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'Thinking under fire': Managing therapeutic boundaries in inner-city secondary schools

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*Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing,
there is a field. I'll meet you there.*

Rumi

ABSTRACT

School-based counselling has become widespread over the last ten years as schools and clinics struggle to cope with the dramatic increase in young people presenting with mental health problems. Until recently, there was little research on school-based counselling in the UK. However, several large scale quantitative studies along with a handful of smaller qualitative studies have now been published. One clear gap in this literature concerns how counsellors experience the educational context, particularly the nature of boundaries in schools. It has been recognised that secondary schools present numerous challenges to practitioners, particularly with regard to boundaries which create the appropriate conditions needed for therapeutic work.

This study used constructivist grounded theory in order to explore the nature of boundaries and boundary management in school-based counselling. It focused on practitioners working in the complex setting of inner-city secondary schools where stretched resources and highly vulnerable young people pose numerous challenges to the work. Ten school counsellors were interviewed. The findings which emerged from this research demonstrate that the management of therapeutic boundaries in schools is a complex process which develops over time. A theory is proposed whereby boundary management evolves over three stages driven by internal and external processes. Three boundary dynamics are put forth: reactive, responsive and reflective. This study argues that these dynamics serve as useful and important constructs for thinking about boundaries and maintaining a sound, ethical stance in schools work and other related contexts. This may be the only study which explores in depth the impact of the inner city secondary school environment on therapeutic work with adolescents from a therapist's point of view. The findings therefore provide a unique and valuable snapshot of therapy at the 'chalkface' of urban secondary education in the UK.

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1 Introduction

School-based counselling in the UK has entered a new era, thanks to a growing evidence base which has demonstrated its effectiveness as a mental health intervention, and to local governments and professional bodies which have drawn up policies, strategies and guidelines critical for its further development and growth. School-based counselling is coming of age, transitioning from a relatively unacknowledged, peripheral activity to a recognised profession with an established identity.

The aim of this study was to explore boundary management in school-based counselling. It focused specifically on practitioners working in inner-city secondary schools, where an urgent need for school counselling has been identified (Sodha and Margo, 2008, Pattison et al. 2009) and where the combination of stretched resources and highly vulnerable young people creates a challenging and complex environment. This study examined how practitioners manage the administrative and interpersonal aspects of therapeutic work, generally referred to as 'boundaries', in the face of such contextual difficulties.

1.1   Importance of context

Schools are an example of a complex community setting which present numerous challenges to the psychological therapist. Similar to those working in outreach settings, therapeutic communities or prison settings, school-based counsellors encounter a series of interruptions, obstacles, expectations and demands as part of their daily work. Practitioners moving across from work in traditional clinical settings often find these disruptions very challenging: "For the therapist trained primarily to work one-to-one in a clinic consulting room, the shock of exposure to the diversity of demands, expectations and projections that one encounters in work in schools can be overwhelming" (Music, 2007:7). This study looks at the impact of contextual factors on therapeutic work in schools and the need for the therapeutic context to be "actively considered and creatively managed" (Mearns and Cooper, 2005: 58) in school-based counselling. By emphasising the role of context, it highlights an important area which according to several authors has been largely ignored (McLeod and Machin, 1998; Mearns and Copper, 2005). Much research has centred on client variables and therapist variables, whilst scant attention has been paid to the contextualisation of therapeutic work and the variables within this (Mearns and Cooper, 2005). This study therefore shifts the role of context into the foreground, with particular reference to the context of inner city schools where the

need for and the challenges to school-based counselling are perhaps greatest. This study addresses the gap noted by Lee (2005) who states that "school counselling practice in an urban context has tended to be overlooked" (Lee, 2005:184). Whilst there exist numerous references to the challenges of working in these settings, there has been no specific research on this topic.

1.2   Mental health of children and young people in the UK

There is evidence that an increasing number of children and young people in the UK are affected by mental health problems. According to a survey by the Office for National Statistics, between 1999 and 2004, 10% of children and young people aged 5-15 had a clinically diagnosable mental disorder (Green et al., 2005). Among secondary school aged children, aged 11 to 16, the prevalence was 13% for boys and 10% for girls, with the most common problems being conduct disorders, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), emotional disorders (depression and anxiety) and autistic spectrum disorders (Green et al., 2005). Self-harm is a particular concern among young people. A 2007 survey reports that, among 16 to 24 year olds, 6.2% had attempted suicide and 8.9% had self-harmed (McManus et al., 2009). The most startling statistic is perhaps that suicide is the leading cause of death in young people. Moreover, mental health problems that emerge in childhood and adolescence persist into adulthood with 75% of all mental illnesses starting before the age of 18 (Edwards et al., 2003).

The statistics are even more troubling for children and young people growing up in poverty. According to a UNICEF report, Britain ranks 24 out of 27 countries on child poverty (UNICEF, 2007). British children and adolescents fare particularly badly on key measures relating to physical and mental health, life satisfaction and well-being and experience of violence and bullying. The association between mental health problems and poverty is well established. A study published by the Department of Health in 1999 reported that children in the poorest households in the UK are three times more likely to suffer from mental illness (Department of Health, 1999). These children are also nine times more likely to have psychotic disorders (Ayre, 2016). Children living in poor housing are more likely to have behavioural problems and growing up in a cold home has been linked to a greater risk of depression and anxiety (Ayre, 2016). Living in a deprived neighbourhood also has an impact on young people's well-being, with 42% of young people reporting living in areas where people used or dealt drugs and 39% reporting people being drunk or disorderly. A large number of young people therefore suffer from "the constellated disadvantage

of poverty and poor housing, insecure attachments and adult relationship dynamics" (Adams-Langley and Everts, 2013/2014:11). These young people are considered 'hard to reach', rarely accessing mental health services and "buried under the rubble of cumulative psychosocial risk" (Baruch, Fonagy and Robins, 2007:6).

1.3 Advantages of school-based counselling

Within this context, school-based counselling offers an important intervention by providing easily accessible and non-stigmatising mental health support at the doorstep of young people and families. School-based counselling which is made consistently available and accessible to young people can effectively target and resolve many of the risks inherent in their environment (Adams-Langley and Everts, 2013/2014). School-based counselling has been found to be consistently associated with significant reductions in psychological distress and these reductions have moreover been shown to be maintained - and possibly improved – three months after the end of counselling (Cooper, 2013b). Counselling services in schools have the advantage of a convenient location, short waiting times, low intake thresholds, and a non-directive, youth-friendly approach. The aim of these services is to act as an effective early intervention and, if necessary, a bridge to the NHS Child and Adolescent Mental health Services (CAMHS) and other specialist services. Over the last ten years, a growing number of secondary schools have established counselling services, either individually or as part of local government initiatives, in response to the need to provide emotional support to their students. A brief history of school-based counselling in the UK is presented below.

1.4 History of school-based counselling in the UK

School-based counselling did not begin to develop significantly in the UK until the early 1960s, when education policy adopted a more holistic, person-centred approach. During this period, counselling services sprouted up across the country and, by the 1970s, training courses for teachers in school counselling were being offered by the University of Keele and the University of Reading (Bor et al., 2002). However, by the 1980s, the *ad hoc* and uncoordinated nature of counselling provision and a change in political and economic climate led to cuts and the onus of pastoral care shifted back onto classroom teachers. Specialised trainings disappeared, and so did much of the provision, with the number of school counsellors declining from 351 in 1977 to 90 in 1987 (Baginsky, 2004). The introduction of the National Curriculum in 1988 marked a further shift in emphasis from a whole child approach to learning and outcomes. The introduction of

education reforms – inspection, league tables, competition between schools – added to this change of values. Instead of pastoral care, emphasis was placed on behaviour management, leading to a steep rise in the number of students excluded from school (McLaughlin, 1999).

A sharp increase in problems relating to young people's mental health and well-being (bullying, exclusion, suicide, self-harm, drug use and gangs to name a few) and the awareness of schools' and agencies' inability to effectively respond soon led, however, to a revival of school-based counselling (Baginsky, 2004) and, by the early 1990s, the need to provide emotional support to students was once again recognised and this time enshrined in law. The Children Act 1989 made it the duty of each local authority to safeguard the welfare of children and young people within its area; 'Every Child Matters' (Department for Education, 2003) and The Children Act 2004 both supported the need for school-based therapeutic services. The 'professionalization' of school-based counselling was slowly underway (McLaughlin, 2014). By 2003-2004, roughly three-quarters of secondary schools in Wales and England offered counselling (Polat and Jenkins, 2005). Since then, large scale government initiatives have been implemented in parts of the UK. These initiatives include rolling out counselling in every secondary school in Northern Ireland (in 2007) and in Wales (in 2008) and the publication of 'Counselling in schools: a blueprint for the future' (Department for Education, 2015) which sets out clear guidelines for schools wishing to establish counselling services.

The strategy implemented by the Wales Assembly Government (WAG) in 2008 is particularly important because of its scope and the research effort which accompanied it. Following the Clywch inquiry in 2004, the Welsh government committed to establishing counselling services in all its secondary schools and piloted primary school services in four local authorities, representing the most ambitious attempt to date to introduce counselling in UK schools (McLaughlin, 2014). A research consortium was commissioned to analyse all the data collected during the first three years of its implementation. A final report of the WAG initiative was then published in 2011 (Hill et al., 2011). This report presented impressive overall results, finding a significant reduction in psychological distress among students following counselling and these benefits were further confirmed by families and teachers. The WAG initiative and the research effort it stimulated made a significant impact on school-based counselling by presenting sound empirical evidence of its clinical effectiveness and establishing clear pathways for its

implementation on a large scale. The WAG initiative endorsed and legitimized school-based counselling giving it both a visibility and credibility which it had not previously enjoyed.

Against this background of political commitment and growth, there is no standardised template for the provision of school counselling in England, nor is there any standardised training, accreditation or supervision for school-based counsellors (Polat and Jenkins, 2005). However, steps have been taken recently to remedy this situation, such as online training resources for counsellors and counsellors working with children and young people. Meanwhile, information has been compiled on competences and training for school-based counsellors (Sewell, 2013: Hill, Roth and Cooper, 2014). The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) has made available a school counselling toolkit (BACP/WAG, 2011) based on the procedures used for the WAG initiative. Whilst the local governments of Northern Ireland and Wales have committed to implementing a nation-wide strategy for school-based counselling, the government of England has limited itself to a "strong expectation" that all schools provide counselling services for their students whilst "allowing schools autonomy to make their own decisions about how to use their funding in the best interests of their pupils" (Department for Education, 2015). Counselling provision in England therefore remains *ad hoc* and uncoordinated, with funding unsecured and threatened by local government cut-backs. It is within this wider context of growth and paralysis, hope and uncertainty that school-based counselling, and this study, are currently situated.

The significant growth of school-based counselling in the UK over the last 10 years means that this now represents one of the most common forms of therapy with young people in the UK (Cooper, 2013b). Cooper states that with 70-90,000 young people participating in counselling in UK secondary schools, "school-based counselling is now a distinct feature on the map of mental health provisions for young people in the UK" (Cooper, 2013a:30). In England, the numbers of young people accessing school-based counselling is almost equal to those attending specialist CAMHS (Cooper, 2013b). As it transitions to becoming a more recognised profession, a unified framework of specific trainings and qualifications is still lacking. There is a diversity of counselling practice and approaches in schools which is provided by a variety of mental health professionals (gestalt therapists, person-centred counsellors, psychodynamic therapists, counselling and clinical psychologists, art therapists and CAMHS workers to name a few) who may be

employed directly by the school or provided through the NHS, the Local Education Authority, or an external agency (Baruch, 2001). Against this dynamic and eclectic background, this study examined a specific area of practice common to all, how counsellors manage boundaries with a view to working therapeutically, and explored how the challenges posed by young people and the school environment are handled.

1.5 Boundaries in schools

The educational context has a significant impact on school-based counselling, particularly on what are considered 'therapeutic boundaries' (Baruch, 2001; Music, 2007, 2008, 2009). Boundaries are generally understood as the reliable and consistent provision of certain conditions - such as privacy, confidentiality, quiet and comfortable surroundings, appointments at fixed times for fixed periods, formal referral and assessment system, full and undisturbed attention and anonymity of the therapist - which are considered necessary in order to work therapeutically. Boundaries in school-based counselling tend to be subject to constant change and counsellors often need to work flexibly and creatively in response to the context and the student's presentation. The context tends to pose numerous challenges: the counselling room, the appointment and referral system, disruptions imposed by the school calendar, the need to breach confidentiality, to meet expectations from the school, accountability, perception of the counsellor and role of the counsellor. Meanwhile, engaging therapeutically with troubled and often reluctant adolescents raises its own set of challenges and requires a highly creative and flexible approach. Here the boundaries of therapeutic work are stretched in interesting ways, for example by playing Snakes and Ladders (and talking about the ups and downs of childhood) or listening to rap music (and discussing the lyrics) or sitting in silence whilst the young person pounds a piece of clay. Whilst boundaries fall within the ambit of good practice and ethical behaviour, it should be pointed out that this study was not concerned with unethical or illegal boundary violations. The aim of this study was instead to explore how practitioners artfully and creatively balance the multiple demands of the school environment and a challenging client group with the need to work within therapeutic parameters.

1.6 Adolescent journey

It is useful to briefly outline the developmental stage of adolescence as a backdrop to understanding therapy in secondary schools. Adolescence begins with puberty and the onset of bodily changes that signal sexual maturation. Young people

develop an acute awareness of their body at this time and an increased self-consciousness around other people's reaction to these changes. They are highly sensitive to societal, family and peer pressures surrounding their appearance and behaviour, the need to fit in and to conform to gender stereotypes (Straus, 2007). In terms of cognitive development, adolescents are moving from concrete operational to formal operation thought (Piaget, 1954). With concrete thinking, they are egocentric, living in the present and less able to take into consideration future consequences. As they slowly acquire the capacity for abstract thought, they develop a more adult perception of the world including becoming more adept at perspective taking. This process is both sweeping and complex and can be experienced as deeply unsettling by the young person (Straus, 2007).

From a neuroscience point of view, the adolescent brain is undergoing profound changes, with a vast pruning and myelination of neural circuits leading eventually to a more complex and more integrated cortical organization (Blakemore and Choudhury, 2006; Siegel, 2013). The prefrontal cortex is one of last areas of the brain to develop during this period, creating an imbalance between the limbic system and executive function (EF). The limbic system, the seat of strong emotion, is fully active whilst the EF, the seat of reason and impulse control, lags far behind (Siegel, 2013). This explains the difficulties teenagers encounter not just with regulating their emotions and impulses but also with problem solving, planning and organization.

In terms of emotional development, young people are de-idealizing and separating from their parental figures. This individuation period is crucial for developing a sense of identity, another key task of adolescence (Erikson, 1968). Young people increasingly gravitate towards their peers and group life which form "a central part of identity formation in adolescence" (Frankel, 1998:75). In disconnecting from their parents, however, teenagers are also more isolated and lonely, more vulnerable to different forms of emotional turmoil and distress. Moodiness can be a result of physiological and hormonal changes as well as a sign of mourning as the young person experiences the 'anguish of loss' of "childhood and child fulfilments which might have at one point brought comfort and tranquillity" (Frankel, 1998:122). The adolescent frequently withdraws and does not want to be understood (Winnicott, 1965/2006). Adolescence can be a confusing period full of contradictions and paradoxes. From pre-teens to their mid-twenties, adolescents find themselves on a long and lonely journey to adulthood with no road map or compass and, often, with

very limited inner or outer resources to rely on. Counselling based in educational settings therefore offers a crucial support during this challenging period.

1.7   Boundaries in adolescent work

By helping to establish a therapeutic space, boundary management is closely related to the concepts of 'containment' (Bion, 1962), 'facilitating environment' (Winnicott, 1965/1984) and 'secure base' (Bowlby,1969, 1988), which are not only posited as core conditions for early emotional development but also for developing a sense of safety and trust with vulnerable clients. Safety and trust are key to building a therapeutic relationship with young people (Everall and Paulson, 2002; Hawkins, 2008) and boundaries which ensure reliability, consistency and confidentiality are of utmost importance with this vulnerable client group. Adolescents generally come to therapy as a result of some kind of environmental failure, past or present, and they often arrive with a great deal of reluctance and distrust. Practitioners working in different contexts stress the importance of managing therapeutic boundaries with young people (Holmes, 1984; Erlich, 1990; Bunner and Yonge, 2006). "Adolescents need us to maintain and communicate clear and appropriate boundaries, which allow them to feel safe and know what to expect" (Patzu-Williams, 2012: 69). By maintaining 'good enough' boundaries, the practitioner creates a 'good enough' environment for a therapeutic relationship to develop and for the practitioner to contain all the thoughts and feelings which arise in the session.

> "With safety, the adolescent is safe-to-explore. The adolescent can explore his life, his past, his present and his future. He can begin to identify his thoughts, feelings, wishes and intentions and to make sense of them all. He can discover who he is under his 'problems'. He can discover his strengths that developed along with his 'symptoms', often in response to trauma" (Hughes, 2009:125).

But, as any parent or teacher will attest, the adolescent requires boundaries not only for holding and safety but also for testing and pushing against. The adolescent experiences boundaries "not only as harbouring safety, power and security but also, and perhaps more so, as limits that must be fought and resisted, together with the dangers they contain" (Erlich, 1990:197). This study will serve to highlight "the centrality of boundaries to the adolescent experience" (Erlich, 1990:198). This study has brought boundaries to the fore, not only by recognising boundary management as an essential part of the therapeutic endeavour, but also by showing how they are particularly alive in the school context and particularly relevant to adolescent work. It

set out to highlight the way in which school-based counsellors work creatively with boundaries and the challenges posed in educational settings.

1.8   Reflexive statement

This study represents, in many ways, an attempt to marry two passions: school-based counselling and counselling psychology. As the author of this study, I hold a deep commitment to and passion for supporting young people and have worked in schools, community projects and telephone hotlines, on and off, throughout my career. I spent five years working as a counsellor in two different inner-London schools. I also spent two years as the clinical services manager of a small school counselling service and two years as a group supervisor of school-based counsellors. I currently see adolescents as part of my caseload in private practice and work part-time as a student counsellor in a contemporary dance school. My experience in the field has directly influenced the choice of research topic. I am aware that I view and practise school-based counselling from the perspective of a counselling psychologist and integrative psychotherapist, as a practitioner-scientist who is comfortable in her role as a humanistic therapist and as someone who belongs to, and is informed by, a broader scientific community. It is my conviction that the philosophy, background and training of counselling psychologists make them particularly suited to meeting the growing demands of school-based counselling as it enters a new era. The ability of counselling psychologists to balance the need for scientific research with client-centred practice; to work inter-professionally across diverse modalities; to bear in mind the all-important aspects of context, cultural diversity, pluralism and power means they are well equipped to make a significant contribution to school-based counselling, as practitioners, researchers and supervisors. It is my hope that this study will inspire more counselling psychologists to bring their breadth of experience and knowledge to this exciting and rewarding arena.

1.9   Summary

This chapter introduced the study by briefly describing the importance of context and the benefits of school-based counselling in the UK followed by the adolescent developmental stage and the nature of boundaries in schools and adolescent work. The next chapter will provide an overview of the literature on therapeutic boundaries and school-based counselling, along with a statement of the research question. Chapter 3 presents this project's research design, describing the methodology chosen and procedures used for collecting and analysing the data. The findings of

the research, including a proposed theory of boundary management, are described in Chapter 4 and a discussion of these findings, in relation to existing literature and theory, is found in Chapter 5.

2   Literature review

This chapter begins with a brief overview of the debate surrounding the literature review in grounded theory methodology. It explains how the literature review was approached for this research project, the steps taken to ensure that a critical, reflective stance was maintained and the implications of this approach for the project. The literature review is then presented with the aim of locating the research topic within the existing literature and examining relevant theory and research. It states that a literature search (see Appendix 1) revealed that there were no significant publications on the topic of boundary management in school-based counselling. The literature review then focuses on the two separate areas of boundaries and school-based counselling with a view to contextualizing the study, followed by a statement of the research question.

2.1   Issues concerning the literature review in grounded theory research

Whilst it is common practice in most methodologies to begin a research study with a literature review in order to contextualise the study, proponents of grounded theory have debated extensively on the timing of the literature review. These views can be grouped according to the three main versions of grounded theory.

Glaser and Strauss (1967), in their 'classical' version of grounded theory methodology, strongly advocated delaying the literature review until after the analysis of the data. They proposed that once a theory had emerged from the data, a literature review could be undertaken and integrated with the theory. The aim of the later timing of the review was to prevent existing theories from influencing the emerging categories. The researcher was supposed to enter the research process as a *tabula rasa,* devoid of any pre-existing knowledge. Glaser has remained wedded to this view of the delayed literature review. Strauss, meanwhile, in a later 'evolved' version of grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) revised his position on the timing of the literature review. He argued against the idea of the *tabula rasa*, stating that researchers will have already acquired significant knowledge of the field even before conducting a literature review. This knowledge enhances theoretical sensitivity (an awareness of the substantive issues), stimulates research questions and theoretical sampling and therefore needs to be acknowledged. Charmaz (2014), in her 'constructivist' version of grounded theory, acknowledges that researchers bring preconceived knowledge to their research and that an early literature review is often preferable but adds that specific steps should be taken to prevent the literature review from defining the research.

Glaser's *tabula rasa* view, where the researcher delays the literature search in order to preserve an unadulterated mindset, has been widely criticized. Blumer (1979), Layder (1998), Mills et al. (2006) and Dey (1999) have all argued that researchers cannot put aside their knowledge of a topic. Hutchinson (1993), McCallin (2003) and McGhee et al. (2007) argue that an early literature review is required to identify gaps in the literature and formulate questions. Gibson (2007) and Lempert (2007) argue that an early review enhances theoretical sensitivity. Charmaz (2014), Dunne (2010), Giles et al (2013) and Hallberg (2010) point out that many researchers, particularly doctoral students and others reliant on approval from funding or ethics bodies, must present an early literature review as part of their research proposal. Both Bryant (2009) and Giles et al. (2013) have noted the growing number of experts in favour of an early engagement with the literature, while Dunne (2010) states that the arguments for an early review are "compelling".

The approach I adopted for this doctoral research project is aligned with Charmaz (2014) and Dunne (2010) whereby the literature review was undertaken in two distinct phases. An initial literature search was carried out at the start of the project for the purpose of identifying previous areas of study, framing the research question and justifying my research proposal to my university's programme approval panel. This chapter presents the results of this literature review along with subsequent updates in the relevant areas. Meanwhile, the results of the second literature review are woven into the discussion chapter with a view to contextualizing the emerging theory.

Specific steps were taken to ensure that the early engagement with the literature would not colour my analysis and that I was prioritizing data over theory, consistent with Charmaz's (2014) position. These steps included allowing the preliminary literature to "lie fallow" (Charmaz, 2014) whilst I was developing and analysing categories. In other words, I did not actively engage in the material I had collected but left it to one side. Any references and literature I continued to collect during analysis were filed for later use in the review or discussion sections. Throughout the research process I assumed the position of 'theoretical agnosticism' (Henwood and Pidgeon, 2006) whereby I tried to avoid being influenced by particular theoretical stances in order to remain as open as possible to what was emerging in the data. At the same time, I adopted a reflexive stance as advocated by Charmaz (2014), Dunne (2010), Ramalho et al. (2015) and Thornberg (2012) by being critically aware

of my research choices and rationale. This reflexivity was maintained by reflective writing which I used as a "self-monitoring tool" (Mruck and Mey, 2007). I regularly took note of my assumptions and expectations by logging them either as memos or in my reflexive journal (see section 3.3 in the following chapter). I also met regularly with a peer researcher and my research supervisor in order to discuss my thinking around my research choices.

My decision to undertake an early review inevitably influenced the research process. The preliminary literature search alerted me to signposts and gaps which shaped and underpinned my research project in the early stages. In the boundary literature, it identified an important distinction between a focus on rules or risk management and a more theoretical focus. This distinction served as a signpost, helping to orient me, as I began to frame my research question, towards creative (non-rule based) boundary management. By identifying, in the early stages, a dichotomy between a rule-based and a theory-based approach in boundaries I was sensitized to one of the key issues in this area and this informed my focus and my approach to the interviews. In the school counselling literature, the initial literature review revealed significant gaps in the research. It found an absence of any literature on boundaries in school counselling, as well as a gap in practitioner research in schools. The growing research base on school-based counselling in the UK was found to be largely empirical in nature, with few qualitative studies exploring therapeutic practice in schools and none specifically on the impact of the school context. The early review highlighted a need for research that informs and supports everyday practice in the challenging field of schools work. By clearly identifying the gap in the literature regarding how practitioners manage therapeutic boundaries in inner-city secondary schools, the early literature review therefore facilitated the formulation of the research question, along with its aims and proposed contribution to the field.

2.2 Literature on boundaries

Boundaries have been a contested issue throughout the history of psychotherapy. It is accepted that "boundary issues pose complex challenges to clinicians" (Smith and Fitzpatrick, 1995: 505) and that there is a wide diversity of practice with regards to boundary management, with many orientations tolerating or even embracing behaviours that others label as boundary crossings (Williams, 1997). To some extent, the different views on boundaries can be tied to specific models, with traditional psychoanalysts occupying the more conservative end of the spectrum

and humanistic therapists occupying the more liberal end. However, theory, opinions and practice have all evolved, so that the discussion now appears to have become both more complex and more intense over the years. This section will attempt to trace how the debate around therapeutic boundaries has developed over time and across modalities and briefly examine the dichotomy between risk management and more theoretical approaches adopted respectively in the US and the UK.

Psychoanalysis has traditionally been concerned with the strict maintenance of therapeutic boundaries. It was the early psychoanalytic writers, starting with Freud, who first established what are considered the 'ground rules' for psychotherapy: free association, evenly suspended attention of the therapist, neutrality, anonymity, confidentiality, abstinence, set time and duration of therapy and set fees (Langs, 1978). The term 'frame' was first used in 1952 by Marion Milner to describe how these rules delineate therapy from outside activity. The analytic frame has been defined as "a dynamic and flexible set of conditions that reflect the analyst's ongoing efforts to respond to the patient whilst also establishing an optimal ambience for the analytic work" (Gabbard and Lester, 1995: 39). Bleger (1967) refers to the 'psycho-analytic' situation' as being composed of the process and the frame. The frame is "the set of constants within whose limits the process takes place" (Bleger, 1967:517). Bleger states any disruption or alteration to the frame on the part of the analyst prevents the possibility of profound treatment. The frame "should be neither ambiguous, nor changeable, nor altered" (Bleger, 1967: 518). Robert Langs (1976, 1988) takes a similar view, distinguishing between a 'fixed frame' which refers to the firmly set boundaries of time, place and confidentiality (which he felt should never be altered) and the 'variable frame' which refers to the therapist's method of working, particularly his anonymity and neutrality. Langs states that boundaries need to be strictly held and that any deviation is undesirable. Informality and psychological closeness are deemed intrusive. This strict adherence to the frame was generally accepted among traditional psychoanalysts and it was considered that this adherence was for the sole benefit of the client. Cherry and Gold (1989) considered boundaries from the therapist's point of view claiming that "the therapist requires the structure of the frame at least as much as the client" (Cherry and Gold, 1989: 163). They assert that the main aspects of the frame - abstinence, anonymity and neutrality – enable the therapist to maintain an appropriate therapeutic stance. In this way, "the frame makes it possible for the therapist to be therapeutic" (Cherry and Gold, 1989:164).

Relational psychoanalysis (Mitchell and Aaron, 1999) and the post-modern social constructivist viewpoint influenced thinking about psychoanalysis's rigid boundaries between the subject and the object, what is real and what is not real, what is true and untrue (Safran and Muran, 2000). The emphasis on transference by traditional psychoanalysts was replaced by intersubjectivity where personal involvement and authenticity are considered core features. The traditional aspects of the frame – neutrality, abstinence and anonymity – were no longer relevant. "Rather than basing one's approach on some inflexible and idealized criterion such as therapeutic neutrality, one can be guided by an understanding of what a particular therapeutic task means to a particular patient in a given moment" (Safran and Muran,2000:14). Negotiation becomes a key element. Mitchell (1993) considers the frame to be co-constructed by therapist and client and the flexibility of the frame to be relative to the nature of the therapeutic dyad. Similarly, Greenberg (1995) asserts the elasticity of the frame is defined by the 'interactive matrix'. Bridges (1999: 299) eschews "a reductionist, rule-bound approach to therapeutic boundaries" in favour of what she calls an 'integrated approach'. She states that treatment boundaries need to be both 'secure and permeable' to allow for new relational experiences with the therapist. An integrated approach both "honours traditional parameters and yet encourages an openness to creative, uncharted outcomes within ethical frames" (Bridges, 1999:299). Bridges re-defines the psychodynamic perspective on boundaries by adopting an inter-subjective relational stance which brings new nuances and flexibility to the notion of boundaries.

In the 1990s, in the United States, the combined growth of health management organizations (HMOs) and malpractice suits instigated an intense debate around boundaries. There was an attempt to establish specific rules or practice guidelines in psychotherapy by licensing boards and courts which were largely based on psychodynamic principles. This stimulated a number of articles and books by authors such as Gutheil and Gabbard (1993) who interpreted boundaries from a forensic perspective, distinguishing between 'boundary violations' and 'boundary crossings'. A boundary crossing is defined as a benign deviation from usual practice whereas boundary violations are harmful or exploitative of the client. Gutheil and Gabbard (1993) stress the importance of context and the need for flexible standards whilst also advocating caution and declaring behaviours such as dual relationships as representing a 'slippery slope' for therapists. This stance is further advocated in two monographs on boundaries by Gabbard and Lester (1995) and Gabbard and

Brodsky (2008) where, on the one hand, assertions are made that clinical practice should not be driven by risk management but, on the other, "good therapy is also good risk management" (Gabbard and Brodsky, 2008:8). Zur (2004, 2007), a psychologist specializing in therapeutic ethics and boundaries, examines boundaries from a risk management perspective, whilst also trying to take a more context-aware approach. Compared to the traditional psychoanalytic view, this literature acknowledges a greater need for flexibility and understanding that a universal approach is not realistic. However, a double standard also emerges in this literature where flexibility is considered acceptable, but strict adherence to rules is still recommended.

In response, Lazarus (1994), a behaviour therapist, joined the debate when he wrote that revised guidelines in the US threatened to undermine clinical effectiveness. Lazarus argued against 'dehumanizing' boundaries saying "blanket rules for one and all will often bypass important individual nuances that have to be addressed" (Lazarus, 1994a:257). He then described the ways in which over thirty years of practice he had interpreted boundaries with considerable flexibility: "Thus I have socialized with some clients, played tennis with others, taken long walks with some, graciously accepted small gifts, and given presents (usually books) to a fair number" (Lazarus, 1994a:257). He says that, from a risk management point of view, such boundary crossings would *ipso facto* be construed as evidence of sexual misconduct. Whilst clearly stating that he does not advocate maintaining informal therapeutic relationships with everyone, Lazarus warns that "therapists who always go by the book and apply predetermined and fixed rules of conduct (specific dos and don'ts) across the board will offend or at the very least fail to help people who might otherwise have benefitted from their ministrations" (Lazarus, 1994a:257). This article stimulated a number of responses (Bennet, 1994; Borys, 1994; Brown, 1994; Gabbard, 1994; Gottlieb, 1994; Gutheil, 1994), the main criticism being that Lazarus was promoting a simplistic, naïve and even dangerous position with regard to risk management (Hermansonn, 1997). The common view is summed up in the conflicting advice given by Smith and Fitzpatrick (1995):

> "Clinicians should consider the nature of their clients' needs and make their decision on the basis of what would benefit the client. In the face of uncertainty, therapists are advised to err on the side of caution and abstain from crossing a boundary where there is a potential that their behaviour, however well-intentioned, could be construed as misconduct by clients or peers" (Smith and Fitzpatrick, 1995:504).

Meanwhile, Williams (1997) states an important objection that behaviours considered as boundary violations by some are commonplace procedures for humanistic, behavioural and eclectic therapists and that innovative practice is at risk of being stifled by risk management concerns.

As can be seen from above, much of the literature on boundaries in the US is problem-orientated and tends to advocate both flexibility and a cautious adherence to certain rules of behaviour. Risk management concerns are generally seen to override dynamic process needs (Hermansonn,1997). Therapists in the US are often advised to avoid boundary crossings which, although harmless and appropriate, may be interpreted by forensic experts as negligent (Gutheil and Gabbard, 1993). This has instigated an attempt by some to redress the balance and argue for the critical role of context and that "boundaries must be regarded as flexible standards of good practice rather than lists of generically forbidden behaviour" (Gutheil and Gabbard, 1998). Current thinking on boundary management in the US continues to move in opposite directions but always be very rule-oriented:

> "On the one hand, the proliferation of risk-management practices leads to more practitioners practicing defensively... On the other hand, the emergence of a more open approach in professional publications and more flexible codes of ethics tilt the standard toward a more flexible, context-based standard (Zur, 2007: 9).

An exception to the forensic approach to boundaries in the US is the relational school which adopts an intrapsychic and interpersonal perspective whereby boundary dilemmas are considered an integral part of the rupture and repair process.

Whilst the debate around boundaries in the US has largely been problem-oriented, the literature in the UK, where the climate is less litigious, has generally been more theoretical in nature. In contrast to the psychoanalytic approach, the person-centred school does not impose the need for strict boundaries on clients. Owen (1997) writes from a person-centred perspective stating that the Rogerian frame is intended to protect the client from harm by offering confidentiality, choice and safety. In person-centred therapy, practical aspects of the frame are dealt with flexibly: "For humanistic counsellors, slightly variable session lengths, at varying times in the week, in which variable events occur, are all part of life and are acceptable variations if they do not interrupt therapeutic progress for clients" (Owen, 1997:171). The more relaxed attitude of person-centred therapists towards boundaries is

considered to be both "realistic and compassionate" (Owen, 1997:171). Owen (1997) acknowledges that whilst the term boundary is useful for describing the different approaches therapists take vis-à-vis their clients, it fails to capture the complexity and richness of the interaction between people. He proposes that the term 'intersubjectivity' is more suited for this discussion. From a person-centred perspective, boundary crossing is seen not as a 'slippery slope' leading to possible exploitation or abuse of the client, but as an expression of empathy: "To be empathic, a counsellor has to move across a boundary into the life space of the client....To maintain therapeutic potency, however, it must be a qualified boundary cross, with the counsellor never leaving his or her own personal territory" (Hermansson, 1979:143).

Existential therapists in the UK also call for the frame to be adapted to the therapeutic interaction. Cohn (1998) writes that the frame has been neglected by existential therapists. Whilst acknowledging that a consensus among therapists is unlikely to be reached on boundaries, he advocates "a meaningful connection between frame and aim, as well as enough flexibility to do justice to developments in therapy" (Cohn, 1998:113). The frame, in other words, must fit the therapy not the other way around. Similarly, Zinovieff (2004) calls for a flexible frame which is geared to the therapeutic situation. "I will be looking for a flexibility to change or modify the frame according to the picture being painted via changes in the therapeutic situation" (Zinovieff, 2004: 49). The existential therapist Smith-Pickard (2004) proposes the idea of an 'extemporaneous frame' which is co-constructed *ad hoc* out of the meeting with the client. He states that "the frame and its boundaries are developed from specific needs within the flux of the therapeutic encounter, and offer flexibility within a tentative structure" (Smith-Pickard, 2004: 133). He admits that creating such a frame demands "a creative attentiveness and a willingness to be fully present in the therapy, regarding it as a shared lived experience of the moment. This can be a difficult and demanding task for both the therapist and the client" (Smith-Pickard, 2004: 133).

Other boundary literature published in the UK includes Gray's (1994/2014) 'Introduction to the Therapeutic Frame', which adopts a more traditional psychodynamic approach and establishes five basic elements of the frame: a private setting, fixed times and durations of sessions, fixed vacation breaks, fixed fees and strict confidentiality. Gray (1994/2014) discusses how the maintenance of the frame is theoretically related to an infant's early experience of maternal care and

advocates that a 'firm frame' be applied to clients whilst at the same time illustrating the different ways flexibility may be necessary. Another psychodynamic account of boundaries is found in Warburtan (1999) who distinguishes place, time, conduct and relationships and advocates the notion of a 'secured frame'. Luca's (2004) collection of essays provide an integrative account of the therapeutic frame in different clinical contexts, including GP surgeries and hospitals, but not schools. These essays represent an attempt to engage in a wider theoretical consideration of the frame with reference to context. The dichotomy in the boundary literature reviewed above could be understood as representing deontological vs teleological approaches. The risk management literature is largely deontological, deriving rules from moral absolutes, whilst the UK literature is more teleological, guided by future outcome and circumstance.

Finally, with regard to actual research on boundaries, three questionnaire-based surveys were found, all conducted in the US, where clinicians were asked to anonymously self-report certain boundary-related activities. Pope et al. (1987) asked psychologists to rate the frequency of activities such as socializing with clients, lending money to clients, asking favours, etc. and found that many behaviours considered controversial were surprisingly prevalent, even though psychodynamically-oriented psychologists made up the majority of the cohort. Interestingly, they found self-disclosure to be an "almost universal" aspect of psychotherapy (Pope et al.,1987:998) despite assertions by authors that this behaviour was particularly risky (Williams,1997). A similar study (Borys and Pope, 1989) surveyed a national sample of psychiatrists, psychologists and social workers and found an equally high rate of boundary crossings. The third study is by Johnston and Farber (1996) involving a questionnaire survey sent to 500 randomly selected American Psychological Association (APA) members. This survey enquired how psychotherapists managed boundaries in their private practice, with questions on timing of sessions, payment, scheduling, self-disclosure, orientation and availability between sessions. The findings showed "a spirit of cooperation and good faith" (Johnston and Farber, 1996: 397), with the majority of therapists being willing to be flexible to accommodate the client's demands. These large-scale questionnaire surveys all demonstrate wide-spread divergence from pre-set, defined boundaries and therefore seem to indicate that a universal rule-based approach to boundaries, though widely advocated by risk management authors and organizations, is perhaps untenable in practice.

As a counselling psychologist and integrative psychotherapist who takes a postmodern pluralistic stance, I assume there are no universal rules with regard to boundaries as long as the client's welfare and interests are always protected. This research study therefore locates itself firmly on the teleological side of the literature. It arises from a curiosity about the diversity of practices signalled in the literature and from my own experience in the field. This study represents an inquiry into how school-based counsellors find their own boundaries and into the processes involved in that search. There is a clear gap in the literature for qualitative research on the impact of context on boundary management, the experience of boundary management and the impact of boundary management on the therapeutic relationship and the outcome of the work. By exploring how school-based counsellors manage boundaries, this study contributes to the current research base on practice with regard to boundaries in the UK, bringing this neglected area into sharper focus, and highlighting the importance of boundary management when working in schools with adolescents.

2.3   Literature on school-based counselling in the UK

The bulk of literature on school counselling emanates from the US, where the profession has been established for some time, but also where the counsellor's role, being largely focused on academic attainment and career guidance, differs considerably from that in the UK. Much of the US literature, therefore, does not pertain to the UK context and none was found, presumably because of its largely non-therapeutic approach, on boundary management.

In the UK, most of the monographs on school counselling have been published in the last fifteen years, mirroring the recent growth of the profession in this country. These include practical guides (Bor et al, 2002; Lines, 2011, Luxmoore, 2014) and collections of practice-based essays (Barwick, 2000; French and Klein, 2012; French and Klein, 2015; Hanley et al, 2013; Keys and Walshaw, 2008; Luxmoore, 2000; McLaughlin and Holliday, 2014). The guides are generally pragmatic in nature and take the context for granted, briefly mentioning boundaries with respect to legal and ethical issues of risk. The essays examine various aspects of school-based practice, some of them relevant to this study, and reflect the wide diversity of therapeutic approaches used in schools. For example, Klein (2012) writes about the therapeutic frame from a traditional psychodynamic perspective. She takes a prescriptive approach, clearly delineating 'dos' and 'don'ts', such as "refrain from accepting cards or gifts" (Klein, 2012:164) or "resist giving direct reassurance"

(Klein, 2012:165). Klein (2012) represents a more dogmatic position which gives little scope for flexibility or reflection on alternative paths of action. A different approach is taken by Heller (2000) who writes about creating a holding environment in inner-city schools from a Winnicottian perspective. She stresses the need for flexible boundaries to create a 'facilitating environment' (Winnicott, 1965 /1984) and illustrates the multiple ways in which boundaries can be creatively extended. Other studies examine specific boundary-related issues. Hawkins (2008), for example, writes about working relationally with adolescents in schools and the difficulties of managing interpersonal boundaries. Fuller (2014) examines, in considerable detail, how confidentiality can be managed sensitively and effectively in the school context. Other articles mention the boundary-related need for containment of difficult emotions (Briggs, 2008; Catty, 2012 Heller, 2000; Luxmoore, 2000). As can be seen from the above, boundaries in school-based counselling have mostly been examined in kaleidoscopic fashion, fragmentary and incomplete, from a variety of perspectives. None of the literature specifically addresses how school-based counsellors manage boundaries in general with respect to the challenges of the context.

The establishment of CAMHS services in some schools triggered a string of articles, several of which highlighted in detail the challenges of working therapeutically in the school context. Here, the contextual challenges are stressed without specific reference to the management of boundaries. Baruch (2001) describes the challenge of setting up a mental health service in mainstream schools, referring to setting-related problems such as privacy as "one of the notable disadvantages of working in a school" (Baruch, 2001: 560). Music (2007, 2008, 2009), who has been involved in providing CAMHS and other psychotherapeutic services to schools, also writes openly on the many difficulties and challenges presented by the school context.

The issue of boundaries has therefore been acknowledged by some, but not all, UK authors when writing about school-based counselling. More specifically, boundary management has not been examined with respect to the impact of the school context. The majority of writers assume the existence of traditional therapeutic parameters and make little reference to the kind of disruptive school environments where many practitioners work, or to the impact this setting has on boundary management and therapeutic process. There is therefore a need for the literature to examine in depth the impact of the school setting on therapeutic work and on how counsellors manage boundaries in practice.

2.4   Research on school-based counselling in the UK

Research on school counselling in the UK is a relatively recent phenomenon. One of the first major studies was a review of school counselling in England, Wales and Northern Ireland commissioned by the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) (Baginsky, 2004). This was followed by a survey of LEA[1]-provided counselling services in England and Wales (Polat and Jenkins, 2005) and a more extensive survey covering 607 secondary schools in England and Wales (Jenkins and Polat, 2006). These three studies constituted the first major attempts to accurately map the state of school-based counselling in the UK and perhaps mark the beginning of a transition of school-based counselling from an ad-hoc pastoral provision to a professional occupation.

A significant amount of research, including several large-scale evaluation studies, issued from the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) initiative which set up counselling services in every Welsh secondary school in 2008. A report by Pattison et al. (2007) was commissioned by WAG in order to lay the ground work. This document outlines a set of policy guidelines for governments and local education authorities when setting up a large school-based counselling service. Cooper (2009) carried out a comprehensive review of audit and evaluation studies relating to secondary school counselling in the UK. The Report of the Welsh Government on its School-based Counselling Strategy (Hill et al., 2011) presents all the Wales-based data and recommendations in final form. Finally, Cooper's (2013b) scoping report provides updated and comprehensive data on the state of secondary school-based counselling in UK secondary schools.

Other outcome-based studies, linked to the Welsh initiative, include: Killips et al. (2012) on motivation as a predictor of outcomes, Cooper et al. (2013) on evaluation of therapeutic outcomes, and Rupani et al. (2012) on outcomes related to students' capacity to study and learn. A quantitative study carried out by the Place2Be measured the effectiveness of therapeutic intervention in primary schools (Lee et al.,2009). Meanwhile, a number of questionnaire-based studies have explored different aspects of young people's experience of school counselling: Quinn and Chan (2009) examined student preferences concerning location and format of counselling and counsellor gender; Chan and Quinn (2009) looked at student

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[1] Local Education Authority (LEA)

preferences for a counsellor of similar ethnic origin; Fox and Butler (2007) canvassed student views on school counselling; Prior (2012) examined students' process of engagement; Lynass et al. (2012) explored students' general experience of counselling; and Rupani et al. (2014) examined students' goals for counselling. A smaller number of qualitative studies have focused on school counsellors' experience. These include studies focusing on: inter-professional practice (Cromarty & Richards, 2009); professional identity (Harris, 2009); 'what works' in counselling (Westergaard (2013); teacher and counsellor perceptions of counselling (Hamilton-Roberts, 2012); and counsellor perceptions of confidentiality (Jenkins and Palmer, 2012). Again, none of these studies address the issue of boundary management in the school context.

As can be seen from above, the research effort on UK school-based counselling has centred on quantitative studies of therapeutic outcomes along with mostly questionnaire-based surveys on practice-related issues and student preferences for counselling. There remain significant gaps in the research on school-based practice in the UK. The research has been primarily quantitative, aimed at providing a detailed statistical account of counselling in UK schools and a scientific evidence base with regard to outcomes. Given the current economic and political climate and the mental health needs of young people, mentioned in the previous chapter, this research clearly serves an important purpose of underpinning and supporting further initiatives and policy efforts in the area of school-based counselling. In particular, this research has been a driver for the publication of 'Counselling in schools: a blueprint for the future' (Department for Education, 2015) which expresses clear support for school counselling initiatives and provides advice on various practical issues of setting up a counselling service. Similar to the other literature, this document refers briefly to boundaries with regard to confidentiality, but refrains from mentioning the wider challenges and complexities of boundary management in schools.

The difficulties and challenges as well as the nuances and subtleties of school-based work have therefore been ignored in favour of the bigger picture. Whilst policy-makers require large-scale research, the all-important voices of practitioners and young people remain unheard. Questionnaires provide more limited feedback and do not capture lived experience. There is an urgent need to explore this area in greater depth and explicate the nature of school-based counselling as it is currently practised in the UK, focussing on therapist and client perspectives. Interview-based

qualitative studies add a vitally important dimension to the literature by teasing out and exploring specific aspects of practice and experience. Schools are generally understood to be a very challenging setting in which to work, and yet, the ways in which therapists meet these challenges have been ignored. This study represents a significant step towards meeting this need and by aiming to fill a clear gap in the literature by examining the specific practice-based issue of boundary management in inner-city schools.

2.5   Research question

In this chapter I locate myself as a counselling psychologist and integrative psychotherapist concerned with producing 'practice-based evidence' (Finlay and Evans, 2009; Orlans and Van Scoyoc, 2009) in the specific context of school-based counselling. There has been a growing call for small-scale research that recognizes the first-hand knowledge of practitioners and service users (Finlay and Evans, 2009). As can be seen from above, such first-hand knowledge is sorely lacking with regard to research in both boundary management and school-based counselling. As a practitioner-researcher who is closely aligned with the human science model which "acknowledges the significance of philosophical and moral questions and values artistry in professional work" (Strawbridge and Woolfe, 2010, p. 10), my aim was to explore therapeutic practice in the complex environment of inner-city secondary schools. Having identified a clear gap in the literature relating to how school-based counsellors adapt their practice in school settings, with particular reference to boundaries, this study proposed to examine and develop a theory around how practitioners experience and manage therapeutic boundaries.

This study brings together and sheds light on two important areas. First, this study looks at the impact of context, in particular the context of the inner city secondary school, on therapeutic work. Secondly, it examines current school-based practice with regard to boundaries, "a fundamental yet neglected topic" (Mollon, 2004: xiii), and develops a theory on how boundaries are creatively managed by school-based counsellors.

The central research question of this study was: How do school-based counsellors experience and manage boundaries in the context of inner-city secondary schools?

As part of the data gathering process, this study was guided by the following questions:

1. How do school-based counsellors experience the context of inner-city schools?

2. What boundaries are school-based counsellors aware of in their work?

3. What is the school-based counsellor's experience of managing boundaries in schools?

4. How do school counsellors adapt their way of managing boundaries to the context of inner-city schools?

5. What are some specific examples of working creatively with boundaries?

6. How is the counsellor-student relationship impacted by the way boundaries are managed?

7. How is the progress and outcome of the work affected by the way boundaries are managed?

8. How has training or orientation shaped school-based counsellors' management of boundaries?

In this study, school-based counselling does not refer to the *ad hoc* emotional support provided by school staff nor to the structured career guidance, Connexions advice, mentoring or similar services available in schools, but to a formal arrangement where a young person receives individual psychological intervention by a trained therapist generally by appointment and for an agreed number of sessions in school. This study has used the terms school-based counsellor, counsellor and therapist interchangeably in order to reflect the diverse backgrounds, training and approaches of school-based practitioners.

2.6   Summary

This chapter began with a summary of the debate surrounding the literature review in grounded theory. It then examined the literature on therapeutic boundaries and found a gradual change from a traditionally psychoanalytic view of the frame as being fixed and unchanging to a more moderate view which acknowledges the need for flexibility and the importance of context. A dichotomy between risk management and theoretical perspectives of boundaries was related to a deontological versus a teleological perspective of ethics. The risk management literature was found to originate largely from the US, where there is a more litigious climate, whilst the literature in the UK was shown to be focused mainly on theoretical and contextual issues. The only research found on boundaries involves questionnaire-based surveys conducted in the US. It was established that this study addresses an important gap in the literature with regard to practitioners' lived experience of

managing boundaries in the complex setting of schools. A qualitative study exploring how therapists manage boundaries will bring a neglected area of practitioner research into focus and contribute to the growing literature on the importance of context.

With regard to school-based counselling, this review found the UK literature to be a relatively recent development, mirroring the growth of this sector. Scant reference to boundaries was found in this literature. A review of the research found three key studies in the early millennium. These were followed by a number of studies associated with the WAG initiative which put counsellors in every secondary school in Wales. These included a large-scale outcome study and numerous smaller studies. Whilst the importance of these empirical studies was acknowledged for validating and legitimising school-based counselling, the urgent need for qualitative research focusing on therapeutic practice in schools, and the nature of the school context, was highlighted. It was proposed that this study makes a significant contribution to the current literature by examining how school-based counsellors adapt their practice in school settings, with particular reference to boundaries. Having located the study within current literature and research, the next chapter will present the methodology used for the study and describe the research design in detail.

3   Methodology

The chapter begins with the rationale underlying the choice of methodology. The research design, in terms of data collection and analysis procedures, is then described in detail, including aspects relating to the participant sample, interviews and stages of analysis. Finally, there is a section on my reflexive journal, followed by sections on trustworthiness and ethical considerations.

3.1   Rationale for methodology

The aim of this study was to explore how school-based counsellors manage therapeutic boundaries. This research question delves into the lived experience of school-based counsellors, the meaning they make of boundaries in schools and the importance of context. This focus on experience, meaning and context – and my desire to bring out the full richness and detail of work in schools - required a hermeneutic or interpretive approach from within a qualitative framework. A qualitative methodology was therefore chosen as it enables a systematic inquiry for interpreting meaning, making sense of experience, identifying processes involved in actions, and conveying the richness and complexity of context (McLeod, 1999). As mentioned in the previous chapter, there are a number of quantitative studies on UK school-based counselling, whilst a more holistic understanding of therapeutic practice in schools is still sorely lacking. A qualitative study on boundary management contributes significantly towards this holistic understanding. Moreover, a qualitative study exploring therapeutic practice in non-traditional settings provides important 'knowledge-in-context' (McLeod, 1999) for practitioners working in the field.

It is generally understood that researchers should adopt a methodological approach that is aligned with their philosophical beliefs (Mills et al.,2006). As a counselling psychologist and integrative psychotherapist committed to a human science model which favours a holistic understanding of experience, subjective and intersubjective processes and an understanding of context, I lean towards an interpretive, non-positivist approach to research. My relativist ontological position stresses the subjective nature of social reality. From this perspective, I believe reality is a social construction not an objective truth and that there are multiple realities and truths. Epistemologically, I locate myself within the constructivist-interpretivist paradigm (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998). According to Denzin and Lincoln (1998) constructivist-interpretivist research is relativist, transactional and subjectivist. It assumes the relativist position where there are multiple realities and truths. It is transactional in

that meaning is deemed to be co-constructed. Much like the dialogical therapeutic encounter (Hycner, 1993), research undertaken from this position involves a co-construction of meaning or a 'fusion of horizons' (Gadamer, 1989). Finally, it is subjectivist in that meaning cannot be fully known, but interpreted through interactions with the other.

Taking into account the nature of the research question and my philosophical stance, I considered two possible qualitative methods: Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) and Grounded Theory. I was initially drawn to a phenomenological approach because it captures the essence of everyday experience (McLeod, 2001) and the everyday experience of working in schools is a key piece of my research question. I was interested in the impact of context on clinical practice from a phenomenological perspective and IPA's detailed exploration of people's lived experience and how they make sense of them (Smith and Eatough, 2007) closely fits this aspect of the research question. However, for me, IPA would not be able to adequately answer the question of 'So what?' The complexity of the secondary school setting has already been mentioned in articles referring to CAMHS work in schools by Baruch (2001) and Music (2007, 2008, 2009). I wanted to go a step further and discover how boundaries in schools were being managed and, if possible, generate a theory or explanatory model around boundary management in educational settings.

I was therefore drawn to grounded theory because it is a widely-used and well-established methodology with recognised explanatory power (McLeod, 2001; Ponterotto, 2005). I was also drawn to the theory-building aspect of grounded theory because I felt an explanatory model would make the research particularly relevant and useful for practitioners. Grounded theory is considered the first of the 'big Q' methodologies enabling psychologists to explore lived experience and participants' meaning (Willig, 2001). It would therefore describe and analyse the nature and experience of boundary issues whilst constructing a theory on how they are managed in practice. As an unstudied phenomenon, boundary management in schools is particularly appropriate for a grounded theory analysis. This is because grounded theory is understood as being well suited for gaining a broad abstracted understanding of a new area which can then serve as a template for further research and be transferable to practitioners working in related fields. The possibility of explicating how boundaries are managed could contribute to school-based practice - by supporting therapists as they enter schools for the first time along with

their supervisors, line managers, etc. - and also potentially to practice in other complex settings.

Having decided on grounded theory as a research method, I then had to decide which version of grounded theory to adopt. The earlier versions of grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1998) embrace a more realist and objectivist stance towards reality and knowledge. They also impose more rigid strategies for extracting meaning from text.   I therefore chose to adopt a more recent version of grounded theory, Constructivist Grounded Theory (Charmaz, 2006, 2014), an approach which is consistent with my philosophical stance. This version diverges significantly from earlier versions in that it firmly and openly acknowledges that the researcher's values and beliefs will influence the interpretation of the data and generation of theory. According to Charmaz (2006, 2014), theory does not emerge from the data but is generated by interaction with the data. This co-constructed nature of data and theory generation entails the need for a reflexive stance on the part of the researcher. Earlier versions of grounded theory rejected reflexivity as it was considered that acknowledging the influence of the researcher meant that theory was being 'forced' rather than allowed to emerge from the data (Mruck and Mey, 2007). In constructivist grounded theory, a reflexive stance is positively recommended. Chamaz (2014) affirms that constructivism re-locates grounded theory researchers from an objectivist stance to a position within the process of inquiry. "We stand within our research process rather than above, before, or outside it" (Charmaz, 2014:321).

Constructivist Grounded Theory constitutes a systematic approach, offering a flexible set of inductive strategies for collecting and analysing qualitative data (Charmaz, 2006). The researcher works systematically and creatively (Henwood and Pidgeon, 2006) and, by offering a balance of structure and freedom, I felt this approach closely matched my own working style. I felt comfortable in an approach to analysis that was both flexible and iterative. This comparative and interactive methodology enabled me to engage with a rich set of data in order to "reveal participants' thoughts, feelings, intuitions and actions as well as context and structure" (Charmaz, 2008: 87).

Charmaz (2014) states that the post-modern social constructivist and social constructionist positions are closely related and this resonates with my own view that we are shaped by both subjective and social forces. The co-constructed nature

of data and theory generation places particular importance on the relationship between researcher and study participant. This study was therefore also informed by the theory of relational-centred research (Finlay and Evans, 2009).

3.2   Research design

3.2.1   Participants

Recruitment

Four sampling strategies were used: convenience sampling, snowballing, purposive (looking for variation) and theoretical. Convenience sampling, in the form of sending recruitment flyers to a number of known contacts in the field, provided me with the first three participants who expressed interest via email in taking part in the project. They were sent an approved participant information sheet (PIS) (see Appendix 2) and a participant consent form (see Appendix 3) and were encouraged to contact me with any queries prior to the arranged interview.

Meanwhile, as part of my purposive sampling strategy to recruit from as wide a base as possible, an approved recruitment email (see Appendix 4) was sent to gatekeepers at a number of London school and youth counselling services. This email informed potential participants of the purpose and scope of the study and invited their participation giving my contact details. One participant expressed interest as a result of this effort and, following her interview, she proceeded to spread word of my project among other school counsellors, so that two further participants joined the project through snowballing technique.

In the interest of further widening the search, flyers (see Appendix 5) were distributed at two conferences, and announcements were posted on a Practice Research Network (PRN) website and on relevant social media websites. The conference flyers attracted the interest of two participants. Word of mouth brought another two participants. The final participant contacted me as a result of an email sent to the gatekeeper of her school counselling service.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria

The inclusion criteria for the study stipulated that participants be qualified BACP, BPS or UKCP counsellors who were working or had recently worked (within the last five years) in an urban state secondary school for at least two years. Participants may have worked either in a voluntary capacity, placed by a specialised school counselling service, or as paid employees of a school, borough or service. It was

decided to exclude counsellors who were working with Place2Be or Kids Company as the organizational context of these services is very different from that which is encountered by school counsellors working independently. Finally, given the need for high quality data in order to be able to construct a grounded theory, it was decided that participants meet the 'Spradley criteria' (Morse, 2007) whereby participants must be "reflective, willing and able to speak articulately about their experience" (Morse, 2007:231).

The above criteria led to the exclusion of two participants. Over the course of this study, 12 school counsellors were recruited and interviewed as participants, with 10 participants being used as the final sample. One participant was eliminated from the study because her experience was confined to working in a suburban school outside of London. In this case, I felt it was important to keep the research focus on counsellors working in an inner city environment so as not to confound contextual issues. This interview was taped but not transcribed. A second participant was eliminated, following transcription and initial coding of the interview, due to what was deemed as a poor quality of responses (Spradley, 1980).

The decision to exclude the second participant was particularly difficult because it was based on what I perceived as more subjective criteria. I was particularly aware that my decision could be perceived as an attempt to exclude data that did not fit my emerging theory, despite the fact that a) the decision pre-dated the emergence of the actual theory by several months and b) this participant's non-reflective stance fitted neatly within the reactive category of boundary management. Whilst I was assured that I was not excluding inconsistent data, but rather excluding an interview that did not offer data of a sufficient quality, I continued to review my motives. I therefore re-examined the interview on numerous occasions in order to be sure of my motives, discussing it with my peer researcher and presenting it to a group of peer researchers before making my final decision. I finally concluded that the responses in this interview were too superficial or lacked the necessary reflection for use in the study. As grounded theory building requires 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973), my focus was firmly on obtaining as rich data as I could from the sample available and this, I felt, justified my decision in the end.

Sampling

As grounded theory puts particular emphasis on being flexible about sample size and on responding to data requirements as they arise, the exact number of

participants was left unspecified. The aim was to continue interviewing until no new concepts or categories were being added to the data. The sample would be large enough to provide rich and varied data capable of reflecting the experience of counsellors working in urban schools, but small enough to avoid swamping the analysis with an excess of data.

As data collection proceeded, I found that the participants were supplying a rich amount of data. Following initial coding of the tenth confirmed participant I therefore decided to suspend recruitment in order to assess more closely the data quantity and quality. The amount of data collected was deemed to be sufficient in that no new categories were appearing. I found there was the risk of the data becoming unwieldy and cumbersome, given the intended size and scope of the project. Also, in terms of time, interviewing additional participants would require another recruiting drive which would extend the data collection period to well over a year, considerably longer than initially planned.

However, the most important consideration in the decision to stop recruiting was data quality. I felt confident that, upon close inspection and on the basis of the ongoing elaboration of codes and categories, the participants interviewed had provided a rich and detailed picture of managing boundaries in inner city schools. The data categories were saturated, in that no new codes were being added, and there was sufficient material for the derivation of a theory. Moreover, I had already collected a large number of 'in vivo' quotes. In sum, I felt the data gathered from a sample size of ten provided both the depth and breadth which the project was aiming for. I therefore decided to limit the sample to ten participants, knowing that grounded theory methodology allows for and even encourages theoretical sampling where further interviews can be arranged as and when necessary for analysis purposes.

<u>Participant background</u>
The final research sample therefore amounted to 10 participants, one male and nine female school counsellors who had school counselling experience of between 3 and 14 years, the average amount of experience being 7.2 years. Participants came from a range of counselling backgrounds and orientations (see Table 1). Six participants were from psychodynamic backgrounds, the other four were from humanistic backgrounds, either integrative, person-centred or psychosynthesis. A majority of the participants (9) had experience working in more than one school, so

that counselling experience in a total of 24 different state schools and colleges was represented (see Table 2). Of the 24 school settings, there were seven academies, five sixth form colleges, five Catholic girls' schools, five mixed comprehensives, one Sikh academy and one sports academy. The school locations were spread across ten London boroughs (Barnet, Hackney, Hammersmith & Fulham, Hillingdon, Hounslow, Lambeth, Lewisham, Newham, Southwark and Wandsworth) including some of the most deprived areas in the city and the country (see Table 3). All of the schools represented serve diverse urban communities affected by poverty and hardship.

3.2.2   Data collection

Data was collected through semi-structured face-to-face interviews. Charmaz (2014) advocates the use of intensive interviews for interpretive inquiry, by which she means conducting an open-ended, in-depth exploration of an area. Following Charmaz (2014) I used a semi-structured interview format which could be adapted as necessary over the course of the study. An interview guide (see Appendix 6) containing a list of open-ended questions was used to focus data collection. The interviews took place over a nine month period. Three interviews were conducted in the researcher's home, one in the researcher's therapy room, four in the participants' homes and two in neighbourhood cafes. Following the concept of the 'extended context protocol' (Flick, 2007) notes were taken immediately after each interview, recording any impressions relating to the interview, the setting and the interviewee.

I obtained written informed consent for the interview and taping prior to initiating the interviews. Participants were also requested to complete a participant record (see Appendix 7) for the collection of demographic information. The interviews lasted between 60-75 minutes and were audio-taped using an Olympus digital voice recorder. I labelled the audio files with an alphanumeric code to protect the participant's identity and transferred them to a password protected computer file.

Any information which could potentially identify the participant or the school they were working in was omitted during transcription, this included references to schools and clients as well as participants. Reference numbers and pseudonyms were given to the research participants.

Table 1: Participant background

Ref	Participant	Sex	Training	Registration	Employer	Years Exp.
P1	Grant	M	Psychodynamic	BACP	agency/school	5
P2	Kate	F	Psychosynthesis	BACP	agency	9
P3	Emma	F	Integrative	BACP	agency/self	4
P4	Rachel	F	Psychodynamic	BACP	agency	8
P5	Sarah	F	Psychodynamic	BACP	agency/self	4
P6	Joanna	F	Psychodynamic	BACP	agency/self	3
P7	Joan	F	Person-centred	BACP	school	14
P8	Ana	F	Psychodynamic	BACP/FBC/BPC	agency/self	10
P9	Octavia	F	Integrative	BACP	school	8
P10	Alice	F	Psychodynamic	BACP	agency	7

Table 2: Types of schools represented

Type of school	Number
Academy	7
Mixed comprehensive	5
Catholic girls' secondary	5
Sixth form	5
Sikh academy	1
Sports academy	1
Total number	24

Table 3: Urban school setting [2]

London Borough	Number of Schools	% Children living in poverty
Hackney	2	41%
Newham	2	41%
Southwark	6	34%
Lambeth	4	34%
Lewisham	3	34%
Hammersmith & Fulham	1	31%
Hounslow	1	30%
Hillingdon	3	28%
Barnet	1	27%
Wandsworth	1	27%
Total number	24 schools	

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[2]Poverty figures published on 15/10/14 by Campaign to End Child Poverty (www.cpag.org.uk)

The aim of the interviews was to elicit the participants' experience of managing boundaries in the context of inner city schools as well as the meaning they attached to this experience. I was aware that I needed to have 'rich' data for a grounded theory study and that the quality of information gathered would depend on the rapport between myself and the interviewee (McLeod, 2003). I therefore adopted a relation-centred approach (Finlay and Evans, 2009) to guide my stance in the interviews. In particular, I sought to actively employ empathy and openness following Finlay and Evans (2009). As the interviews progressed, I became more confident and more aware of the 'theoretical direction' (Charmaz, 2014) of my study which enabled me to be both more relaxed and more focused as an interviewer. There was less reliance on a formal interview schedule and the space began to open up more for what the participant wanted to elaborate. This seemed to enable the categories to widen and deepen.

3.2.3 Data analysis

Data analysis followed the guidelines laid down by Charmaz (2006, 2008, 2014). Interview data was transcribed, coded and analysed in overlapping and iterative cycles which is described in detail below. I decided not to use analysis software (CADQAS) for a variety of reasons: firstly, I deemed the time and expense involved in acquiring and learning a software program would outweigh its advantages in data manipulation and, secondly, I feared it would distance me from the data and constrain the way I analysed it. Finally, as someone who requires the kinetic experience of writing or drawing by hand to fully engage my creative processes, I felt I needed to trust my own close interaction with and immersion in the data in order to allow a theory to emerge.

Transcribing

Interviews were manually transcribed within one or two days of recording. There are two approaches to presenting interview material (O'Neill, 1998). One involves faithfully representing all the repetitions, gaps, pauses, utterances of an interview which then become part of a text analysis, usually using discourse or theme analysis. The other approach involves 'smoothing' (O'Neill, 1998) whereby the dialogue is edited slightly in order to improve clarity and readability. In smoothing a text, redundancies and repetitions are deleted or an omission may be filled in. O'Neill (1998) argues that distractions are cleared away by smoothing, allowing the meaning to be more clearly conveyed. O'Neill (1998) reports that smoothing is used

by a number of qualitative researchers including Charmaz (1994) and Gilligan (1982). In the actual process of transcribing, I refrained from recording all the 'umms' and 'ahhs' but otherwise typed a verbatim account. The raw data therefore remained true to each participant's style of speech, I then adopted 'smoothing' in the writing-up stage when inserting participant quotes in the study. The quotes presented in this study have therefore been slightly modified or 'smoothed' for the ease of the reader.

The transcripts produced were verbatim, except for where concerns for confidentiality led me to omit identifying references or detailed descriptions of client work. Whilst I transcribed, I jotted down further notes about the participants, their possible motivations, their attitudes and stance. I also noted any observations which arose about my interviewing style and mode of questioning. Transcripts were formatted in landscape with a wide left hand margin and printed for the first cycle of manual coding.

<u>Coding</u>

The first stage of coding was carried out quite swiftly, within a week of transcribing each interview. I understand coding as "the process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing and categorizing data" (Strauss and Corbin, 1990: 61). This involved initial coding where short descriptive or summary tags relating to meaning units or segments of text were hand-written in the transcript margin (see Appendix 8). I attempted to keep the codes 'short, simple, active and analytic' (Charmaz, 2014:120) These initial codes were then studied and refined through a process of comparing them to the data. A table was drawn up for each participant which listed all the initial codes in one column with the relevant quotes in the column alongside (see Appendix 9). This procedure of transcribing, manually coding and tabulating was carried out after each interview.

After the first three interviews were transcribed and coded, initial codes were cross-compared between participants. I then moved into the focused coding stage applying more conceptual, rather than descriptive, codes to groups of similar codes. Charmaz (2014) describes both initial and focus coding as emergent processes. It is the beginning of moving towards the more analytical. I was deeply immersed in the data, moving back and forth between the raw data and the two levels of coding. I was following the grounded theory dictum: "Study your emerging data" (Glaser,1978). A tentative list of focus codes was handwritten on a large flip chart

pad which was placed next to my desk. This served as a baseline, giving me a sense of a starting point but also an anchor or focal point. I continued to develop focus codes to describe or synthesize larger chunks of data. Where possible I retained 'in vivo' codes in an attempt to capture as explicitly as possible the participants' experiences.

The next two interviews were then recorded, transcribed and coded. The initial codes were cross-compared with the existing list of focus codes. Codes were changed, added to or eliminated. Each subsequent interview followed the same pattern of initial coding followed by a longer stage where data was sorted, synthesized and organized into focus codes. Tables continued to be created, listing the codes and quotes for each new participant.

Focus codes began to be grouped into clusters, tentative categories, and links between categories were explored. This was a period of growing and shrinking where some codes were collapsed into one another whilst other codes expanded. I wrote the focus codes out on index cards so I could experiment with different ways of grouping them. As nascent categories appeared, relevant queries about them would be added to the interview schedule and, in this sense, the interview questions evolved organically as part of the research process.

Following standard grounded theory methodology, data was collected and analysed contemporaneously, using the 'constant comparative method' (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). As the lists of focus codes and categories began to grow, I compiled a master table containing the categories, codes and quotes for the study (see Appendix 10). Whilst I continued to refer back to the original transcripts, and the individual participant tables, from time to time, this master table became the main point of reference in the writing stage. At every step, codes and categories were compared against each other and against the raw data to explore variations and difference. Analysis proceeded until all the categories were 'saturated' or no new data could be found to add to them. The final codes included in the study were chosen on the basis of three criteria: their frequency within specific interviews, their frequency across interviews or their explanatory power (their ability to vividly capture an aspect of boundary management).

<u>Theory building</u>

A combination of manual and computer tools was used for analysis. By choosing to transcribe my own recordings and not to use analysis software (CAQDAS) I felt I was staying close to the data. Paper and pen was used for initial coding, keeping a reflexive journal and theory mapping, whilst the evolving codebooks were stored in the form of Word tables in computer files. The computer application Evernote was used for memo writing. Memos tended to be short observations, comments, queries on emerging categories and themes (see Appendix 11). Being able to access Evernote on a variety of platforms meant I could capture ideas on my phone or ipad whilst on the move. However, I did not write extensive memos, as being tied to a keyboard inhibited my creative process, so I followed Charmaz's (2014) advice and did what works for me, which was essentially a lot of mind mapping.

Using coloured pens, index cards, post-it notes and large sketch pads, I mapped out possible themes and studied the relationships between categories across participants (see Appendix 12). I found myself asking, again and again, Glaser's (1978) fundamental question: 'What's happening here?' I was aware of a growing 'theoretical sensitivity' where I was beginning to understand and define processes in abstract terms. Charmaz states "With this type of sensitivity, grounded theorists discern meanings in their emergent patterns and define the distinctive properties of their constructed categories concerning these patterns" (Charmaz, 2014: 161). Diagramming played a large part in the analysis. I began to identify a pattern within the categories where the variation in codes spread across similar spectrums which mirrored the spread of experience of the participants. By studying how the spread of data mapped onto the spread of participant experience I was able to detect three distinct stages of boundary management. Further analysis enabled the identification of attendant processes and then in a 'EUREKA!' moment a theory arose. I set about cross-checking the theory against the raw data and lists of codes. I worked on diagramming the theory and drew up a table listing the definitive categories and focus codes.

<u>Theoretical sampling</u>

Towards the end of the analysis stage, a gap in the data emerged around one of the sub-categories and I decided to employ theoretical sampling as a way of bridging it. It was originally envisaged in the research design that follow-up interviews might be arranged to gather further data on specific themes, in accordance with the theoretical sampling strategy advocated by Charmaz (2014). Participants were

informed of this eventuality in the participant record which asked permission for them to be contacted for a second interview at a later date if they so wished. It was on this basis that I decided to contact one of the participants for a follow-up interview. An interview was arranged and held at the participant's home. The aim was to conduct a shorter, focused interview on several specific points which I felt needed further elaboration. It was therefore a much more directive interview, though I gave ample space at the beginning and end to re-connect with her. This interview was then transcribed and coded in the same way as the others and integrated into the data.

Theoretical sampling was also used to gather further information on a case which emerged during analysis and appeared to lie outside the proposed theory. Negative case analysis (Kidder, 1981; Lincoln and Guber, 1985) was employed which enabled the theory to be further defined and substantiated. This case is presented at the end of the following chapter.

3.3 Reflexive Journal

As a constructivist researcher standing firmly within my research, both personal and epistemological reflexivity serve as important anchor points for this study. I therefore chose to keep a 'reflexive journal' (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) where I recorded information about both myself and my research method.

From a personal perspective, the journal documented the emotional roller coaster of the research process: from early excitement to confusion, uncertainty, determination, discouragement, boredom, inspiration, exhaustion and more determination. The journal felt like a safe place to confide all my thoughts and feelings and was a faithful companion on what often seemed like a surreal and lonely journey. It played an important role in giving a sense of consistency and continuity to a process that often felt disjointed and fragmented.

From a research point of view, I used the journal as a way to examine my research decisions and any expectations and assumptions arising about the project and the emerging data. I also used it to document each step of the research process. The journal contains reflections on the literature search and on recruiting and sampling. It contains information on the interviewing process, including field notes from each interview: detailed descriptions of the location and circumstances of the interview, information about the interviewee and my reactions. It includes notes on the coding

process and notes on specific codes. Thoughts and reflections on the analysis process were recorded which sometimes were expanded into analytical memos stored in Evernote. There were ongoing notes on the implications of my findings and the limitations. Then there are entries relating to the writing up phase, tracing the evolution of each chapter with mind maps, mini diagrams, timetables and doodles. Finally, there are brief notes following meetings with my research supervisor and peer researchers and attendance at research conferences.

3.4   Trustworthiness

Among the constructs used for establishing trustworthiness in qualitative studies, those proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) have gained wide acceptance (Shenton, 2004).   This section therefore takes these four constructs - credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability - as its basis and explains the techniques used to meet these criteria.

Credibility

The credibility of this study is supported by two factors already built into the research methodology. As part of grounded theory analysis, I used a 'constant comparative method', whereby codes and categories were continuously checked against the data for verification. Secondly, by immersing myself in the data I ensured a close reading and intimate knowledge of the raw material on which theory is based, thus minimising the risk of misinterpretation. These correspond to the established techniques of prolonged engagement and persistent observation.

A cross-validation exercise was used where a peer researcher was given an interview transcript and asked to assign codes (see Appendix 14). These codes were then compared against those proposed in the study and any differences were examined and discussed. My interview style was also critiqued by checking interview questions and prompts for any anomalies. Member checking was carried out by one of the participants who asked to see her verbatim material used in the study and expressed her satisfaction in how it had been represented.

Finally, the 'negative case analysis' (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), already mentioned above, represents a validation exercise which enabled my model to be further confirmed and supported.

<u>Transferability</u>

Triangulation provides an important means of assessing transferability of findings to other settings. Alongside the research, I was employed to supervise two small groups of school-based counsellors working in secondary schools. This supervision work provided an opportunity to triangulate my emerging data with outside informants, thus enabling focus codes and categories to be informally corroborated. I noted when focus codes identified in the research were discussed in supervision and, whilst I was careful not to apply any extra weight or importance to these focus codes and categories, I was often encouraged that what was coming up in the interviews was also being reported live in the field by other practitioners.

This study also meets the transferability criteria by using 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973) where phenomena are described in sufficient detail and depth to enable comparisons to be drawn with other contexts or client groups. The liberal use of verbatim material and 'in vivo' codes moreover ensure that the theory is vividly illustrated and firmly grounded in the data.

<u>Dependability</u>

The criteria of dependability has been met through an inquiry audit. I met with both a peer researcher and a group of peer researchers on a regular basis in order to discuss and critique my research and findings. These external audits were held throughout the research period providing important feedback and enabling my analysis and theory to be assessed and corroborated.

<u>Confirmability</u>

An audit trail, tracing all the stages of coding and analysis, has been established in Appendices 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13 where excerpts from relevant documents relating to the study have been made available. Examples of coding and analysis are provided as well as tables and diagrams relating to the theory. A reflexive journal was kept which tracks the evolution of thoughts and ideas throughout the research process. Reflexivity is met by both the journal and the reflexive accounts included in chapters 1 and 5 of this study.

3.5   Confidentiality and ethical considerations

Ethical approval for this study was granted by the Metanoia Research Ethics Committee (see Appendix 15) and, throughout the research process, there was careful adherence to the principles and guidelines set out in the BPS Code of Ethics

and Conduct (2009). Participants were granted the right to withdraw from the study at any time and have their contribution to date deleted. Participants were fully informed of the objectives of the study and any queries were answered prior to obtaining their informed consent. The confidentiality and anonymity of the participants was ensured by changing all the names and deleting any identifying references in the transcripts and other documents. This included omitting place names, the names of schools, and specific references to client cases (including all names and identifying features of the work). A coding system was used in gathering and processing interview tapes, transcripts, notes and memos in order to preserve anonymity. Participants were also offered the opportunity to check their verbatim material included in the study. One participant chose to make use of this opportunity. Clients were de-briefed at the end of the interview and were given the opportunity to feed back on their experience.

Throughout the study, the complex and sensitive nature of boundaries was taken into careful consideration in the awareness that ethics is an on-going process rather than a simple procedural exercise. Firstly, a comprehensive and thorough risk assessment of this project was carried out prior to ethical approval. This assessment involved examining in depth the different ways in which this project might pose a risk to the participants involved or – indirectly - to their clients or schools. As part of this risk assessment, it was stipulated that, in the event a counsellor disclosed any evidence of unethical practice, a clear procedure would be set in motion. This procedure involved encouraging the counsellor to reconsider or re-evaluate her behaviour and, if the counsellor is resistant, alerting the appropriate professional bodies. In the event, this occasion did not arise. Ethical awareness continued during the research process as I became increasingly conscious of the scrutiny being paid to the participants' practice. This led me to reminding the participants about their clients' confidentiality and to refraining from transcribing parts of interviews where details of client cases were mentioned. In hindsight, I would have liked to have made explicit mention in the participant information sheet of the potential risk to client confidentiality when exposing the participants' practice to ethical scrutiny. In the event, my sensitivity and increasing awareness of this issue led me to discussing client confidentiality before and during the interviews and to being particularly fastidious in omitting any identifying references in the transcripts. Throughout the research process, ethical questions were regularly reviewed during meetings with my research supervisor and peer researcher. These mainly involved thinking about ways of ensuring that confidentiality and anonymity

were fully protected, from the perspective of the participants, their clients and the schools involved, both in the process of collecting and recording data and when using in vivo quotes.

3.6   Summary

This chapter presented the rationale for choice of methodology and a detailed description of the research design. It gives a clear account of all the procedures used in collecting and analysing the data as well as a description of the participant background. The next chapter provides an in-depth description of the findings of the study, presented in the form of a theory of boundary management.

4   Findings

This chapter presents the theory of boundary management which emerged from an analysis of the findings. It begins with a brief summary of the theory and then proceeds with an in-depth explication of the theory, presented stage by stage, illustrated by quotes from the participants. It concludes with an outlier case which, through negative case analysis, is shown to lend further support to the theory.

4.1   A theory of boundary management

The aim of this research project was to explore how school-based counsellors manage therapeutic boundaries. The project focused on counsellors working in inner-city secondary schools and sixth forms as these present particularly challenging contexts and have been identified as having an urgent need for therapeutic support. The findings which emerged from this study demonstrate that the management of therapeutic boundaries in schools is a complex process which develops over time. Three distinct stages were identified. In addition, it was found that there are important internal and external processes that contribute to this development.

In the first stage, school-based counsellors encounter numerous contextual challenges which disrupt and interfere with the conventional boundaries school-based counsellors are trained to maintain. These challenges concern the demands of working in an educational setting, the specific pressures of inner-city schools and the clinical complexity of caseloads found in this context. Participants identified four particular areas where boundaries were problematic: the therapy room, the school-based counsellor's role and presence, client confidentiality and engaging an adolescent in therapy. In this stage, participants reported imposing boundaries which were often either too rigid or too loose. They struggled to maintain consistent and coherent boundaries in the face of the multiple demands and pressures of the school environment and described feeling overwhelmed and unable to think. Externally, participants reported feeling isolated and alienated, unsupported and unacknowledged.

In the middle stage, school-based counsellors begin to negotiate boundaries. This is a period of adjustment when the participants described needing to compromise in the face of school demands. It is also a stage when counsellors begin to build relationships with key figures in the school enabling them to feel supported and contained. This is a stage of negotiation both externally with school staff and

internally with the school-based counsellor's own ethical stance towards boundaries. Participants described the different ways they had to 'ease up' their working methods and become more flexible whilst asserting themselves and firming up their boundaries in other areas, such as their role. Boundary management is evolving in this stage from a reactive, rigid and inconsistent dynamic to a generally more responsive, flexible and containing dynamic that is becoming more sensitive to the needs of both the school and the student.

In the later stage, boundary management is more fully integrated with the school-based counsellor's sense of identity and role. It is both a reflective process and a collaborative process underpinned by an emerging professional identity and ethical framework. School-based counsellors are now embedded in the school environment, working autonomously whilst also collaborating with key staff members. Their role is both contained, being established and well-defined, and evolving. Their evolving role may extend to school-wide interventions, to working inter-professionally with CAMHS teams and to advocacy work on behalf of families. Boundary management has evolved into an ongoing reflective and reflexive process which is informed by their understanding of the school environment and their own inner compass or ethical stance. The boundary dynamic is reflective, balanced and skilful, more closely attuned to student concerns whilst keeping the wider school context in mind.

Over time, the participants described an external process of becoming embedded, moving from feeling isolated and alienated to establishing relationships with key members of staff for consultative and collaborative purposes. Participants reported that these relationships helped to 'anchor' them in the school. Internally, participants gradually adapted to the stresses of the context, becoming both more contained and confident and learning to 'think' and hold multiple perspectives. These internal and external therapist processes both mediate the contextual challenges and disrupted boundaries and drive the stages of boundary management as shown by the bi-directional arrows in the model.

In the first stage, the stress of working in a challenging and unfamiliar context, along with their isolated position, interferes with school-based counsellors' ability to make boundary decisions. Their boundary management style is reactive, tending towards more towards erratic and inconsistent decisions. The counsellors' boundary management style is driven by their process of feeling uncontained and isolated and

feeds back on their sense of being unsettled. However, over time, the gradual process of embedding and increased confidence and reflective capacity enable them to 'think under fire'. Boundary management is summed up as 'thinking under fire' or as the ability to reflect on situations as they arise and respond sensitively and appropriately according to one's own internal compass. A model illustrating the theory of boundary management is found below in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Theory of boundary management

CONTEXTUAL CHALLENGES:	BOUNDARY DISRUPTIONS:
• **School setting**	• **Room**
• **Inner-city setting**	• **Role**
• **Clinical implications**	• **Confidentiality**
	• **Engaging students**

THERAPIST PROCESSES

EARLY STAGE:	MIDDLE STAGE:	LATER STAGE:
Feeling uncontained	→ **Finding containment**	→ **Emerging identity**
Isolated	**Building relationships**	**Embedded**

BOUNDARY MANAGEMENT

EARLY STAGE:	MIDDLE STAGE:	LATER STAGE:
REACTIVE	→ **RESPONSIVE**	→ **REFLECTIVE**
(Erratic, loose/rigid)	**(Collaborative, flexible/firm)**	**(Attuned, self-aware)**

4.2 Early stage

The early stage is the most difficult period for school-based counsellors. Participants reported that the initial experience of working in an inner-city secondary school involves encountering a range of contextual challenges and disrupted boundaries which can have a significant repercussions on their ability to hold therapeutic work.

4.2.1 Encountering contextual challenges

The participants described feeling impacted by multiple challenges posed by the secondary school context. The contextual challenges include practical and administrative matters, systemic pressures and clinical repercussions. There are a number of minor boundary issues pertaining to practical issues like referrals and appointments which need to be resolved or taken into account as well as the wider organizational and societal issues which overshadow an urban school.

4.2.1.1 School setting

Different values

Psychotherapy traditionally values confidentiality, safety, neutrality, privacy, consistency and predictability. In this protected environment, counsellors focus on the inner experience and emotional well-being of the individual, adopting a non-judgemental and accepting stance. Schools are a very different environment from a standard counselling setting. In secondary schools, the emphasis is on conforming and fitting into the group, appropriate behaviour, achievement, ranking, assessment, competition, discipline, punishment and exclusion. School boundaries involve strict rules around uniform, jewellery, forms of address, mobile phones, class behaviour, homework, use of language and punishments in the form of detention and exclusion. School-based counsellors therefore find themselves having to accommodate to a very different world from the one they were trained to work in. Rachel sums up the transition counsellors need to make: *"One thing that comes to mind is all the training one has as a counsellor and coming from places where counselling was the organisation's main service, if not only service, and then walking into a school and trying to provide a therapeutic service in a non-therapeutic environment." (Rachel)*

Suspicion

Teachers and other school staff often have little understanding or experience of therapy. Participants reported reactions to the service that ranged from sceptical to suspicious and even antagonistic. This can come as a shock to newly arrived

school-based counsellors who may expect to be welcomed with open arms. Therapists can quickly feel their confidence evaporate under the close scrutiny of school staff. Kate described herself as particularly affected: *"A lot of suspicion initially. I felt… I may have been young…there may have been a lot of things rolled in with that…. but I felt that there was...yeah...quite an amount of suspicion from the staff." (Kate)*

Part of the school-based counsellor's job often involves trying to win over members of staff about the value of therapy, in order to get referrals and gain the goodwill of the teachers. School-based counsellors need to develop diplomatic and marketing skills in order to sustain their service.

> *"And so the work, the therapy, can be a bit anomalous. It can feel like that. And school-based counsellors in schools have to work very hard to get the message across that what they are doing is valuable and beneficial to the students in the longer term." (Alice)*

Managing expectations

Schools can have very different expectations from therapy. Participants reported that schools expect therapy to improve a student's behaviour or get them to conform in some way. School-based counsellors need to hold these expectations in mind, and modify them where possible by educating staff, whilst attending to the student's needs. Participants also reported feeling considerable pressure to get students 'back on track' with their studies. With pressure on schools to meet ever more demanding thresholds set by OFSTED, failing students come under particular scrutiny, and this pressure gets passed down to the therapist. School-based counsellors can feel torn between needing to meet the needs of the school and the needs of the student.

> *"You're always aware that you've got to hold in mind the school's focus for the work which is usually about having more compliant and biddable students, better achievement, and also what your particular student's concerns are. You always need to balance those two things in your mind really." (Alice)*

Juggling appointments and referrals

In the early stage, school-based counsellors need to set up and manage an appointment and referral system that is tailored to the school. They need to set up appointments bearing in mind that they will be taking students out of class. Appointments need to be rotated to avoid the student missing the same class every week, which means consistent appointment times, an important feature to most therapy situations, is unachievable. Therapists are constantly having to juggle

appointments in response to unexpected timetable changes, exams and absences. They need to be aware that there can be resentment from the teacher about disruption to their class. This is another area where school-based counsellors need to use all their diplomatic skills. Therapists will adapt the length of the session to the lesson length and fit their caseload around the all the breaks in the school day. They also need to take into account the school calendar and the numerous term breaks, exam periods, school trips and other interruptions to their work and be vigilant to pace therapeutic work accordingly.

Referrals will often involve working with students in the same class, friendship group or even extended family. School-based counsellors have to find ways of being flexible about overlapping referrals whilst protecting the confidentiality and safe space of the therapy situation.

> *"There's lots of cross-overs…I think that's just part of being a school counsellor… I think you have to be able to hold all of those things in your mind. Just as you do when you see kids in the same friendship group. At the moment, in my sixth form college, I'm seeing lots of students who know each other. So it's just part of the work really." (Alice)*

Disciplinary procedures

School-based counsellors can find themselves with referrals that have been mandated as part of a disciplinary procedure. Therapy becomes part of a punishment and school-based counsellors find themselves face-to-face with an angry, disaffected student threatened with possible exclusion. The challenge of engaging their clients then becomes magnified as the school-based counsellor becomes identified as another unfair, punitive adult.

> *"There's usually a stage when they go to the school counsellor before they're excluded and certainly before they're permanently excluded. So it always feels like they have to tick a box. 'We did everything we possibly could to keep this student in school….including sending him to the counsellor'. We are definitely part of that process. That's for sure." (Alice)*

In some schools, students under disciplinary procedure are threatened with exclusion if they do not attend therapy sessions. School-based counsellors find themselves part of a punitive process that is entirely counter to the very ethos of their work: *"I've had students who feel quite threatened if they don't go to counselling, particularly if they are faced with exclusion." (Joan)* On the one hand, being involved in disciplinary procedures creates obstacles to the therapeutic alliance and affects how counsellors are perceived by the student body as a whole

whilst, on the other, refusing to take part in these procedures can be construed by the school as being uncooperative. This illustrates the tightrope which boundaries represent in schools.

<u>Atmosphere of uncertainty</u>

Added to this, frequent visits by the school inspection body OFSTED, whose decision can determine the entire future of the school, and the impact of austerity cuts create an atmosphere of uncertainty and fear. Participants were acutely aware that a poor OFSTED report could mean sudden changes to the school, the leadership team or the cancellation of their contract. Participants reported never feeling secure in their job and this lack of security added to the emotional toll of the work.

> *"And it's also having an understanding how pressured schools are right now. I'm really aware that we went from being an outstanding school to a struggling school at the last OFSTED. Now we are going to have to have another OFSTED this year, what a difficult experience that is for everybody and finances are tight." (Octavia)*

The participants reported frequent changes of head teachers in their schools. Several participants experienced their school being changed into an academy. Management changes represent particularly stressful times for the participants.

> *"Fingers crossed it seems we are safe. Because of the population that we have and the huge needs that the students bring with them, it's unlikely that they will get rid of the welfare officer or myself but I don't take it for granted! We had a new principal appointed three years ago and at that point nobody knew what was going to happen but things have carried on." (Ana)*

4.2.1.2 Inner-city setting

An inner city setting adds another level of complexity to working in secondary schools. The research participants reported inner city schools as highly charged, often chaotic, environments with a very diverse population of students from impoverished backgrounds, marked by trauma and abuse, where the young people are often very committed to academic achievement whilst burdened by dysfunctional family dynamics. The participants were unanimous and unequivocal about the challenges this setting presents to school-based counsellors: *"It's definitely a very, very difficult context to work in, I think." (Alice)*

<u>Emotionally charged atmosphere</u>

The inner-city schools exhibited a very high noise level and threat of violence which the participants found unsettling and disruptive.

> *"There didn't seem to be much order, much control, and we could hear the teacher shouting at the young people. When the teachers weren't in the room we could hear the young people. It sounded like they were throwing chairs around. They were standing on desks." (Joanna)*

Several participants described working in failing schools, or schools in special measures, where the atmosphere was particularly threatening. Participants compared the environment to a war zone or prison: *"That school in particular felt like a war zone. We had police on horses at the end of the day. That's how bad it was."* (Ana).

Diversity and poverty

Participants all reported working in schools with a largely non-white immigrant population. These inner city schools were located in deprived neighbourhoods where systemic problems such as inadequate housing, unemployment, poor health and crime were pervasive.

> *"They are students from very deprived backgrounds where often they have to share a room with 2, 3, 4 other siblings. They might come from war-torn countries, where they might have been refugees, used to having nowhere to go. They might have moved from pillar to post, lots of different houses, hostels, B&Bs. Some of them might be homeless or living in a hostel." (Ana)*

Participants were aware of being from a different socio-economic background and this accentuated their feelings of being an outsider to the students and staff.

> *"Because there must be such a perception of us, I'm sure of me, as a middle-class white woman coming in, hoity-toity, my nose up in the air and not wanting to muck in with all the other members of staff…And I'm sure that there must have been lots of times when they couldn't bear me. What did I represent? What did I represent to them?" (Rachel)*

High staff turnover

The constant turnover of staff in inner city schools adds to the feeling of instability, inconsistency and lack of safety. Participants reported in some schools a high turnover of staff combined with constant changes of leadership.

> *"There is such a high turnover of teachers. I would say it is particular to inner-London schools. You get a lot of young teachers who aim to spend a good two or three years in an inner London school with the idea they can get a job anywhere else afterwards. So you do have a lot more of that (turnover), I think, than Home County schools." (Joan)*

4.2.1.3 Clinical implications

The clinical implications of working in an inner-city secondary school include a heavy caseload, severe presentations and low outcomes given the limited resources available to deal with issues. These are presented below.

<u>Working with risk and complexity</u>

School-based counsellors working in inner city settings are faced with heavy caseloads involving considerable risk and complexity. Severe presentations are the norm. Participants reported working regularly with trauma, for example. *"There was a lad who was a refugee from Afghanistan and he'd come (into the country) in the boot of a car and both his parents had been killed… I can't remember, I don't think he witnessed it, but anyway his case was really severe." (Joanna)* Bereavement and fractured families, children living apart from parents, were also reported as routine issues in this setting.

In the inner city context, participants reported that working with risk is highly prevalent and ongoing. Participants reported feeling worn out, anxious and exhausted. Working on a continuous basis with complex caseloads could take its toll. *"One of the reasons I left the secondary school is that after ten years I felt a little bit worn out. The level of risk, deprivation and the neglect that the students have experienced….I think I wanted to move to an area where those issues were not so prevalent." (Ana)*

<u>Low outcomes</u>

Participants described having to adapt their expectations of outcome to a level of basic survival.

> *"We used to say a good outcome at the end of the year is that the student is alive, and not pregnant and not in a gang and not doing drugs. Just keeping them going was a good outcome, never mind the results or exams. They are surviving. And for some of them that is a good outcome. And you hope they will take something with them that will enable them to go on to the next stage of their lives." (Ana)*

Whilst school-based counselling helps many students, for some deprived young people in schools, "individual work will never be enough" (Music and Hall, 2008). The reality that social and larger systemic issues, over which school-based counsellors have no control, are often at the root of an inner city child's difficulties means that school-based counsellors need to come to terms with their limited agency in this context.

4.2.2 Encountering disrupted boundaries

Against this background of contextual challenges, participants reported encountering four major boundary issues: therapy room, therapist role and presence, confidentiality and engaging an adolescent client. These boundary issues are set out and explored in detail below, along with the internal and external processes of the early stage and the boundary management style.

4.2.2.1 Defending the space

The therapy room was the boundary issue most commonly cited by the participants. In the early stage, school-based counsellors are often assigned whatever room might be available in the school with little consideration of the need for quiet, privacy and comfort. Participants reported working in draughty, disused classrooms, unheated storage rooms, Portakabins and medical rooms crowded with equipment. Participants described different problems with the room which are set out in this section below, the main concern being the need to defend the therapeutic space from intrusions, noise, upheaval and change. Sarah describes some of the difficulties she encountered with regard to the therapy room:

> *"Because (boundaries) are just such a challenge all the time. You're constantly trying to find that therapeutic space and protect it and stuff, because you want to have that space that it's the same every week, you know, no one interrupting, people who are supposed to be getting the clients to you or arranging the appointments or whatever, having those things set up properly with no messing around. It's not the easiest thing to get right." (Sarah)*

Noise and interruptions

Not surprisingly, given the highly charged nature of inner city schools, one of the main problems participants encountered was noise and interruptions. Participants reported using 'do not disturb' signs, in an attempt to counter these problems, though these were not always effective: "*And I used to put a notice on the door saying 'Please don't come in' and that was nicked within a half an hour of being put up. And people would knock on the door and run away. And they'd do all kinds of things." (Rachel)*

Participants experienced these intrusions as extremely challenging. The privacy of the therapeutic situation is threatened and the difficult and delicate process of getting a student to express their thoughts and feelings is abruptly halted, even broken into. *"Well it can break a student's process and the flow. It can be really*

difficult." (Joan) Sudden intrusions make establishing safety and trust, the key factors for working with young people, a challenge. A tenuous therapeutic alliance can be broken and the room becomes another unsafe and unpredictable space. *"And one day the Deputy Head did just walk in with a big funder from Europe and threw open the door in the middle of my counselling session when the girl had said she had been raped." (Octavia)*

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Disruptions tend to rattle and unsettle the therapist in the early stage and participants described reacting to intrusions in ways that were frozen, flustered or apologetic. *"And I would find myself saying things to the students like 'I'm really sorry about this. This isn't meant to happen'." (Rachel)* Participants reported that some students appeared immune to interruptions and much less affected than the counsellors themselves. *"I think it's me more than them… I think they're kind of used to noises and people coming in and out." (Grant)*

Changing rooms

Participants all had the experience in the early stage of being moved from room to room, in other words not having a dedicated room in which to base their work. Ana described her experience: "*Like an asylum seeker, every year seeking asylum somewhere because the college has gone through a lot of changes." (Ana)*

School-based counsellors find themselves having to settle with whatever is on offer in the early stage: *"I've had the situation where I've had to spend part of the day in one room and the other part of the day in another. It's very hard when you are saying to students, particularly in the beginning, well I'll see you this time or next time and you can't even say it's going to be in here." (Emma)* The lack of a dedicated room further undermines the consistency and predictability of the counselling and contributes to the therapist's sense of being unsettled and insecure.

Sharing rooms

The lack of space and resources in inner-city schools means participants often had to share a room with other teachers or services. This could lead to more interruptions and a sense of the therapist being an interloper.

> *"Members of staff would come barging in because I had to share it with two members of staff who agreed not to use it on a Monday. But the English teacher, who was in fact very nice, kept on having to come in to get her books… You know, in mid-session she come in and say 'I'm so sorry'." (Rachel)*

The presence of teachers or other staff members in the room or sharing the room, detracts from the efforts of the therapist to establish a distinct space, separate from all the business of school.

Shared rooms means having to deal with the detritus left behind by the previous occupant: *"And you go in and it would be just a mess because it was used as a careers room as well." (Grant)* It also means never knowing what to expect: *"And one day I'd come in the room and find…a number of times… I found teachers there saying 'I'm doing an oral exam now'." (Rachel)*

Inappropriate rooms

Participants reported working in under-resourced inner city schools where they were allocated storage rooms or disused medical rooms which were full of an odd assortment of material. *"It was a very tricky space…It was narrow and full of a lot of clobber. Odd clobber. It would have piles of nurse-y leaflets. You know - pap tests, smear tests and HIV - and lots of health-type literature." (Kate)* This often communicated a sense of the counselling not being valued by the school. Messy, chaotic rooms were experienced as depressing environments to work in, mirroring the neglect and deprivation the students were experiencing at home.

Rooms could be airless, claustrophobic or lack doors that closed properly:

> *"I just remember I was in a shed at one point that I had to lock from the inside, because otherwise the door swung open. And that was hard because I had to lock the door. Every time they came in, I had to explain to them I was only locking the door because it wouldn't close. But I thought, that's awful because some of them are quite claustrophobic." (Rachel)*

As can be seen, inadequate boundaries around the therapy room have a considerable impact on therapeutic work from interrupting process, to creating a sense of inconsistency and unpredictability (and therefore a lack of safety and continuity) to a sense of being undervalued and neglected. Participants managed the ruptures by apologising, explaining and trying to resume contact, though this was often a challenge as they were trying to contain their own feelings as well.

4.2.2.2 Defining role and presence

Another problematic boundary which emerged in the research concerned how school-based counsellors managed their role and presence when working in schools. In the early stage, participants described being unsure how to present

themselves, how much contact they should have with school staff and how to maintain their role without appearing stand-offish.

<u>Staying separate</u>

Participants in the early stage reported generally trying to stay separate in order to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the therapy situation and to distinguish themselves from the teaching staff. However, this boundary could prove wobbly when school-based counsellors found themselves lured into communal spaces by staff. Reluctance to offend teachers led some participants to mingle more with staff than they intended:

> *"I did once go into the canteen at my first school. I can't remember why, to see my link teacher or something. And she said, 'Sit down. Sit down.' There were all the other teachers around and I felt terribly uncomfortable. With all the other students there. What does it look like? I didn't do that again! But you can't hold yourself completely in isolation." (Rachel)*

<u>Pulled out of role</u>

As an adult working in a school, participants described feeling unsure where their responsibilities started and ended: *"And I always had this terrible fear that something would happen while I was in the corridor and that I would be…should I intervene? What would be my role?" (Emma)*

Participants described being pulled out of role to assist staff members in unrelated duties. Initially these boundaries are difficult to manage as school-based counsellors find themselves wanting to appease the staff and make a good impression.

> *"And my line manager was horrified when I told her that my link teacher had actually left me in charge of some girls after she went off to have her lunch. She said, 'Oh just keep an eye on them'. You know, she was in the centre where the naughty girls were. She said, 'I'm just going to nip out and get a sandwich. Can you hold on'. You know wanting to be helpful, not wanting to be snooty and precious, but in fact if one of those girls had kicked off in that….I had no idea. I didn't even know where an alarm bell was. This was in a Portakabin. Would I have any authority? No, I wouldn't…. It was silly of me. I should have said, 'I can't do that. Sorry. I'd like to but I can't'." (Rachel)*

This incident shows the extent to which role boundaries can collapse as counsellors, still new to their role, try to be amenable to the staff around them.

An example of how mismanaging the role boundary can damage a trusting relationship with a student is given by Kate who allowed a teaching assistant to sit in on a counselling session:

> *"And I made one error. There was an autistic boy I had been working with and he was having a very rocky time with a teaching assistant… And at one point she (the teaching assistant) said, 'Can we have a session together? Can I come in and let's talk about this together?' and I allowed that. I thought that was going to be helpful for the three of us and that I could hold it."* (Kate)

Kate then went on to describe how her alliance with the student was affected: *"That broke something. That broke something between him and me and it didn't help heal what was going on with her. He stopped trusting me because I think that space was meant to be absolutely sacrosanct and I let her into my space."* Kate reflects that she had been influenced by the staff member wanting her help and had lost sight of the student's perspective when managing the boundary. *"I lost sight, in that moment, I lost sight of him as central. And it was as if he perceived I'd shifted sides or I'd changed shape. And he didn't like that shape." (Kate)*

4.2.2.3 Protecting confidentiality

The struggle to protect students' privacy and confidentiality is challenging in the early stage when the school-based counsellor is still new to the school and unsure of their role.

<u>'Leaky' staff</u>

School-based counsellors often want to 'make a good impression' in the early stage which can lead to sharing information or engaging in conversations which threaten confidentiality. Here again, boundaries are managed loosely or inconsistently. Grant describes feeling torn when engaging with staff, especially those he has identified as 'leaky' or liable to blurt out confidential information in public:

> *"The head of student services, who is an absolutely delightful woman and works incredibly hard, is a bit leaky. She says, "Oh, have you seen so-and-so?" At first I tried to give her enough information to kind of satisfy her a bit but also tried to keep it confidential. But I felt quite torn. I suppose in a way I wanted to make a good impression at the school." (Grant)*

'Leaky' staff often want to know how students are getting on in therapy and participants described being accosted in school corridors. Participants reported feeling challenged with regard to how to handle certain staff members who always wanted more information:

"In terms of boundaries I quickly learnt that I had to be very careful with the child protection officer. The child protection officer was a very dramatic, hysterical woman and it was very important for her to really dig around and get absolutely maximum stuff. I had to really learn to hold my boundaries very carefully because she was really like a sniffer dog and she wanted more than was appropriate for her to have." (Kate)

'Chasing' students

In schools, students are escorted to the therapy room by a member of staff, collected from class by the school-based counsellor herself or expected to make their own way to the session. Most of the participants preferred not to collect students from class as this undermined the confidential nature of therapy, but in the early stage collection systems are rudimentary and often break down:

"And in that role I had to go to the classes and collect the young people. And it wasn't great. It wasn't ideal. I found it a bit exposing for the young person as well because sometimes, not very often, you'd get a bit of mocking going on or people making faces and sometimes you'd be waiting and they wouldn't show, or you might have to interrupt a class if they had started earlier than you could get there, it wasn't great. And sometimes they wouldn't be there and I'd speak to the teacher and they'd say 'If they arrive I'll send them over'. But invariably they didn't. So that wasn't ideal." (Joanna)

The boundary of how students are going to be collected, or make their own way to counselling, is one that requires considerable thought and negotiation in order to protect the privacy of the therapy situation. Often, in the early stage, therapists struggle to manage these issues due to their isolated position.

There are also complexities around what happens when students fail to attend their session. As the school is paying for the service, the school expects referrals to be seen and the school-based counsellor has to work out a way of managing non-attenders in a way which both satisfies the school and gives students a sense of choice. In the early stage, boundary management is often an erratic system of trial and error as the school-based counsellor tries to iron out problems.

"She would say, okay here is your list of appointments. And then I would sit and wait for the girls to come. If they didn't come, I would need to ring her and say they're not here. So she'll then run after them and go find them. That's kind of not working. So we're going to find a new way of doing it. So maybe, I know where they are and I can go get them, which would save a lot of hassle. But you can get into things with girls where they never want to come and always want you to get them… and what does that mean…and all that. So that's going to have to be worked out, I suppose." (Sarah)

Participants revealed that working in inner city schools involved making frequent disclosures about suspected abuse or neglect. The decision to break confidentiality, sometimes against a student's wishes, for child protection purposes often risks rupturing the therapeutic relationship. The participants all found these decisions extremely difficult: *"I think child protection is one of the things that gives me sleepless nights." (Rachel)*

Participants described having to balance their legal responsibility to disclose information for safeguarding purposes with the student's right for privacy. School-based counsellors have to be able to hold very difficult material and be sensitive and judicious about what information to disclose and when. School-based counsellors have to be well acquainted with their school's child protection policies and need to consult closely with their supervisor and develop a good working relationship with the school's child protection officer. All of this takes time and adjustment.

> *"The agency had its own child protection policy, the school has its own child protection policy, the sixth form college has its own child protection policy and I've got my own internal and external child protection policy. So it's a question of being able to hold a lot of stuff and think it through...as to what needed to be disclosed to the school and what not needed to be." (Rachel)*

This need for therapists to hold multiple perspectives at once is an important feature of boundary management which will be re-visited in the later stage.

4.2.2.4 Engaging students

Due to the hierarchical nature of the school context, school-based counsellors encounter a particularly rigid interpersonal boundary between themselves and their student clients. This boundary articulates around adult/child, staff/student, authority/subordinate as well as the socio-economic differences in the room. Moreover, the sections above have shown how an unsafe room, blurry role and lapses in privacy and confidentiality can contribute to undermining student trust. Participants described having to make a number of adjustments to their ways of working in order to engage their adolescent clients and foster a therapeutic relationship.

<u>Being called 'Miss'</u>

Several participants mentioned their discomfort at being called 'Miss' by the students, a term used for teachers and other school staff. Being called 'Miss' indicates how students perceive the school-based counsellor as another power figure and represents the interpersonal boundary which the school-based counsellor needs to address. There is also the element of anonymity in the term 'Miss' when school-based counsellors are trying to establish an intersubjective space. *"One of the things I found difficult for a long time was the idea of calling me 'Miss'." (Joan)*

Part of the culture shock of working in a secondary school is the exaggerated power dynamic which school-based counsellors find themselves thrust into, symbolised by the use of formal (and distancing) terms of address. This power dynamic is something school-based counsellors have to work hard on redressing.

> *"So I had these students coming in and calling me madam, wearing a school uniform and just being in that situation where they are used to members of staff disciplining them and handing out detentions. They get sent to this room to see this strange person and they don't really know what the relationship is and I didn't really know much about working in schools." (Emma)*

<u>Working with silence</u>

In the early stage, the need to establish a trusting relationship often requires school-based counsellors to adapt their therapeutic model or ways of working. Participants reported 'talking more' because long periods of silence were 'too persecutory' for young people. Other participants described introducing more creative approaches to working with their students. Familiar boundaries or ways of working are adapted as new approaches are tried out. Grant described feeling torn when adapting his model. He became more conversational in the sessions but then needed to 'forgive' himself for having stepped out of his model:

> *"And, in a way, it's almost: can I just ditch the psychodynamic stuff and just be a bit more relaxed and speak more? I get a little bit tied up with me waiting to see what they bring. But then sometimes they don't bring much. So I kind of ease up in my own mind a bit. It doesn't have to be very abstentious and see what the student brings. I'll be more prompting. But I have to sort of forgive myself a bit." (Grant)*

Some participants rationalised their new way of working. For example, Rachel made the internal adjustment and was 'fine with it':

> *"Because I'd been trained as a psychoanalytic school-based counsellor, I tried to do as best I could with psychoanalytic methods. But, because of their age, I found myself asking a lot of questions and being much more interactive and person-centred in a way than my training had. I felt*

fine about that. Just adapting rather than being precious about it."
(Rachel)

In the early stage, school-based counsellors find themselves experimenting with different methods in order to lessen the divide and engage their students. Participants described an underlying insecurity and lack of confidence in this period when they were always questioning their methods: *"Because sometimes you worry you have moved so far away from how you were trained....it's like is this okay?" (Emma)*

Unplanned endings

Another challenging boundary is the tendency of some students to avoid ending sessions, preferring to disappear in the school corridors rather than saying goodbye, or the way school exams or end-of-year activities can impose a sudden, unexpected ending. Participants in this stage described feeling upset by this feature of working schools: *"And I'll be the one feeling absolutely bereft. And guilty. And I could have handled this better and why didn't I know and…..yeah." (Rachel)*

A planned ending is considered an important therapeutic boundary. Participants struggled to come to terms with unplanned endings and the sudden loss of the therapeutic relationship: *"And I understand why it happens but I hate it for myself, because I want an ending, is when they don't come to the last session. And that I find hard. I want to make them come! But I can't and I know why. It's hard." (Emma)* Unplanned endings represent another way in which the therapeutic process can be interrupted by unpredictable events, meaning the therapist has to learn to always hold this possibility in mind whilst planning treatment.

4.2.3 Therapist processes
4.2.3.1 Feeling uncontained

These numerous contextual challenges and disrupted boundaries have a significant impact on school-based counsellors in the early stage. The contrast to working in more traditional therapeutic settings leaves therapists unprepared for what to expect. Moreover their training in many cases has not covered work outside the traditional frame. Participants all found that the emotional impact of working in a school for the first time was significant. *"It was terrifying! I hadn't been in a school since I had been at school. I have no teaching experience or experience of being in there. And I'd been used to working in agencies." (Emma)*

Participants described feeling anxious, overwhelmed and unable to think. The tension between having to manage their own feelings of overwhelm and those of the student were very evident. *"First of all I felt really quite nervous. Quite apprehensive and energised. That awful feeling in your stomach. And trying to hold the client at the same time." (Joanna)*

The school context was experienced initially as foreign and sometimes even hostile: *"It was very overwhelming and felt very alien to me." (Joan)*

4.2.3.2 Being isolated

Working in a busy secondary school or sixth form, in a role which is very different from anyone else's at the school, means in the early stage school-based counsellors can often feel isolated, alienated or even invisible:

> "*I felt very isolated. I used to arrive, make my way up to this room, get the key from a lady, and she was very busy, she was in charge of bursaries. So I would pretty much take the key, make a cup of tea in the staff room, go to the loo and, apart from being introduced to a couple of key people, I was on my own!" (Joanna*)

The perceived need to maintain the traditional boundaries of staying separate can exacerbate feelings of isolation and being an outsider. *"I hardly speak to anyone. In some ways it's quite isolating. I miss some of the contact." (Grant)*

The sense of being a barely acknowledged presence triggered in some participants feelings of being unappreciated and under-valued. *"So I felt very isolated. I suppose I felt under-valued really. Unsupported and under-valued." (Joanna)*

Working all day with students presenting with high risk and complexity, without the backup of a team or other colleagues, can quickly lead to feelings of burn-out and failure.

> "*Because sometimes when you leave and you've had a really rough day and it's been really upsetting and when you leave the building, you haven't even said goodbye to anybody, because you haven't seen anyone to say goodbye to, and you walk away feeling really rubbish." (Emma)*

The risk of staying separate is feeling alienated and even invisible or unknown. *"I mean interestingly there's a new headmaster and I have no idea who he is. I*

wouldn't recognise him...that's quite interesting in a way. And I'm thinking what's he thinking of the counselling service? Does he know about it?" (Grant)

4.2.4 Reactive boundary management
In the early stage, boundary management was found to be reactive, meaning school-based counsellors were reacting to a succession of disruptions rather than following a consistent strategy. Under conditions of stress and isolation, the school-based counsellor's ability to think about boundaries was easily de-railed or shut down.

The need to keep a clear head is crucial to being able to respond judiciously to situations as they arise and yet this is extremely difficult in the early stage when so many challenges are present. *"There's always something throwing you for a loop. So you just grow and get used to managing it really quickly and so the anxiety comes and it's 'okay, think, think'." (Sarah)*

For this reason, in the early stage, boundary management is often erratic and inconsistent, swinging from loose to rigid and back again. Bridges (1999) acknowledges that the startled or overwhelmed counsellor can mismanage boundaries: "When startled, therapists may set up unhelpful therapeutic boundaries as a way to manage their own anxiety" (Bridges, 1999:298). Such mismanagement can take the form of retreating behind rigid boundaries, an experience which several participants described. This is because they arrive in a school with the traditional therapeutic frame in their mind. *"I think I may have been more rigid before. Because my training was really, really rigorous and they were very much like 'Why did you do that?' Not in a punitive way, but to think about everything you do." (Sarah)* Alternatively, boundaries can be managed too loosely in an attempt to be accepted by the staff. Sarah describes the risk of being too loose with her boundaries when talking to staff members. *"I have to be careful not to let myself slip out of boundary sometimes. Because you can get into the mode of being a school staff member. And you're not. And is it more comfortable to say 'Oh yes, he this or that'. And I think it can get a bit cozy like that." (Sarah)*

4.3   Middle stage
4.3.1   Negotiating boundaries
In the middle stage school-based counsellors are adapting to the school context, gaining confidence and building relationships with key staff members. As this

develops, they also begin to realise that 'boundaries are negotiable'. Alice describes this process of becoming more flexible: *"And you have to be less rigid. I think when I first started I think I expected, you know from my training, that the space is sacred and time is sacred and various aspects of the boundary are not negotiable. But, in fact, in the end they are (negotiable)." (Alice)*

4.3.1.1 Defending the space

<u>'Ordinary, quiet room'</u>

In this stage, participants reported focusing their efforts on negotiating a more appropriate space for counselling. This negotiating process can be continual as schools are in constant flux. *"We moved around the school quite a lot. It's always a bit of a negotiation. Are we going to get as good a room as we had before? And we are never a high priority." (Alice)*

School-based counsellors need to establish their own concept of a good enough room, or the boundaries sufficient for containment, which is part of developing their own ethical compass. Ana described a good enough room as: *"In the secondary school, same room throughout the ten years. Never disturbed. Nice. Two chairs, poster, table, a bookshelf. Just an ordinary quiet room."* Kate stated that a good enough room is one that is dedicated and relatively free from interruptions: *"So it needs to be a really separate, respected space."* Octavia stressed that the room needs to be welcoming, comfortable or cozy: *"And there was nothing in the room but then I began to take things in and I filled it with art materials and books. And it became much more cozy."*

Once an appropriate room is established, a transformation begins to take place: the school-based counsellor feels respected, and so do the children.

> *"Unlike, for instance, School X where I had people trying to break into the room or people were already using the room, although that didn't happen too often, I feel as if my space is my space. It's sacrosanct. It's devoted to counselling and nobody is going to tread on my toes. So I feel that the whole service is very well respected." (Joanna)*

The importance of an 'ordinary, quiet room' in a school setting is more than just ensuring predictability, safety and security. It brings with it a sense of being thought about for the school-based counsellor and the student:

> *"Good room. The attention to detail was huge. The link teacher used to make it warm, comfortable, client-friendly. Posters and plants. And just generally a sense, for me, of being thought about. And having my*

position respected. That sort of thing instead of being put in a draughty old place where….you know." (Rachel)

Both school-based counsellor and student benefit from a sense of the service being valued and respected. *"And if I am going to feel valued, the child is going to feel valued too." (Rachel)*

<u>Setting up</u>

As negotiations for a better room can take time, participants described finding ways of adapting the room or creating a better space in which to work. Sarah arranged her table, chairs and materials the same way each week. The 'set up' became the familiar container whilst the room often changed.

> *"But if they come in and it might be in a different place. Where am I? Now what? So if you had it the same way: the table is this way, I'm sitting in this place, I'm looking that way. Then they can come in and they can feel like okay. And then they can start working on that deeper stuff because the bigger picture is looked after. And that's part of the boundary too." (Sarah)*

Here the boundary is managed by setting up a consistent and reliable space in an inconsistent and unpredictable room; a sense of continuity is being fostered despite the changing environment.

Setting up establishes boundaries of safety and privacy, a 'closing of external doors'. *"I really think about things. Whether it's in terms of positioning them or the lay-out of the room. It's very much a closing of external doors." (Joanna)*

Emma used her Russian doll as a way to set up the familiar and help students feel settled:

> *"I always take my bag with me and I set it out in a similar way. And in the beginning I was saying to my supervisor, I feel like I'm always in other people's homes. You know, like I'm moving around. I knew a school counsellor who used to take a collection of crystals in and set them all out. I'm not really a crystal person but I went out and I bought a Russian doll and I always take that. And it's next to my clock. Children will play with it and sometimes we'll talk about is the Russian doll different parts of you or family members but it's also part of my set up, wherever the doll is I am." (Emma)*

<u>Managing disruptions</u>

In the middle stage, participants reported managing interruptions by staying grounded and resuming contact: *"My sense is sometimes, as long as I'm still with*

them and come back to them, they generally seem to be fine about the interruption."
(Joan)

Sarah said she responded by addressing the reaction to the broken boundary and using it in a positive way:

> *"So the more you can think what is actually happening rather than just react. So when that person has left the room, you can have a conversation with the child about the interruption. Or address the anxiety. So it's being able to use it. How are they reacting and feeling? I guess that is part of managing yourself in that." (Sarah)*

Participants in this stage also described making efforts to acknowledge and rectify interruptions, showing respect and concern for their student clients. For example, Joanna gave her students the choice of re-scheduling their sessions: "*So I would work with the young person in this noise, ask them how they felt about it, could they manage and did they want to re-arrange or come back at another time." (Joanna)*

4.3.1.2 Defining role and presence

<u>Being visible</u>

Whilst in the early stage school-based counsellors are struggling to stay separate, in the middle stage there is a recognition that some visibility can work in their favour. This is another example of school-based counsellors re-thinking their boundaries and moving from a rigid position to a more flexible one. Sarah verbalises this process of extending her boundaries and becoming more visible:

> *"Well, it's interesting because the counsellor I'm taking over from she has been there ten years. She doesn't know anyone at all. And that's her way of doing it. She doesn't mix with anyone. So I think, in that sense, I'm not sure how I'll deal with it but I think because I'm up in this little tower, that I might make an effort to be in the kitchen so I can just get a little perspective. Yeah. I might show my presence a little bit." (Sarah)*

Alice described staying separate but also needing to balance separateness with visibility:

> *"In the sixth form school that I work in, I'm in a day and a half a week. And every week I might try to make sure that I'm in the staff room at some point during the week…So that they remember that I exist, that I'm around and part of the school and they can refer to me. And also just to say hi and be seen as part of the school." (Alice)*

Kate describes the impact of visibility when her room was moved from being in a remote wing of the school to being in a central position next to the child protection

office. She became less isolated and consequently felt more confident to develop new links. For Kate, visibility paved the way for building relationships, getting more referrals and establishing her role:

> *"So that was quite interesting, there was something about being more valued, and put central. I appreciated being brought into the centre. It felt symbolic. This was a real shift. And I then, correspondingly, I think I felt more accepted by the staff. I would get more corridor referrals, they began to know who I was, and I think I began to feel less at odds."* (Kate)

Octavia illustrates the diplomatic role school-based counsellors need to take in their schools. She is mindful of how she is being seen by the leadership team as an active, engaged staff member and how this serves to promote her service. *"It was quite interesting that because as I rotated appointments I was quite visible and I think it worked in my favour. I often went to collect kids from class and the leadership saw me, crossing the playground, getting children. So I was very mobile and I think that worked in my favour."* (Octavia)

'Showing goodwill'

Whereas in the early stage participants struggled to contain their role, in the middle stage participants described situations where they were willing to extend their role as a display of loyalty, attachment or goodwill towards the school. *"I'll do a school assembly in January to year 9s about decision making. My supervisor is like 'Why do they want you to do that?' And I said 'It's fine. I'm part of the school and I think that's okay'."* (Octavia)

'Showing goodwill' is about doing a bit extra to consolidate the service and relations with the school. For example, Alice offers counselling to staff members and sees this as a way of establishing her service more firmly in the school. *"I see members of staff after school. In a way it serves to endorse the service that we offer because if members of staff are using the service too, and finding it useful, then they will be more sympathetic to the counselling that we are offering students."* (Alice)

'Showing goodwill' communicates a sense of commitment and even attachment to the school community.

> *"And in December a student who I never met committed suicide at the school… And I was really surprised, I felt really strongly part of the school, even though I'm not. And I went in for two days on a voluntary basis and just saw anybody who wanted to see me. Because I felt like I had to be there?"* (Emma)

In these examples, the participants are thoughtfully extending their role boundaries in response to certain situations and requirements, showing their goodwill and thus enabling them to strengthen their position and to become part of the fabric of the school.

4.3.1.3 Protecting confidentiality

<u>Educating staff</u>

In the middle stage participants refine their strategies of managing 'leaky staff'. One of these strategies involves educating teachers by providing training or information on counselling in the form of leaflets or other literature. *"From the beginning I've talked about what the boundaries are. Now I give all the schools I work at a copy of the BACP Guidelines for Schools." (Emma)*

Joan is actively involved in training teachers on counselling matters:

> *"And it does help. Every year I train new teachers about the counselling service. Just tell them about it, the referral process, I'm giving them a leaflet this year. I'm giving all the staff a brand new leaflet this year. And for newly qualified teachers I do an hour's training not on the service but on counselling in general." (Joan)*

Another strategy involves corralling conversations in a way which protects student confidentiality whilst allowing staff a space and opportunity to share their concerns. Joan illustrates her skill in guiding staff to be more mindful: "*Teachers will talk about students and I think what I do is, whilst I can't really stop them easily, I can say 'Well it sounds like you're going to say something quite important, why don't we go to my room or go to your classroom or email. Or I'll phone you in five minutes'. So I generally contain it. Usually successfully.*" *(Joan)* This diplomatic side-stepping exemplifies how counsellors are firm about confidentiality boundaries whilst also giving staff an opportunity to discuss matters which trouble them.

<u>Sharing information</u>

School-based counsellors often find they need to be more flexible with the confidentiality boundary. Initially, they are reluctant to share information but as school-based counsellors adapt to the school context and become more sensitive to the needs of the school, this changes. Sharing information can also benefit the student involved. For example, making a staff member aware of certain issues can ensure that support is provided when the therapist is absent. Participants described asking the student's permission to share, so that confidentiality was not breached,

and disclosed just enough to help bond the student-teacher relationship. Participants reported that sharing information in schools is a delicate process of disclosing pertinent information without revealing the content of the sessions.

> *"I usually got permission of the student. And they'd always say yes. It was being thought about, concerned about. And I was always quite gratified that they said yes. I think they liked that. I did quite a lot of networking, for lack of a better word, not to the point where stuff in the sessions was disclosed but general things that might help a bit." (Rachel)*

4.3.1.4 Engaging students

Explaining therapy

School-based counsellors in the middle stage still struggle to engage reluctant students. Participants reported adopting psychoeducation – consistent with the school context – to explain how therapy works. *"I suppose in secondary schools there's more resistance to counselling. So there needs to be more orientation with the students to tell them what counselling is. And guidance about what the therapy is at the beginning." (Alice)*

Ana adopted a very clear stance, articulating what therapy can provide:

> *"But I do say, 'If what you want is a new house, because your house is very crowded, you are not in the right place. If what you want is a better mum, I can't change that. But I can help you think about what it feels like not to have a good mum. And indeed how to manage the relationship with your mum a bit better.' So they know what they are in for really. And I am very clear what it is for." (Ana)*

Grant stressed to the students the importance of what counselling can offer and the commitment it entailed: *"So the gravitas of what's being offered…I try to gently put this across to them. You know, this is being offered for them. And this is a very useful resource for them. The importance of, kind of, sticking to the number of sessions that we have. Yeah. I think that's important actually." (Grant)*

Working creatively

In the middle stage, school-based counsellors are continuing to adapt their working methods to meet the needs of their students. Rooms which participants in the early stage find difficult or inappropriate are used creatively. For example, Kate reported working in a medical room surrounded by extraneous equipment such as a bed, a sink, scales, etc. She described letting one client engage fully with the equipment, play with it and use it therapeutically:

"*And there was actually one fellow where measuring became one part of the things that we did. He found it very difficult to engage in the work. So we did these other things. We washed hands and he would lie on the bed and sometimes he would lie on the bed and talk from the bed. He talked better from the bed. The weight and height became a sort of solid thing. It was a bit of pushing and pulling of doors and kicking things and moving around. But the best thing was having this water (a sink in the room). He did a lot of tap flowing. Testing me, checking to see if I was going to get nervous with the tap running, nervous with the basin filling right up to the top level.*" (Kate)

The medical room helped Kate to re-think her approach: *"I think it was a hard room and it made me dig quite deep. So in a way I think that started off my creative, my really creative, side by really digging deep and finding the creative."* By being open to the opportunities offered by the medical room, Kate was able to work at greater relational depth and explore new layers of meaning: *"I just used it (extra equipment) and brought it in. And in a way that room taught me, I think, to be really present with whatever they brought to the room and however they used the room and finding ways of bringing that in ways that was useful to the work and therapeutic."* In this example, Kate exhibits an ability to work at the edge of boundaries, thoughtfully and skilfully, in a way which is both safe and attuned. In this way, she exemplifies the sort of school-based counsellor described by Bridges (1999:298) who "is comfortable with more uncharted treatment approaches" and shows "a willingness to cope with the unknown and to be influenced and educated by their patients about the therapeutic value of these events."

In this stage, school-based counsellors stretch their model to accommodate resistant or non-verbal students. Some participants reported feeling uncomfortable as they experimented with different ways of working. Grant described a situation where he pushed the boundaries of his model significantly by taking a non-verbal client into a nearby music room to play drums together. The drum playing had a therapeutic effect but Grant felt uncomfortable straying so far from his usual way of working:

"*I mean there was one guy who was very, very non-verbal. And it turned out he desperately, desperately wanted to play the drums. So I kind of waited for a very quiet period, in between lessons. And because the room was very near to where we were, I said "Why don't we both go and play drums for ten minutes?" And he said "Fantastic". So we both just sat and played drums. And I think it worked quite well therapeutically but I ended up thinking it's too...What about if people see him and ask him questions? And it was too, yeah, too unboundaried really. So we did it for a couple weeks..."* (Grant)

And whilst Grant was adamant that he would be sticking to a more conventional approach with non-verbal students, later in the interview he said that he might indulge his passion for playing drums, belying a temptation to stretch his boundaries again. This example shows the extent to which therapists stretch their boundaries when working with young people and how difficult and personal this decision-making process is. Grant is both highly attuned to his student's therapeutic needs and aware of the school's expectations, holding both the student's and the school's perspectives in mind. However, like Grant, therapists in the middle stage often feel pressured to manage boundaries in ways which ultimately comply with a school's expectations, so as not to risk the survival of the service. It is often only in the later stage, with further embedding of the service, that counsellors feel able to more fully meet the needs of the student.

Promoting mutuality

Participants spoke of the need to be sensitive to the power dynamic as an important way of engaging their clients. Students view adults as authority figures, so establishing a sense of mutuality in the therapy room provides a new experience for the student and paves the way for trust. In this connection, Grant was aware how he could be perceived if he refrained from actively engaging with a student:

"When working with students from different backgrounds and cultures, I think you have to be careful about just sitting back. If I'm just going to wait abstentiously, that could make them very nervous and it can become a power thing. You know, like I'm the sphinx character that will just wait and wait and wait." (Grant)

Grant attended to the power dynamic by expressing a gentle, tentative curiosity about the student's experience in order to break the ice: *"What do you make of being here? And that's a very different question, I think, from what other people might ask them. So I'll try to kick off with something like that, that centres around their experience and not my experience." (Grant)*

By promoting mutuality, participants reported opening up a different kind of space, allowing the student freedom to be more fully themselves without the threat of retribution. For example, Rachel said students could talk about whatever they liked in the sessions and, unlike in the classroom, were free to lose their temper or swear: *"I say whatever happens here…you say whatever you like. There's no boundary on that." (Rachel)*

Promoting mutuality also means allowing students to push back and test boundaries, an important part of the adolescent process:

> *"One girl did try and climb out a window when I was in a session. And I just sat there. I said, 'I don't think that's very sensible, do you?' She was looking at me the whole time to see what I would do. And that was a very scary moment and again, when I thought back it was probably not the right thing to do, but in a sense she was very different after that. Calmer." (Rachel)*

By allowing the student to test her and push the authority boundary, Rachel was able to communicate a sense of respect to the student which strengthened their therapeutic bond.

4.3.2 Therapist processes

4.3.2.1 Finding containment

Whereas in the early stage, participants described feeling overwhelmed, in the middle stage they are slowly adapting to the context and finding containment. *"I think it's a work in progress for me personally. I think finding the internal boundaries is more important because then if you're thrown for a loop, like when I had to go in that room the other day, you can kind of not feel as thrown." (Sarah)*

As school-based counsellors begin to feel more settled and confident in the school environment, they feel more able to think and hold the work. *"So in terms of the containing, I felt more contained myself and I felt more able to contain the clients because I had more confidence working with young people and it just felt a lot more secure." (Joanna)*

Kate describes the gradual process of feeling more anchored in a chaotic school environment: *"It was chaotic but I still felt anchored in the work. That wasn't to say that in the beginning that I wasn't sometimes quite strongly affected by it, because it was very strong. But over the years as I became more rooted and more confident, and a bit more experienced, that also died." (Kate)*

The importance of the school-based counsellor feeling held and safe is stressed by Rachel. *"And if we're not (self-contained), they'll probably act out. And they're going to pick it up, aren't they? If we're not feeling held and safe. We're going to be passing it on." (Rachel)*

4.3.2.2 Building relationships

In the middle stage, the need to stay separate is counterbalanced by the need to build relationships with key members of staff. Building relationships contributes to helping the participants feel more grounded and confident.

> *"Then I slowly formed relationships, and I suppose allies, with the alternative curriculum staff. And also the child protection officer. So I began to work very closely with her and with that team. So that was like a sort of nest, in a way. That was my starting base and that was all about nurture and it felt very nurturing for me." (Kate)*

Good relationships with key staff members provide an essential support network enabling the school-based counsellor to feel part of, and better understand, the school context and its multiple demands.

> *"So I think really it's just about my finding my way about. My feet are under the desk now. And I'm feeling more confident. I know where people are, I know who does what. I know I'm getting a new supervisor, link person. I just feel that things are taking shape a bit more now. I'm looking forward to working with this guy in the hope that there will be more support and containment." (Joanne)*

The external process of building relationships develops over time and feelings of isolation and alienation are gradually replaced by feelings of independence and confidence.

4.3.3   Responsive boundary management

In the middle stage boundary management changes from reactive to responsive. As school-based counsellors settle into their role, they begin to negotiate their boundaries taking into account the demands of the context and the needs of the student with greater skill and confidence. This negotiation goes on internally, where they adapt their ethical stance – or inner compass - around boundaries, deciding where to be more flexible and where to be more firm, and externally where they negotiate actively with school staff and students to establish clear limits. In this way, boundaries are becoming more responsive to the needs of the student, school and the school-based counsellor.

In the middle stage, participants described themselves as more contained and better able to think through and respond appropriately to the challenges presented to them. Rather than reacting, the school-based counsellor is finding ways of responding calmly and thoughtfully to boundary disruptions.

In the middle stage, school-based counsellors have a more flexible boundary management style as they take the context more into account and begin to relinquish their earlier rigidity.

> "*Well I think it's a matter of time and exposure really. You just come to realise that actually schools are busy, bustling places and you're just one cog in a big machine. And I think there's sometimes something a little bit precious about training where you imagine you will be working in a particular way and when it comes to the reality of working with young people and young people being as they are, the place, the organization reflects the adolescent. So I think it is a process really. That you recognise that you have to be flexible.*" (Alice)

School-based counsellors in this stage also feel they need to be flexible in order to show goodwill towards the school and be accepted. "*And maybe we have to adapt to show that we're flexible and willing and wanting to fit in as much as we can.*" (Rachel)

Whilst participants said they generally became more flexible in the middle stage, they also described instances when they 'put their foot down' or imposed firm boundaries. For example, Kate was firm in her insistence that the therapy room be a dedicated space: "*And I then argued after that very strongly that the counselling room gets used for NOTHING ELSE and by NOBODY ELSE except counsellor*". Rachel was firm on her time boundaries: "*The time boundary. I never went over time. I thought, 'I must keep to some boundaries within my control'. And the time boundary was within my control.*"

In the middle stage, therefore, there is both a sense of being flexible, where boundaries are stretched to take account of the school context and the student's needs, and a sense of being firm where boundaries are held to provide containment and holding for both school-based counsellor and student. Boundary management is becoming more sensitive and responsive to the needs of the school, student and the school-based counsellor.

4.4   Later stage

4.4.1   Integrating boundaries

In the later stage, there is a weaving together of different boundaries - room, role, confidentiality and ways of working – with the therapist's emerging sense of identity and ethical compass. The work of embedding the service has been largely achieved and the school-based counsellor is now managing boundaries from a more

autonomous standpoint. The student becomes more central in the boundary management process.

4.4.1.1 Defending the space

In the later stage, room issues have been largely resolved. In most cases, an 'ordinary, quiet room' has now been found for the school-based counsellor and it is suitably equipped. Obtaining a suitable room is a key part of the embedding process. Sometimes room changes still occur, as well as interruptions or disturbances, but the school-based counsellor is now able to tolerate these boundary disruptions and negotiate any difficulties that may arise. The therapy room therefore goes from being the main boundary issue in the early stage to the least prominent issue in the later stage.

Tolerating disruption

As later stage school-based counsellors are more confident, supported and contained they are better able to tolerate boundary disruptions. Unlike in the early stage, when school-based counsellors experience considerable anxiety and stress, disruptions like interruptions or room changes are now taken in stride and are less likely to have an impact on the therapeutic process. Counsellors are also able to put room issues into perspective, seeing them from a more systemic point of view. Ana's matter of fact attitude illustrates the calm, more detached stance of the embedded school-based counsellor:

> *"But again I was very aware that we were all being moved. The re-shuffling, I didn't take it personally, I don't think it had anything to do with 'Oh the counsellor, she doesn't matter, she is only two days a week, we can move her'. No. Everybody was re-shuffled and every time I had to move there would be a discussion." (Ana)*

Boundary management has become particularly skilful in this stage where participants describe being self-contained and containing despite the difficulties of the room. Ana exhibited this ability as she described her experience of holding a therapeutic space in a chaotic school environment, an experience she described as 'thinking under fire':

> *"The school was such a war zone, there was so much going on, that actually to have forty minutes in peace, even if it was in the corner of a very crowded classroom. But it was quiet. We could think. Amongst the chaos, it was a space where we could be thinking under fire. That feeling of being under fire. Being in a war zone. And yet we could sit down and think about what was happening for them. Even though around us there was chaos everywhere." (Ana)*

The phrase 'thinking under fire' accurately captures the nature of boundary management in schools, both the challenges and complexities involved.

<u>'Bearing in mind the environment'</u>
In the later stage, school-based counsellors are able to manage disruptions by taking a more detached, impersonal stance. Understanding the context and its impact on boundaries contributes to the school-based counsellor's more reflective attitude. *"I think it's very important to bear in mind the environment. The school environment and the social environment. We are part of a complex society and we must bear that in mind really." (Ana)* By bearing in mind the environment, Ana is able to see boundary disruptions from another, less personal, perspective:

> *"I'm quite well self-contained and I can allow for difficulties to happen and meet people half way and all that. I don't feel people are threatening my role. I don't take things personally. I don't think 'They are doing this because they hate the counsellor'. I think, they are doing this because of what is happening around them." (Ana)*

The ability to stay calm, think and take a broad perspective in the midst of a busy and challenging environment is a hallmark of this stage, enabling the reflective management of boundaries.

4.4.1.2 Defining role and presence
The therapist's role and presence are slowly widening as the stages progress. In the early stage, school-based counsellors struggle to contain their role and presence; they get pulled into difficult or exposing situations and then react by withdrawing and keeping themselves separate. As school-based counsellors become more comfortable and confident in their role, they begin to show goodwill and be more visible. They are both defining and extending their role. This continues in the later stage where we see school-based counsellors working more widely across the school and across services, all the while counter-balanced by a careful impartiality and self-awareness.

<u>Being autonomous</u>
School-based counsellors in this stage are self-contained and autonomous, using their network of contacts to their full advantage. Being autonomous suggests being independent and informed, able to solve problems as they arise, make arrangements as necessary. Being autonomous means being well-resourced and connected.

> *"If I have an IT problem, I contact the IT person. If I have a telephone line problem, I contact somebody. I know the tutors, I know the head of faculties. I don't like to ask people to do things for me, I'd rather take the initiative. I am now in a position where I know the college very well, the systems, the people… And similarly, in the other school, I knew how busy the link teacher was so I handled things myself." (Ana)*

Ana described the trust and respect put in her by the school, which enabled her to work autonomously. *"And in the college I just do what I want, how I want it. They are very open and trust that I am working as I should. They have no interest in telling me what to do. They assume I know what to do because I've been there 10 years." (Ana)* Ana's observation was repeated by several participants who said that once a service is embedded, counsellors have greater freedom to manage boundaries according to their own judgement and there is less pressure to meet expectations from the school.

Expanding role

The participants in embedded services described extending their influence from counselling parents and staff to undertaking school-wide interventions. Octavia described her work in promoting well-being across the school. She was involved in a preventative initiative which illustrates the evolving role of more visible and more active school-based counsellors in schools:

> *"I do this project 'Friends for Life'. It's a resilience programme. So all the girls in year 7 do a test for anxiety and social problems and we work with the 12 most anxious girls. I think it's a fantastic programme and we now train up all the staff and roll it out for all of year 7. We were the first in all of our borough to do it with all of years 7s." (Octavia)*

Participants also described taking on an advocacy role on behalf of students, such as supporting them in fostering decisions, housing problems or other matters. *"For example, in one particular case, the family was going to be evicted. The student said we are going to be evicted, the bailiffs are coming at the end of the week. So, I said, "Okay, let's go and talk to Mrs So-and-So." (Ana)*

Handling risk and complexity

As described at the beginning of this chapter, risk and complexity weigh heavily on the school-based counsellor in inner-city schools. Octavia described her work as: *"A massive caseload. Really heavy…girls in gangs."*

Participants running embedded services like Joan reported expanding boundaries and working with more complex cases than previous counsellors at her school. *"I think it's a willingness to work with something which the previous counsellor wasn't prepared to do. Only because I had my own training and experience so I can work a lot more with young people with self-harm, for example, than some school counsellors might feel comfortable with." (Joan)*

Whilst more willing and able to work with complexity, Joan also set firm limits on her caseload to guard against burnout:

> *"Sometimes I stretch myself to fill in everybody. And especially in the first few years that I was doing this, I got to an overwhelming point. And I thought I'm going to burn out if I don't change something that I do. That was about being more boundaried, in terms of my appointments, sending students elsewhere, creating a waiting list." (Joan)*

Octavia also reported working with an increasing number of severe cases and described the need to contain the work accordingly. *"I am having to work with more and more severe cases. Absolutely. I don't see anybody, and I tell the teachers this, for little friendship issues. It's all more and more severe cases. And that's also why I work four days a week." (Octavia)*

<u>Working across services</u>

Embedded school-based counsellors, thanks to their contacts and established positions, respond to the growing pressure on their caseload by liaising with external services. Octavia described working closely with her local CAMHS team and other external agencies to support the students' mental health needs: *"I will make onward referrals for those with serious anorexia, serious suicide attempt but I'll often do an assessment first. Last year I made eight CAMHS referrals. And I work a lot with social workers, victim support, child abuse support, rape crisis."* Octavia also helps students with external referrals, sending girls to a local counselling service when they want to be seen outside of school, and generally liaising with local agencies.

Participants in the later stage reported long waiting lists and having to find other resources to support students:

> *"We are very lucky in the college to have the welfare officer who can deal with all sorts of external referrals if I can't. And we are very well linked up with charities who can offer counselling to young people. So if I am full up, which is often the case, we know a number of other places we can try in the borough or neighbouring boroughs." (Ana)*

4.4.1.3 Protecting confidentiality

Confidentiality is the main boundary issue in the later stage. With the school-based counsellor's role involving higher visibility, greater collaboration, advocacy and working across services, confidentiality is "practically a daily thing to deal with." (Joan) Information sharing becomes more sophisticated and complex in this stage as more individuals and services are involved.

<u>Being transparent</u>

The need to get students' permission each time information is shared and to consult with students on an ongoing basis on how their case is being managed is a boundary to be fastidiously respected. A transparent approach sets the therapist apart from other staff members who tend to share information freely. *"I guess what I've noticed is that I'm more transparent about who I've spoken to with children than the staff are. I think it's a very different ethos really." (Joan)*

Participants stressed that transparency, or being completely clear with students about how, when and why information is shared about them, is essential for maintaining the therapeutic alliance. By being clearly informed on how information might be shared, students feel respected and empowered. Transparency lays the basis for a trusting relationship: *"So I tell them always that I will respect the privacy of their thoughts and feelings in any feedback I give. So I'm quite clear about the extent of the confidentiality I can give them. I think that's really important actually. To be absolutely clear." (Alice)*

The challenges to protecting confidentiality in this stage are multiple. Joan described feeling wary about how sharing information on complex cases may be undermining her students' right to confidentiality and privacy. Her self-awareness and concern for protecting student confidentiality illustrate the reflective and reflexive process of managing boundaries in this stage.

> *"I'm concerned about becoming complacent with reaching out (to other services). I'm much more aware of myself doing that and the danger of doing that, of getting into the habit of ringing the social worker, or of the school starting to expect me to contact other people…I have to think about it and get the child's permission." (Joan)*

In this comment Joan illustrates the difficult balance which needs to be struck between working across services and protecting confidentiality as well as the need

to manage the school's expectations. In this stage, participants are highly attuned to the many subtle ways in which confidentiality can be eroded in schools.

4.4.1.4 Engaging students

<u>Allowing resistance</u>

By this stage school-based counsellors have refined their systems for providing targeted interventions to students and offering other means of support for those unable to engage in therapy. By being more sensitive to each student's needs, resistance is less of an issue in this stage.

> *"If you do an assessment properly, then you are less likely to find students who don't engage. If someone is very resistant I might say, "Perhaps this isn't the right time or the right place?" or "You can come back in three months' time" or "You can go see someone else like the learning mentor." (Ana)*

In this example, Ana is empowering students to think about what is best for them, and giving them choice. By setting clearer boundaries and procedures around the referral process the counselling resources are also being used more wisely.

<u>Being 'philosophical'</u>

Similar to the way therapists are better able to tolerate room disruptions, participants in this stage appeared less attached to outcomes, and to the need to engage every student. For example, with regard to unplanned endings – which participants in the early stage found upsetting – Grant describes himself as being 'more philosophical'. *"Some people just sort of disappear. And I would try and encourage them to finish but it just doesn't always happen. I think I've just got more philosophical about stuff like that now. If we don't have an ending session – well - I just hope they got something out of it." (Grant)* This shows a shift in how the therapist manages their expectations about outcomes and becomes more realistic about what can and cannot be achieved with their student client group. 'Being philosophical' involves a less rigid, more reflective and forgiving holding of boundaries.

<u>Working pluralistically</u>

In this stage, therapists continue to extend their ways of working, incorporating different techniques and models as necessary to meet the needs of the students. Participants reported adopting a more pluralistic stance as a result of their greater attunement to the school setting and client group:

"Pluralistically. That's definitely the way that I work now. I mean underpinning everything there is always a psychodynamic scaffold for me. That's what it is all based on, but certainly I will use CBT exercises, mindfulness, breathing. I talk to students about the 3-minute breathing space, body scan. Whatever really. I use family maps. Emotional learning cards. Resources." (Alice)

<u>Creating a safe haven</u>

As school-based counsellors find ways of managing their boundaries more skilfully - providing containment and safety with an 'ordinary, quiet room' room, working flexibly and creatively, promoting mutuality and transparency - the therapeutic space begins to acquire a special quality. Several participants described the therapeutic space as a haven. "*It was a sanctuary; it was a haven. They would go there and know that they were safe". (Kate)*

In this stage, reflective boundary management fosters a therapeutic space where students can feel calm and think. Rachel described the importance of this refuge for one of her students:

"And one of the Year 9 girls I was working with did say that when she closed her eyes and wanted some peace, she conjured up our room. The table and the chairs and the plant and that made her feel very, very peaceful. And I thought there was something about internalising this space which had become very important to her. I was really pleased about that. Because she wasn't very articulate and she had got a very messy, noisy home and somehow in her mind she went into this." (Rachel)

The therapeutic importance of such a refuge for troubled young people in schools cannot be underestimated. This sense of a haven is consistent with Music and Hall (2008) who wrote about therapeutic work in schools aiming "to facilitate an atmosphere in which children can be genuinely held in mind and can learn to feel 'at home' in themselves and the institution" (Music and Hall, 2008:43).

Skilful boundary management in the later stage therefore results in the therapists' ability to provide a 'secure base' (Bowlby, 1969, 1988) and 'facilitating environment' (Winnicott, 1965/1984) despite all the chaos and upset around them. Grant describes the importance of being able to hold that space and provide a haven for the therapeutic relationship: *"I never under-estimate sometimes just having that space. Fifty minutes. That little haven. Away from all that stuff." (Grant)*

4.4.2 Therapist processes

4.4.2.1 Emerging professional identity

In the later stage the internal process culminates in an emerging professional identity which enables school-based counsellors to manage boundaries with greater confidence and self-awareness. Joan describes how her professional identity emerged as both a gradual process and a 'light bulb moment', giving her a new position of strength from which to negotiate boundaries:

> *"So I got in touch with my own sense of self-worth as a counsellor and value as a professional. It was difficult at first. And that grew with time and practice. Feeling more confident that I knew what I was doing and that what I was doing was valuable. And even just having this light bulb moment of 'Wait a minute. The school is paying me to do a job properly and this is how I have to do it properly'."* (Joan)

In this stage, participants articulated a clear sense of mission in the interviews, which illustrates their sense of emerging identity. *"My job, if I had to describe it, is to help the kids think about the unthinkable. So we just think. So my job is to help kids think about the thoughts feelings that are otherwise unthinkable or are overwhelming when they try to do it by themselves. So we just talk and think and reflect."* (Ana)

The clarity with which the participants in this stage were able to articulate their identity interweaves and integrates with a strong sense of role. *"It's about supporting their development as well as helping them to resolve issues. It's setting them up for life. And that's part of working with adolescents, setting young people up with better resources and more resilience."* (Alice)

4.4.2.2 Being embedded

In the later stage school-based counsellors are embedded in the school which means they have built strong relationships with key members of staff and are well supported by the school. They are a self-contained entity inserted in the context, able to both stay separate and impartial whilst maintaining essential links. This external process enables them to better manage the complexities of school boundaries, by holding multiple perspectives, as they arise. Being embedded also engenders a sense of feeling anchored and well-resourced:

> *"The school I currently work in has used our services for very many years so it works like clock-work there to a great extent. So we are all embedded. They know our routines, we know theirs. We work around them as much as we can and they are very accommodating. They value the counselling that we give them so it works very well there."* (Alice)

Kate described the respect towards her service as a 'sea change' as she became more embedded. Embedding a service involves developing trust and respect with the school. *"And then over time there was real respect. In the beginning, probably the first two years, there was some staff who tried to be a bit distant and truculent about it and then gradually, as it became more visible and understood and accepted, there was a real sea change in how it was viewed." (Kate)* School-based counsellors are therefore engaged in a parallel process of developing trust with school staff and with the students as they seek to embed their service.

Embedded school-based counsellors are part of the fabric of the school. *"I am part of the communications and I definitely feel well held. And I think that is why I have been there so long and why I am carrying on. Because they are good places to work. I do feel held despite the changes and various other things." (Ana)*

4.4.3   Reflective boundary management

The boundary dynamic in this stage is called reflective because it is characterised by school-based counsellors being able to pause, stand back and think. It is about holding multiple perspectives and not rushing in. It is about keeping the student absolutely at the centre of the process. Joan exemplified this, when talking about managing confidentiality: *"I have to think about it and get the child's permission."* It is underpinned by school-based counsellors' thorough understanding of the school context, of the students' needs and their own sense of identity and ethical stance. Rachel clearly stated the extent to which her boundary management style is both focused on the student and guided by her inner compass: *"Keeping the student at the centre of my mind. All the time. And keeping your own sense of integrity really." (Rachel)*

The participants in this stage embodied a quiet strength, confidence and assuredness in the interviews. There was a clear sense of them being self-contained and containing. *"I'm very self-contained. I think that is maybe something to do with it. I don't flap and get anxious and cross and the rest of it." (Ana)* Reflective boundary management was communicated as much in their stance as in their words, revealing itself in their "clear, calm and receptive attitude" (McLoughlin, 2012:235). *"So all these things have nuances and subtleties, don't they really? It's not me going 'I have boundaries and this is what they are'. It's being able to manage them in a very thoughtful, containing, loving way. I suppose." (Rachel)*

The reflective process is also a reflexive process, involving a profound self-awareness and an accompanying sense of humility. It is an awareness that the school environment and students will always be throwing up new challenges and there is little room for complacency or grandiosity in this context. *"So I guess that's one of the most difficult things for me is managing myself, in terms of being flexible and yet containing and consistent. And I feel like, even though I've worked as long as I have, that there are still issues that come up for me where I feel unsure." (Joan)*

4.5   When boundaries fail – a negative case analysis

This study presents boundary management as a process which develops over time with the school-based counsellor adapting to the setting and eventually becoming an important part of the fabric of the school. It should be pointed out, however, that this is not always the case. Whilst in the majority of cases boundary management progresses along these lines, boundaries sometimes implode and therapy services fail as a result. One such case was described in the participant interviews, an outlier case, which serves to validate the current findings as a negative case analysis. This case also serves to reveal how vulnerable boundaries are in urban schools and dispel the idea that the process of adapting and embedding in schools is automatic or inevitable; it is neither.

Rachel described the experience of working in a mixed secondary school for six years. She was responsible for setting up a therapy service from scratch with little assistance from the school she worked for or from the agency, which later took over the contract. This job was her first experience of working in a school, though she had considerable experience working in other complex settings with both adults and children and families. Rachel described struggling with a number of boundary issues over this period, including being assigned a succession of inappropriate rooms and being routinely interrupted mid-session by staff. Nevertheless, she was able to work open-ended with her students and found the work rewarding. However, the leadership was never supportive of her work and links with other staff members failed to develop. The embedding process, in other words, was never allowed to take hold. Meanwhile the school began to suffer major systemic problems. As the organizational systems within the school began to weaken, staff members resigned or went on sick leave, including the link teacher who was not replaced. At this point Rachel was entirely unsupported in the school and working in isolation. Chaos

ensued as more staff left and the referral system broke down. Rachel described the gradual implosion of her therapeutic service:

> *"And pupils started being brought to my door willy-nilly. 'Can you help him/her?' And my boundaries were just going. It was a sort of A&E but very, very difficult to portray the chaotic features really. I remember I had staff coming to my door. I had the chaplain coming to me saying 'Could I talk to you about the head?' And teachers were being threatened with disciplinary proceedings unless they saw me, whilst I was trying to explain that I was there for the children. I wasn't paid or employed to see staff."* (Rachel)

Rachel left the school before the end of the school year. She and the agency recognised that, with the disintegration of therapeutic boundaries, the school and the service she was employed to run were becoming unsafe. What does this outlier case tell us? From the perspective of the current study, this case highlights the importance of boundaries in holding a therapy service. The disintegrating boundaries - unsuitable therapy rooms, continued interruptions, the disappearance of the link teacher, the breakdown in the referral system and her role – led directly to the collapse of the counselling service. The extent to which therapeutic boundaries are the essential scaffolding of a service is clear in this example. More importantly, without the support of the school, Rachel was unable to maintain this scaffolding against the wide range of pressures being put upon her.

This case also shows that school-based counsellors need the active and unequivocal support of the school's leadership team in order to manage boundaries and hold the therapeutic space. The role of the school is similar to Winnicott's (1965/2006) role of the father in a child's early infancy period. According to Winnicott, the mother-infant dyad, during the period of early maternal care, needs the father's protection and support. The father therefore becomes "the protecting agent who frees the mother to devote herself to the baby" (Winnicott, 1965/2006: 237). Similarly, the school setting acts as a Winnicottian father figure protecting the therapist and student. This protective role is hugely important. When a counselling service is marginalised and devalued, as in Rachel's case, it quickly becomes the container for all the school's problems. Without the support of the school, Rachel was unable to hold her boundaries or contain or re-direct issues that landed at her door. School-based counsellors can and do work autonomously but they also need containment, they need a layer of protection and support from secure boundaries and the school in order to function. This case therefore provides support for this

study's findings by showing that without the process of embedding, therapeutic boundaries in schools remain vulnerable and prone to collapse.

4.6   Summary

In this chapter three stages of boundary management were outlined in detail and illustrated by quotes from participants using examples from the key boundary areas identified. The internal and external processes which both mediate contextual factors and drive the development of boundary management enrich the theory and delineate the personal and professional growth of the school-based counsellor in this context over time.

This study conceptualises three boundary dynamics – or management styles – of the school-based counsellor: reactive, responsive and reflective. Whilst the theory associates these dynamics with specific stages which develop linearly, it is recognised that development may not be strictly linear and that school-based counsellors might exhibit two or more styles or might bounce between styles and stages depending on the circumstances. It has been shown that context deeply impacts boundary management, so counsellors moving between contexts will experience changes in boundary dynamics. The terms reactive, responsive and reflective are proposed in this study as useful constructs for thinking about how boundaries are being managed, particularly in new or complex settings.

Finally, this study has examined boundary management through the lens of inner city schools in order to highlight the particular challenges school-based counsellors face in a context which has been largely ignored, and to explore how contextual challenges impact therapeutic work. However, whilst the focus here is on inner city schools, the theory of boundary management proposed by this study is intended to apply to all school contexts. The three stages as well as the processes of adapting and embedding are considered universal, as are the boundary dynamics. The inner city school may be situated at the more difficult end of the spectrum of educational settings, but even privileged and well-resourced schools will present significant boundary dilemmas. In this study, the inner city context therefore serves to present in somewhat starker contrast the kinds of boundary issues which are nevertheless present in all schools.

The next chapter will situate aspects of this theory within existing literature and theory. This serves to give the theory further grounding and basis within the general context of counselling psychology and integrative psychotherapy.

5   Discussion

Following the presentation of the findings in the previous chapter, this chapter will summarize the proposed constructs of boundary management and then discuss some of the key findings pertaining to the therapeutic context, boundary issues and boundary management in relation to a broad range of literature in the field. Two reflexive accounts on the research process and epistemological issues are then presented, followed by a consideration of the contribution of the study.

5.1   Constructs of boundary management

This study has introduced three novel and meaningful constructs as part of its model for thinking about boundary management. These constructs are summarised below.

Reactive boundary management relates to the early stage and involves the initial experience of counsellors making inconsistent and ill-judged boundary decisions in reaction to a challenging and difficult therapeutic context. Music (2007:3) writes that "schools can be extraordinarily anxiety-provoking places" and, as such, school-based counsellors often find themselves initially reacting in a knee-jerk fashion to the multiple demands put upon them. The participants in this study reported instances of either being rigid or loose in managing boundaries in the early stage. Examples of this may be disclosing information without a student's permission or refusing to give important feedback about a student, adopting a non-responsive stance with a student or being overly friendly with staff. The feeling of being overwhelmed impedes thinking and, added to this, the newly arrived counsellor is usually keen to make a good impression on the school and staff. They are often confused about their role in the school and unsure how to engage more reluctant students. Reactive boundary management, as we have seen, is inconsistent and uneven; it is emotionally triggered. It therefore tends to be impulsive and not thought through.

Responsive boundary management is the result of taking the context more into consideration. It involves being more flexible and also being more firm. The counsellor is no longer as alarmed by the school environment and is starting to build relationships with key members of staff. It means being better able to balance the needs of the school with the best interests of the student by making more careful and considered choices and decisions; for example, negotiating with teachers and students which classes are missed for counselling. In this stage, counsellors are re-

writing their working modalities to adjust their practice in line with the school, such as sharing information judiciously with staff and giving feedback as necessary with student consent. They are tackling the problem of 'leaky' staff and taking steps to educate staff and students about the value of therapy. They are finding ways of working creatively with students and promoting mutuality in the sessions. In this stage, counsellors may be more focussed on building trust with the school and promoting the service than aligning themselves with the needs of the student. They are often busy negotiating for a better room or pressing for different referral and appointment procedures, for example. This makes sense as they are needing, in this stage, to play a diplomatic role as they embed the service in the school. In the next stage, the counsellor's boundary management thinking and decisions take the student's concerns into fuller consideration.

Reflective boundary management involves an extension of the middle stage, moving towards an ever more considered and informed approach to boundaries, with the student becoming absolutely central in the decision process. In this stage, counsellors are working closely with a network of contacts and feeling well-resourced to manage complexity and risk as it arises. It means being able to firmly and compassionately hold the therapeutic space and contain the emotions within it. By establishing strategies of self-care and setting clear limits on their caseload, counsellors are more self-contained and able to tolerate boundary disruption and other contextual challenges. Counsellors are fully attuned to the need for transparency and mutuality in the counselling room and are able to provide a safe space and 'facilitating environment'. Over time, and through trial and error, counsellors have developed their own working practices and ethical compass. Reflective boundary management is underpinned and informed by a deep ethical awareness, a set of guiding principles which have been thought through and refined over time. It is reflexive as well as reflective, with an increased awareness of self in context and a constant questioning and thinking through of implications and consequences of boundary decisions. In this stage, counsellors have acquired the understanding and awareness to hold multiple perspectives at once: their own, the school's, the student's, the family's and external services'. By this stage, trust has been established with both the school and students; links have been forged, ways of creatively engaging students in therapy have been developed, the school-based counsellor is now in a position to work collaboratively at all levels with staff and students. Reflective boundary management combines Bond's integrated and

differential models where therapists are both integrated in the school context and staying impartial, upholding the student's interests as their prime concern.

5.2   Key points relating to context

The impact of context on therapeutic work is a constant theme in this study. The research found that the school context had a significant impact on boundaries and the therapist's internal and external processes. These findings are consistent with literature on therapy in other complex settings, such as home-based services (Knapp and Slattery, 2004), prisons (Broderick, 2007), therapeutic communities (Campling, 1995; Haigh, 2013) and GP surgeries (House, 1999; Smith, 1999; Zinovieff, 2004). Participants reported initially feeling overwhelmed and isolated in the school setting, leading them to make less skilful boundary decisions because they were unable 'to think' and because their isolated position prevented them from collaborating with staff. The study found that over time counsellors found ways of adapting to the context. This adaptation is a dual process. Therapists adapt internally to the context by containing their anxiety, understanding the forces at work in the school and adjusting relevant goals, beliefs and attitudes. They adapt externally to the context by embedding which involves establishing relationships with key staff members, students and external services. This dual process enables the therapist to 'think under fire'.

The school context was also seen to have an impact on four key boundary areas. The traditional attributes of the therapy room – privacy, quiet, comfort - were seen to be severely affected by the school environment and counsellors had to find ways of managing and tolerating constant disruption and change. The role and presence of the counsellor was thrown into confusion by the school context and had to be carefully re-considered and negotiated by finding a balance between being separate and connected. The notion of client confidentiality was challenged and counsellors had to re-align their thinking and find ways of sharing information sensitively and judiciously; this was seen to be a complex undertaking which remains challenging in the later stage. Finally, the school setting had an impact on the interpersonal boundaries of the therapeutic relationship, with the counsellor trying to build safety and trust in a context where adults are not considered trustworthy, where the values are not conducive to mutuality and respect and where time and expectations create great pressures on both the counsellor and student.

Another difficult aspect of the school context, which emerged in this study, regards the clinical caseload. This study found that the clinical caseload of school-based counsellors to be increasingly complex. This finding coincides with Music's (2007:12) description of caseloads in inner city schools as being of the "utmost seriousness" and including issues such as "serious abuse, neglect, refugee children, domestic violence, drug and alcohol use, mentally ill parents and sexualised behaviour". The challenge for school-based counsellors when managing risk and complexity, is being sensitive to their own limits and boundaries - the ethics of competency and self-care - with regard to caseload. Both Octavia and Joan described setting limits on their caseload and having clear policies and procedures for onward referral.   However, deciding what to work with and what to refer onwards, in a context of much reduced child and adolescent mental health services, with ever longer waiting lists, and with a client population where there can be significant cultural barriers to accessing external services, remains difficult and fraught. This study found that the participants were needing to flex their boundaries significantly in terms of the amount and nature of their caseload, whilst remaining mindful that they were working within their competence and keeping the safety and well-being of the young person and themselves at the forefront of their minds.

5.3   Key points relating to boundary issues

5.3.1   Importance of a safe space

The findings of this study have stressed the importance of a 'good enough room' (Holliday, 2014) for school-based counsellors. This is consistent with McLeod and Machin (1998) who identified the counselling room as a key factor contributing to the effectiveness of the counselling process. In the context of schools, the counselling room plays a particularly important role as a 'secure base' (Bowlby, 1969, 1988) for both the counsellor and the student. The reflections reported in this study are consistent with statements made by the Glasgow school counsellors reported by Hough (2006), such as "not feeling secure with a room has had a bigger impact on me than expected".

What emerged from this research is that, in schools, a good enough room can sometimes be more important for the counsellor. Students can, in some cases, be habituated to the noise and chaos of school life. Counsellors, on the other hand, initially struggle to feel safe and grounded in the school setting; they struggle to think and concentrate in school environments which feel strange and foreign. A good enough room enables counsellors to focus on their students' problems and not

be constantly distracted and caught off guard. A good enough room allows them to settle into their role and adapt; it represents a crucial first step in the embedding process. For both counsellor and student, therefore, "containment is where counselling begins" (Luxmoore, 2014).

These findings echo the literature on therapy in GP surgeries where counsellors face similar room issues. Zinovieff (2004) stresses the importance of securing a dedicated counselling room in the GP surgery to "assuage my own insecurities" (Zinovieff, 2004:43). Zinovieff (2004) asserts that a designated room establishes a crucial frame around the therapy work, enabling it to co-exist alongside the medical practice. This mirrors this study's description of an embedded school therapy service which is both integrated and separate. A good-enough room therefore enables the counsellor to straddle the two worlds of therapy and school and hold the delicate balance between the two.

5.3.2 Evolving role of the school-based counsellor

This study has found that, over time, school-based counsellors develop from an isolated, lone practitioner to an established and embedded counsellor. It notes the convergence of role and identity when embedded participants take on an expanded role underpinned by an emerging professional identity. This study has also found that the role of an embedded school-based counsellor is evolving and becoming wider and more inclusive.

In the literature, the school-based counsellor role has generally been described in static or fixed terms. Bond (1992) distinguishes between the 'integrated model' and the 'differentiated model' of school therapy services. In the integrated model, the counsellor works collaboratively and information is shared as a matter of course, whilst in the differentiated model the counsellor keeps herself apart and confidentiality is held more strictly. This study has noted the tensions existing in both models, also acknowledged by Loynd, Cooper and Hough (2005), where counsellors are either more closely allied with the school or with their student clients. Harris (2009) also looks at the role or identity of school-based counsellors in fixed, binary terms, arguing that school counsellors identify either as insiders or outsiders depending on their positioning in the school. According to Harris (2009) outsiders tend to be engaged on part-time contracts through agencies whilst insiders are employed by the school in a dual role. Their identity, therefore, is rooted in the nature of their contract and whether they are part-time or full-time.

This research, however, finds the role/identity of school-based counsellors to be more complex and dynamic than either Bond (1992) or Harris (2009) suggest. This study argues that the processes of adapting and embedding over time enable school-based counsellors who initially identify as 'differentiated' or 'outsiders' to become 'integrated' or 'insiders' (of sorts). The school-based counsellor role is not static and fixed but is evolving and multi-dimensional. For example, this study found that part-time agency counsellors like Ana and Alice developed a professional identity that enabled them to feel respected and trusted and to become insiders, who are both part of the school and separate. It is not the nature of their contract but the gradual processes of internally adapting and externally embedding which enable this. Moreover, it is important to underline the fact that, in the later stage, counsellors are both integrated and separate, both insider and outsider. This point, the evolving status of a school therapist, is corroborated by Prior (2012) and Cromarty and Richards (2009) who state that "the longer the counsellor worked in the school the more trusted, known and relied on their services became" (Cromarty and Richards, 2009:183). Luxmoore (2014, 2015) also writes about the gradual growth of trust with a school that eventually enables a counsellor to feel accepted and an insider. It is therefore the process of building relationships over time which makes an insider an insider.

This study found that the role of the school-based counsellor develops from someone initially providing an isolated and marginalised student counselling service to what Luxmoore (2014) calls "an integrated, whole school counselling service". The findings of this study showed participants in the embedded stage extending their role boundaries in different ways: running groups, counselling parents and staff members, giving talks and training. The findings in this study therefore point to school-based counsellors generally becoming more visible, more active in school life, more engaged in a wider range of activities – a stance promoted by Gould (2015), Luxmoore (2014, 2015) and Music (2007, 2008, 2009). The need for counsellors to expand their role and presence in schools and to be both 'independent and integrated' is also mentioned in 'Counselling in schools: a blueprint for the future' (Department of Education, 2015) reflecting a growing awareness and acceptance among commissioning bodies of the evolving rate role of the school-based counsellor.

An important part of the embedding process is building relationships, which is associated with the middle stage in the proposed model. Participants in this study generally found it advantageous to build relationships with key staff members. Danchev (2010) writing about counselling psychologists working in educational settings, makes a similar point underlining the importance of liaising and building working relationships. This study also corroborates Cromarty and Richards (2009) findings on secondary school counsellors establishing a wide network of professional relationships. Specifically, this study found identical benefits in building strong relationships with school staff: for securing the success of the counselling service, for obtaining 'good referrals' and in educating staff on the service for broadening understanding. This work of embedding, building relationships across the school and external services, responds directly to the need expressed by teachers and allied professionals in Cooper (2013a) for more open communication and greater feedback from counsellors and more information on the therapy service itself. The role of school-based counsellors is therefore dynamic and evolves in ways that closely meet the needs of the school context.

This study reported that teachers find counsellors a safe person to confide in: either informally, as in Joan's experience of being approached in hallways by staff, or formally as in Alice's experience of providing after-school counselling sessions especially for teachers. In either case, this echoes the ancillary role acknowledged by Fuller (2014) where "containing and listening to teachers' anger and anxiety about clients can be a key part of our daily role" (Fuller, 2014:176). Similarly, Music (2009) affirms "the counsellor's availability to staff proved to be a vital element of the work" (24). In all these instances, school-based counsellors are seen to be flexing their role boundaries whilst retaining a sense of professional identity and integrity.

5.3.3 Complexities of confidentiality

This study found that confidentiality in schools is a far bigger and more complex issue than it first appears. The need to balance student trust and safety is a constant challenge which has been noted in the literature (McGinnis and Jenkins, 2006; Jenkins and Palmer, 2012; Fuller, 2014). Participants in this study generally reported that they worked collaboratively with staff members and other services, and shared information as necessary.

School-based counsellors are under considerable pressure to share information (Baginsky, 2004) from record keeping and giving brief feedback on sessions to

making detailed onward referrals, and the benefits of this are clear in terms of a fully integrated and supported service. However, the flip side to sharing information is the need to protect student confidentiality and retain the student's sense of trust and safety. Sarah described how it was easy, in the early stage, to get lured into talking about a student or their family. Fuller (2014) states that "school counsellors need to work alongside their teaching colleagues in a way that carefully balances young people's rights to a trusted space with managing the transparent flow of information to best support and protect them" (Fuller, 2014:175). This study found that an important part of adapting to the school context is learning how to share information in a sensitive manner which respects student confidentiality, echoing the research carried out by Cromarty and Richards (2009).

This study supports another finding of Cromarty and Richards (2009) that secondary school counsellors collaborate with a wide range of external agencies. Managing confidentiality when having to work across external services is particularly challenging as witnessed by Joan in this study. Safeguarding issues can require the counsellor to communicate with a number of professionals who all may have very different perceptions of student confidentiality. This need to protect confidentiality as much as possible whilst remaining cooperative is a delicate balance. Fuller (2014) proposes that three factors are important for protecting confidentiality in schools: careful and explicit contracting, an appropriate and clear service-level agreement and protocols with the school and developing an approach that puts transparency at the forefront of therapeutic work with young people. The participants in this study were found to generally conform to Fuller's (2014) guidelines in terms of contracting, service agreements and transparency. The participants all stressed that information sharing is based on ongoing informed consent, consistent with both Fuller (2014) and McGinnis (2008). Participants in this study also stressed the importance of transparency which is further discussed below. Counsellors working in sixth forms were particularly sensitive to confidentiality issues mirroring the finding that older students tend to be most concerned about confidentiality (Fuller, 2014).

5.3.4 Working therapeutically with young people in schools

This study found that school-based counsellors need to adjust their interpersonal boundaries, to change their shape, their ways of being and working, in significant ways in order to engage young people therapeutically. This finding is consistent with research in the field of adolescent psychotherapy (DiGuiseppe, 1996; Everall and Paulson, 2002; Westergaard, 2013). It was found that school counsellors gradually

become more flexible, open and creative in their work with young people which is corroborated by Hanley et al. (2012), Hawkins (2008), Heller (2000) and Klein and Lund (2015). This research identified three key factors which were particularly important in working with young people in schools: transparency, mutuality and pluralistic approach.

Participants found that being transparent with students on issues of confidentiality and contracting, among other areas, was crucial to building trust. Transparency sets counsellors apart from teachers and other school staff who are rarely open with students and a trusting relationship has been shown to be essential when working with young people (DiGuiseppe et al., 1996; Everall and Paulson, 2002; Hanley et al., 2013; Westergaard, 2013; Fuller, 2014). Being transparent means more than just explaining the limits of confidentiality in the first session, it means consulting students on an ongoing basis about how information is shared and their case is being managed. In this study, Joan provided an example of being particularly sensitive to the need for transparency.

Participants were very aware how disempowered their student clients were in their day-to-day life and they stated that promoting mutuality in the sessions was considered important in order to establish a therapeutic bond. The study found that giving students clear information about counselling, agency and choice over whether to attend and over the goals of therapy were all part of promoting mutuality. These findings corroborate findings by both Everall and Paulson (2002) and Prior (2012) who found that agency and choice played an important part in engaging young people in school counselling.

Finally, a pluralistic approach which is active, flexible and creative was found to be important for helping a student engage in the work. Participants reported significantly adapting their approaches, whether by talking more, working more interactively or using various types of projective techniques, such as games or music. Kate exemplified a counsellor who re-thought her approach and became much more creative as she sought to engage her students therapeutically. This finding supports Geldard and Geldard (2010), Hanley et al. (2013) and Westergaard (2013) who stress the importance of using a pro-active, flexible and creative approach when counselling young people, as well as Luxmoore who sums up the need to flex the counsellor/client boundary as "young people need something much more interactive" (Luxmoore, 2014:58).

5.4 Key points relating to boundary management

5.4.1 Boundary management as 'thinking under fire'

This study conceptualises managing boundaries in schools as 'thinking under fire', a phrase taken directly from Ana when describing her work in a chaotic school environment. Ana was referring to Wilfred Bion when she used this phrase, which is loosely associated with Bion's experience in World War I as a young tank commander (Bion, 1997). In his memoirs, Bion described his struggle to think: "Bion felt sick. He wanted to think…He tried to think…He tried to think" (Bion, 1997:p.254).The phrase is also associated with his theory of thinking called the 'alpha function' (Bion, 1962a; Bion, 1962b; Brown, 2012) and with Bion's (1979) reflections on clinical work where he compared sitting with a difficult patient to being with the enemy: "In war the enemy's object is to terrify you that you cannot think clearly, whilst your object is to continue to think clearly no matter how adverse or frightening the situation" (Bion, 1979: 322). Ana used 'thinking under fire' to describe the difficulty of holding the therapeutic space in the midst of a chaotic, mismanaged school. It aptly captures the challenge of thinking therapeutically and, more specifically, managing boundaries in schools.

This study argues that 'thinking under fire' summarizes the essential nature of boundary management in schools as presented in these findings. Throughout the different stages described in the previous chapter, counsellors are engaged in finding better ways to 'think under fire', to respond mindfully to the constant barrage of disruptions and challenges and hold the therapeutic space. 'Thinking under fire' conveys the nature of boundary management and, in particular, the qualities described and demonstrated by the research participants in the interviews, seemingly paradoxical qualities which in themselves give a sense of the delicate balance of boundary management. These qualities are briefly described below.

Alert but calm

'Thinking under fire' conveys how the school-based counsellor has to be prepared for every eventuality, from emergency referrals to unplanned fire alarms, and to manage the feeling of never being secure – even contractually. The school-based counsellor also has to remain calm and grounded in order to be able to reflect and to contain the work, to provide a safe space for the student. As Rachel says "If we're not feeling held and safe, we're going to be passing it on".

Reflective but active

'Thinking under fire' conveys the reflective nature of managing boundaries, the need to pause and think through what is happening in the moment. But 'thinking under fire' is not a passive stance, as being under fire also implies the need to act promptly and assertively. This is particularly important given the considerable risk and complexity inherent in inner city school caseloads. School-based counsellors are often called upon to respond quickly and decisively to safeguarding and crisis situations. They are also active in terms of responding creatively and pro-actively to the therapeutic needs of the student.

Collaborative but impartial

'Thinking under fire' involves collaboration and consultation but also the ability to be impartial and trustworthy. A collaborative approach builds trust with the school, which is an essential part of embedding a counselling service, and builds trust with students. Collaboration is a key component of Geldard and Geldard's (2010) pro-active approach with young people. At the same time, the therapist needs to remain impartial in order to keep some distance from the staff, to retain perspective on the school and its organizational dynamics, to hold a professional stance which is impartial and dispassionate. Both students and staff members rely on counsellors to have an objective viewpoint, uninfluenced by the stories, rumours and gossip which swirl through the school corridors.

Detached but compassionate

Finally, 'thinking under fire' entails the ability to be detached enough to be practical and grounded, to tolerate disruptions and upset, whilst being closely attuned to the relational needs in the room. It means being self-contained and containing enough to work selflessly and relationally in the midst of chaos. Again, Rachel sums this up by saying: "*So all these things have nuances and subtleties, don't they really? It's not me going 'I have boundaries and this is what they are'. It's being able to manage them in a very thoughtful, containing, loving way. I suppose.*"(Rachel)

5.4.2 The reflective nature of boundary management

An important finding is that boundary management is understood as an ongoing reflective process which can be severely challenged in the context of schools. Like Bion (1979), the participants struggled to "think, think" in the midst of chaotic circumstances and this was found to impact how boundaries were managed. The internal process, in the early stage, is focused primarily on re-gaining the ability to

think under pressure. These findings link to established literature in the field on how clinicians adopt a thinking stance to manage the therapeutic space.

<u>'Thinking under fire' as reflection-in-action</u>

The social scientist Donald Schon (1983) described the process of problem solving by professionals as 'reflection-in-action'. In his book, Schon addresses a post-modern 'crisis of confidence in the professions' which he attributes to the mismatch between professional training or education and the reality of the work setting. He points out "the complexity, uncertainty, instability, uniqueness and value conflicts which are increasingly perceived as central to the world of professional practice" (Schon,1983:14). The participants in this study certainly experienced a similar crisis of confidence in that their training did not prepare them for work in a school setting which presented all the same complexities. Schon blames an outmoded epistemology of practice – called technical rationality- as the root cause of this crisis in confidence. According to Schon, practitioners are no longer able to explain in precise terms how they solve problems, their problem-solving approach having evolved by necessity from a science-based technique to an 'art' which defies - to some extent – explanation. Schon then proposes a new epistemology of practice which he calls reflection-in-action to describe "the artistic, intuitive processes which some practitioners do bring to situations of uncertainty, instability, uniqueness and value conflict" (Schon, 1983:49). By responding to complexity in "what seems like a simple, spontaneous way" the practitioner displays an artistry "which is evident in his selective management of large amounts of information, his ability to spin out long lines of invention and inference, and his capacity to hold several ways of looking at things at once without disrupting the flow of inquiry" (Schon,1983:130). Schon states that this artistry is dependent on the previous experience and knowledge accumulated by the practitioner, on the "range and variety of the repertoire that he brings to unfamiliar situations" (Schon,1983:140).

There are certainly parallels to be drawn between Schon's proposed reflection-in-action and this study's 'thinking under fire'. The problem of managing therapeutic boundaries in school settings is a similar problem to those he describes. The crisis of confidence, the mismatch in training and the artistry which gradually emerges in practice are all consistent with the current findings. However, Schon's practitioner is a seasoned professional who brings a full repertoire of experience to inform his thinking in action. He fails to describe or delineate the process whereby a practitioner develops the capacity to engage his thinking or reflection and the stages

he goes through to learn his 'art'. Nor does he refer to instances when thinking goes offline, as experienced by this study's participants.

The current study therefore significantly builds on and extends Schon's concept of 'reflection-in-action' by proposing a theory and detailed examples of how boundary management – 'thinking under fire' – develops over time. This research posits that by engaging in an internal process of adapting and an external process of embedding, the professional (in this case the school-based counsellor) gradually arrives, through specific stages, at a position to manage boundaries skilfully and artfully as an example of reflection-in-action.

<u>'Thinking under fire' as mentalization</u>

'Thinking under fire' also bears similarities to the concept of mentalization (Fonagy, Gergely, Jurist and Target, 2004; Allen, Fonagy and Bateman, 2008) which has gained wide acceptance in the psychology and psychotherapy fields. Like reflection-in-action, mentalization is referred to as an 'art' (Allen, Fonagy and Bateman, 2008). Mentalization is defined as "our capacity to think about our own minds and the minds of others" (Midgely and Vrouva, 2012:1). It is employed as a therapeutic technique with different client populations, including adolescents, in order to help them understand how and when their reflective function - or mentalizing - goes offline and how this impacts their relationships. It is understood that clinicians' ability to mentalize can also go offline: "when exposed to great pressure, most people tend to lose their capacity to think about the thoughts and feelings of others" (Midgely and Vrouva, 2012:24).

This study found that, in the early stage, participants described feeling under stress, which affected their ability to 'think' and manage boundaries. It would appear that in these cases participants were experiencing what Allen et al. (2008) refer to as 'frazzled mentalizing'. Mentalization can explain the thinking process underlying boundary management where the therapist has to step back and view a situation from multiple perspectives (their own, the school's, the student's, the family's) in order to decide on the best course of action. More specifically, both boundary management and mentalization involve an intrapsychic and interpersonal process of simultaneously tapping into one's own mental state and the mental states of others. Allen et al. (2008) distinguish between implicit mentalizing and explicit mentalizing. Explicit mentalizing is "conscious, deliberative and reflective" whilst implicit mentalizing is automatic and intuitive (Allen et al., 2008:27). 'Thinking under fire'

could be understood, therefore, as a form of explicit mentalizing similar to other 'commonplace examples of mentalizing' (Allen et al., 2008:5) as shown in Table 4 below.

Boundary management and mentalization are further linked by the fact that mentalization has been closely associated with moral development and described as having "an inescapable ethical texture" (Allen et al., 2008:337). In fact, Allen et al. (2008:337) state that "judgements of right and wrong are founded in mentalizing". Both boundary management and mentalization therefore involve operationalizing our system of personal values and ethical beliefs. On this basis, boundary management could be described as a reflective process involving explicit mentalizing where the therapist is tapping into their own mental state – and ethical beliefs – and the intentions and beliefs of others with a view to making boundary decisions. Mentalization effectively explains the metacognitive process of 'thinking under fire' which comes into full fruition in the later stage as reflective boundary management. It also explains the phenomenon experienced by participants in the early stage of interrupted thinking under stress.

Whilst boundary management could simply be labelled as another 'commonplace example of mentalizing' (Allen et al., 2008), it is important to point out that - like reflection-in-action – mentalization only partially explains the phenomenon of boundary managment. This study's theory of boundary management goes considerably further by providing a clear and detailed account of how the ability to 'think under fire' is impacted by context and how it develops in three distinct stages alongside the internal and external processes of adapting and embedding.

5.4.3 The collaborative nature of boundary management

The research has found that, in the later stage, boundary management is also a collaborative process where counsellors actively consult with staff and students on boundaries. It emerged in this study that participants generally struggled to manage boundaries in isolation and that the process of building relationships and embedding was crucial to their feeling more confident, supported and informed to make boundary decisions. This finding coincides with Baruch (2001) who highlights the importance of "collaboration with the school staff and integration in the school" when running a psychotherapy service in a school.

Table 4: Commonplace examples of mentalizing (taken from Allen et al., 2008)

TABLE 1-2. COMMONPLACE EXAMPLES OF MENTALIZING

For the patient

- Explaining why he or she is seeking treatment and providing a history of symptoms
- Describing his or her spouse's view of the presenting problems and considering the impact of the presenting problems on their children's well-being
- Considering the impact of relationships in the family of origin on current relationships
- Articulating the basis of his or her distress and apprehension in the clinical interview
- Evaluating the accuracy of the clinician's observations and correcting the clinician's misunderstandings
- Reporting on the effects of medication

For the clinician

- Enabling the patient to feel safe in the session
- Understanding the meaning of stressful life events in relation to a history of trauma
- Formulating a diagnostic understanding and explicating it to the patient
- Explaining to the patient how a particular treatment approach might help
- Helping the patient to appreciate signs of progress or regression in treatment
- Managing the patient's distress stemming from the patient's own experience or behavior

Nonclinical interactions

- Reassuring a frightened child
- Ascertaining what gets in the way of holding to a diet
- Understanding the reasons for one's unreasonably angry response to a request
- Asking a harried supervisor for time off
- Mediating conflicts between children, friends, or family members

<u>The AMBIT model</u>

The finding that the embedded counsellor is better able to manage boundaries effectively in schools is consistent with the philosophy underlying the adolescent mentalization-based integrative therapy (AMBIT) model (Bevington and Fuggle, 2012) which operationalizes the above-mentioned concept of mentalizing and applies it to outreach work with troubled adolescents. The basic assumption of AMBIT is that it is both "predictable and normal" that caseworkers lose their capacity to mentalize when working with troubled youth in unstructured settings and the aim is to help caseworkers regain their mentalizing (or reflective) stance.

As already mentioned, participants in the early stage of boundary management can be understood as having lost their mentalizing stance in that they felt overwhelmed, alienated and unable to think. Their thinking was de-railed by the chaos and disruption around them. AMBIT describes 'thinking together' as a strategy for the caseworker to connect with other team members and think through his situation. This directly addresses the isolation of the caseworker. AMBIT encourages a structured and focused approach to team discussions in order to re-establish mentalizing. Similarly, this study found that the process of building relationships with key members of school staff, and engaging in focused, boundaried discussions, enabled school-based counsellors to find containment and re-engage their thinking around boundaries. This study also found that 'taking the context into account' was an essential step in adapting and negotiating boundaries which is similar to the AMBIT practice of 'mentalizing the network' which involves "encouraging the worker to become curious about the intentions and beliefs of others in the network" (Bevington and Fuggle, 2012:183). The collaborative aspect of thinking about boundaries and boundary management in schools and the need for embedding are both supported by the AMBIT model.

5.5   Personal reflexivity: reflections on the research process

My constructivist epistemological position, which assumes that research is shaped by the researcher, makes me particularly sensitive to the ways in which I have influenced this study. These influences are set out below.

My interview schedule was initially guided by my knowledge and experience in the field. When interviewing participants I briefly disclosed my own experience as a former school counsellor. This was beneficial in that it established I was an 'insider' and able to grasp the challenges they were faced with. I was aware of being situated in the middle of the participants, as someone with five years' experience in two inner-city schools; being neither a neophyte nor an expert, I was able to relate to all the participants more or less equally. I was well aware of the different ways in which boundaries can be disrupted and this enabled me to prompt or explore areas further with the participants. Having said that, I also attempted to take up an 'outsider' position in the research. I sought to bracket my knowledge by not dwelling on or bringing specific details of my own experience to mind. I did not compare my experience to the participants' but sought to lay it aside very intentionally and consciously. I sought to remain open to different views and opinions and attempted to explore with equal interest and curiosity whatever emerged from the questions.

The research question arose from my curiosity about how other school-based counsellors managed boundaries and I was particularly interested in producing an explanatory model that would be useful for other practitioners in the field. As mentioned in chapter 2, this preference for an explanatory model led, in part, to my choice of grounded theory as a methodology. It also influenced a number of other choices throughout the research. For instance, in the interviews, my questions and prompts tended to focus more on concrete examples or explications of boundary management rather than abstract musings. The focus on concrete aspects of boundary management continued in the coding process with the identification of codes and categories around specific boundary issues. In the analysis, I sought to organize the emerging categories into a model which would explain the process of boundary management. I was both grounded in the data and grounded in the practical nature of my endeavour, ie. the explication of the practice-based issue of boundary management. Finally, in the writing up phase I sought to use clear, concise language in order to best explain the resulting structural model of boundary management.

At the same time, in counter-balance to all this, I was also holding a view of boundary management, as explained in chapter 2, that was not non-rule based. Throughout the project, I was therefore holding a tension between a conception of boundary management as an un-chartable, creative process and a desire to map how school counsellors manage boundaries in practice; a Winnicottian paradox that, in Winnicottian fashion, needed to be tolerated rather than resolved. This tension reflects my own personal process – both as a therapist and as a person - of seeking and appreciating depth, richness and mystery as well as clarity, understanding and vision and, as a constructivist, I find it fitting that my own paradoxical strivings have emerged in my research.

Throughout the research process, I assumed a "critical, reflective stance" (Charmaz, 2014) by taking note of the different ways I might be subtly influencing on the study. In the analysis stage, I sometimes worried that my interpretation might be drifting away from the findings. Each time such a worry surfaced I would go back to the raw data and scan the interviews. I found that my analysis was staying true to the data and, in some cases, I was taking my leads from the participants themselves. So that when a new code appeared in an interview I would ask about that code in the next

interview. A synergetic loop was created where I was alerted to a code or category by the emerging data and then this would be fed back into the interview schedule for further confirmation or disconfirmation by later participants. I was therefore both influencing and being influenced by the emerging data. I developed a habit of regularly going back to the raw data (the original transcripts and my handwritten notes in the margins) and checking that the tables of categories and codes I was assembling were firmly rooted in the participant data. This use of the 'constant comparative method' (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) helped me to feel confident and secure in my findings and, as I began to abstract ideas and concepts from the data, I continued to loop back and check earlier code lists and the transcripts. I continued this process of checking and re-checking my path throughout the writing up, ensuring that there was a firm basis to my theorizing, and used my reflexive journal to reflect on any assumptions or expectations that were present.

Having completed the research, I feel I have drafted a study that is both true to the data and to myself. The findings and theory are deeply grounded in the participant data. At the same time, this study ultimately represents a co-construction of meaning and understanding between myself - my own experience, knowledge, viewpoints and preferences – and the participants. I have inevitably shaped the interpretation and analysis of the findings, as well as the generation of the theory. This study therefore represents a 'fusion of horizons' (Gadamer, 1989) between myself and the participant data. I feel that I have emerged from this research process as a more deeply informed and sensitive psychological therapist with a clearer idea of what constitutes a 'facilitating environment' (Winnicott, 1965/1984) for a young person and how to think about and manage various issues, such as my role and confidentiality, in challenging contexts. Most of all, I have gained a much greater awareness of, and appreciation for, the ways in which the more subtle and everyday ethical and boundary decisions impact my work and life.

5.6   Epistemological reflexivity

This section will present my reflections on several epistemological aspects of the study, namely the implications, limitations and transferability of the study and ideas for future work in the field.

<u>Implications</u>

One implication of this study, and particularly of the negative case analysis, is that clear support from the school's leadership team is crucial to the smooth running and

boundaried containment of a counselling service. Without the support from the top levels of management in a school it is very difficult for a counsellor to get the respect and cooperation they need from the rest of the staff to effectively run a therapy service. The importance of the school leadership team actively supporting a therapy service has moreover been raised by several authors (Cromarty and Richards, 2009; Harris, 2009; Fuller, 2014).

As part of this support, a well-equipped and dedicated counselling room has been shown in this study to be particularly important. A school's leadership team therefore needs to take room issues seriously and ensure that the school-based counsellor has a suitable workspace. The leadership team should ensure that a variety of resources are provided to the counselling service, such as access to a photocopying machine, games, art and stationery materials, etc. An experienced and appropriate staff member should be assigned as link teacher who can help the counsellor get to know and embed in the school. The leadership team need to introduce the counsellor to the staff at the beginning of the year and to meet with and consult with the counsellor on student welfare issues on a regular basis. The counsellor should be supported to attend regular training days and to visit external mental health services with a view to building important links in the local community. Measures like these will send a clear message to both students and staff that counselling is a valued activity in the school.

Another implication of the research is the need for school-based counsellors to be highly trained in order to effectively manage the contextual challenges, increasing complexity and risk inherent in their caseload. Specific trainings in trauma, mindfulness, eating disorders, self-harm and working inter-professionally, for example, should be considered. This study has shown that working therapeutically in schools requires considerable knowledge, experience and skill which needs to be acknowledged and taken into account when recruiting and determining pay scales for school-based counsellors. As stressed by Music (2009: 22) "there are good grounds for employing our most experienced counsellors to work in schools, particularly as we often see the most complex cases there". In addition to in-depth training, school-based counsellors would also benefit from being trained in an integrative or pluralistic model which would give them a wide range of tools and techniques to use with students.

Given the rapid growth in the field and the clinical complexity mentioned above, this study has implications for counselling psychologists in particular. First of all, their breadth of training makes counselling psychologists particularly adept at running the school-wide services mentioned in this study, covering a variety of roles such as individual therapist, group therapist, workshop leader and well-being coordinator. Meanwhile their depth of training make counselling psychologists highly suited as supervisors, capable of overseeing the kinds of complex cases prevalent in schools and of supporting supervisees to liaise with external services. The humanistic philosophy of counselling psychology is suited for school-based work in that it aligns with and supports the flexible and creative approach promoted in this study which advocates transparency, mutuality and pluralism. In particular, reflexive practice - a key element of 'thinking under fire' - lies at the very heart of counselling psychology training and philosophy, underpinning both practice and thinking in a way which makes counselling psychologists particularly well adapted for work in schools and other complex settings. Finally, counselling psychologists, with their advanced training in practitioner research, could make a valuable contribution by conducting qualitative research studies further extending our knowledge of practice in the field of school counselling.

This study also has implications with regard to the supervision of school-based counsellors. The findings suggest that supervisors need to take into account the impact of the school context on clinical practice, particularly in the early stage when a counsellor is still new to her role. Supervisors need to be familiar with all the challenges and difficulties inherent in the role of school counsellor. Supervisors need to pay particular attention to the school-based counsellor's level of anxiety and ability to 'think under fire'. This study suggests that more supervisory support may be required in the early stage when a counsellor is isolated in the school. The model presented in this study will enable supervisors and supervisees to assess how boundaries are being managed, using the theoretical constructs: reactive, responsive and reflective. In this way, this study provides a clear framework enabling ethical practice in schools to be more clearly and effectively monitored by supervisors. This study also will encourage supervisors and supervisees to think about their internal and external processes in the school and how they can be better supported in their work.

Finally, the importance of thinking about boundaries, particularly in complex settings, and the need to promote more reflection on 'creative ethical practice'

(Owens et al., 2012) is clear from this study. In the later stage, 'ethical mindfulness' (Bond, 2015) was found to be an integral part of the participants' therapeutic stance – or 'way of being' - in the counselling room. As psychological therapists find themselves working more and more in schools and other non-therapeutic settings with complex client groups, specific trainings, workshops and modules on ethical practice and boundary management is both valuable and necessary.

Limitations

As this study collected data from participants who volunteered and consented to be interviewed, self-selection bias (Castigan and Cox, 2001) must be taken into account as a possible influence on findings and generalizability. As a result of the snowballing sampling strategy, several participants had worked with the same school counselling agency, which may have influenced their experience in similar ways. Their common agency supervision or line management may have coloured their attitudes towards boundaries and working in schools. Also, just over half the participants were trained in the psychodynamic model - a model which tends to view boundaries more conservatively – which may explain why the use of self-disclosure, which often arises in youth work, did not appear as a boundary issue in this study. According to Cooper (2013b) most school-based counsellors are trained in the humanistic model, so it is possible that this study's predominantly psychodynamic sample is slightly skewed. It is also possible that this study's sample is simply representative of London-based counsellors working in schools. Due to constraints of time and space, I was unable to conduct follow-up interviews with the participants. Such interviews may have enabled the participants to feel gradually more comfortable about discussing certain boundaries which are considered 'taboo', such as self-disclosure. This project should therefore be viewed as an exploratory study opening up the broad area of boundaries in schools to discussion, various facets of which deserve to be studied in greater depth and detail.

Transferability

As regards transferability, it has already been mentioned that whilst this study examines the context of inner-city secondary schools, the proposed theory of boundary management is considered applicable to all schools since the general boundary issues can be deemed the same, given the mention of issues like confidentiality and role in the general literature on school-based counselling. This study's theory of boundary management could also be extended to other non-therapeutic and complex settings, such as pupil referral units, detention centres,

youth centres, GP surgeries, work-based settings, hospitals, etc. It is even arguable that the constructs of reactive, responsive and reflective boundary dynamics could be applied to all therapy and supervisions situations.

<u>Future work</u>

There is much future work that could be undertaken in the area of boundary management, particularly from the qualitative perspective. It became apparent from the study that working in a sixth form involved a slightly different approach from working with younger secondary students and a study devoted to managing boundaries in sixth-form colleges, or comparing work in sixth forms to work in universities and secondary schools would be useful and revealing. A study exploring boundary issues in primary school counselling, where parents and teachers are often more closely involved, would also be valuable. It would also be both interesting and useful to conduct interview-based studies in each of the boundary areas identified with a view to deepening and broadening the perspectives already presented.

The impact of context, a major theme of this study, also deserves further study. Participants in the later stage showed an appreciation of the organizational dynamics of their schools which underpinned their ability to manage boundaries. Further research on the intersection of context and therapeutic work, on different ways of thinking about and conceptualising the context and how therapists understand and adapt to different contexts would be extremely valuable.

5.7   Contribution of the research

This research may represent the first study to explore how therapeutic boundaries are managed in school-based counselling in the UK. As an exploratory study it provides both a broad and incisive view of a new, important area and serves as a valuable template for future research.

This study may also be the first to generate a theory of boundary management in schools. This theory proposes that boundary management develops in three stages over time and is driven by internal and external processes. Three innovative boundary dynamics are put forth: reactive, responsive and reflective. This study argues that these dynamics serve as useful and important constructs for thinking about boundaries and maintaining a sound, ethical stance in schools work, which may also be transferable to a variety of other contexts.

This study equips school-based therapists and their supervisors with a clearly articulated model which explains how therapeutic work is impacted by contextual challenges and assists them to 'think under fire'. In addition to explicating a theory on boundary management, this study specifies a list of qualities necessary for the task of boundary management: alert/calm, reflective/active, collaborative/impartial, detached/compassionate. It conceptualises boundary management as 'thinking under fire' and links this concept to both reflection in action and the metacognitive process of explicit mentalizing, thus firmly locating it within current psychological theory.

Another contribution of this study is its identification of key boundary issues affecting school-based counsellors. The importance of an 'ordinary, quiet room' for both student and therapist, the evolving and dynamic nature of the counsellor's role, the multiple complexities of confidentiality and the difficulties of engaging with young people in a school setting have been examined in depth and detail. By signalling the problems encountered and tracking their resolution stage by stage, this study marries the theoretical with the practical providing an overall theory and clear examples of expertise transferrable to the field.

This study provides an important insight into counsellors' experience of working in urban British schools. It may be the only study which explores in depth the impact of the inner city secondary school environment on therapeutic work with adolescents from a school-based counsellor's point of view. The findings therefore provide a unique and highly valuable snapshot of therapy at the 'chalkface' of urban secondary education in the UK. The impact of the context in emotional and professional terms is explored with reference to managing boundaries. The study is interwoven with a rich seam of 'in vivo' quotes from participants which support the findings and present a vivid and accurate picture of work in inner-city schools.

In this study, the challenges of the school context are presented from the perspective of the participants' experience of these challenges. The highly complex nature of school-based work is revealed and clearly documented. This study therefore contributes to raising the profile of therapists working in schools. This study also makes the case for recruiting, training and appropriately compensating highly skilled therapists for work in schools.

Finally, as possibly the first interview-based qualitative study on boundary management, this research breaks new ground and can be considered as contributing in significant ways to the body of practice-based evidence in counselling psychology and integrative psychotherapy, and to research in school-based counselling in particular.

6   Conclusion

This study has examined boundaries from a unique perspective. As argued in Chapter 2, much of the literature on boundaries has focused on boundary violations, transgressions, crossings and generally preventing harm to patients (Gutheil and Gabbard, 1993; Gabbard and Lester, 1995; Gabbard and Brodsky, 2008) which adds an undeniable element of fear to the debate. This fear, or uneasiness, was present at the start of the interviews with this study's participants. I was aware of initially feeling uneasy about what I would encounter in the interviews, in terms of boundary management, and whether I would have to 'report' a participant for unethical behaviour. I was also aware of participants being hesitant to admit a more flexible approach and shutting down certain topics. I had to work hard to establish a 'friendly' discussion about boundary management because, in the psychology and psychotherapy professions, boundaries are not generally perceived as being 'friendly'.

Zur (2004) has noted the moralistic approach to boundaries, criticizing the 'slippery slope' argument adopted by Gutheil and Gabbard (1993) and Pope (1990) whereby flexible boundaries are thought to lead to dual roles and more serious sexual transgressions. Zur (2004) also noted the tendency to view all boundaries as sexual boundaries, which Dineen (1996) has referred to as 'sexualising boundaries'. Foucault in his History of Sexuality (1976) argued that morality has traditionally been treated as sexual morality (Smith, 2008); this research would argue that therapeutic boundaries have been similarly treated as sexual boundaries. This means the more nuanced, quotidian aspects of boundary management have been largely ignored. Bridges (1999:292) states that "counsellors are now well informed about the parameters of ethical conduct but confused about the ethical construction of creative, clinically useful boundaries in the counsellor-patient dyads". There seems to be a yearning for an honest, open discussion about how we can adapt our frame to different contexts, clients and presentations. This study has recognised and attempted to address this yearning.

This research explored what happens when counsellors go into schools, where the usual setting parameters are either absent or not applicable, and manage a new and different set of boundaries to contain their work. This study looked at how skilful boundary management builds safety and trust and creates a 'facilitating environment' (Winnicott, 1965/1984) for the therapy. It looks at how consistent, negotiated, thoughtful and attuned boundaries enable a trusting relationship to be

established with both the student and the school. As we have seen, discussions about boundaries have often degenerated into discussions of rights and wrongs where thinking can become narrow and fraught. This study has sought to conceive of boundaries as a way of opening a space, ensuring there is a safe space to think. From this perspective, boundary management is about being able to think and what the counsellor and client need to be able to think and be together. Boundaries don't only prevent harm to clients, they also promote and facilitate growth, particularly when they are compassionate. Bridges (1999) takes a similar position and calls for an integrative approach to boundaries, stating "a reductionist, rule-bound approach to therapeutic boundaries is not useful" (Bridges,1999:299). This research has sought to correct the negative bias in boundary literature and to promote a less fearful and more open, reflective and positive discussion of boundaries.

In Buddhist meditation, the preferred posture is sometimes referred to as 'strong back, soft belly' which conveys the combined robustness and compassion required for the discipline of sitting practice. This study would argue that robustness and compassion are also, in the final analysis, important features of boundary management. Robustness is the need to be able to firm and compassion is the need to be flexible. Boundary management can ultimately be thought of as an embodied posture - an ethical stance - that needs to be constantly held and upheld.

This study has found that boundary management in schools can be conceptualised as 'thinking under fire', or an ongoing reflective process undertaken under pressure. It involves both explicit mentalizing and active collaboration with both colleagues and students. Boundary management is essentially everyday ethics, it is ethics-in-action. In this way, this research supports and champions Bond's (2015) call to re-consider ethics as 'ethical mindfulness' and to incorporate thinking about ethics as part of everyday work. Boundaries need to be removed from the 'naughty step' and ethics from the dusty back bookshelves so that therapeutic practice can be thought about and held in a way which is truly – in Rachel's words – 'thoughtful, containing and loving'.

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

A&E	Accident and Emergency
AMBIT	Adolescent Mentalization-based Integrative Therapy
APA	American Psychological Association
BACP	British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy
BPS	British Psychological Society
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service
CAQDAS	Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software
CBT	Cognitive Behaviour Therapy
EF	Executive Function
GP	General Practitioner
HMO	Health Management Organization
IPA	Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis
LEA	Local Education Authority
NSCPP	National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
PIS	Participant Information Sheet
PRN	Practice Research Network
UK	United Kingdom
UKCP	UK Council for Psychotherapy
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
US	United States (of America)
WAG	Welsh Assembly Government

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Strategies used for the literature search

It is important to point out that I chose in this study to present a narrative literature review with the aim of providing a comprehensive overview of the topic and highlighting significant areas of research. The literature search was conducted in two phases: a preliminary search, which was carried out for the purposes of drafting my research proposal and gaining approval from Middlesex University's Programme Approval Panel, and a later search with a view to integrating literature into my discussion and contextualizing my emerging theory.

The first search used the databases PsychInfo and EBSCOHost, the archive Pep WEB, the search engine Google Scholar, and the online catalogues of the Middlesex University Library and the British Library. This literature search used the terms "school counselling" combined with "boundaries" and "young people". The search was not limited by study design or date. This search was specifically aimed at identifying any literature on the specific topic of therapeutic boundaries in secondary school counselling in the UK. The following literature was excluded from the search: non-UK school counselling literature and literature not relating to secondary school counselling (ie. counselling in primary schools or universities). All therapeutic boundary literature was included. Further literature was identified by examining the references of relevant articles and by manual searching the CPR journal from 2005 to 2016.

The second phase of my narrative literature search was conducted during the writing-up phase (2015-2016). This search involved primarily manual searches aimed at situating and corroborating aspects of my emerging theory. Inclusion criteria was widened to include literature on therapeutic boundaries in non-traditional settings (such as prisons and primary care) and literature on aspects of my theory, such as engaging young people in therapy, on confidentiality in schools and the role of the school counsellor. I also read widely in the fields of reflective practice, mentalization and ethics.

The approximate chronology of the literature searches can be gathered from the dates listed below:

March 9th 2012	Middlesex University Library
May 18th 2012	Middlesex University Library
August 6th 2012	British Library
February 15th 2013	British Library
March 23rd 2013	British Library
June 19th 2015	British Library
August 28th 2015	British Library
March 1st 2016	Middlesex University Library

Appendix 2: Participant information sheet

The Art of Managing Boundaries in School Counselling: A Qualitative Study

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you make your decision it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the information below carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Feel free to ask any questions or to request further information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

1. **WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT?** The aim of the project is to explore school counsellors' experiences in managing therapeutic boundaries in order to investigate the impact of the school context on therapy with young people. The study is planned to run for approximately 18 to 24 months.

2. **WHY HAVE I BEEN CHOSEN?** You are being recruited as an experienced secondary school counsellor with a view to being interviewed for this project. It is planned to recruit 10-20 school counsellors as participants in this project.

3. **DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART?** It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw from the study at any time, without giving a reason, and have your contribution to date deleted.

4. **WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO ME IF I TAKE PART?** You will be given a copy of the participant information sheet and a signed consent form to keep. You will be asked to attend an interview at a time and place convenient to you. It is possible that you will be contacted later on in the study for a second interview with a view to clarifying or developing certain themes. You have the right to decline taking part in a second interview if you so wish.

5. **WHAT DO I HAVE TO DO?** Should you agree to take part, you will be interviewed by the researcher (Pamela Lawson) for approximately 60 minutes. The interview will be taped and transcribed. You have the right to refuse to answer or respond to any question put to you.

6. **WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE BENEFITS AND RISKS OF TAKING PART?** There are no known benefits or risks to you as a participant in this study.

7. **WILL MY TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?** All information that is collected about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. Any information about you which is used will have your name and address removed so that you cannot be recognised from it. Any identifying references to schools or third parties will be deleted. A coding system will be used when gathering and processing interview tapes, transcripts, notes and memos in order to preserve anonymity. You will be given the option to check any verbatim material from you that I am including in the study. All data will be stored, analysed and reported in compliance with the UK Data Protection Act.

8. **WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH STUDY?** This project is being undertaken as part of a Doctorate in Counselling Psychology and Psychotherapy by Professional Studies (DCPsych) run by Metanoia Institute and conferred by Middlesex University. It is planned that it will be published in 2015-2016 as a doctoral dissertation and be made publicly available through the University library.

9. **WHO HAS REVIEWED THE STUDY?** This research project has been approved by the Metanoia Research Ethics Committee.

10. **WHO CAN I CONTACT FOR FURTHER INFORMATION?** For further information, please contact the researcher (Pamela Lawson) via email on ▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇ or Dr Patricia Moran (research supervisor) on Patricia.Moran@metanoia.ac.uk. Alternatively you can contact us at Metanoia Institute, 13 North Common Road, London W5 2QB, Tel 020 8579 2505.

THANK YOU FOR TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY.

Participant Identification Number:

Title of Project: The Art of Managing Boundaries in School Counselling: A Qualitative Study

Name of Researcher: Pamela Lawson

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the participant information sheet dated... for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason. If I choose to with-draw, I can decide what happens to any data I have provided.

3. I understand that my interview will be taped and subsequently transcribed.

4. I agree to take part in the above study.

5. I agree that this form that bears my name and signature may be seen by a designated auditor.

_____   _____   _____
Name of participant   Date   Signature

_____   _____   _____
Researcher   Date   Signature

1 copy for participant, 1 copy for researcher

Appendix 4: Approved recruitment email

Dear ,

I am contacting you with regard to a research project I am conducting in the field of school counselling. The topic is the "The Art of Managing Boundaries in School Counselling" and I will be seeking to interview experienced, seasoned school counsellors who are working or have recently worked in secondary schools. I am interested in boundaries in the broadest sense of the term. This study is not concerned with unethical practice but instead aims to explore how practitioners artfully and creatively manage the multiple demands of the school environment in therapeutic work with young people. The interview will last roughly 60 minutes and will be taped and transcribed. All information collected will be kept confidential and anonymous.

If you are interested in being a participant in this project, please contact me either by email or phone so I can send you a participant information sheet. I will be more than happy to answer any questions you may have.

Pamela Lawson
Doctoral Candidate in Counselling Psychology and Psychotherapy
Metanoia Institute/ Middlesex University

Appendix 5: Conference flyer

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS WANTED

The Art of Managing Boundaries in School Counselling: A Qualitative Study

Are you a qualified, experienced school counsellor? Would you be interested in sharing your experience and thoughts on the challenges of working in an educational setting? I am conducting a doctoral research project on therapeutic boundaries in school-based settings. I am looking to carry out 60 minute interviews with school counsellors on their experience of managing therapeutic boundaries in a secondary school or sixth form. Confidentiality and anonymity are guaranteed.

School counsellors often find themselves having to manage boundaries and adapt working practices that are in sharp contrast to 'traditional' psychotherapy or counselling settings. For example, school counsellors tend to work in environments where:

- there is often no dedicated counselling room
- the room may be inappropriate in terms of size, location, etc.
- disruptions and interruptions are common
- sessions can be of variable length (and at variable times and variable days)
- students may need to be collected from the classroom (or elsewhere!)
- information may need to be shared with school staff
- the nature of the work can shift to social work, advocacy, etc.
- *ad hoc* or emergency sessions are common
- little or no background or assessment information may be provided
- the counsellor may need to juggle dual roles
- there may be a lack of support from teaching staff
- students may be sent to counselling as punishment
- there may be pressure to improve behaviour or grades or to demonstrate client improvement.

How do school counsellors manage to hold or contain the work in the midst of a chaotic environment? How do they build a therapeutic relationship in the face of constant disruption? How do they hold or contain themselves in this environment? These are the sorts of questions I am interested in. By studying boundary management I hope to explore the many different ways schools counsellors creatively and effectively manage the challenges presented by their school setting. I also want to explore the difficulties faced, but rarely shared, by school counsellors in their work.

If you are interested in participating in this project, please contact me either by email or phone so I can discuss the project in further detail with you and answer any questions you may have. Please feel free to pass this sheet on to any interested colleagues you may have in the field. Many thanks.

Pamela Lawson (UKCP, MBACP, MBPSsS)
Doctoral Student in Counselling Psychology and Psychotherapy
Metanoia Institute/ Middlesex University

Appendix 6: Interview guide

Initial Questions

1. Could you briefly describe the school you work in?
2. What were your first impressions of the school setting?

Intermediate Questions

1. How have you experienced boundaries in schools?
2. Can you give some examples?
3. Are there any boundaries that you find particularly challenging to manage?
4. What is that like for you?
5. How is the work impacted?
6. Can you describe your general approach to managing boundaries?
7. Have you adapted your way of working with boundaries in schools over time? How?
8. Can you give an example of how you might be managing boundaries differently, perhaps more creatively, now?
9. What processes are involved in this management? What is going on here?

Ending Questions

1. How has your training or orientation shaped (or hindered) the way you manage boundaries?
2. How has supervision affected the way you manage boundaries?
3. Have you felt sufficiently supported in this area?
4. How confident do you feel now about the way you manage boundaries?
5. How important is an awareness of boundaries in school-based counselling?
6. What has it been like for you to talk about boundaries in your work now?

Appendix 7: Participant record

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Age: _____

Ethnicity: _____

Training Institution: _____

Courses Undertaken: _____

Qualified as: _____

Registration: _____

Theoretical orientation: _____

Employed by: _____

Job title: _____

Other roles: _____

Days per week: _____

Weekly caseload: _____

Description of school: _____

London Borough: _____

Years counselling in schools: _____

Previous experience in schools: _____

Would you like to check your verbatim material? _____

May I contact you for a follow-up interview? _____

Appendix 8: Example of transcript with initial codes (segment)

Transcript Interview P1

Researcher: I guess if we could begin by you just talking a little bit about your work and where you work...where you work in your school....where you work, what you do..how long you've been there for.

5

Grant: Sure...and it's changed a bit and I think it's very significant to what has changed as well. It's XXX up in XXXX which is a sixth form only college. It's a large one, about 1200 students. So a lot of students. They do have an entrance exam, so I would describe it as a very hot house place, so high achieving, they expect their students to really kind of perform and I originally

10 started working there actually as an unpaid role. It was somebody who had been there a long time became ill and it was a bit of a panic phone call from somebody I know and asked me if I'd go in for probably a couple of terms. So I did and this was usually seeing two or three students on a morning. And then that kind of extended into the next year and then we started getting

15 paid a bit for it and then two years ago the organisation that was placing the counsellors there wound up like a lot of places. They themselves ran out of funding so they couldn't offer any service to the school. The school went back to the main person at community counselling as it was and said could you put together some kind of discussion paper about providing counselling

20 however you see it? So she did. She cobbled something together very quickly and she picked out three counsellors and I was one of them. So her company is XXXX. So I work for her and now that service is externally contracted by XXXX(school) and I go in Monday mornings and I see three slots with students.

25

1

Handwritten marginal codes:

change
Significant change
lots of students
hot house
high achieving
start of unpaid
employment / role
temporary position
2/3 students morning
contract, extended
paid work
change of agency
funding problems
school re(presenting) equally
unprompted bid
picked as part of a team
new agency
boss
contract 3 students
Monday mornings
(period of uncertainty followed by a more settled arrangement?)

19/3/14

Researcher: Yeah, so that's an interesting piece too. So are you employed by the school, are you employed by the external/internal.. so you're an external person.

Grant: Yeah. And I think that's quite significant.

Researcher: Tell me about that.

Grant: Well what I think is significant is a) in a sense I feel we are very independent, you know, when we go in. So one of the things that has changed a little bit and this I was sort of conscious of changing this. I used to go in the main entrance and the head of student services who is an absolute delightful woman and works incredibly hard but is a bit leaky, kind of, so she says 'oh, have you seen so-and-so?' and I (laughs) I..

Researcher: Where other people can hear..

Grant: Yeah! And I actually...she's often got other students knocking on her door, the door might be open a bit, and so I'm kind of... At first I tried to give her enough to kind of satisfy her a bit but also tried and keep it confidential. But I felt quite torn. Because I wanted to, I suppose in a way I wanted to make a good impression at the school and... but also she has another team under her and you've got another layer of potentially leakage..really. So, we kind of re-educated her, a little bit, and she actually went on a counselling certificate course but then her understudies might say 'Oh, I've sent so-and-so to you, did she turn up last week?'. There's even been occasions when this has been shouted at me as I'm wandering through a communal area. I mean it's incredible...

Researcher: Yeah, that's classic, isn't it. It's just one of the many ways you just go 'help!'. And so you tried educating her and that was one way to do it?

Handwritten margin notes:

Identify as external
Importance of external-
ity

external = independent

change in how he entered
the build.t
staff member identified
as 'leaky'

Tries to compromise
offer 'leaky'
try + to compromise
not feel + comfortable
want + to make a good impressi-
vs. protect confidentiality
recognising how information circulates
attempt to re-educate
counsell. course
other staff members leak
extreme examples
of leakage

30

35

40

45

50

2

136

Grant: Yeah, so we did that. And that worked a bit. But now what I do and I've very consciously done this and I think it's much better is I literally avoid the kind of public spaces, the staff room. So I used to go into the staff room to get a cup of coffee, then I'd go to the counselling room. Now I don't. I've found another little tea room, which is buried away, and I like it more. I think people don't really see me around the school anymore. I go straight to the room. I get a cup of tea. I hardly speak to anyone. In some ways it's quite isolating. I miss some of the contact.

Researcher: Yeah, that's where you lose, don't you.

Grant: So I miss some of the contact with teachers. But I just.. I thought it's better. And I'm even conscious of students if they do see me, they see me go straight to this room. They don't see me around the kind of restaurant area. And I think that quite important actually.

Researcher: So that affects how they trust you in the room..how they..

Grant: I think so, yeah. And I'll say to them you know you might see me wandering over to the room occasionally, but you won't see me in the main body of the school. And I tell them we are not employed, we are not part of the school teaching staff. I think (for) that age group that's very important because so often they are used to the quite leakage between student services, tutors, teachers. So we've really this year worked on keeping that much more boundaried and that's good.

Researcher: So you've got together as a team and really talked about how you stay off on your own.

Grant: Yeah. Yeah.

3

137

Margin handwritten notes:

adopting re-educating working a bit
New solution: avoid of public
spaces + staff room
giv'g up niceties (coffee) for privacy

55

likes being buried away
invisible presence
moving way straight to room
downside: isolating, misses contact

60

miss'g contacts w/ teachers
weighed against it's better
students able to see he doesn't mingle

students: see, = importance

trust ↓

tell'g students he won't mingle
tell'g students he's external
age group need'g privacy to trust?
age group struggl'g to trust?
students used to no privacy
working to provide that —
satisfied w/ result

65

70

making a joint decision to
work anonymously.

re-educated to us
decision to keep apart
implies they could not
trust self...

75   Researcher: and then, like you said, it's isolating and they bring all their
     problems to you and it can feel quite a lot. I guess.

     Grant: Yeah. I mean I miss the interaction with some of the teachers. And
     umm I think, you know, we get use of the library, there's some good facilities
     there (laughs) and sometimes you know there'll be talks and things but I just
80   avoid it now because I don't want somebody saying to me 'Oh, I sent so-and-
     so to you last week' and we did have a real issue with one of the teachers
     who...well, I was staggered, to be honest with you. She would literally call
     out the person's name to me and we had to say it's not appropriate at all.
     And I think we have re-educated it but it took a while.

85   Researcher: Yeah. And you had to do that on a one on one basis rather than
     go to the staff room and talk to them as a group. Maybe that wouldn't have
     worked...

     Grant: Yeah, we sort of avoid all that. I mean I used to. I gave a little.. when I
     first arrived in there, I gave a little, a very brief talk in the staff room. I
90   wouldn't dream of doing that, actually, now. I just think we stand alone. You
     know, we get enough referrals, there's enough of a waiting list, so in a way, I
     pretty much keep myself to myself now.

     Researcher: Really interesting, really interesting. Those are really good
     points you're making. So you know my next question is what boundary
95   issues have you experienced and those are really good clear ones. Are there
     other ones that come up? Come to mind in terms of generally...

     Grant: Not really. You know I was thinking of this when I was looking through
     the questions. Because we changed it I might be a bit boring..

Sabotage
?

Staff's
concern

Miss it interaction is (staff
forgoing library privileges
& other facilities

Not wanting names revealed
on teacher being reg

teacher sabotage?
communicated is inappropriate on
re-education

avoiding talking to staff as
a group

early efforts to give a talk

changing his stance
firm in his decision to remain
isolated

no need of referrals. Independence
self - Sustaining

4

138

100 Researcher: Well the interesting thing is what you had to change because I'm also interested in how do we adapt to the work. How do we have to adapt to the school or to the school setting. So yeah...

Grant: I mean there are a few things that more and more...because I was thinking about your questions... I kind of think about. One thing that I feel
105 ..the other side of this is that you do feel like a bit of an outsider. So I get to the front door and I have to you know ring a sort of front door buzzer, used by work people going in and out, and you know deliveries and that's because I haven't got you know a swipe pass which the other teachers have. So you know that , you notice that, and soon as I get in and you know I must put on my ID card because everywhere it's kind of one of these you know 'No ID -
110 No Entrance' all over the place. You know look out for the people with no ID, so I put it on as soon as I and in a funny way I find it just a bit...I don't know, I have to buzz and sometimes reception they might not recognise me, there's a tiny cam thing and well..you know...I've been here four years (laughs). And you know they do let me in obviously. But I think you feel a little bit
115 alienated. Straight away. You know going in this work person's entrance and ...um... and I suppose the other things that have changed, I don't use these smart cards, so if you want to buy a cup of coffee for instance, a decent cup of coffee...um...they don't use cash anymore, so it's these smart cards they load up. And I just sort of avoid all that now. I just don't do any of those
120 things. Because I find that quite often things don't really work, there are these log-ons for the computer system and sometimes you know nobody told me it was interview day for next term's intake. Nobody told me. So I went in and I'm there for three hours and I kinda clock, cause my first student's late. I text them – I might come on to that as well – and you know
125 'No, no it's interview day. We're not in.' And (sigh) great! (Laughs) So three hours, you know.

[Handwritten margin annotations:]

Camus!

respect?

feeling like an outsider

ringing the buzzer
using delivery entrance
no pass like teachers
ID card - not recognised
foreign presence – then person?
slight aggravation of not being recognised.
4 years at school – still a stranger

feeling alienated
delivery entrance!
not respected
not low t access to smart card
unable to have coffee
avoiding but also not engaging
not trusting new developments
frustration
not informed about change in schedule
feeling unseen, unimportant
disconnected.
efforts not recognised

Sartre
L'Etranger

5

Appendix 9: **List of focus and initial codes for P1 (segment)**

Focus Code	Initial Code	Quote
Adapting	Seeing change Establishing independence Avoiding communal areas No contact vs trust Firmer boundaries	"It's changed a bit and I think it's very significant to what has changed as well" (P1.6-7) "Now what I do, and I've very consciously done this, and I think it's much better, is literally I avoid the kind of public areas. So I used to go into the staff room to get a cup of coffee, then I'd go to the counselling room. Now I don't. I've found another little tea room, which is buried away, and I like it more. I think people don't see me around the school any more. I go straight to the room. I get a cup of tea. I hardly speak to anyone." (P1.51-57) "So I miss some of the contact with teachers. But I just…I thought it's better.." (P1. 60) "So we've really this year worked on keeping that much more boundaried and that's good." (P1.70-71) "We've thought about it...we thought, no, we don't want to get in discussions with teachers, get slightly caught up in student services, so we all of us just go to the room and just come out. We don't really have much interface with student services. Just very occasionally." (P1.685-688) "I'm aware that in other places it's much more kind of impact on confidentiality. And people are asked to attend meetings and they're thinking I don't feel comfortable saying certain things but they've been requested to attend meetings or student services have called them in. And I feel we've developed this independence really well at our school so in a way that affects what I've said here a lot. I don't feel perhaps as so..it's not so immediate, the issue of boundaries, as it used to be. But I think it's really important." (P1. 702-709)
Impressions of school	Big school	"It's a large one, about 1200 students. So a lot of students." (P1.8)
Ethos of school	Pressure to achieve	"They expect their students to really kind of perform" (P1. 10)
Contract with school	Starting unpaid Filling in	"I originally started working there actually as an unpaid role." (P1. 10-11)

	Small caseload Getting paid Part of a team Demanding changes Demanding more pay	"Well, we changed it there. We've been more demanding as we've gone on." (P1. 639-640) "You know it's half my day and I could have one client and that would earn me more than we're being paid here for five hours. And we did. And they put the rate up. And the school was prepared to put the rate up." (P1. 644-647) I think the school was spoilt in the past with community counselling which, I think they did charge but it was a nominal amount, and they had that for about ten years. So I think they were spoilt in terms of the rate they were paying. So they were a bit shocked when the counsellors said 'Yes. We want to continue working there but I'm sorry what you were paying before was just way, way below the market rate. So you're going to have to make your mind up'." (P1. 659-666)
Contract with Agency	Funding problems Bidding for services More settled arrangement	"So I work for her and now that service is externally contracted by the school and I go in Monday mornings and I see three slots with students" (P1.23-25) "I think in some ways there's a lot of this now...because it's actually a really small agency. It's just one person. And she's also our supervisor as well as the person who runs the agency." (P1. 653-655)
Leaky staff	Link teacher Leaky staff Wanting information	"The head of students services, who is an absolute delightful woman and works incredibly hard, but is a bit leaky.." (P1. 34-35) "She says, "Oh, have you seen so-and-so?" and I…" (P1.35-36)
Trying to satisfy staff	Trying to satisfy staff	"At first I tried to give her enough information to kind of satisfy her a bit but also tried to keep it confidential.." (P1. 39-41)
Feeling torn	Feeling torn Stepping out of role	"But I felt quite torn" (P1. 41) "I don't know really. I felt he was very, very non-verbal. And that did animate him. He liked that. And in some ways I'd liked to have perhaps done a bit more of that. But I found myself not telling my supervisor too much about it. I felt it was a bit too radical really. It's as though: "No, no, no. That's not what we are contracted to provide". So I kind of backed off a bit." (P1. 364-368) "I will throw a bit of cognitive stuff and,

		you know, more scripts and strategies, that kind of stuff. Reassurance……but sometimes I'm a bit tired and it's kind of like...umm...you know, I think you can't just sit back too much. You need to be a bit more proactive with them sometimes. So I get a bit torn with that." (P1.556-564)
Wanting to make a good impression	Wanting to make a good impression	"I suppose in a way I wanted to make a good impression at the school…" (P1. 41-42)
Re-educating staff	Re-educating staff	"So we kind of re-educated her, a little bit, and she actually went on a counselling certificate course…" (P1. 44-45)
Sabotaging staff	Sabotaging staff	"There's even been occasions when this has been shouted at me as I'm wandering through a communal area. I mean it's incredible." (P1.46-48) "We did have a real issue with one of the teachers who...well, I was staggered, to be honest with you. She would literally call out the person's name to me and we had to say it's not appropriate at all. And I think we have re-educated it but it took a while." (P1. 81-84)
Feeling isolated	Isolating Missing contact	"I hardly speak to anyone. In some ways it's quite isolating. I miss some of the contact." (P1. 57-58) "It is lonely." (P1. 135) "I do miss talking to people. There's people I got to know reasonably well ....but we are much more anonymous now and I think that's best." (P1. 715-717)
Students' perception of him	Students seeing him be separate Telling students he is separate Different from teachers	"And I'm even conscious of students if they do see me, they see me go straight to this room. They don't see me around the kind of restaurant area. And I think that quite important actually." (P1.61-63) "And I think it's sort of a hidden thing. I think if a student perceives that you're not independent of the school, I think things would be different. I really do." (P1.709-711)
Establishing trust	Telling students he is separate	"And I'll say to them you know you might see me wandering over to the room occasionally, but you won't see me in the main body of the school. And I tell them we are not employed, we are not part of the school teaching staff." (P1. 65-68)
Different from teachers	Telling students he is separate Not chasing	"I think (for) that age group that's very important because so often they are used to the quite leakage between student

		services, tutors, teachers." (P1. 68-70) "I feel, you know, that age group is so used to texting, and so unused to a phone call, in some ways. I do ring them sometimes. But I kind of..I don't like doing too much chasing. And it's just my background. I kind of think, well, I'm not going to do too much chasing." (P1. 298-301) "I think there is something about being different from the teaching staff. And that sets you apart."(P1.672-674)
Staying separate	Staying separate	"And umm I think, you know, we get use of the library, there's some good facilities there (laughs) and sometimes you know there'll be talks and things but I just avoid it now because I don't want somebody saying to me 'Oh, I sent so-and-so to you last week'" (P1. 77-81)
Being self-sufficient	Not needing contact for referrals	"You know, we get enough referrals, there's enough of a waiting list, so in a way, I pretty much keep myself to myself now. " (P1. 90-93)
Feeling unacknowledged by school	Feeling like an outsider Alienated	"One thing that I feel...the other side of this is that you do feel like a bit of an outsider. So I get to the front door and I have to you know ring a sort of front door buzzer, used by work people going in and out, and you know deliveries and that's because I haven't got you know a swipe pass which the other teachers have. So you know that, you notice that, and soon as I get in and you know I must put on my ID card because everywhere it's kind of one of these you know 'No ID - No Entrance' all over the place. You know look out for the people with no ID, so I put it on as soon as I and in a funny way I find it just a bit...I don't know, I have to buzz and sometimes reception they might not recognise me, there's a tiny cam thing and well..you know..I've been here four years (laughs). And you know they do let me in obviously. But I think you feel a little bit alienated." (P1. 104-115) "I mean interestingly there's a new headmaster at XXX(School) and I have no idea who he is. I wouldn't recognise him...that's quite interesting in a way. And I'm thinking what's he thinking of the counselling service? Does he know about it?" (P1. 717-720)

Out of the loop	Feeling isolated Missing out	"You know going in this work person's entrance and ...um... and I suppose the other things that have changed, I don't use these smart cards, so if you want to buy a cup of coffee for instance, a decent cup of coffee...um...they don't use cash anymore, so it's these smart cards they load up. And I just sort of avoid all that now. I just don't do any of those things. Because I find that quite often things don't really work, there are these log-ons for the computer system and sometimes you know nobody told me it was interview day for next term's intake. Nobody told me. So I went in and I'm there for three hours and I kinda clock, cause my first student's late. I text them – I might come on to that as well – and you know 'No, no it's interview day. We're not in.' And (sigh) great! (Laughs) So three hours, you know." (P1.115-126) "And you know one of the things that crops up for everyone is that the work is so isolating, I think. You know it just is. Isolating work and it's well documented. I think in some ways, you know, you can kind of miss out as well." (P1.138-141)
Wanting peer support	Wanting peer support	"It's funny because you know at the moment we were trying to potentially set up a little peer group up at the XXX practice. It's kind of not quite worked because we can't agree on boundaries, you know...is it just a coffee... and it really is important." (P1. 135-138)
Stepping out of role	Stepping out of role/Students' perception of him	"And I think the school feels a bit like that. So..you know..first the music teacher..you know I play drums...once she was showing me around the music place and I play a bit of drums and "Oh! Just come in! There's nobody in in the mornings, so if you've got a gap, come in and play drums!" And I did a little bit. But again there's kind of an impact of that because I think..you know..if the students see me and I just kind of thought 'not quite right'. You know I stopped doing that really." (P1. 144-151)
School's perception of him	Room Feeling unacknowledged Long process	"And again this used to really annoy me actually. It really was just a kind of you know..ugh..we'll find a room for the counsellors for the thing." (P1. 162-163) "And you go in and it would be just a mess because it was used as a careers room as

		well." (P1. 164-165)
		"But it changed. And now we're back in there and it's fine now. They have... you know they've got two chairs and a table... but this has taken four years to get to this point." (P1. 175-177)
Problems with Room	Changes in room Inappropriate equipment Noise	"This is the third room.." (P1.162) "We then got moved to a .....(laughs) it was called 'health base' and in fact that's the room we're in now. We've gone back to it. And when I first went in there..(laughs)..I'm saying this as a guy.. I walked in and, I mean bearing in mind we have Muslim students as well, there's this HUGE inflatable penis.. (laughter)... Oh...lordy!" (P1. 165-169) "You know things like we're going to need blinds. Because it's also in a thoroughfare with the gym. So you get a lot of racket a lot of the times. And I find that very disturbing for my concentration let alone the student's concentration. But on balance you just think, hey, we've got the room we want now and so that's, you know, okay." (P1. 177-181) "I think it's me more than them. I sometimes say I'm sorry about the noise outside and they just tend to shrug. I do think that's maybe more my issue than theirs. I think they're kind of used to noises and people coming in and out." (P1.184-187)
Room location (Exposed =vulnerable, Hidden=safe)	Room Poor location Feeling exposed	"The previous one, again the location, you had to go past the staff room so you know.. just inappropriate again really." (P1. 201-202) "Whereas now it's in a separate block near the PE building. But if they're coming there they could be going to PE or all sorts. So it's..I kind of like it..it's more anonymous where we're based now." (P1. 202-205) "I think that's it's certainly better than when we used to based in the main building. When we walked through a coffee area, a recreation area, I just didn't like that. It's absolutely packed, it's full of really loud, buzzy students and you're literally fighting your way through. I just didn't like that. Something about it I didn't like. Whereas now, at least, I can walk independently to the therapy room." (P1.

		216-221)
Existential sense of non-being	Feeling alienated	"Well, I thought long and hard about this and it's partly just feeling a bit alienated when I get there." (P1. 208-209)
Holding risk	Holding risk Not disclosing absence	"One is a student who is..I am quite concerned about, may be a suicide risk, and let's say they don't turn up. I'm thinking of someone very recently who missed probably about three sessions on the trot, having said that they would come. I was aware of her mentioning suicide and I find that very difficult because initially I think I felt quite anxious even leaving the school and speaking to my supervisor. So I found myself thinking 'Is the person in today?'" (P1. 254-260) "So, you know, I could very easily if I wanted to, I could go up to somebody and find out if she is college and I think it's not really appropriate because they are going to ask me or they are going to infer that that person hasn't turned up for counselling and their reaction is a slightly kind of: "Oh, didn't they turn up for counselling? Oh, right..." And I'm thinking.. oh no, no,no... I don't want to do anything about it, I just want to know if they're in school. (P1.262-269)

Categories	Focus codes	Quotes
Managing presence	'Staying separate'	"Now what I do, and I've very consciously done this, and I think it's much better, is literally I avoid the kind of public areas. So I used to go into the staff room to get a cup of coffee, then I'd go to the counselling room. Now I don't. I've found another little tea room, which is buried away, and I like it more. I think people don't see me around the school any more. I go straight to the room. I get a cup of tea. I hardly speak to anyone." (P1) "And umm I think, you know, we get use of the library, there's some good facilities there (laughs) and sometimes you know there'll be talks and things but I just avoid it now because I don't want somebody saying to me 'Oh, I sent so-and-so to you last week'"(P1) "It was taken for granted that I come into the school and I relate to the teachers as and when necessary but I try not to relate too much. So I can keep neutral. If the students want to speak to me about Miss So-and-So I can remain as neutral as I possibly can."(P9) "I think (I'm) invisible in many respects but present in people's minds. So they know 'Oh, Mary has an issue with her mother, let's refer her to the counsellor'… So I'm present in their mind but I don't necessarily see them or speak to them directly. A member of staff might grab me but overall I am pretty much confined to my room."(P9) "The thing is you're a bit limited in terms of contacts. If I need to speak to somebody, I know how to find them. If it's not emailing I can find them. But in terms of…I think most schools anyway, most educational settings, prefer counsellors not to wander around because you know the young people you are seeing don't necessarily want you to see them, with their friends or whatever. So you kind of keep a low profile."(P7) "The lad who I was seeing who had the physical, I can't remember the name of the condition now, he was 14-15 and he was seeing the SEN and he was also having physiotherapy outside of the school. The physio and the SEN were liaising and I was brought into that occasionally. Part of that triangle because I needed to know some of the things that were being said to the physio and vice versa but in terms of sharing information with teachers only practical, very limited, kind of things."(P7) "I think in the beginning at this school I did [go into

the staff room] a couple times but it just felt quite awkward. I think that was just me though. Like I was thinking they have their own little thing going on and you feel like you're kind of there and kind of not. They're not expecting you to be too involved. It's up to you really."(P6)

"I know people who are very involved in school but I felt quite distracted by that because it takes up so much of my energy to do what I'm doing that I don't really want to spend my energy getting involved in all these extra people. The teachers are one thing and then the SENCO is another thing, and then the Head, and the people at reception. That's enough!"(P6)

"I had a very similar kind of feel of joining a huge club of which I was not a member. And particularly knowing I was never going to be able to become a full member of that club because I felt I needed to keep a certain distance and keep things to myself."(P5)

"Albeit being friendly and pleasant and cooperative and wanting to be as helpful as I could and get as much information as I could from a link teacher and other members of staff. But still keeping a certain distance."(P5)

"And that reminded me very much of being shut away in my probation officer's room in the prison and having to deal with members of staff in a way which again I wasn't able to throw myself into being part of their club. It was just keeping on the fringes, really, which had resonances for me."(P5)

"I suppose I did try to keep myself to myself, as much as possible. I'm not saying that's a good thing because I've read so many articles where they say the school counsellor, if she keeps herself really apart, then she's not going to be helpful to anyone…"(P5)

"I did once go into the canteen at my first school. I can't remember what it was… to see my link teacher or something. And she said, 'Sit down. Sit down.' There were all the other teachers around and I felt terribly uncomfortable. With all the other students there. What does it look like? I didn't do that again. But you can't hold yourself completely in isolation. You've got to be…"(P5)

"And I would never go to any staff functions. I never eat in the canteen. I only ever go into the staff room when it's empty to check my pigeon hole. I don't go in."(P4)

"a sense of needing to stay separate, you know, I spent a little bit of time in the common room, teachers' room, staff room, but …just enough to get to know people but it felt not right to invade their space. There was a sense that I needed to be kept a

		bit separate and that I needed to keep myself separate." (P3)
	Being visible	"I was quite interesting that because I rotated appointments I was quite visible and I think it worked in my favour. I often to collect kids from class and the leadership saw me, crossing the playground, getting children. So I was very mobile and I think that worked in my favour."(P10) "I would engage with people, say hi, be polite….I think in that school it was quite necessary to be visible and I knew it worked in my favour. And in the end of the day it's about being liked." (P10) "Umm…yeah….I usually, the sixth form school that I work in, I'm in a day and a half a week and every week. I might try every week to make sure that I'm in the staff room at some point during the week. To make sure I'm seen by members of staff, so they remember I'm there, because I'm only there one and a half days a week. So that they remember that I exist, that I'm around and part of the school and they can refer to me. And also just to say hi and be seen as part of the school."(P11)

Appendix 11:   Memos

Engaging Adolescents - Attaching/Detaching

Notebook: Categories
Created: 14/12/2015 13:19   **Updated:** 14/12/2015 15:12
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This category is harder to define because there is no traditional boundary as such. However, it represents an area where the therapist needs again to be flexible, to adjust her settings, to re-evaluate her approach in order to do the work. It is about creating the conditions to do the work which are linked to the room, confidentiality, presence/role by the theme of TRUST and SAFETY.

How does the therapist engage with the student in a way that feels safe? Looking at the focus codes in this category:
Attending to power dynamic
Working creatively
Working with silence
Allowing resistance
Being transparent
Working pluralistically
Creating a haven

There is something about how the therapist needs to learn to open themselves up to the student, follow his lead, be swept up in his process and allowing herself to be touched/moved by him. The therapist needs to let his defences down - if that is about silence or ways of working - and be entirely authentic. This is one reason why 'Being called Miss' is mentioned by therapists. They are trying hard to be different from the teachers, established a different kind of relationship and the title 'Miss' negates that. It makes me think of Buber's I-Thou relationship as opposed to the I-It relationship a student has with a teacher.
It is about allowing the student to be exactly s they are and they accepted. Creating a haven.

And as we open ourselves to the student and join him in whatever space he might be in, we also need a degree of professional detachment. We need to be alert to signs of risk, we need to be assessing, we need to step in with strategies and tools when necessary and be a reliable source of advice and support. We need to be attuned to what they are needing in the moment and gage the amount and timing of what we are offering.

And in the final stage stage what the participants are saying is that it is transparency and mutuality which is the key piece. Really communicating a clear ethical stance which the student can rely on.

Gaining a foothold

This is the key piece to adapting to the school context. Gaining a position of relative strength from which the therapist can progress her work is often a hard won battle. Without such a foothold the therapist is always on the back foot, on the defensive, and without the necessary support and respect from the school she will become demoralized and she will struggle to have a significant impact.

Obtaining a good enough room seems to be the first part of this process. And having the necessary equipment: telephone, computer, locking cabinet. A link teacher who understands counselling is another important piece. A trusted colleague at the school with whom the therapist can have conversation about the students. Links with other key members of staff, preferably in the leadership team. Then there is the process of learning to walk the tightrope. Therapists usually starting out being quite rigid. This seen around the boundaries of staying separate, staying within their role, confidentiality, being autonomous. Safe-guarding and the need to make disclosures/share information is an early lesson in learning to flex their boundaries. They also struggle around having to chase students and managing leaky staff. there then seems to be decision around whether it is useful to become more embedded or not. Grant has decided not to become embedded, that the students trust him more as an outsider, though this is at a cost to his feeling isolated. Joanna and Sarah are on the cusp of joining a school in a self-employed capacity (rather than through an agency) and are hoping to gain a foothold. Emma is spread across three schools over the week and is not thinking in these terms yet, but is surprised how connected she feels to one of the schools. Rachael as an agency worker stayed mostly separate but worked closely with her link teacher. Kate, Ana, Alice are embedded part-timers while Joan and Octavia are full-time and therefore embedded at their schools. Some therapists will maintain their invisible presence. Other therapists will decide it is in their own and the students' interests to gain a foothold in the school. At this point they will have to become more adept at being both flexible and firm. Balancing staying separate with being visible. Using diplomacy skills, being friendly whilst staying private. Leaning in while containing role.

Staying separate/Being visible
Containing role/Extending role
Being flexible/Being firm (room, referrals, appointments)
Building relationships/ Being autonomous
Sharing information/Protecting confidentiality
School's (and agency's) expectations/Student's interests
Holding risk/Making disclosures
Working with complexity/Onward referrals

Presence - Staying separate/Connecting

I am wondering how or whether to tease apart presence and role. Initially they were separate codes and then categories which I then conflated in the interest of economy. They are very similar in the basic polarity of being separate/connected but role is also about emerging professional identity. In fact, presence and role are closely associated with both the therapist's subjective process and her interpersonal process.

Presence is how the therapist carries herself in the school. Does she go into the staff room? Does she attend school events? How visible is she? How does she navigate the school context? Role is about how she defines her work. Does she write up the disclosure forms? Does she see teachers or parents? Does she make presentations or leaflets? Does she train teachers? Does she do group work? This is also linked with the evolving changes in the profession from a hidden, almost secretive role exclusively devoted to face-to-face work, to a more open role associated with whole school well-being. The focus code of taboo comes in here too where several participants report there being less of a taboo, to the extent of there being even an open acceptance, about school therapy.

silence being punitive and being healing

Notebook: Process boundaries
Created: 07/04/2015 16:00   Updated: 08/04/2015 14:48

Participants also spoke about boundaries coming up in the work. Working with silence was an area where participants felt they needed to be more flexible. Grant talks about needing to ease up in his mind and allow himself to fill silences. Rachael too is happy to talk more. Their model needing flexing when working with this age group and in a setting that can so easily feel punitive. Sarah talks about learning to interpret less and being less explicit in the work. In other words working in the implicit relational domain. Learning how much to name or articulate in the work and how much to be left unsaid and worked through in the relationship. Kate talks about learning to pull back from 'digging' and leaving the student client in control of his material. Her need to hold an awareness of risk but not to dig, to leave the decision to disclose up to him. She speaks about working in the implicit and engaging in deeply relational moment by moment encounters using art and games. Allowing the student to speak through games rather than language. Allowing things to be left/remain unsaid. Grant allowing silence but making it bearable.

Other areas that come up as part of adolescent process: Students asking personal questions, wanting shorter sessions, being resistant (perhaps forced to attend) and unplanned endings. Emma talks about relaxing in terms of self-disclosure. Grant says his sixth form clients ask for shorter sessions and he doesn't analyse that , it's just another area where he is willing to be flexible. In terms of resistance, therapists find ways of trying engage the student. They also spend more time explaining the benefits of therapy and/or have a rigorous assessment phase.

Appendix 12: Analytic maps and notations
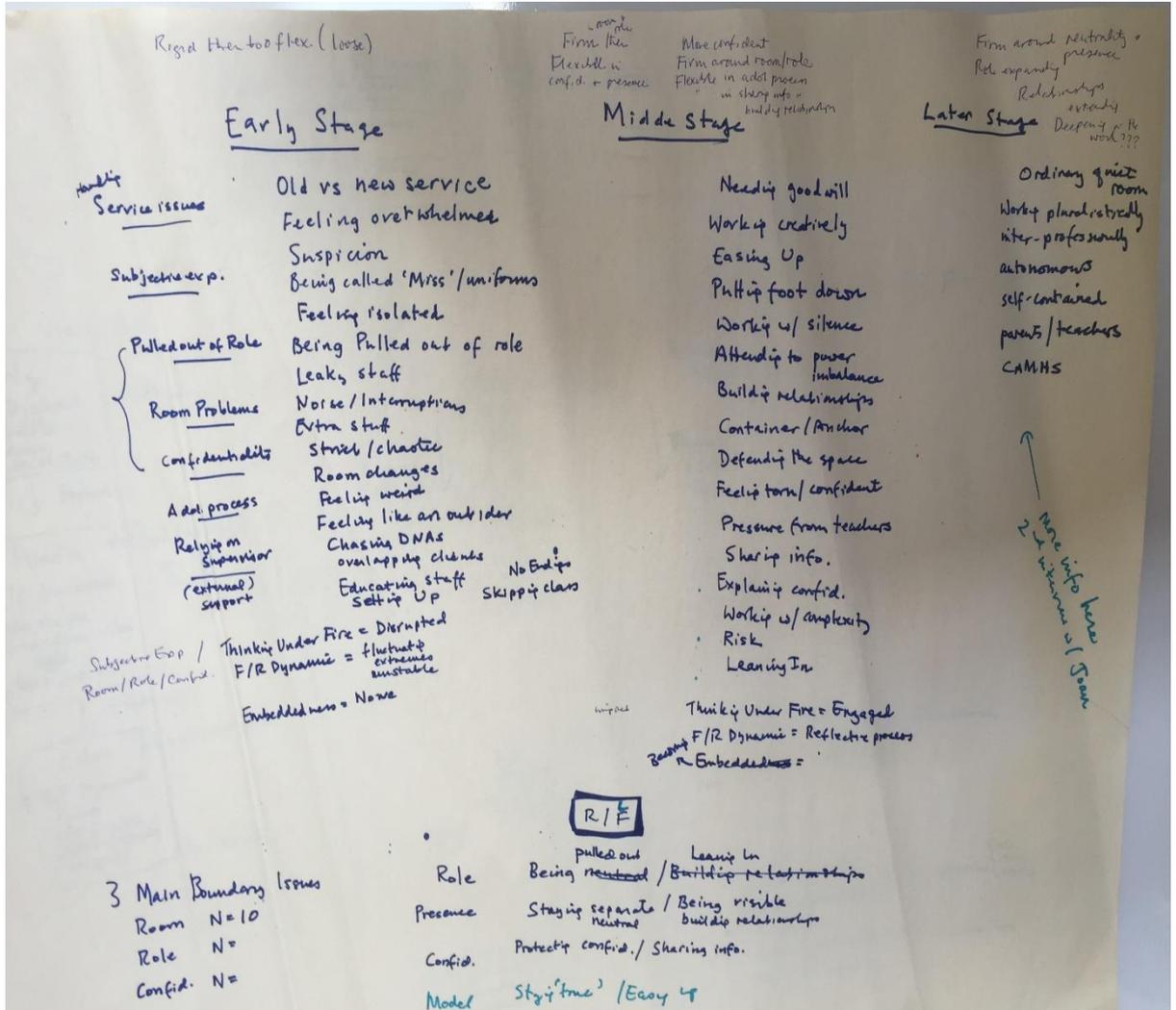
On this flip chart paper I am looking at how the categories and focus codes map onto the notion of stages and looking at how they fit. The smaller number of codes in the later stage has been noted with an instruction to gather more information via a second interview. I am making sense of the emerging theory. In the bottom part of the page, R/F refers to the rigid/flexible boundary dynamic. I am still thinking in binary terms here and have yet to move on to thinking about the dynamic as being reactive, responsive and reflective.

What does this mean? Managing boundaries?

(in inner city school)

— Managing /Defining role
— Defending the space (room) ^privacy   Thinking space
   Protect   anonymity privacy
— ~~Mana~~ Confidentiality / Sharing info.
  Running   contained w/systems   ^referrals
— Managing ~~referrals~~ (appts, ~~chasing~~, parent permission
   Service   (Suitability, assessment)
   caseload
— managing presence &public face
    self + school   (accountability, low outcome
? (— managing expectations (lack of agency, suspicion, achievement)
              (silence, resistance, ambivalence, transference
— managing adolescent process (hiding, no endings, power)
               Severe presentations
— managing risk & complexity (disclosures, inward referrals)
    therapist's subjective experience / countertransference
— Managing ~~no endings~~
— ~~Managing relationships~~ Adapting

Here I am thinking about some of the categories that have emerged from the data. Categories and codes are in the process of expanding and shrinking as I work on the analysis. One of the categories has a question mark next to it - managing expectations – and I ultimately decide to drop that category. Risk and complexity will eventually go back to being a focus code. Running a service will be broken down into codes and moved under another category.

Theoretical categories and focus codes across participants

Theoretical categories	Sub-categories	Focus Codes	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10	Total
Contextual Challenges	School setting	Different values			X	X	X		X	X		X	6
		Suspicion		X		X							2
		Juggling appointments and referrals		X	X	X	X	X	X			X	7
		Disciplinary procedures		X		X						X	3
	Inner-city setting	Atmosphere of uncertainty	X	X	X		X	X	X		X	X	8
		Chaos	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	9
		Diversity and poverty	X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	8
		High staff turnover		X		X			X		X		4
	Clinical Implications	Risk and complexity		X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	7
		Low outcomes/ 'kicks you in the teeth'	X		X	X			X	X			4
Disrupted boundaries	Therapy Room	Noise and interruptions	X		X	X	X	X			X		5
		Changing rooms	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X	8
		Sharing rooms	X	X	X	X	X	X					6
		Inappropriate rooms	X	X	X	X	X	X		X			7
		Setting up		X		X	X	X					4
		Ordinary, quiet room		X		X		X		X	X	X	6
		Tolerating disruption		X					X	X		X	4
		Bearing in mind the environment						X	X	X		X	4
	Presence/Role	Staying separate	X	X	X	X	X	X					6
		Pulled out of role	X	X		X	X						4
		Being visible			X		X					X	3
		Leaning In		X	X						X	X	4
		Being autonomous		X					X	X		X	4
		Expanding role		X					X	X		X	4
		Handling risk and complexity		X					X	X		X	4
		Working across services							X	X		X	3
	Protecting confidentiality	Leaky staff	X	X	X		X		X			X	5
		'Chasing' students	X		X	X	X	X	X				6
		Making disclosures			X	X							2
		Educating staff	X	X	X				X	X		X	6
		Sharing information				X			X	X		X	4
		Being transparent		X		X			X	X		X	5

Theme	Subtheme								Total
Engaging adolescents	Being called 'Miss'	X			X	X	X	X	4
	Encountering silence/resistance	X		X	X		X	X	4
	Unplanned endings	X		X	X		X	X	5
	Explaining therapy	X					X	X	3
	Working creatively	X	X	X			X	X	5
	Promoting mutuality	X	X		X	X	X	X	6
	Allowing resistance	X		X	X		X	X	4
	Being 'philosophical'	X					X		2
	Working pluralistically		X		X		X	X	3
	Creating a safe haven	X	X	X	X		X	X	6
Therapist Process – Internal	Feeling overwhelmed		X	X	X	X	X		6
	Unable to think			X	X	X			3
	Feeling undervalued	X		X	X	X			4
	Gaining confidence	X		X	X	X	X		7
	Feeling anchored		X	X				X	5
	Sense of mission/integrity		X	X		X	X	X	5
	Feeling respected		X	X		X	X	X	5
	Feeling trusted		X	X		X	X	X	5
Therapist Process - External	Being isolated	X		X	X	X		X	5
	Being unsupported	X		X	X	X			5
	Being invisible	X		X	X	X			4
	Building relationships		X	X			X	X	6
	Understanding the context		X	X	X		X	X	6
	Being embedded		X	X		X	X	X	6
	Being underpinned		X	X		X	X	X	5
	Being collaborative		X	X		X	X	X	6
Boundary Dynamics	Being rigid	X		X	X			X	3
	Slipping out of boundaries			X	X				3
	Wanting to make a good impression	X	X	X	X				5
	Being flexible		X	X	X	X	X	X	6
	Being firm/putting foot down		X	X	X	X	X		4
	Needing goodwill of staff/taking context into consideration	X	X	X	X		X	X	6
Reflective	Thinking/holding multiple perspectives		X	X		X	X	X	5
	Being reflexive		X	X		X	X	X	5
	Staying attuned/keeping the student central	X	X	X		X	X	X	6

157

Appendix 14: Cross-checking exercise (segment)

Transcript Interview 14

Researcher: Could you just start with describing the schools or the secondary schools you work in?

5   **Emma:** Okay...they're all in the same borough. And the first one I've been working at the longest. So for about four years. And it's a sports academy. And it's...umm... in XXX, which you won't know but is in a London borough but is actually a rural village. But is a very large school and has a very large catchment area. It's quite unusual because it's a state academy but it has a 10   boarding component to it.

Researcher: Oh, how interesting. So it's a state academy with a boarding...

Emma: And it's also connected to a football team. I think it's a premiership football team. So...and it takes students from overseas who are very good at sport and they do training as part of their school day. So it's quite an 15   unusual...

Researcher: Very unusual. And that's mixed? Or is it just boys?

Emma: It's mixed. So it's roughly half the students are there because they are very, very talented at sport. And half of them just live in the local area, which is quite a deprived area. So there's quite a lot of contrast.

20   **Researcher:** The people who come from abroad must be quite wealthy..

Emma: Yeah. And who could end up being very successful because they could be on a scholarship from a premiership football team and some kids from the council estate. And I also work in an academy in XXX which is part of a chain of six schools. And they have quite a deprived background. And 25   then most recently out of the secondary schools I work at a faith school which is in XXX which is a sikh academy.

1

Researcher (handwritten notes)

+ deprived
rural local, in
large school – large
catchment
unusual (state board
ing)

connected football team
(unusual)

contrast between
students
mixed
local vs talents

Kids w/ future
+ no future

deprived
faith school
sikh

Checker (handwritten notes)

Been there 4 yrs.
Large school.
Boarding component.
Sports School.

Deprived area
contrast – different needs?

Different children –
successful / privileged vs.
deprived.
Also work at faith
school – Sikh

Researcher: How interesting...

Emma: And I've only been there since January.

Researcher: Okay. And how big are they roughly. Do you know what size they are?

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Emma: Ummm....the sport academy is quite a large school, I would say roughly 1500 students. And then the second is a very, very small school. I know their intake for the current year 7 is 30 students. They're really small. But they're part of a larger chain of academies. And so they only serve a very local area. And the sikh school...I have no idea.

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Researcher: You don't know yet. You're new...

Emma: I'm new! I think it's quite large and has a big catchment area because it serves a big part of London. Because faith schools tend to, don't they?

Researcher: Exactly. They have big catchment areas. And

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ummm...fascinating. And so which was the first school you started working at?

Emma: The sports academy.

Researcher: so what were your first impressions going in to a school like that?

45

Emma: It was terrifying! I hadn't been in a school since I had been at school. I have no teaching experience or experience of being in there. And I'd been used to working in agencies. And I'd seen young people, I'd seen school-aged clients in the local young persons counselling agency but I never had that situation where they were in school uniform. And at the sports academy

50

they call female teaching staff 'madam'. So I had these students coming in and calling me madam, wearing a school uniform and just being in that situation where they are used to members of staff disciplining them and

2

Handwritten margin notes:

Researcher

Schools of differing sizes

no teaching background
terrifying experience
used to working in agencies
school uniform being different
madam
used to keep disciplined

Overcodes

Faith school - More recent.

Contrast - size large + small school.

Terrifying.
Not been in school environment since was there.
No teaching experience.
School uniform - Strange.
Being called / madam
Kids used to staff disciplining them

159

handing out detentions. They get sent to this room to see this strange person and they don't really know what the relationship is and I didn't really know much about working in schools.

55 Researcher: And how did you get in there? Were you place by somebody or did you apply directly?

Emma: Umm...my supervisor worked there and has worked there for a long time. And she was talking about how she wanted to start getting people to

60 do placements in school. And she didn't ask me about it. And you know when you are really 'why hasn't she asked me if I want to do it? So I said, 'Can't I do it?' And she said, 'Oh it's really for trainees'. And I said, 'Oh but I've never worked in a school' and I thought this could be the way to go. So I did it, thinking I'll do it for quite a short while. But I stayed a long time

65 because after I'd been there a few months they paid for me to do the training course and in return I promised to do a certain number of hours for 18 months. And after I finished that, I stayed and then they asked me to start seeing teaching staff. Staff clients as well. And then gradually I carried on doing that and they started to pay me to see students and I just stayed

70 there. And I'm seeing more students.

Researcher: So you stayed and started getting paid. So you're there more than one day a week?

Emma: I was there for two days a week. And then I dropped back down. And now I'm just one day.

75 Researcher: And you see how many kids?

Emma: I see four students and one member of staff.

Researcher: So it was terrifying. And going into a school and...finding a room...finding your way around...

3

160

Checker

Noise - like they're killing each other.

Fearing what goes on outside the room.

Distracted by what's happening outside the room

Uncertain of role - will she intervene with other kids?

Aware of other kids as potential clients.

Being apologetic.

Noise - like screams being murdered

Fear about what is happening outside the room.

Weird boundary thing - have to speak to other kids?

Don't have 50mins - clue to ...

Researcher

noise
corridor
worried about her role

room location
noise distress?

Not wanting to discipline -

A different kind of presence

havn't to control noise

80　Emma: And also when the bell goes....or it doesn't go (because it doesn't go in schools anymore) but when they all move and being in a corridor with all these kids who are all getting to their next lesson. And then you can hear them, it sounds like they are all killing each other, but actually.... And I always had this terrible fear that something would happen while I was in the corridor and that I would be...should I intervene? What would be my role?

85　Also...umm... I work in a room off the library. And sometimes the librarian won't be there and they'll be children in there and they'll start messing around and it will be getting really loud and it will start distracting my client. And then I'm sitting there thinking I've got to go out now. How can I say 'Oh can you just..' ? I 'm looking at my client but inside I'm thinking 'oh no!'.

90　Researcher: Well that's a really good boundary issue. Because we are an adult in a school and we are supposed to kind of watch out. The idea is, no one tells you, but the idea is we should all be making sure everyone's okay.

Emma: Yes. But while you're doing it you're very aware of the fact that these people could one day be your client.

95　Researcher: Yes. Yes.

Emma: And umm...so I'm always terribly apologetic (laughter). You know....if you don't mind.....

Researcher: Trying not to be like a teacher.

100　Emma: Yes! But there is that fear that you know. I have been in school and heard terrible sounds of somebody being murdered (laughter) and I've just opened the door and looked out and sometimes that's enough to make them go away. And I haven't had to say anything. But you do think this is a weird...weird boundary thing. And I wasn't used to the fact that you don't

105　have necessarily 50 minutes. Because there's usually a lesson time that ends the session. And that's kind of different. Things like that and worrying about

4

when you make the next appointment is it going to be there their lunch hour.

Researcher: Yeah...do you have to change appointments there?

Emma: I do have to change so they don't miss the same lesson. And then when you're having to negotiate what the next session is, because a lot of them have training, you know you don't want to interfere with <u>training because that's their... and so you're having to negotiate the time.</u>

Researcher: And do they have double lessons? Or do you just take them out for 40 minutes?

Emma: I would never go beyond the 50 minutes. But sometimes they'll be reluctant to leave because they don't want to walk into the lesson. So sometimes we (laughs) chat. And go on a bit longer because it's that thing of coming into the lesson and people wondering where you've been. Yeah, cause people are nosey and they want...to <u>know</u> where they've been. And if they weren't in the lesson they could be anywhere. But if they come back in... for the <u>last ten minutes, it could cause a problem.</u>

Researcher: So you have to spin it out a little with a game or be casual...

Emma: You don't want them going back upset either. They've got to back out to the corridor.

Researcher: Yeah, it's the corridor and you can't go back and see they've been crying or...

Emma: I always have a little mirror in my bag and I'll say to the girls "Oh do you want to borrow my mirror?" because a lot of them where makeup and ...yeah.

Researcher: And so are you employed...are you a member of staff? An outsider? Or an insider?

Handwritten right column (Researcher):

- Worries about timing - it next appointment in lunch

110 — no fixed appointments / juggling times

- Negotiate timings so don't miss some lesson.
- Negotiate time. Aware of their time table.

115 — extending the session

- Time of session.
- Can go on for longer as kids not want to walk into lesson.

120 — nosey people / re-entry rituals clear

- Not wanting them to leave

125 — re-entry

- Upset as have to go to corridor/ lessons.

130 — offering a mirror / prepare for re-entry (makeup)

- Aware of how they will look when leave - not wanting to be seen.

5

Notes on the cross-checking exercise

My codes are immediately to the left of the text, whilst the checker's codes are on the far left. The checker was given the transcript with my codes hidden from view. They were only revealed afterwards. I was given my cross-checker's transcript. We worked together at a table coding each other's transcripts in this way. We then discussed the experience of coding and compared each other's codes.

We noticed that my initial codes were shorter and pithier. While the initial codes are in both cases generally descriptive in this stage, directly reflecting the content, I am trying to keep them more concise. In the majority of cases the checker and I are coding the same information and our codes are very similar. We decided that this overlap confirmed that coding was being carried out in a sound manner consistent with Charmaz (2014). We also noted that, in some cases, it appears I have fewer codes and this is because I was coding specifically for boundary-related responses and leaving aside irrelevant material. We explored whether my shorter codes were missing any key information and it was deemed that nothing was missing.

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w w w . m e t a n o i a . a c . u k

Pam Lawson
DCPsych programme
Metanoia Institute

21st January 2014

Dear Pam

RE: *THE ART OF MANAGING BOUNDARIES IN SCHOOL COUNSELLING: A QUALITITATIVE STUDY (ref: 3/13-14)*

I am pleased to let you know that the above project has been granted ethical approval by Metanoia Research Ethics Committee. If in the course of carrying out the project there are any new developments that may have ethical implications, please inform me as Chair of the Research Ethics Committee.

Yours sincerely,

Prof Vanja Orlans
On behalf of:
Peter Pearce
Chair of Metanoia Research Ethics Committee