the wider school community and yet still maintain boundaries effectively.

CRITICAL AWARENESS

In researching and writing this dissertation I have been acutely aware that the 'autonomy-relatedness' debate is not a new one and many of the themes explored in this text are also by no means new. There is a multitude of research material and academic literature surrounding adolescent autonomy development which rendered this project a challenge from the start. However, I managed to blend aspects of theory to bring new understanding to adolescent autonomy development through arriving at the concept of duality between relatedness and autonomy. Also, in creating the AT and the FRC I have managed to create an integrative approach with contemporary application to counselling adolescents, particularly school-based counselling.

There are gaps in this study, some of which were conscious decisions due to both time constraints and word count, others are due to the enormous body of literature available. I intended to include more exploration around attachment theory (Bowlby 1952) as well as the effects on relatedness of parental chronic illness. Other omissions surrounded feminism, liberalism and

educational perspectives on autonomy as well as ego centric behaviour and the role of narcissism in adolescence. All of these aspects were either reduced substantially or removed but I consider did not impact the outcome greatly.

I have found this journey useful and informative professionally and have adjusted aspects of my own practice with individual clients through awareness of these themes. At the outset of this process I considered autonomy and relatedness to be opposite concepts which almost duelled for supremacy, this view has adjusted to conceive of duality rather than tension, a massive theoretical journey for me.

The implications for counselling practice are explored in relation to the BACP ethical principle of autonomy and highlighting the perspective of duality between autonomy and relatedness. There is a careful balance to be respected here as although aspects of psycho-educational approaches to working with individuals, groups of peers and parents would appear to be a useful development of the counselling role, there are ethical considerations which would require careful consideration. Therefore, the implications to counselling practice suggested here could easily be viewed as too prescriptive with the danger of ethical challenges, particularly surrounding confidentiality.

Counsellor 'awareness' appears on the surface to be a slightly insignificant implication but when linked with professional ethical commitment to supporting autonomy, professional awareness becomes a powerful concept which brings a deeper level of meaning to the piece. I suggest there is a subtle strength in the application of the learning gained from this text which lends itself to further investigation.

The chosen names of each vertex of the AT, especially the 'parent vertex', may be potentially problematic. The term 'parent' appears to deny acknowledgement of the many different people engaged in parenting young people and school official policy requires the use of 'carer' rather than 'parent', therefore I did consider changing the 'parent vertex' to 'carer vertex'. However, on further reflection, 'parenting refers to the aspects of raising a child aside from the biological relationship' (Davies 2000, p.245). Therefore, I suggest that in this instance the 'parent vertex' applies to processes of relatedness and the task of 'parenting'. As such, this need not be completed by someone who is a biological parent and therefore has wider application, thus I retained the original name. It is also important to note that there may be discrepancy over whether the terms parent, adolescent and peer, refer to singular or plural consideration. This is dependent on discussion surrounding the contextual dynamics which are therefore changeable, this could prove confusing to some professionals.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This research raises a number of different questions which I feel could be answered in future empirical research. Firstly, I suggest it may be helpful to collect data surrounding numbers of clients presenting for counselling with autonomous-relatedness issues. In Wales, data is collected on a termly basis for other categories, an adjustment to this may yield some interesting results.

In addition it may be useful to explore the relatedness between parents and peers, there is a lack of research in this area but the findings could build empirical strength into the AT.

I would be particularly interested in exploring the concept of the FRC further, to gain a better understanding of its scope and what happens when adolescents become 'closed' and unresponsive along with the processes involved in inviting positive communication again. As a part of researching the FRC or as another project, it would be useful to further explore the concept of duality between relatedness and autonomy, I consider this to be a significant theoretical shift by comparison to previous research, which lends itself to further consideration. All of these ideas could be researched using a more empirical approach whilst also inviting qualitative responses directly from young people.

Thus I have integrated theory to conceive of the AT and the FRC and as a result suggest autonomy and relatedness as inextricably linked rather than working in opposition to each other or 'in tension'. I have shown the process to be fluid, reciprocal and responsive, even conflict has a place in the movement of relational social learning around the AT. Therefore rather than 'tension' we have duality and reciprocal interdependence. 'Social being constitutes an irreducible aspect of human existence: we live our lives both in connection with others, and alone within our own private awareness' (McLeod 2009, p.269).

(Words: 21,768)

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