

THE LANGUAGE OF AGENCY
IN PARENT-ADOLESCENT CONVERSATIONS ABOUT CAREER

by

HAYLEY TURKEL

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Department of COUNSELLING - PSYCHOLOGY

The University of British Columbia
Vancouver, Canada

Date April 9/03

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore how the language of agency was reflected in parent-adolescent conversations about career. Through the lens of action theory, I sought to gain better understanding of how agency was co-constructed in these conversations. The language of agency was analyzed by a collective case study method, in which the conversational data of three parent adolescent dyads were explored. Agentic language, as operationalized by O'Connor's (2000) writings, was evident in the parent-adolescent conversations, evinced by thematic categories. Agency emerged as a complex and multifaceted construct, expressed by parents and adolescents in a myriad of ways. Their choices in self-expression, their self-awareness and ability to think reflexively, the reciprocal energy of their interactions, their diverging opinions, their sense of engagement and connection within their relationships, their arguments, and their seeking and providing support were some of the many ways that these dyads communicated agency through language and joint-action. The themes are presented separately in each family case study, as well as jointly in the instrumental findings that link the three cases together. This inquiry's findings about agency are generally consistent with the existing literature. However, the socio-contextual nature of this study provides new insight to the construct of agency. Limitations of the study, as well as its implications for future research and counselling are also discussed.

DEDICATION

To those people in my life who never lost faith
and reminded me of the joy of living agentically.

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CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

While conducting the data analysis of a study exploring how Chinese-Canadian families discussed the future, interests, and career of their adolescents, some interesting ideas began to emerge about the conversational style of these families. Often, parents had strong agendas of what they wanted for their children's future, and they were quite direct in their communication of this. The teens responded by respectfully acquiescing to their parents plans for them, or by withdrawing and withholding information when they disagreed (Young et al., in press). Some questions began to arise from this analysis, addressing the manner in which parents and teens talked to one another, and how their dialogue influenced and affected the types of life choices and actions of an emerging adult.

This led me to the concept of personal agency, or an individual's "sensed capacity to bring about desirable outcomes or carry out a task" (Cochran, 1997, p. 29). Agency's etymology originates from the Latin word *agere*, meaning "to do" (Canadian Oxford Dictionary, 1998). It is characterized by intentionality and instrumentality (Plunkett, 2001), a striving for autonomy, independence, competence, and self-definition (Singer, 2001), and "the endowments, belief systems, self-regulatory capability and distributed structures and functions through which personal influence is exercised" (Bandura, 2001, p. 2). I became very curious about whether or not agency was apparent in these parent-adolescent, career-related conversations. If so, how would it take shape? Could agency exist and be fostered in the context of this kind of parent-child interaction?

There are several studies in the existing body of social science research in which parenting styles and practices, such as nurturance, sensitivity, openness, supportiveness,

encouragement, authoritativeness, warmth, individuation in the relationship, and academic involvement and aspirations for their children, are related to agency beliefs, achievement, and active career exploration in their children (Juang & Silbereisen, 2002; Kracke, 2002). It makes sense that the way parents interact with and raise their children would contribute to how the children, in turn, acquire a sense of personal agency; of course parents play a large role in shaping the development of their children. However, parents are not the only ones whose actions and modes of behaviour are influential. Rather, throughout the current trend in the parent-child relationship literature, researchers “acknowledge that parent-child relationships are co-constructed and are embedded in a social matrix that is defined by patterns of reciprocal influence over time” (Pettit & Lollis, 1997, p. 435). Models of such bidirectional influence construe parenting in terms of both the parent’s and the child’s individual contributions, not only to the child’s adjustment, but also to the quality of their relationship. In addition, the association between the child’s behaviour in the relationship and his or her own adjustment is also considered (O’Connor, Hetherington & Clingempeel, 1997).

Indeed, Lollis and Kuczynski (1997) propose a model in which bidirectional parent-child interactions are representative and constitutive of, and best understood within the context of the parent-child relationship. In other words, the reciprocal influences of their interaction are the building blocks upon which a life-long parent-child relationship is founded. In turn, these interactions take place within the larger context of the relationship. Within this model, parents and children are viewed as having equal agency and interdependent power to influence and be influenced by the other. Lollis and Kuczynski call for a new body of descriptive and qualitative research in which the

process of interactions over time helps to build a picture of parent-adolescent relationships, and conversely, the long-standing contextual nature of their relationships helps to create meaning and explain their interactions. In this form of descriptive research, both parents' and children's behaviours and cognitions are means by which their power and agency can be understood within their interactions and their relationships.

One means to achieve this goal is by looking at agency through the lens of action theory. Action theory is a contextual framework or construct that helps individuals deal with, organize, and make sense of their engagement in everyday life, (Valach, Young & Lynam, 1996; Young, Valach & Ball, et al., 2001). From an action-theoretical perspective, action is conceptualized as goal-directed, intentional behaviour, that occurs at three levels: joint goals, the functional steps used to reach the goals, and elements, or specific verbal and nonverbal behaviour that comprise the steps (Valach, Young & Lynam, 1996; Young, Lynam & Valach, et al., 2001; Young, Valach & Ball, et al., 2001). Particularly salient for research exploring bidirectionality, is the action-theoretical notion that action can occur both individually and jointly. In addition, we conceptualize action not only in terms of the manifest behaviour we can observe, but also through the internal processes associated with and the social meaning ascribed to it (Young, Lynam & Valach, et al., 2001).

In the original investigation, the parent-adolescent career-related conversations that took place were part of a family career development project, or a series of joint actions occurring between parents and adolescents in the career development of the adolescent. There, we sought to understand the nature of the career development

projects in terms of their properties, as well as their embeddedness in other superordinate family projects (Young, Valach & Ball, et al., 2001). Here, it seems particularly apt to investigate if and how agency is manifest in the joint action of parents and teens through the vehicle of their conversations about career.

Why is it important for individuals, particularly teens, to develop a sense of personal agency? Throughout the literature, the construct of personal agency has often been utilized as a means to help in the understanding of career development. Indeed, it seems an ever-growing pervasiveness is reflective of a shift in the vocational research toward understanding career development as a process in which active agents not only act in accordance with, but also reciprocally shape their environments (Lent & Hackett, 1994). Lent Brown and Hackett's (1994) social cognitive career theory is an example of a theory of career development which incorporates and integrates constructs related to agency from some of the seemingly divergent vocational theories.

According to Reed Larson (2000), agency is closely related to and incorporated in the notion of *initiative*, or "the ability to be motivated from within to direct attention and effort toward a challenging goal" (p. 170). He sees initiative as an integral part of positive youth development, or "the pathways whereby children and adolescents become motivated, directed, socially competent, compassionate and psychologically vigorous adults" (p. 170). Particularly in our post-modern Western society, where "job demands and basic life course and life-style decisions are not preconfigured, adolescents will need to acquire the motivation and skills to create order, meaning and action out of a field of ill-structured choices" (p. 171).

In reviewing linguist Shirley Brice Heath's research on adolescents participating in youth-driven organizations, programs, and other extra-curricular activities (Heath, 1993; 1994; 1999; Heath & McLaughlin, 1993), Larson (2000) suggests that one means for exploring internal and organismic changes in young people's integration of initiative may be through language. Indeed, according to Quigley (2001), the study of language can be used as a means to construct the self actively. We can observe this process as it is happening through a description of situated language use. If language does help to create reality and if some of the objects and experiences are partly constituted by the language we use to describe them, then the study of discourse can provide information about cultural meaning systems, as well as the speaker's individual meaning. "The language we use in autobiographical narratives displays both our agentive selves (to do with actions, goals, events) and our epistemic selves (to do with beliefs, feelings, wants)" (p. 154).

However, aside from Heath's work, there is paucity of psychologically-related research on the language of agency and young adults, and virtually no body of research exists regarding agentic language in dialogue (as opposed to autobiography or personal narrative). For instance, little has been explored and described about reciprocity or interplay of two people speaking agentially, or how the language of parent-adolescent conversations might relate to the development of personal agency in adolescence. Also, the existing research on agentic language does not then look at how language is or is not subsequently or concurrently manifest in action.

The purpose, then, of this study is to explore the construct of personal agency in the context of parent-adolescent conversations about the adolescent's future, interests,

and career. It is a secondary analysis of a rich extant data set, in which the data have been collected in such a way as to capture the interaction and reciprocity of parents and adolescents in dialogue. Here, agency can be explored as it is happening, rather than in the context of a retrospective autobiographical narrative. Specifically, I will endeavour to find and describe how personal agency is reflected, jointly constructed, and manifest in the language used in these conversations, as well as in the parents' and adolescents' self-reports.

Research questions

1. What evidence is there of the language of agency in parent-adolescent conversations about career?
2. What characterizes the reciprocity of agency between parents and adolescents in dialogue?
3. How is agency reflected or embedded in the organizational levels (elements, functional steps, and goals) and the interwoven manifestations (manifest behaviour, internal processes, and social meaning) of action?

Review of the Literature

Throughout the social science literature, there is a considerable amount of research dealing with the notion of agency. In turn, there are many diverse theoretical perspectives and definitions of what constitutes this particular construct. Although many of these perspectives incorporate similar core tenets, each adds its own subtle flavour to the definition, exploration, and understanding of agency. In this section, I will discuss some of these diverse approaches, investigating and describing agency from the following theoretical origins: personality and developmental psychology; social cognitive

theory; sociological or life-course perspectives; counselling and therapeutic perspectives; and the action-theoretical perspective.

Personality and developmental psychology

McAdams and his colleagues (1996) define agency in highly individualistic terms. Based on Bakan's (1966) seminal work, agency manifests itself in self-protection, self-expansion, and mastery of the environment. It is also defined in terms of what it is not, namely communion. Communion is characterized by relational qualities, such as union, love, and intimacy. Agency and communion are defined as distinct and orthogonal concepts, utilized by McAdams to explore facets of personality and generativity in adulthood. With the aid of the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT), McAdams and his colleagues have proposed four themes to describe agency and four others to describe communion in autobiographical narratives.

According to McAdams, et al. (1996), agency is characterized by the themes of self-mastery, status, achievement and responsibility, and empowerment. The theme of self-mastery is predicated on one's ability to gain autonomy from his or her environment. Once at least somewhat autonomous, individuals endeavour to gain control over their environment while attempting to strengthen their desired sense of self. Specifically, "through forceful and effective action, thought, or experience, the person is able to strengthen the self and become a larger, wiser, or more powerful agent in the world" (p. 346). The theme of status involves striving for a heightened position or prestige, while fulfilling a need for dominance. In particular, status is centred around the quest for recognition and honour from others, resulting from winning a competition, or being "number one" (p. 347). Similar to Bandura's (1989) concept of self-efficacy (see section

on cognitive social theory below) is the theme of achievement/responsibility. Here, individuals meet challenges, accomplish successive goals, and continue to work toward the future building on their existing successes. In other words, "the person feels proud, confident, masterful, accomplished, or successful in (a) meeting significant challenges or overcoming important obstacles concerning instrumental achievement in life or (b) taking on major responsibilities for other people and assuming roles that require the person to be in charge of things or people" (p. 348). Finally, the theme of empowerment deals with sources of power emerging not from the self, but rather some larger or more potent outside force. "One's agency may be enhanced by an association with the agency of others, especially those who are stronger, larger, wiser, or more powerful than the self" (p. 348).

Although the theme of empowerment suggests that certain aspects of agency are found outside the self, it is generally a highly individualistic concept. In contrast to the mostly internal themes of agency are McAdams, et al.'s (1996) themes of communion: love and friendship, dialogue, care and help, and community. The theme of love/friendship is centred around positive emotional bonds, intimacy, and affiliation in close friendship or passionate love. These relationships are characterized by an exclusive quality that highlights the uniqueness of each partner, as well as their bond. Dialogue, the second communal theme, also touches on the fulfilling aspect of intimacy, or the sharing of "that which is inside the self with another who is outside the self" (p. 349). Although one aspect of dialogue incorporates the intimate and intensely satisfying exchange of self-disclosure, it also includes simply engaging in reciprocal and noninstrumental dialogue. The theme of help and care deals with the expression of

altruism, sympathy, care, and helping others in need. It characterizes those relationships in which an individual's sense of well-being is enhanced by providing or receiving "care, assistance, nurturance, help, aid, support, or therapy" (p. 350). Family relationships are included under the aegis of this theme. Similarly, the family is also subsumed under the theme of community, which encompasses the idea of being part of a larger group, whether it is a small group of people (such as a family), a community, or even all of humankind. Community is related to experiencing a sense of relatedness, rootedness, unity, harmony, togetherness, and belongingness to something larger than the self.

Although McAdams, et al. (1996) conceptualized and hypothesized agency and communion as separate and even diametrically opposed concepts, the aggregate findings of the three studies within this journal article do not support such a distinction. Although some overall agency and communion scores were negatively correlated with each other, the effect size was rather small. In addition, low intercorrelations were found among both the agency and communion themes respectively; the correlations for the themes under each domain did not cluster. This suggests that all themes are relatively independent of one another and do not necessarily exemplify the domains they are meant to represent. Nevertheless, McAdams, et al. propose that "it may be more appropriate to see agency as revealing itself differentially in each of four very different themes... Thus, each theme manifests a different aspect of agency" (p. 359). Therefore, even though the themes are statistically unrelated to each other by domain, they still express an overriding structure or mechanism of agency. However, I disagree. It is my contention that all eight themes, including those of communion, are various expressions of agency and that truly

to understand agency, we must also view it in terms of its social and “communal” dimension.

From his previous research, Larson (2000) describes most of today’s adolescents as bored with and disengaged from most of their daily activities. This is hardly an ideal context in which to foster a sense of personal agency and initiative in one’s life. It also does not bode well for the future of today’s adolescents. In our current social context, with its growing career possibilities and progressively less proscribed paths for adulthood, a sense of agency has become imperative in the effective navigation of life. According to Larson, agency is closely related to and incorporated in the notion of *initiative* or “the ability to be motivated from within to direct attention and effort toward a challenging goal” (p. 170).

In order for an individual to demonstrate initiative, three elements must be present. First, intrinsic motivation, or the “the experience of wanting to be doing an activity and being invested in it” (Larson, 2000, p. 172) and having this motivation originate from within the self, is crucial. Second is the construct of concerted engagement in the environment, in which concentration, or devotion of thought and effort, is directed at creating some kind of “order, synergy, or negentropy” (p. 172), while fitting in to the constraints of the external and objective world. The third requirement constituting initiative is that this motivation and engagement occur over time.

Larson (2000) goes on to discuss contexts in which initiative can be fostered in an adolescent’s daily life, particularly in what he refers to as structured voluntary activities. Most of these activities are extra-curricular and involve some structure, or a system with rules, constraints, and goals, to which the adolescents must adhere. Sport is the most

frequent example of these types of activities, possessing all three requirements for initiative: intrinsic motivation, concerted engagement, and a temporal arc. Throughout most of the existing literature, researchers discuss the notion of secondary socialization; the positive changes demonstrated by adolescents through their participation in voluntary structured activities may be a product of adapting to new group norms. However, Larson speculates and promulgates the notion that somewhere in the process of participation, an internal and organismic shift takes place within the adolescent that allows him or her to use the skills of initiative learned through the activity in other subsequent aspects of life. In other words, by participating in and being influenced by a particular social context, adolescents are able to experience internal changes in their sense of personal agency and how they navigate the world. One means for exploring internal and organismic changes in young people's integration of initiative may be through their use of language, which will be discussed in greater detail below.

Similarly, in their meta-analysis of the developmental benefits of youth participation in community service, Yates and Youniss (1996) discovered that agency was among three important concepts related to identity development (along with social relatedness and moral-political awareness). Specifically, the authors investigated the notion of agency through three different types of inquiry: those studies that focused on the characteristics and motivations of their participants, those that explored the effects of service participation, and those that sought to describe the process of taking part in community service.

In terms of the participants' characteristics and motivations, Yates and Youniss (1996) found that the youth were depicted in a highly agentic manner, as active and

intense individuals, possessing a strong sense of control over their lives, who strove to be involved. In particular, personal competence emerged as a key characteristic in describing the participants. Competence was manifested in several ways, such as mastery, engagement in goal-oriented activities, internal locus of control, achievement through independent action rather than through conformity, and the drive to become closer to their ideal selves. Agentic participants were highly motivated, both by the notion of helping others, and by their own positive feelings from having participated. They described their participation through meaningful and inspirational experiences.

In the effects-oriented studies, Yates and Youniss (1996) found that those who participated in community service experienced an increased sense of personal agency. Here, agency was characterized by a sense of competence and efficacy, both in attitude and action, as well as by self-esteem. Thus, by participating in service, the youth gained feelings of positive self-worth, self-acceptance, and self-confidence, experienced greater inner-directedness and conscientiousness, and benefited from a heightened sense of responsibility and personal competence. The authors also suggested a connection between social relatedness and agency. Through their participation, young people were able to gain access to the adult world, where the development of responsibility, control over planning and outcomes, and collaborative and cooperative work were practiced together.

Similarly, social relatedness and agency emerged as interrelated constructs in the process-oriented studies. Here, self-understanding was a key concept experienced by the youth, in addition to responsibility, competence, efficacy, success, and positive self-evaluation. Service participation inspired them to articulate fundamental questions of

meaning (e.g., "Who am I?"), enabled them to take on new roles, provided them with a sense of connection to a wider range of people, places and problems, stimulated new knowledge about themselves and others, allowed them to change self-perceptions from more passive to more active, and to better understand their roles in effecting change.

This meta-analysis elaborated the notion of agency in terms of personal competence, directiveness, efficacy, responsibility, action, self-esteem, self-understanding, and social relatedness. Thus, by investigating youth participation in community service, we gain a clearer picture of agency from a developmental perspective. The findings of this study suggest that agency has strong links to aspects of the social world.

In their investigation of control beliefs, social support, and psychological well-being throughout adulthood, Smith, et al. (2000), also conceptualized agency from both an individual (personal agency) and social (interpersonal agency) perspective. Personal agency was defined as achieving desired outcomes on one's own behalf (e.g., through ability, choices, perseverance, or planning), while interpersonal agency was defined as obtaining positive ends through interactions with others (e.g., by expressing needs or behaving cooperatively). The authors found that personal and interpersonal agency are two distinct, but related concepts, and are both means by which generalized control beliefs develop. These control beliefs, related to the notion of self-efficacy, are described as an overall feeling of being capable of controlling, directing, and mastering one's life, and are construed as an overriding sense of agency. Generalized control beliefs, in turn, are thought to contribute to psychological well-being in adulthood.

Social cognitive theory

One of social science's most pervasive and well-utilized conceptions of personal agency comes from social cognitive theory (SCT). Here, agency is construed as "the essence of humanness" (Bandura, 2001, p. 1), being one of the fundamental building blocks of life. According to Bandura (2001),

To be an agent is to intentionally make things happen by one's actions. Agency embodies the endowments, belief systems, self-regulatory capabilities and distributed structures and functions through which personal influence exercised, rather than residing as a discrete entity in a particular place. The core features of agency enable people to play a part in their self-development, adaptation, and self-renewal with changing times. (p. 2)

Although always somewhat inclusive of environmental and social factors, this theoretical approach and its consequent body of research and literature has evolved over the years from a relatively individualistic to a more multifaceted and contextual approach in understanding and describing agency (Bandura, 1989; 1999; 2000; 2001). Originally, SCT and agency were founded on the notion of triadic reciprocal causation, in which human agency emerges from the interaction and reciprocal influence of one's behaviour, his or her personal factors, such as cognitions and emotions, and his or her environment (Bandura, 1989; 1999). Thus, humans do not merely react mechanically to their environments, but nor can their agency be understood in isolation of personal, as well as contextual factors.

Other fundamental concepts relating SCT to agency are self-efficacy, anticipated outcomes, and goal representations. These three concepts are particularly relevant in career exploration and development (Lent, Brown & Hackett, 1994). Bandura (1989; 1999) considers self-efficacy beliefs to be the most central and pervasive mechanism of human agency. It is through this type of belief system that people feel as though they are

capable of exercising control and producing desired effects through their actions.

Through self-reflection and evaluation individuals appraise their actions, experiences, abilities, and feelings. From this appraisal, one's efficacy beliefs are formed.

Recognizing one's ability and power to produce change is the basis for motivation and self-directedness. How individuals perceives themselves affects the outcomes they anticipate from their behaviour, as well as the kinds of goals they set for themselves. In other words,

It is partly on the basis of efficacy beliefs that people choose what challenges to undertake, how much effort to expend in the endeavor, how long to persevere in the face of obstacles and failures, and whether failures are motivating or demoralizing. The likelihood that people will act on the outcomes they expect prospective performances to produce depends on their beliefs about whether or not they can produce those performances (Bandura, 2001, p. 10).

Self-reactiveness describes a core feature of agency in which monitoring, evaluation, and regulation not only of people's choices and plans, but also their actions and steps taken in achieving their goals, occurs. It is this aspect of agency that also influences an individual's pursuit of endeavours that contribute to a sense of pride, satisfaction, and self-worth; self-reactiveness is the monitoring process that ensures that these positive self-evaluations are met. If not, individuals must realign their goals or change their course of action (Bandura, 2001).

Another core feature of human agency is intentionality. According to Bandura (2001), an act is only agentic if it has been done with intent. Intention "is a representation of a future course of action to be performed. It is not simply an expectation or prediction of future actions but a proactive commitment to bringing them about" (p. 6). In other words, intentionality implies forming a vision of the future and a forward-directed action plan to reach that desired state.

Related to intentionality, but intended to capture a longer-range and more generalized future-orientation, is the core feature of forethought, or the “temporal extension of agency” that “provides direction, coherence, and meaning to one’s life” (Bandura, 2001, p. 7). The cognitive representation of future events, forethought allows individuals a form of “anticipatory self-guidance”, in which “behaviour is motivated and directed by projected goals and anticipated outcomes rather than being pulled by an unrealized future state” (Bandura, 2001, p. 7). So, although individuals cannot foresee the future, their projection of what is to come provides direction and motivation to their actions in the present.

All the above-mentioned fundamental aspects of agency seem to describe the more individualistic component to human agency. However, Bandura’s (2000) thoughts on agency hardly end here. Indeed, he distinguishes between three different forms of agency – personal, proxy and collective. What I have described so far, when considered in terms of a single individual, may be considered personal agency. However, under many circumstances, people are not always able to rely “exclusively on the direct exercise of personal agency and the cognitive, motivational, affective, and choice processes through which it exerts its effects... People do not have direct control over social conditions and institutional practices that affect their lives” (p. 75). In this situation, how does one produce and shape his or her own experiences and life?

Proxy control, or the “socially mediated mode of agency” in which “people try to get other people who have expertise or wield influence and power to act on their behalf to get the outcome they desire” (p. 75), may be the mechanism of choice in meeting ends that are beyond one’s immediate reach. In addition, people may also employ proxy

agency in pursuing a desired end when they are not able or willing to invest the time and effort to develop the knowledge and skill required. They may “surrender control to intermediaries because they do not want to saddle themselves with the burdensome aspects of direct control” (Bandura, 1999, p. 34), such as bearing the brunt of stress, risk, and sole responsibility.

However, at times, individuals may pursue goals that can only be achieved through interdependent efforts, or what Bandura calls collective agency (1999; 2000). Here, people work together to accomplish something they would not be able to do on their own. Not only does each individual’s knowledge, talents, and skills contribute to collective agency, but so does “the interactive, coordinative, and synergistic dynamic of their transactions... it is an emergent group-level property” (Bandura, 2000, p. 75-76). Just as self-efficacy beliefs are fundamental to the exercise of individual agency, so is collective efficacy inherent in collective agency. Collective efficacy refers to a group’s shared beliefs in their ability to accomplish the task set out for them. It influences the types of goals groups set out for themselves, how well they use their resources, how much effort they invest in the process, and how resilient they are at facing the challenges and setbacks in realizing their goals.

Through his conception of agency in SCT, Bandura (2000) rejects the artificial duality between individual agency and the social structures within which it inevitably operates. In order to fully understand human adaptation and change, a theoretical causal structure is required in which social influences produce certain behavioural effects as mediated through self systems. However, although it is socially constituted, the self operates not only reactively, but also generatively and proactively on social systems. In

other words, individual and social structures act upon and influence each other reciprocally. It is imperative that we incorporate such a multicausal approach in the quest for understanding human agency.

The life course perspective

Although the life course perspective conceptualizes personal agency at the individual level, those proponents of the approach explore agency in conjunction with other principles, such as the social and historical context in which the individual lives. Coming from a considerably more sociologically-oriented bent, life course theorists consider that agency is best understood in terms of “the location of lives in historical time and place, the differential timing of lives through events and experiences, and linked lives” (Elder & Russell, 2000, p. 18).

In their research on agency in adolescence, Shanahan and Hood (2000) conceptualize agency at the level of the individual, at the microsocial level of small groups (institutions, organizations, families, interpersonal relationships), and the macrosocial level of society (facilitating or constraining social structures and normative dictates). They term the interplay between these three distinct, but interrelated, levels *bounded agency*. At the individual level, agency is characterized as one’s capacity to formulate plans and pursue goals across the life span. Close relationships, such as those with family members and peers, as well as proximal settings, like school, may influence the shaping of goals and facilitate or hinder their pursuit. Society, in turn, provides structured pathways of work, family, and education, normative expectations of pursuing those paths, and socio-historical structures, such as war, poverty and discrimination, that either constrain or facilitate one’s means and abilities to achieve his or her goals.

The concept of planful competence elucidates the incorporation of the three levels of agency. Based on the work of Clausen (1991, as cited in Shanahan, 2000), planful competence is the “the thoughtful, assertive, and self-controlled processes that underlie one’s choices about institutional involvements and interpersonal relationships” (p. 675). In other words, agency is demonstrated through the individual’s ability to set, pursue, and reach goals that are planned in accordance with the individual’s own strengths, abilities, values, as well as selected social settings, and socially structured age-graded opportunities and limitations.

Although agency at the individual level possesses many of the same characteristics mentioned in other theories and perspectives, it is inexorably linked to, and reciprocally influenced by that individual’s socio-historical context. Elder and Russell (2000) capture the essence of the life course perspective on agency:

In life course theory, the principle of human agency states that ‘individuals construct their own life course through the choices and actions they take within the constraints and opportunities of history and social circumstances’. (Elder, 1998, as cited in Elder & Russell, 2000, p. 18)

Counselling and therapy

From a psychoanalytic perspective, Pollock and Slavin (1998) posit that the origins of psychological distress in adulthood may be related to disruptions in the development of agency during childhood. In the classical psychoanalytic paradigm, treatment is understood as assisting patients in becoming more agentive, namely by taking responsibility for their own motives and impulses. In contrast, Pollack and Slavin espouse a relational approach, in which agency is construed as “the internalized experience of being able to have an impact on one’s relational world” (p. 861). This feeling of having an effect on others originates in the parent-child relationship during

infancy. Here, the mother acknowledges to the child that his action has created meaning, had an impact, or revealed an intention. The infant's perception of the effect of his actions informs him that he is an entity separate from his mother, as well as his own feelings and behaviours. Thus, the child's sense of self as separate from other people and distinguishable from events that take place is sparked. It is here that the first seeds of agency are sown.

However, for those individuals whose initial experiences of personal agency were disrupted and who have not subsequently spent a lifetime experiencing reinforcement of a distinct sense of self, it is critical that psychoanalysis foster the reintegration of agency (Pollock & Slavin, 1998). By being genuine and transparent in the analytic relationship, therapists reflect how their patients impact them. In other words, by showing their own vulnerabilities, and articulating their own agency as therapists, analysts "inevitably recognize something about the impact the patient has had, thus creating a space in which the patient can reclaim her own agency" (Pollock & Slavin, 1998, p. 871).

From the divergent, but also therapeutic, approach of career counselling from a narrative perspective, Cochran (1997) readily incorporates the notion of agency in his work. For him, an agent is "one who makes things happen" (p. 3), whereas a patient is one who allows life to happen to him or her. An agent takes action in shaping his or her own future, beginning with a fragment of that future. Thus, an agent may start with a goal. This goal requires motivation and intention in order to be pursued, and intention becomes elaborated in to a plan of action that accounts for resources and hindrances in the achievement of that goal.

Overriding the notions of taking action and being an agent is an individual's sense of agency, or "a person's sensed capacity to bring about desirable outcomes or carry out a task. A person with a strong sense of agency is one who experiences this capacity to make things happen as meaningful (i.e., it matters) and actual (i.e., it exists)" (Cochran, 1997, p. 29). What makes one's experience agentic is its importance to the individual, as well as the practicality or attainability of the action to be taken. Included in an agentic story can be actions such as goal-setting, choosing, and planning.

Taking action and having a sense of agency work in concert with one another in an individual's career development. Cochran (1997) summarizes this notion:

Combined, the gains of action contribute to a person's sense of agency regarding career. Over time, the person might have a history of achievements or successes in an activity, a growing repertoire of strengths, a meaningful role in performing, and a strong interest. At its best, action is an exercise of agency that strengthens a sense of agency, which in turn encourages one to take further action. (p. 143)

It makes sense, then, that individuals who take an active stance in their lives, whether by planning, goal-setting, executing, evaluating, learning, and achieving, develop a greater sense of agency, responsibility, and direction. In narrative career counselling, one of the aims is for the client to adopt a more agentic, rather than passive approach to life. By highlighting episodes of agency within an individual's narrative of the past, and encouraging the language of responsibility, goals, and actions in a narrative projection of the future, the client's sense of personal agency is fostered.

These therapeutic approaches both take a very practical view of agency and its functions for psychological well-being. Although they come from distinct points of theoretical origin, they share one common, implicit, and very important quality.

Specifically, both of these therapies are predicated on a social construction of agency

between the therapist and the client. In other words, it is the interaction and joint effort of these two individuals who bring their own notions of agency to the table, discuss, negotiate, and come together to foster a greater sense of agency reciprocally in the therapeutic relationship, and in turn, for the client.

Agency and action theory

Although Cochran (1997) uses the terms action and agency almost interchangeably, it is important to understand how action is distinctly conceptualized by the theory that guided this research study. Action theory is a contextual framework or construct that helps individuals deal with, organize, and make sense of their engagement in every day life (Valach, Young & Lynam, 1996; Young, Valach & Ball, et al., 2001). From an action-theoretical perspective, action is conceptualized as goal-directed, intentional behaviour used by agents (Young, Lynam & Valach, et al., 2001). Its meaning is understood and enlivened through the context in which it has taken place. However, we conceptualize action not only in terms of the manifest behaviour we can observe, but also through the internal processes associated with and the social meaning ascribed to it (Young, Lynam & Valach, et al., 2001). In addition, action can occur at either an individual or joint level. The Family Career Development Project and the conversations that took place as part of this research constitute joint action between parents and adolescents in the career development of the adolescent (Young, Valach & Ball, et al., 2001).

For the purpose of this study, it is important to understand the organizational structure of action. From an action-theoretical perspective, action can take place at three levels: joint goals, the functional steps used to reach the goals, and elements, or specific

verbal and nonverbal behaviour that comprise the steps (Valach, Young & Lynam, 1996; Young, Valach & Ball, et al., 2001). What is unique about this particular study is that it is focused at the level of elements, or the words used by the parents and adolescents within the conversations and self-reports. Of course, these elements are still inextricably linked to the steps and goals they describe; however, I believe that language as action informs and reciprocally influences higher-order actions such as goals and functional steps.

It seems intuitive that a construct such as agency should be an integral part of a theory based on goal-setting and action-taking. Interestingly, although agency as a concept lends itself readily to action theory, there is a dearth of existing literature linking the two together. According to Chen (2002), the constructs of agency and action share several similar features, such as meaning, intentionality, purpose, and action, particularly within the context of career. Indeed, "agency without action leads to no end, and action without agency loses its momentum" (p. 121).

Chen (2002) goes on to describe in greater detail some of the shared features and the distinct nuances of agency and action. In terms of the constructs of actor versus agent, both describe individuals who are doing something purposefully, intentionally, and toward a valued goal. However, agency is an internal quality, concerned with outcomes pursued in a linear, causal fashion, while action is a more multi-faceted, process-oriented and goes beyond the individual to the social/contextual level. "Actor in this sense is both a process constructor and a result creator" (p. 124), whose ongoing intentional participation, interpretation, and interaction with his or her environment leads him or her toward the desired outcomes.

Chen (2000) argues that action theory and agency share the fundamental theoretical common ground of social constructionist ideology; however, I would disagree. Although many existing approaches to agency include a social or contextual facet in their explanations, it does not appear that these perspectives view agency solely as a product of social origins. Post-modern theories, such as social constructionism, have propagated the dissolution of the self, rejecting the idea that an individual is the sole creator of his or her own experience, and in turn, they have eliminated a place for the source and practice of human agency. Rather, social constructionists subscribe to the notion that humanness is more a product of the process of shared language than our individual and internal characteristics; we are the language that we speak (Young & Valach, in preparation). However, as clearly depicted from the above-reviewed literature, existing theories of agency still base their ideas about agency as originating from an internalized self. Indeed, how can agency exist if there is no self from which intentions, goals, plans, motivation, and action can emerge? According to Young and Valach (in preparation), contextual action theory provides a structure in which agency can be understood in terms of how it is constructed socially, as well as how it can originate from an internal and organismic self. It does so by being founded on an existential/phenomenological view of human experience:

Agency as we conceptualized it in action theory is not based on the cognitive/rational; rather, it is founded on our embodiment in the existential realities of our lives. As human beings, our bodies are instruments of action that enable the realization of agency. (p. 21)

From this perspective, the agentic self and its socially constructed meaning converge under the notions of intentionality and joint action. Intentionality, a core component of agency, is constructed through engagement in the world, and arises out of a

temporal perspective. Our intentions look toward the future, but are grounded in the present, and are informed by past experiences. Through contextual action theory, intentionality occurs and is imbued with meaning in the field of joint action (Young & Valach, in preparation). Fields of joint action, such as a conversation, project, or career, range in length and involvement and possess varying manifestations of joint action, such as activities and communication. Indeed, within a face-to-face interaction, such as a conversation, communication exists as a continuous flow of information (Mascolo, Fischer & Neimeyer, 1999). One means of such communication is through the use of language. In this particular research study, language is the vehicle by which agency is explored through the joint-action of communication in the joint-action field of parent-adolescent conversations.

Agency as reflected in language

Heath is a socio-linguist interested in the language used by young adults through their participation in structured voluntary activities (Heath, 1993; 1999). These extra-curricular activities, such as drama groups, boys and girls clubs, and sports teams were driven and sustained by the youth involved, were subject to real-world constraints, and took place over an extended period of time, thus meeting Larson's (2000) criteria for initiative. These organizations provided a context in which Heath (1999) was able to observe changes in the language used by the young people involved; from their participation, emerged "a language of agency" (Larson, 2000, p. 177). More specifically, Heath found an increase in four different types of language which "reflect skills to think about the world as a field of action" (Larson, 2000, p. 177): use of conditionals (if-then constructions), use of modals (i.e., "should", "could", "would"), getting clarification from

others (including what-if questions), and use of varied genres and voices in speech (Heath, 1999; Larson, 2000). These types of language reflect the way young people practise and sort out the possibilities and contingencies of current and future behaviour. They demonstrate goal-setting and planful action through the use of what Heath (1999) refers to as socio-dramatic bids, or “let’s pretend” situations (p. 67). What is perhaps most interesting and unique about these young people’s acquisition of a new form of agentic language is that they then are able to take it outside the context of the organizations in which it was learned, incorporate it into their lexicon, and use it generatively in other situations (Larson, 2000).

Although certainly demonstrating an internal and organismic shift in the initiative of young people, these four types of language used are quite general, amorphous, and could hardly be considered inclusive of the many ways individuals express their own sense of responsibility and ability to take charge over their own lives.

In her book, *Speaking of Crime: Narratives of Prisoners* (2000), O’Connor describes and discusses several other ways in which agency is reflected through language. Here, O’Connor looks at agentic language in the context of prisoners’ life stories, including narratives of the crimes they had committed, as well as a telling of the life incidents and experiences leading up to their places in the present. From these narratives, she outlines three general linguistic phenomena through which agency can be reflected: verb position, use of pronouns, and reflexive language. I will describe each in greater detail below.

Verb positioning

When looking at verb positioning, O'Connor (2000) defines personal agency as "the positioning of the self in an act or in the reflection on an action indexed to that person as figured along a continuum of responsibility, in which the subject is more active, more personally and morally involved in relation to the verb" (p. 39). In other words, a person's actions or description of those actions can be perceived by that individual in a way where little, some, or a great deal of personal responsibility is taken. In this conception of agentic use of verbs, the verb structures do more than simply recount the sequential actions of an event. They also reflect the speaker's position toward his or her role in the act being recounted. One lens through which a speaker's actions, role, and position can be better understood is through the aforementioned continuum of responsibility, ranging from deflecting agency (least responsibility) to problematizing agency (moderate responsibility) to claiming agency (most responsibility).

So, what does an agentic verb positioning look and sound like? According to O'Connor (2000), "simple past-tense forms of action-oriented verbs in active voice combined with a personal pronoun subject 'I' are expected in taking claim for an act" (p. 39). Therefore, "I broke the antenna," (p. 39) is an example of claiming agency. Another, perhaps less obvious way to claim agency in language is through what O'Connor refers to as life-assessment remarks, in which the speaker provides rationale, context, moral implications, and personal responsibility when describing an act in narrative. For instance, "anything that I did I put myself in" (p. 46), is an example of one of the inmates in O'Connor's study taking responsibility for the crime that he had committed; here he is claiming agency for his actions.

However, individuals who recount their stories using active verbs in the first person are not necessarily claiming agency. Certain structures in utterances can be passivising, deflecting agency by shifting the speaker's position from dynamic to static meanings, from acting to being acted upon. For example, "I caught a charge" (p. 43) is a seemingly agentic phrase – both the first person and active voice are apparent. But, when looking further into the meaning of the utterance, it is evident that agency is being deflected from the speaker, who likens being charged with a crime to catching a cold. It is important, then to also keep in mind the meaning behind phrases, not simply look at their verb structures, when exploring agency in language.

Somewhere in the middle of claiming and deflecting agency is problematizing agency. These utterances are likely to be embedded in more self-reflective language and may also reveal a speaker's epistemic state or stance on his or her actions. Irony and word plays are often a means to convey this somewhat moral grappling between the speaker's past acts and current subjectivity. For example, one of the participants in O'Connor's (2000) study recounts how he began his life of crime, "On occasion I participated in a lot of stealing" (p.59). This ironic juxtaposition (using "on occasion" and "a lot" referring to the same activity, in the same sentence), as O'Connor calls it, "signals that the speaker is taking a stance on the content of what is told... This 'show' is aimed at the hearer and is also turned onto the self as well. Thus, the discourse of the speaker becomes a site for locating the agency needed to assess a life, not just one act in a life story" (p. 64).

Thus, when looking at verb positioning in an exploration of agentic language, one must look beyond the basic use of the first person and active voice. It is also the meaning

behind the words which demonstrate whether agency is being claimed, deflected, or problematized.

Pronouns and agency

Just as verb positioning cannot always be taken at face value as a sign of agentic language, pronoun use can also have more meaning than may appear at the surface level. As mentioned above, one of the most obvious pronouns that demonstrate agency is the first person, or “I”. During discourse, however, speakers often shift to the pronoun “you”, while still indexing (or referring to) themselves. According to O’Connor (2000), this shift generally serves three main functions for the interlocutor: to distance him or herself from the act being described, to further involve the listener in the narrative, and to problematize, in much the same way as verb positioning, the act being described.

The first and perhaps most straightforward interpretation of the shift from the pronoun “I” to “you” would be to create distance between the speaker and the act. Although O’Connor (2000) did not find many instances of this in her research on the narratives of prisoners, she describes this use of “you” as the impersonalized other, which leaves the speaker out of the act or state described. Here, as one would imagine, less of a sense of personal agency and responsibility would be evident. Again, in this circumstance, the context of what is being said is tantamount in understanding the meaning behind the use of the pronoun “you” and whether it is being used as a generalized other, to separate the speaker from the act.

More frequently used than the purely distancing “you” is an interpersonal “you” which can both distance the interlocutor, while also involving the listener. This involving “you” can bring about a shared sense of agency, including the speaker, the addressee, as

well as a generalized other. Although on the surface it may seem to be a means to distance the listener, it may also be a positioning tactic. This positioning may be used with many sensorial details meant to draw the listener in to identifying and empathizing with the speaker. It may be evinced in the form of an evaluative and speculative passage, indicated by the use of conditionals and future aspect, thus drawing the listener in to possible experiences. It may also be a way for the interlocutor to include him or herself with the generalized other, positioning him or herself as not-so-different from others.

Often this interpersonal “you” may also be used in concert with an intrapersonal “you”. Thus, as above, “you” is used to distance the speaker from solely personal involvement, while drawing the listener and speaker closer; it is a means of both deflecting personal responsibility and involving others. Simultaneously, “you” is indexing not only other people, including the present self (of the speaker), but also another version of the self, found in the autobiographical past of the narrative. In this way, the use of the pronoun “you” can indicate moments of self-reflexive thinking on the part of the narrator. As O’Connor (2000) explains, “the understanding that is achieved is not solely implying a moral understanding but is also suggesting an understanding (or at least an undertaking) that is psychological as well, attempting to figure out the workings of the person’s own mind” (p. 117).

Reflexive Language and Frame Breaks

In addition to verb positioning and pronoun use, reflexive language is a means by which to identify agency in language. A frame break, or a break in the telling of the story to comment on what is being said, can be one way in which reflexive language is demonstrated in dialogue. According to O’Connor (2000),

Such discourse is reflexive because the speaker is contemplating his intentions and his actions, what caused his actions, and choices he might have made. He is agentively showcasing these embedded thoughts or narrated events for the listener and, epistemically, for himself. He uses language as a guide. (p. 119)

Therefore, commentary about one's thoughts, motives, and actions not only provides insight into the story being told, but also provides a means to organise, create cohesion, and foster understanding of the experience of the speaker. Even if the story being told is not one where agency and personal responsibility are depicted, the frame breaks, self-reflection, and meta-commentary on the narrative are acts of agency in and of themselves.

Both Heath's (1993; 1999) and O'Connor's (2000) work provide elaborate and useful descriptions of how agency appears embedded in language. By synthesizing and incorporating these operational definitions of agency, they will serve as my guide in uncovering the language of agency in parent-adolescent conversations about career.

Conclusion

Having explored a sampling of the varied theoretical orientations throughout the social science literature, it appears that agency cannot be fully understood without considering the interpersonal and larger social contexts in which it inevitably occurs. Within the realm of developmental psychology, research on adolescents' development of agency has been conducted within the social context of extra-curricular programs (Larson, 2000) and community service (Yates & Youniss, 1996). In addition, psychological well-being in adulthood has been explored through the concepts of personal as well as interpersonal agency (Smith, et al., 2000). The one exception to this trend is in the area of personality research, where McAdams and his colleagues (1996) still conceptualize agency and communion as two dichotomous personality traits and

functions of generativity in adulthood. Nevertheless, their research has not fully supported this theoretical position.

Bandura's (1989; 1999; 2000; 2001) social cognitive theory has also evolved to explicate in greater detail the socio-contextual facets of human agency. Although originating with the model of triadic reciprocal causation, in which human agency emerges from the interaction and reciprocal influence of one's behaviour, his or her personal factors, and his or her environment, Bandura has also developed conceptualizations of proxy and collective agency, in which agency is co-constructed by two or more individuals. Similarly, and perhaps as one would expect, the sociologically-rooted life course perspective deals with agency through the integration of personal, interpersonal, and socio-historical influences (Elder & Russell, 2000; Shanahan & Hood (2000). Indeed, individuals shape their own lives through their choices and actions, but can only do so in conjunction with the facilitating or constraining influences of interpersonal, social, and historical circumstances.

Although originating from different points of theoretical origin, the psychodynamic (Pollock & Slavin, 1998) and narrative (Cochran, 1997) approaches to agency in a therapeutic context share common qualities. Both of these therapies deal with agency in a very practical manner. In addition, they are both predicated on a social construction of agency in which the therapist and client engage in a reciprocal discussion, negotiation, understanding, and generation of a greater sense of agency. This occurs within the context of the therapeutic relationship, and in turn, for the client.

The action-theoretical approach also conceptualizes agency as a social construction, while acknowledging its origins from the internal and organismic self.

From its existential/phenomenological foundations, action theory integrates the agentic self and its socially constructed meaning through the convergence of intentionality and joint action. The field of joint-action provides a context in which intentional, goal-directed behaviour can meaningfully occur (Young & Valach, in preparation).

Although some of the more recent perspectives, such as self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2002) and action-control theory (Hawley & Little, 2002; Little, et al., 2002) are founded on its organismic origins, they too include a dialectical approach that integrates the internal and socio-contextual aspects of agency. Indeed, there appears to have been a paradigmatic shift in the way agency is currently conceptualized throughout the social science literature. Rather than structure theory to reflect a dichotomy in individualistic and social pursuits, agency has begun to emerge as a multifaceted construct, manifesting itself differently depending on the context in which it is meant to occur. It seems appropriate, then, to consider agency within the context of parent-adolescent relationships. Because agency is reflected in language (O'Connor, 2000), their conversations about career provide a field of joint-action in which parents and adolescents co-construct agency through the action of speaking. It is in this social context that I intend to gain some understanding of how agency is manifest in the reciprocal language of parents and adolescents.

CHAPTER 2 - METHOD

This inquiry is a secondary analysis of a rich and varied extant data set. The original study (Young, Valach & Ball, et al., 2001) was conceptualized through an action-theoretical, qualitative approach, in which a family career development project was identified for each of the twenty parent-adolescent dyads. This project emerged from and was named through the lens of parent-adolescent joint action that took place in conversation with one another. It was then monitored for a period of six months. The analysis of the data was guided by action theory. Throughout this analysis, our research team engaged in a hermeneutic process involving continuous interaction between our action-theoretical conceptualization (Young, Valach, & Collin, 1996) and the data.

A qualitative, collective case study method was utilized in an effort to address the following research questions:

1. What evidence is there of the language of agency in parent-adolescent conversations about career?
2. What characterizes the reciprocity of agency between parents and adolescents in dialogue?
3. How is agency reflected or embedded in the organizational levels (elements, functional steps, and goals) and the interwoven manifestations (manifest behaviour, internal processes, and social meaning) of action?

This inquiry was based on Stake's (1995) approach to qualitative, collective case study. Collective case study is a form of what Stake refers to as an instrumental inquiry, in which a research question is formed and a need for general understanding exists. In other words, the case is instrumental in gaining a better understanding of something other

than the case itself. A collective case study involves more than one case, where both the patterns between cases, as well as the intricacies of the individual cases themselves contribute to our understanding of a particular phenomenon.

Secondary analysis

It is important, here, to address some issues and questions that arise in conducting a secondary analysis of qualitative data. Although it is quite common for quantitative inquiries, secondary analysis is a burgeoning and relatively undocumented approach in the realm of qualitative research (Heaton, 1998). According to Heaton (1998), secondary analysis “involves the use of existing data, collected for the purposes of a prior study, in order to pursue a research interest which is distinct from that of the original work” (What is secondary analysis? section, para. 2). It usually entails a more in-depth analysis of an emergent finding or an interesting sample sub-set from the original study that warrants further investigation. Like the present secondary analysis, this type of inquiry may also be an examination of the original data from a new theoretical or conceptual perspective.

Although a proponent of secondary analysis in qualitative research, Heaton (1998) highlights several methodological and ethical considerations in conducting this type of inquiry. First is the question of whether a secondary analysis of qualitative data is a contradiction of terms. Generally, qualitative research is conceptualized as “an inter-subjective relationship between the researcher and the researched” (Methodological and ethical considerations section, para. 2). Thus, how do researcher and participant co-construct understanding when they are not working directly with one another? Heaton argues that qualitative inquiries are often team-based and that not all individuals on a

research team are directly involved with the participants. Team members rely on one another to provide contextualization and interpretation of the data. In this particular case, I was a member of the original research team. Although I did not encounter the participants directly, I worked in conjunction with my colleagues, who provided rich background and insight into my understanding of the families. I incorporated this understanding into the present inquiry.

Second is the concern around where the primary analysis ends and the secondary analysis begins, as qualitative research is generally an iterative process in which research questions are changed and refined (Heaton, 1998). However, I argue that the theoretical underpinnings of personal agency and language, while still related to the action-theoretical approach that informed the original inquiry, are easily distinguishable and demarcate the primary and secondary analyses quite clearly.

Third is the question of whether the data are amenable to secondary analysis (Heaton, 1998). Here, I argue that the abundance of rich and varied data provide a fertile ground on which many theoretical perspectives can be explored. For my particular purpose of investigating agentic language in the bidirectional context of dialogue, the parent-adolescent conversations and self-reports were particularly apt.

Finally, as researchers, we have a duty to explore the ethics of a secondary analysis, particularly as it is generally not feasible to obtain informed consent from the participants again (Heaton, 1998). In the case of this inquiry, informed consent was obtained for the original study. My thesis committee and I deliberated at length on ethical implications of re-analyzing the data without further consent. In the original consent form, participants were informed that all members of our research team would be

privity to all the data we collected from them (video and audio tapes, transcripts, logs). As I was a member of this original team, we concluded that my continued access to the data would be ethically acceptable. The supervising researcher also initiated a follow-up discussion with the head of our university's ethics committee. He concurred that this secondary analysis would not be violating the agreement made between the participants and the original research team.

Participants

The original study consisted of 20 parent-adolescent dyads who responded to local newspaper advertisements and presentations to community groups requesting participants for a research project on career development in the family. All the families resided in the metropolitan area of a large Canadian city. Each participant individually indicated his or her willingness to participate in this study, and informed consent was obtained before the data were collected.

For the purpose of this secondary inquiry, each parent-adolescent dyad was considered a case, three of which were selected as individual cases for the collective analysis. According to Stake (1995), it is important to understand that case study research is not sampling research. The most important criterion is to maximize what we learn. In other words, cases are best selected when they are likely to lead us to understandings, assertions, or perhaps even reconsideration of existing generalizations. However, Stake does acknowledge that selecting cases with some reflection of representation of diverse attributes and characteristics contributes to our understanding of the study. Hence, in the selection process, I endeavoured to choose those cases that

reflected some diversity in characteristics from the original participant pool, while maintaining the opportunity to learn as the highest priority.

Originally, four cases were to be reviewed for this inquiry. In order to maximize the potential to learn about how agency is manifest in language, I undertook to include several criteria in the process of selecting cases. First, in the original study (Young, Valach & Ball, et al., 2001), each dyad was asked about the progress of their specific family career development project (FCDP), from which three groups of projects emerged: those projects that were deemed successful in attaining some or most of the participants' goals and that would be on-going subsequent to their completion of the formal research study, those projects in which the project itself was redefined throughout the course of the data collection period, and those projects in which the participants did not consider that their goals had been substantially realized. I selected families from each of these three groupings, two from the first (13 of the 20 families fell into this category), one from the second, and one from the third, in order to ensure that a range of projects would be included in my inquiry.

Second, it was important to select families that included a varied gender composition of the dyads. Therefore, I selected one family from each of the following parent-adolescent combinations: mother-daughter, mother-son, father-daughter, father-son.

Third, the extent to which agency seemed superficially apparent was the key factor in selecting families for this inquiry. I read (re-read in most cases) each of the original 20 dyads' first interview transcripts, taking brief notes on the evidence of agentic

language. In the end, I selected four parent-adolescent dyads, who, at first glance, seemed distinct in their use of the language of agency.

Finally, six of the 20 families in the original data set were of Chinese-Canadian background. In order to maximize the diversity, thus ideally increasing the richness of the data, I included one of these families in the collective case study.

Stake (1995) also maintains the importance of making an early assessment of progress to determine if the initial selection will promote the greatest learning about the phenomenon in question. If, upon closer reflection, a particular case no longer seems to have the characteristics necessary to maximize learning, one should not be bound to his or her original selection. During the analysis, two of the dyads revealed several similar qualities. Both of their family career development projects were centred around the adolescents' career exploration, and the parents' encouragement and support of future-orientation, goal-setting, and action. Both dyads were also of the successfully completed/on-going family career development project grouping. As there was an abundance of rich data to be analyzed, one of the dyads was dropped from the inquiry; in the end, this collective case study was based on three parent-adolescent dyads.

Data Collection Procedures

In the original study, the data were collected in the following four stages (see Young, Valach & Ball, et al., 2001 for a detailed description). First, each family (parent-adolescent dyad) met with two researchers who introduced a discussion centred around the adolescent's future, interests, and career, and the parent's role in influencing his or her teen's goals and interests. Some salient family issues would generally emerge from this "warm-up" and the parent and adolescent continued to have a video-taped

conversation with the researchers excusing themselves from the room. The dyads were instructed to converse for approximately 15 minutes. Upon completion of the parent-adolescent conversations, each participant paired off with one of the researchers and separately watched a video playback of their conversation. During this “self-confrontation”, each parent and adolescent watched one-minute segments of the conversation and were asked to comment on the thoughts and feelings they recalled having during that particular minute.

Second, the videotapes from the initial interview were transcribed and the researchers analysed each parent-adolescent conversation in terms of its elements, functional steps, goals, and intentional frame (overriding goals and intentions). From these analyses, narratives for the parents and adolescents, respectively, and joint family career development projects were composed. The researchers met with each family approximately one month subsequent to the initial interview in order to provide them with feedback on the initial conversation, while outlining and negotiating a family career development project (FCDP) for the dyad.

Third, the family entered a six-month monitoring period in which they were asked to log any activities or conversations they deemed to be related to FCDP. Concurrently, the researchers made bi-monthly phone calls to each participant in order to discuss any project-related conversations, activities, and functional steps that had taken place, or goals that had been achieved either with or without the other member of the dyad.

Finally, after the six-month monitoring period, the family and researchers met for a final interview during which the research process was debriefed. The parent and adolescent also engaged in a second project-related conversation, which was then played

back to them in the same manner as the first interview. Also, during the self-confrontations in this final interview, several questions were asked relating background (cultural was not specified), and values, attitudes and beliefs to the joint activities of the project and the parent-adolescent relationship.

Data analysis procedures

According to Stake (1995), interpretation is a distinctive characteristic of qualitative research. Qualitative case study research is not meant to produce generalizations in the way that quantitative inquiries do. Rather, its purpose is one of “particularization” (p. 8), an understanding of the uniqueness of the case itself. By virtue of looking at each case as distinctive, an acknowledgement of comparison between cases also exists. In particular, through instrumental, collective case study, where research questions and case issues may originate from outside the case (i.e., existing theory) and several phenomena are being looked at simultaneously, patterns and similar observations may arise. In these situations, modified generalizations, or assertions, as Stake refers to them, may be drawn. These assertions can contribute to a refinement or an increase in confidence of existing knowledge. For this particular inquiry, then, it was important for me to incorporate an approach in which the most learning could be fostered and perhaps some assertions made. Because this study was informed by extraneous influences, such as existing theory on human agency, action research, and agentic language, as well as previous analyses from the same data set, an instrumental approach was taken.

Stake (1995) further explicates how researchers reach new meaning about cases through not only direct interpretation of an individual instance, but also categorical aggregation of several instances. Direct interpretation is an in-depth description,

understanding, and meaning-making process that focuses solely on the intricacies of a given case. Categorical aggregation is a process of correspondence, or search for meaning through patterns and consistency both within and between cases. Researchers utilize both interpretation and correspondence in both intrinsic (learning about one particular case) and instrumental case study. However, by their very nature, collective case studies would be more appropriate for inquiry based on a search for patterns across cases.

For this inquiry, then, my purpose was to utilize both interpretation and correspondence in beginning to understand agentic language in parent-adolescent conversations about career. I endeavoured to make meaning of the vast array of data at my disposal through a thematic conceptualization. From the original data collection, there were rich and varied sources of qualitative data used in this analysis: transcribed parent-adolescent conversations, as well as parent and adolescent self-confrontations, log books, and telephone monitoring forms. More specifically, by incorporating both Heath's (1999) and O'Connor's (2000) criteria for agentic language, I explored each parent-adolescent conversation at the level of elements for evidence of the language of agency. I also searched the various forms of self-report for further evidence of agency in language structure, semantics, and other behaviours. For each particular case, I conducted an in-depth and detailed analysis (direct interpretation), followed by an examination of patterns and themes across the three cases (categorical aggregation).

Beginning with the dyad that seemed to incorporate a variety of language structures, to possess a complexity in their interaction, and in whose dialogue there seemed to be at least superficial evidence of both agency and non-agency, the transcript

of the first parent-adolescent conversation was analyzed. During this first investigation, every phrase in each utterance (a portion of the dialogue in which the speaker expressed him or herself uninterrupted) was colour coded as agentic (yellow), passivising (blue), both agentic and passivising (green), or difficult to classify (pink). In addition, brief notes were written after each utterance, providing some explanation of how agency was (notes written in red) or was not (notes written in blue) present in the given utterance.

The following is an example of a portion of analyzed transcript¹:

S: I don't want to really design the world I don't think. I don't think I have what it takes to design the world.

- expresses desire
- expresses what he is not capable of (self-reflexive)
- does so in slightly passive way "I don't think"
- making self-deprecating comment?

F: What do you think it takes?

- open question, inviting S to explore and think about what he has just said
- asking S in non-judgemental and non-reactive way to provide further explanation and rationale for his last statement of opinion

S: A lot of technical garbage.

- Using humour as strategy to not have to really answer question
- Could be agentic as a self-protecting boundary strategy, or way to get rise out of F
- Could be way of avoiding further thought and responsibility for his opinions and planning for future

F: Try again.

- although language is a bit forceful, seems as though he is encouraging S to use his brain and take responsibility for his answers
- not letting S get away with joking non-answer
- somewhat aggressively cornering him to answer again

S: To do anything you need a keen mind and a lot of time.

- some cleverness and sarcasm in here? As a means to avoid pressure to be intelligent from F?
- now simply giving the answer F wanted to hear?

¹ All the transcripts were stored on the hard disc of a PC. Rather than printing out and using a hard copy, the data analysis was conducted on computer, using a word processing program.

- Distancing aphorism

F: I would say to design the world you need to have an imagination.

- opening up a discussion, room for debate and sharing of opinions
- providing S with a different perspective, something else to think about
- furthering own agenda and imposing own beliefs on S (you're wrong, I'm right)?
- Addressing S as "you", or generalized other?

S: Tried to hide that one.

- avoiding topic of his own intelligence and the higher expectations that come with this
- self-protective
- lacking agency and personal challenge
- no subject/use of "I" in this sentence - distancing

F: You need an imagination and you need skill.

- see above

S: Yeah. Well skill can come by you learning it, you learn the skill.

- engaged in debate with F
- clearly expressing own opinion on matter
- uses "you" in generalized way, slightly distancing, but includes himself in this "you"

F: You can acquire skill through practice but you can't learn skill. You either have it or you don't mostly. Well that's my own opinion. It's not necessarily, I mean that's why I spent all my time in education, finding out what I was skilled at. And then to find the things that I was skilled at that interested me. Then when I found something that I was skilled at and that I was interested in I did really well. It wasn't hard.

- provides clear and agentic description of his own experience
- explains that it is his opinion and experience
- some message of imposing his experience on S?

S: That's the opposite. I try and find the interesting thing and then try and apply skill to them.

- clearly states his own opinion and process, engaged in process with F
- self-reflective and aware

F: I'm just telling you the way I did it. I mean when I walked into a university I didn't have any skills. What I did is that I took things that I found interesting and I tried to see whether or not I was any good at them. If I was good at them and I was interested in them then I pursued them. But the skill thing, I mean there are some things that some are not skilled at. You know some

people don't have find motor coordination, they just don't have it. There is not much they can do about it.

- provides clear and agentic description of his own experience
- explains that it is his opinion and experience
- some message of imposing his experience and opinions on S?
- informing S of how it is in didactic manner

S: I could do watch repair. That's a joke.

- use of humour and going somewhat off-topic, out there kind of talk
- agentic as a way to individuate from F, to protect himself?
- Non-agentic avoidance?

F: Not anymore. Watch repair isn't much work except for watches like mine where you pay more than the price of the watch to get it repaired.

- Allowing conversation and directing it further off topic
- Speaking in a "this is the way it is" manner

Upon completion of the first conversation analysis, the coded and notated data were sent to the supervising researcher for revision and verification. The analysis was verified to ensure some congruence and consistency in the interpretation of agentic and passivising language.

The original means of analysis as illustrated above was effective as a first step in both the organization and comprehension of this large data set. The remainder of the transcripts for the first dyad (first interview warm-up, parent self-confrontation, and adolescent self-confrontation), as well as the second interview warm-up, conversation, parent and adolescent self-confrontations, and all monitoring logs and interview forms) were coded and notated using the same process.

Once this analysis procedure was repeated for the remaining two families, I went back and re-read each transcription analysis. I wanted to ensure that my original coding and interpretations remained consistent after having completed an initial analysis of all the data. For the majority of the analysis, no changes were made. However, particularly for sections of data that were difficult to code and interpret during the initial

investigation, some new insights were acquired. Hence, I proceeded to amend and fine-tune some of the original interpretations, in order to maintain consistency both within and between the three cases.

Stake (1995) describes the imprecise nature of qualitative case study:

In my analysis, I do not seek to describe the world or even to describe fully the case. I seek to make sense of certain observations of the case by watching as closely as I can and by thinking about it as deeply as I can. It is greatly subjective. I defend it because I know no better way to make sense of the complexities of my case. (p. 77)

He goes on to say that there are few adequate guides that direct case researchers on the process of interpretation, the process of transforming an observation into an assertion.

Also, Stake concedes that this type of inquiry is often propelled by researchers' intuition, their own biases in determining what is of interest or importance, and their desire to gain the most understanding of the phenomenon. Nevertheless, "good case research is patient, reflective, willing to see another view of [the case]. An ethic of caution is not contradictory to an ethic of interpretation" (p.12).

I recognize that while I worked to be patient, reflective, and open to other perspectives in interpreting the cases, it would have been impossible for my biases not to emerge during my interpretations. It is important, then, for me to acknowledge what some of those biases were. First, I was quite certain at the outset that I would find evidence of agency in the dialogue between parents and adolescents. By looking for something specific, guided by theory, and having a very strong feeling that there would be evidence of the language of agency, it seems more likely that I would find it.

Second, having a background in counselling has certainly influenced what I personally deem to be a reflection of agency. From my training and experience as a

therapist, I value one's ability to be expressive, reflexive, self-aware, candid, and emotionally mature. Although these qualities do not necessarily fit the traditional definition of agency as taking action, being successful, and striving for separateness and autonomy (particularly in comparison to its theoretical counterpart, communion), to me they are characteristics of psychologically vigorous individuals. Because attaining these qualities is often challenging, requiring strength, perseverance, and action, I perceive them as elements of the agentic self. Therefore, they were included in my analysis and interpretation of the data.

Finally, although I was looking at these families with a fresh perspective and through a new theoretical lens, I already had some familiarity with these cases at the time of this secondary analysis. I was a member of the research team that conducted the primary analysis of these families (Young, Valach, & Ball, et al., 2001), and had already participated in a thematic analysis of the data. I knew these families, and had already developed some opinions on their interactions. In particular, the father-daughter dyad was very familiar to me, as I had participated in a previous secondary analysis of the original data, focused on the six Chinese-Canadian families (Young, et al., in press). As I mentioned in the introduction, the notion that dialogue was a context in which to explore personal agency emerged from this inquiry. I therefore had some assumptions that this family did not communicate in a particularly agentic manner with one another.

Although I was aware of and attempted to look beyond my preconceptions, I readily acknowledge that their influences are present in this thesis. What I can assert is that I worked to provide a non-judgemental and accurate (if subjectively slanted) description of what I observed from these families' conversations. Because of my belief

that language not only reflects, but also shapes thoughts and perceptions, I endeavoured to write in a way that left room for other interpretations and possibilities. By being mindful of my biases throughout the analysis, I always strove to consider phenomena from a different perspective. In addition, I employed other means to lend greater credibility to my interpretations, which are described in detail below.

As previously mentioned, I conducted a second round of analysis to aid not only in keeping my biases in check, but also in maintaining a consistent and parsimonious interpretation. Upon completion of this second data review, I considered how the information would be compiled and structured into a family case study of agentic language. I attempted several means to conceptualize the organization of the data into thematic categories for the first family, each to no avail. In order to simplify the process, I conceptualized separate categories for the parent and the adolescent. I then subdivided these categories to include all instances (i.e., language structure, meaning, and action), of agency and non-agency respectively. Thus, I created a four-quadrant table with the following categories: parent agency, parent non-agency, adolescent agency, and adolescent non-agency.

In order to enhance the process of data compilation, I began with the family whose manifestations of agency seemed most obvious and frequent (this was the mother-daughter dyad). My rationale for this selection was that with greater evidence of straightforward agency, a broader and more varied range of themes would easily emerge.

Proceeding to review both of this family's conversation transcripts for a third time, all the analysis notations were classified into the four separated categories mentioned above².

I then began to cull the notations together, grouping ones which seemed related to one another thematically. It was from these groupings that the first thematic categories emerged. Once classified, the notations for each category were reviewed for redundancy, with all duplicates being deleted and similar notations being incorporated together. I also re-examined the self-confrontations for both parent and adolescent. They provided insight into and explanation of the parents' and adolescents' thoughts and feelings regarding what was said during the conversation. This assisted me in paring down the notations to the most salient, allowed me to verify some of my interpretations, and contributed new notations to some of the emerging thematic categories.

Once several notations were grouped together, I assigned a tentative name to each category, endeavouring to choose a word or phrase that would best capture the essence of each category's notations. I reviewed all the themes again for redundancy, and for notations that did not seem to fit properly once the category was named. I also looked for instances in which two or more categories seemed to represent one overriding theme, in which case I joined those categories together. Once all the agentic categories were thematically named, I began titling the non-agentic themes, finding that they generally paired well with an agentic counterpart (i.e., "lack of expression" and "expressiveness"). Thus, I had a table divided by parent and adolescent, by agency and non-agency, with each quadrant containing several thematic categories (see Appendix A for each case's analysis summary table).

² Specifically, I utilized a word processing program for PC to create the four-quadrant table and to cut and paste all the notes written in red into the "agency" category and the notes written in blue into the "non-agency category" for the parent and adolescent, respectively.

When the first family's table was complete, I reviewed both the parent's and adolescent's personal logs and telephone forms from the six-month monitoring period. I not only added any other salient notations in terms of language, but I also analysed each form in terms of manifest behaviour reflecting agency, drawing connections back to the existing themes. Once all the analysis notations had been reviewed for all of this family's data, I began to compose the case study.

This first case study was structured in much the same way as the data compilation tables: separating parent and adolescent and their respective demonstrations of both agency and non-agency. Upon its completion and the supervising researcher's review, the first case study was revised. Because of the separated structure of the data compilation table, the joint-action, reciprocity, and interplay of the parent and adolescent was not clearly apparent.

Before revising the first case study, I began constructing the data compilation table for the next family (the father and son dyad), utilizing the same process outlined above. However, before writing, I also attempted to highlight the dyad's main *modus operandi*, or reciprocal pattern in their communication with one another. From this, I began to conceptualize how the separated themes of agency and non-agency, for both the parent and adolescent, were interwoven and interdependent. Thus, when the second case study was composed, not only the evidence of agentic language, meaning, and action was explored separately for each person, but also how these manifestations appeared in concert with one another. A case study was then completed for the final family (father and daughter dyad) and the first case study was reconceptualized and rewritten to

incorporate reciprocity and interplay of agency in dialogue (see the following chapter for each dyad's case study of agency).

As each family's data were being compiled and transformed into thematic case studies, other trends seemed to emerge. I took note of them and revisited them once all the intrinsic case studies were complete. I then reviewed all the data compilation tables, as well as the case studies themselves, for interesting patterns and trends I noticed taking place across the three families. For this instrumental case study, I then revisited my research questions, and drew up my discussion section by outlining some of the overriding, between-case themes as informed by those questions.

Grounded subjectivity

Stake (1995) describes how the nature of descriptive research, such as this qualitative thematic study, is largely based upon a constructivist philosophy, in which knowing the world is a matter of subjectivity. While looking through this epistemic lens, "most qualitative researchers believe that there are multiple perspectives or views of [the case] that need to be represented, but that there is not a way to establish, beyond contention, the best view" (p.108). However, he also concedes that as researchers, we have an ethical obligation to minimize misrepresentation and misunderstanding; we cannot conduct an inquiry based solely on "intuition and good intention to get it right" (p. 107). I undertook several efforts in order to ensure that my interpretations originated from and were grounded in the data. First, as I discussed above, I endeavoured to be aware of and not be bound by my biases.

Second, varied sources of data were collected in the original study. Specifically, each member of the family dyad engaged in separate self-confrontation interviews with a

researcher after the parent-adolescent conversation. During this time, both parents and adolescents, respectively, were given a forum in which their thoughts and feelings about the conversation could be discussed. It is here that much of the data from the conversations was explicated, possibly providing confirmation or disconfirmation of observations and interpretations made from the dialogue itself. Also, two additional types of data were collected during the original study. Specifically, each participant was given a logbook to be filled out whenever a project-related conversation occurred, and monitoring forms were completed and compiled by the research assistants as each participant responded to questions during his or her bi-monthly telephone interviews. Here, we had data that reflected the participants' lives outside of the interview setting, which again may have provided a broader basis upon which meaning could be interpreted.

Finally, I undertook to ensure that my interpretations made sense to others in light of the data. Although the data were not blindly reviewed by a second researcher in order to maximize the reliability of the coding system, portions of the coded and notated data were reviewed by a supervising researcher. In addition, all three families were originally discussed within the context of a research team, and the interpretations within the three case studies were discussed, re-evaluated, and refined with a master's level colleague experienced in both the research and practice of counselling psychology.

CHAPTER 3 – INTRINSIC FINDINGS

This chapter pertains to the findings of my intrinsic or individual case studies. A case study is outlined separately for each of the three families, the mother-daughter dyad, the father-son dyad, and the father-daughter dyad. Each study is structured to reflect the themes of agency emergent from the data analysis. By incorporating many direct citations from the transcripts, I endeavoured to capture the essence of the language of agency as it was manifest in the parent-adolescent dialogue and within the negotiation of the family career development project.

Mother-daughter dyad - Case study

This particular family dyad comprised a single-parent mother and her daughter. The daughter was fourteen and entering grade nine at the time of the first interview, while the mother was employed in the field of market research. From just a brief scanning of the transcripts, it quickly became evident that this family had a consistent and reciprocal pattern of communication. The mother opened the conversation and provided space in which the daughter could express herself. In turn, the daughter appeared to be an equal and willing participant, engaged and interested in having discussions with her mother. Throughout their conversations, there was an air of ease, coupled by a steady flow of dialogue, suggesting that mother and daughter talked to one another regularly and comfortably.

An interesting and distinguishing characteristic of this particular dyad was that the daughter already had some very clear ideas about her interests and how those interests could relate to possible future careers. She seemed to be much further along in her career decision-making process than the teens from the other two case study families, having

already narrowed down her choices to becoming either an interior designer or an architect. In turn, the mother appeared very enthusiastic, encouraging and supporting the daughter's exploration of both careers in order to begin planning processes for her future.

By investigating their use of language through the lens of personal agency, my aim was to provide some insight into the unique qualities of this family. I endeavoured to explicate how both agency and non-agency are manifest in the dialogue, self-reports, and actions of the mother and daughter with the aid of the following themes: reciprocity; expressiveness; self-awareness and reflexivity; initiative, assertiveness, and support; and space and agenda.

Reciprocity

While looking at the use of language in dialogue between the mother and daughter, what first became evident was the consistency of their communication style. Most of the mother-daughter conversations were based on a mutual and reciprocal dialogue, in which both parties seemed energized and equally engaged. There was almost a rhythm to the way each member of the dyad participated in the dialogue, like a ball bouncing back and forth across a tennis court. When the mother initiated a particular topic of conversation, the daughter often picked up on it and proceeded to elaborate the topic at hand. As both individuals contributed to the conversation by asking questions, probing, making suggestions, or providing responses and elaborating with explanations, they both appeared to gain momentum from each other, thus further propelling the exchange.

Building upon each other's utterances, mother and daughter participated in mutual and joint actions, such as the unfolding of ideas, negotiation, and problem-solving. For

example, the mother and daughter discussed the interests and course of study of the daughter's step-brother:

M: Did he go to BCIT?

D: No.

M: No.

D: He's going to Simon Fraser, I think.

M: Is he?

D: Or he's going – yeah. I think Simon Fraser.

M: Or isn't there a college out in Abbotsford?

D: Yeah. There's, there is. It's the –

M: Valley –

D: Valley University or something.

M: Something Valley.

D: Fraser Valley.

M: Yeah. I remember he was going to take the computer CADS.

D: CADS and computer drafting and computer programming.

M: What did he want to end up doing?

D: Something in computers.

M: Not necessarily drafting.

D: No. He just wants to do stuff with computers.

M: Well he should have taken computer graphics anyway.

D: No. He's, he's taking computer programming, computer graphics, computer drafting, computer -

M: Everything.

D: Everything.

M: Oh, okay.

This particular excerpt clearly demonstrates how the mother and daughter worked in concert with one another within their discussion to problem-solve. Each contributed whatever information and understanding they possessed to the dialogue, building upon what the other had said. By asking questions, clarifying, and elaborating reciprocally, the mother and daughter were able to piece together the information about the step-brother, thus allowing them to continue the conversation on computer assisted drafting (CADS), relating it to and incorporating it into the daughter's interests in architecture and drafting.

In sum, the mother and daughter showed a considerable amount of consistency in their conversations. The majority of their dialogue was based on a mutual, energized, and balanced exchange. By attending to and elaborating on each other's utterances, this family's conversations embody the notion of joint action and reciprocity in co-constructed language.

Expressiveness

Not only did mother and daughter share the ability to communicate energetically and reciprocally with one another, but they also shared several common forms of expressiveness. First, both the mother and daughter often spoke in agentic language, using the first person (pronoun "I") followed by active verbs, such as, D: "I made like a stove and a bathroom", and M: "I really work well with lists."

Second, both the mother's and daughter's agentic expressiveness went well beyond the elemental level to incorporate the meaning behind their words and structures. For instance, both provided rich descriptions, vivid details, extensive background

information, and progressive elaborations to explain and provide rationale behind her thoughts, opinions, preferences, values, general life ethos, and plans for the future. Nevertheless, although their speech could be very elaborate, generally mother and daughter bantered back and forth in an easy dialogue. For example:

D: The CADS. That's what I want too, I want to go to UCLA 'cause they've got good CAD (indecipherable).

M: That's the school you want to go to?

D: Either there or BCIT or UBC. Those are all the (indecipherable).

M: And how come those schools?

D: BCIT's good for accounting and stuff, and UBC just 'cause it's near and I can still live at Mom's house, hopefully.

M: So UBC 'cause you could still, you could live at home.

D: Um hmm.

M: But do you know anything about UBC, like for architecture, or –

D: No.

M: No. You – just because it's close, that's it.

D: Maybe free rent, hopefully?

M: Uh huh. And why BCIT?

D: Engineering stuff because Ms. Mace was talking to us and they suggest what (indecipherable). Ms. Mace was talking to us, she, she was talking to us about BCIT.

M: Um hmm.

D: And she said they're really good for like engineering courses and stuff like that.

M: Did she take them?

D: She went to BCIT because she was going to be a science teacher –

M: Um hmm.

D: Science and math. So she had to go to BCIT to learn about science stuff, you know.

M: Um hmm.

D: And she went there and she said they're, they're really good for like engineering courses.

In this excerpt, the mother encouraged the daughter's expressiveness by initiating and opening the conversation. She provided topics, asked open questions, checked in with her daughter, acknowledged what she had said, and generally invited the daughter to engage in an elaboration of the rationale behind her current interests and perceived options for her future. When engaged in conversation with her daughter, the mother also used active listening skills, such as empathy, paraphrasing, repetition, summarizing, and immediacy to help create a space for reciprocal dialogue.

In turn, not only did the daughter have clear and well thought-out ideas about herself and the contexts she inhabited, but she was also able to articulate eloquently their origins and the reasons behind them. In addition, those ideas were generally very well-grounded in reality, adding further weight to the argument that her expressiveness was a manifestation of the daughter's sense of personal agency.

It should be noted, however, that the daughter showed a lack of expressiveness by occasionally remaining quiet and not fully engaged in the dialogue. At times, she answered questions in a closed manner, by providing a simple "yes" or "no" response. At other times, she responded with utterances that contained very little content or meaning. For example:

M: Like every so often sitting down like we did the other day? Like sitting down and-

D: Maybe, I don't know.

M: Have you thought about it at all, like what happens after this?

D: No.

M: Or did you just think "Oh good, it's done."

D: No. I forgot about this I think.

Here, the mother was attempting to engage the daughter in a conversation about how their family career development project would continue although their time participating in the research study had ended. Although she was asking questions and making suggestions as she had many other times throughout their dialogue, the daughter was providing very brief, vague, and closed answers. It is true that the mother's questions were structured in a relatively closed way, inviting a "yes" or "no" response from the daughter ("Have you thought about it at all, like what happens after this?"). It is also possible that the daughter had not yet formed ideas about what was going to happen next in terms of her career planning and exploration, or that she had simply not "warmed up" enough to be fully engaged and comfortable in the dialogue, as this segment occurred early in the second interview.

It should also be noted that the daughter's silence or minimal responses could be construed as a sign of agency. For example, it may have been a way for the daughter to assert her boundaries and not get into topics of discussion that were inappropriate or uncomfortable, given the context of a research interview. Although this interpretation does not seem to apply readily to the previous excerpt, there were other instances within

the conversations in which this might have been the case (i.e., the mother talking about her own "lack of career").

In sum, both mother and daughter shared several common characteristics while in dialogue with one another; they both expressed themselves in a reciprocal, energized, thorough, and detailed manner. Although there were instances in which the daughter, in particular, appeared inexpressive or non-agentive in her speech, both generally used an agentic language structure (pronoun "I" and an active verb) when talking about their experiences, opinions, perceptions, desires, behaviours, values, and feelings. They were also both quite articulate in their conversations, providing rich, vivid descriptions of their thoughts as well as extremely detailed explanations of why they formed these ideas.

Reflexivity and self-awareness

In addition to their similar forms of expression, mother and daughter shared yet another quality in their style of communication. They both demonstrated considerable self-awareness and reflexivity, whether engaged in dialogue with one another, or during their self-confrontations with the researchers.

The mother exhibited her self-awareness not only by describing herself, but also by discussing her role as a supporter, facilitator, and resource person for her daughter. In addition, she was certainly reflexive in expressing her own thoughts, feelings, opinions, values, and beliefs. Possessing a keen awareness, understanding, and appreciation of her daughter, she was quite familiar with the intricacies of their relationship and interaction. In addition, the mother reflected on her relationship with her own mother, and how past experiences and particular patterns had come to bear on her role as a parent:

We talked, right from the time M was very little, we talked. She was given choices, she was given majority of time choices. She was given a chance to speak

what she needed to say. I did not. I grew up in that era where kids just did whatever their parents said they were going to do. "We're moving next week, just pack up all your toys." You had no choice, you had no options, you were a child so you feel like you were chattel. I just as a child felt very disrespected as a human being, I just on a very cellular level I thought this doesn't make sense. I might only be five and I can't actually verbalize what I'm feeling but it just seems so illogical. And I think when we're very, very young we make certain choices in our brains, you know, and I vowed, if I'm in a position as this person, tables will be turned around.

Here, the mother clearly demonstrated a considerable amount of insight into her experiences and feelings. She also discussed the origins of her parenting values and beliefs in terms of the transgenerational effects that individuals transmit from their parents to their own children. While acknowledging that her daughter's feelings, values, priorities, and preferences may have been different from her own, the mother went on to express how she had made a conscious effort to take a step back and not impose her will on her daughter. It was very important that she parent differently than the way she had been raised. This was the foundation of honouring and respecting her daughter's individuality.

Not only did the mother express herself in this way, but she also encouraged and fostered self-awareness and reflexivity in her daughter. During their conversations, the mother initiated a reflexive dialogue centred around the research project, in terms of her relationship with her daughter. She invited the daughter to share her insight into and reflections on their communication and interaction.

M: Do you think this project helped?

D: Yeah, I think so, it helped a lot.

M: A lot.

D: Yeah, otherwise (inaudible).

M: Maybe it did affect our relationship. Maybe we are talking more than we would have.

D: No, we talk lots.

M: You think so?

D: I think we just talk more about this particular item than before.

M: Oh for sure, but I just wonder, because we're kind of required to have conversations every now and then. So, we're focused on having our conversations, maybe we talk more. You might have disappeared into your room a bit more.

Here, the mother first initiated by asking a question, then acknowledged the daughter by repeating her words, then elaborated by suggesting an alternative ("Maybe it did affect our relationship. Maybe we are talking more than we would have"), and finally clarified and acknowledged her daughter's opinion ("You think so?"). The daughter responded, articulating her thoughts and perceptions with clarity and agency: "Yeah, I think so, it helped a lot", "No, we talk lots", and "I think we just talk more about this particular item than before". In turn, the mother acknowledged the daughter's response and provided a further explanation of the rationale behind her own opinion.

Like her mother, the daughter was also able to express her feelings in a manner demonstrating reflexivity and self-awareness, both in dialogue with the mother, as well as in conversation with others. Although this may be difficult for some adults, the daughter easily identified her feelings (and associated behaviours) and was able to discuss them, regardless of whether positive or less desirable. For example, the daughter discussed with the researcher her feelings regarding a segment of the mother-daughter conversation:

D: I was embarrassed about that.

R: You were feeling a little bit embarrassed about saying that?

D: Yeah, yeah. About being control freaks.

R: About, about saying that there, or about –

D: No, about –

R: You thinking that you're a control freak, or about saying that she's a control freak?

D: About thinking that I am.

R: Oh, about thinking that you are.

D: Yeah. I'm embarrassed.

Not only was the daughter aware of her feeling, but she was also able to express it and its origins with clarity and agency. Similarly, she expressed self-awareness and reflexivity of her thoughts, strengths, weaknesses, preferences, opinions, values, and beliefs, throughout the conversations with her mother. As she watched her self-confrontation, the daughter noticed and reflected on her body language: "Well I remember when my mom was still talking about the Cobb houses I was getting bored with that and that's why I was looking at my shoes".

In terms of self-awareness and reflexivity, mother and daughter possessed similar characteristics in their use of language. Both expressed themselves in a way that demonstrated a familiarity and understanding of their own and each other's inner workings. Particularly in terms of their relationship, the mother and daughter shared a dialogue illustrating their reciprocity in reflexivity.

Initiative³, assertiveness, and support

Just as she invited the daughter to share her feelings, perceptions and insights regarding their relationship and the family career development project, the mother would generally introduce topics within the conversations and invite her daughter's participation. Although at times she may have waited for or allowed the mother to begin or propel their dialogue, the daughter often initiated and elaborated points of discussion on her own, without probing or prompting. Throughout the interviews she also demonstrated initiative in expressing self-reflexivity, and there were several reports of the daughter taking initiative through action in the log book and telephone forms from the monitoring period. For example, when asked about what goals she had recently achieved, the daughter replied: "I got a B in drafting, that was my goal. And looking for other courses related to architecture and finding out at Arts Umbrella, although the timing isn't good now". She also wrote about her experience and appraisal of drafting class in her log book, telling "Mom what I was doing; what I liked and didn't like (that I was doing and drafting stuff)".

Also, the daughter took initiative in seeking support and guidance from her mother. By asking questions and using her mother as a resource, the daughter gathered information and planned realistically. In addition, she would straightforwardly ask for her mother's assistance and support when it was needed to pursue a particular interest or endeavour. For example:

D: This summer I've been asking and mentioning it a lot and I don't think you've been listening.

³ Earlier in this paper, initiative was defined by Larson (2000), as "the ability to be motivated from within to direct attention and effort toward a challenging goal" (p. 170). Here, I am using the term in a slightly more generalized manner, inferring motivation, attention, and effort, not necessarily toward a challenging goal, but at starting a process, regardless of how lofty a goal it may be.

M: Okay.

D: (laughing) I thought, could we go to the art store and get balsa wood, please?

M: I never heard you.

D: This is my sixth time asking in like the last two months. 'Cause I got one big piece of it, but I need more to make little houses.

M: When did you ask me?

D: I've been asking forever.

M: Oh.

D: And I need new glue gun stick thingies.

In this particular excerpt, the daughter was very clear, assertive, and specific in her requests for support from her mother. Indeed, her assertiveness was perhaps most baldly depicted by her expression of displeasure at feeling as though her mother had not been listening or providing the assistance for which she had been repeatedly asking. In addition to this segment of dialogue, the daughter was quite assertive in her communication with others, clarifying, correcting, collaborating, and disagreeing in a direct, but gentle and judicious manner. Also, during the initial warm-up, when the mother suggested that she attend a film school summer programme because of her love of movies, the daughter asserted herself with agency: "No, I don't want to go. I want to watch the movies, I don't want to make them."

In turn, the mother generally responded in a relatively open and non-defensive manner. She did not push her daughter into attending the summer programme, nor did she deny that the daughter had been asking for her help in the segment of dialogue above. Instead, she took some responsibility for not having supported her daughter. However,

rather than saying that she did not listen to her daughter, the mother stated “I never heard you.” By doing so, she absolved herself of some accountability, almost suggesting that the daughter did not “speak loudly” enough for the mother to hear her requests.

Nevertheless, the mother was generally very amenable, and in fact, rather enthusiastic about providing support for her daughter. Whether it was supporting her in a tangible and more physical manner, such as making plans to buy needed building supplies (the mother did so soon after the segment of dialogue above), or by emotional means, such as encouragement, positive reinforcement, and enthusiasm, the mother was very responsive to her daughter’s needs. For example, the daughter introduced the idea of working for a friend of her mother’s:

D: J is cool. He, he offered me a painting job once.

M: He would be a fascinating person for you to work with because he would teach you an awful lot. He would teach you some incredible stuff.

D: Yeah. I want to do that, that (indecipherable) stuff with the paint brush.

M: Oh, you should see one of the apartments that he was doing. It, it was just – we walked – it’s like a little apartment in the west end and you walk down the hall and it’s ugly – like a 1970’s ugly job. And it’s got ugly like wood stripe plastered to the hallway. It’s just awful. And then we open up the door to go into this apartment and it’s like a gothic medieval home.

D: Cool.

M: And, and it’s (indecipherable).

D: Does - it looks like there’s like stones in the wall?

M: Oh, plaster and he’s got – and then you go on the balcony and the balcony’s tiny. It’s like smaller than this room, but this is where this guy’s like covered it in ivy and there’s a, a fountain, a lion’s head fountain and you’re – it’s not like you’re even in the west end, you’re not in an apartment. It’s really – and, and it’s beautiful. And J has done the kitchen which is like being in an Italian kitchen with all the terra cotta.

D: Cool. Oh, it's -

M: And the floors - it's beautiful. He's done the tile, he did, he did the living room.

Here, the daughter took initiative to introduce another means by which she could explore and gain experience in an area of interest and possible future career. She incorporated an idea from the past into the current dialogue, to which the mother's enthusiasm was immediately ignited. By providing interesting information, rich and detailed descriptions, positive reinforcement, and abundant rationale as to the positive aspects of her daughter's idea, the mother clearly supported the daughter in her career exploration. In other words, by providing this detail and explanation, the mother demonstrated her excitement, enthusiasm, and resulting support regarding the daughter's notion of becoming an apprentice painter.

In sum, the daughter demonstrated agency by initiating conversations with her mother, by taking action to achieve her goals, and by expressing herself assertively. With excitement, enthusiasm, and openness, the mother responded to, and perhaps reinforced, the daughter's initiative and assertive requests for her support and guidance.

Space and agenda

Her acknowledgement, encouragement, and reinforcement of her daughter's interests and aptitudes, as well as the internalization and expression of those interests with enthusiasm, demonstrate how the mother's language was greatly centred around her daughter. This, in turn, seemed to create and facilitate a space in which the daughter could continue to develop her own sense of agency. For example, the daughter took initiative in introducing a topic of interest. Here, the design on the interview room wall

caught her eye and the daughter shared what she saw with her mother, changing the topic of conversation rather abruptly:

M: Um, I don't really have a career. I kind of did in film, but –

D: Isn't that like sort of like a dragon's head?

M: Yeah. (indecipherable).

D: I just thought I'd show you. It looks sort of like you know, it's like a gargoyle or dragon's head.

M: Like a miniature.

D: Yeah. Can you see the (indecipherable)? Oh, we gotta go to Miniature World again.

M: I was just thinking about that 'cause you really like the little houses and stuff.

D: (laughing) The little people. You know that would be a cool job (indecipherable). I like the one next to the saloon one and you can look into the, into the houses.

(pause)

M: Didn't you say one time you wanted to, you wanted to know how to make models, like those –

D: Yeah.

M: Like what you (laughing) wanted to do in architecture was actually make some models.

D: That's what I wanted to do and that would still be a cool job.

M: But how do you – that's, see that's what I mean. It's like who do you talk to, to find out how you get that job? Well they do, I know they do it down on Granville Island. You could just go – like could you just go down and talk to them? You were thinking about that course – oh, that Arts Umbrella thing, too.

D: That drafting one, yeah. I want to take that.

M: Do you want to do that one?

D: But first I want to – I could do that in the spring session ‘cause if I start drafting in high school and I don’t like it at all –

M: Um hmm.

D: If it totally bores me and it’s totally awful, then I don’t want to spend – waste our money on, on a drafting course outside of school.

M: Okay. That makes sense. And then... try the course at Arts Umbrella in the spring.

The mother provided insight into her thoughts and feelings regarding this segment of dialogue during the self-confrontation with the researcher:

Well it’s, well I just love how M can change subjects so quickly. And I don’t know why she does that. Sometimes out of feeling uncomfortable... I was thinking it just now again, is just how her mind flits to a creative thing. It’s like “yeah, we’re talking about this, now look at this. Like, like to visualize it, this looks like a little dragon’s head.”... And it’s not what I wanted to talk about at that moment, but I thought okay, I’ll shut up and just let her have that creative moment.... And to see it and let her get into whatever it is she needs to say about that, which then led into this whole other thing of you know, it’s miniatures. As soon as I said miniature I thought of Miniature World and then she said it. The, the place out in Victoria that I, I knew that she loved and, and actually it leads into the next little bit.

What began as the mother allowing the daughter “her creative moment” turned into a reflection of the daughter’s past experiences, a discussion of her interests, and an exploration of how they relate to a possible future career. The mother encouraged the daughter to utilize this reflection, discussion, and exploration to learn from, plan and project into the future. It is perhaps from the agentic space created within their dialogue that the daughter was able to develop and internalize a means of forward thinking. This future orientation manifested itself in several ways, such as looking ahead, goal-setting, and planning the steps needed to achieve her goals.

In the excerpt above, the mother invited the daughter to engage in a sociodramatic bid of the future. In this instance, the daughter envisioned the possibility of squandering

money on a drafting course in which she was not interested. Instead, she planned to enrol in a drafting course offered at her high school to test the waters. From imagining possible future outcomes, the daughter was able to weigh contingencies and plan accordingly. There were several other instances throughout the conversations and self-confrontations in which the daughter engaged in sociodramatic bids in order to plan appropriate steps and set realistic goals for the future.

A related point of particular interest is that the daughter reported following through on some of the goals and steps she set out for herself. For example, there were several personal log entries in which the daughter discussed taking and evaluating her interest, aptitude, and enjoyment of the aforementioned high school drafting course. She did in fact follow up on her planning to take the course and evaluate it. Also, the family career development project for this dyad was *having fun and exploring both architecture and interior design, with no pressure on the daughter to make a decision at this time*. Indeed, although there was no pressure for the daughter to make a decision, this goal was achieved throughout the evolution of the family career development project; by the end of their participation in the research, the daughter had undergone an extensive career exploration. She had eliminated interior design as a possible future career and made a decision to pursue architecture.

Although the mother created space and facilitated forward thinking and agentic behaviour such as goal-setting, there were times during which her own agenda for her daughter came to the forefront. Very often, the mother's goals and desires for her daughter were shared by the daughter. However, this was not always the case. For example, the mother suggested some ways to carry on the family career development

project in anticipation of the family's participation in the research study drawing to a close:

M: Do you want to spend some time this summer, like that brainstorming idea, just looking at a whole bunch of ideas and maybe getting like a-

D: You know it is summer, right? I also just want to go out downtown everyday.

M: I just mean we'd spend like a day. Like it doesn't have to be an every single day kind of thing.

Here, the mother seemed to have an idea for the project to be maintained in a somewhat structured way. She made a suggestion of one way that her facilitation and her daughter's exploration of her future career could continue to be manifest. The daughter did not seem very keen on her mother's idea, placing a higher priority on enjoying her leisure time throughout the summer. However, the conversation does not end here. The mother continues to provide suggestions and alternatives, convincing the daughter until she agrees to participate. Although the mother is willing to adapt her ideas until they fit with a vision that suits the daughter, she might have created a greater space in which the daughter could form her own plans to achieve the goal of uncovering more information about post-secondary training in architecture.

As this example illustrates, the mother was normally relatively flexible in letting go of or adapting her agenda when it did not fit with the daughter's visions of her own future. There was, however, one very clear exception to this pattern:

M: Or looking at the requirements you're going to need. That's kind of what you're, I don't think it's looking at if you're going to go, you are going, to post-secondary education. That's not the question.

D: I am, am I?

M: Yeah, you are, it was decided before you were born actually.

The mother acknowledged that having some regrets about not completing her own university degree may have fuelled her determination for her daughter to pursue a post-secondary education. Although she was not normally so directive in her parenting style, this was one case in which the mother was unwilling to budge or compromise, should the daughter disagree. The mother explains to the researcher during her self-confrontation:

Yeah, and I anticipated that you know, as a teenager if there would be one big fight that we would have, it would be the fact that she would do this whether she wanted to or not - that she would just get it out of the way, satisfy her mother and then she could do whatever she wanted. She could push a broom or sell-

The daughter knew herself quite well, and thus could differentiate herself, or what defined her (interests, opinions, ideas, etc.), from others. In those moments when the daughter perceived that her mother's agenda was being imposed upon her, she began to feel as though her choices were being stifled and constrained. She discussed the same segment of dialogue during her self-confrontation with the researcher:

[I was] also feeling just a little bit shocked too to hear that I have no real choice in the matter of whether or not I was going to university, it was just which one I had the choice in. It was a little like, "Oh, okay, (inaudible)" I mean, I know I'm going to go for me-

Interestingly, the mother anticipated that the daughter might resist her decree of post-secondary education. Indeed, the daughter expressed feeling unimpressed. However, it was not due to the fact that she disagreed with her mother's plans. In fact, the daughter stated, "I know I'm going to go [to university or college] for me." Rather, it is my guess that the daughter's discomfort was centred around feeling as though she had "no real choice in the matter", that the space for her own decisions and agency were thwarted by her mother's edict.

In conclusion, although there were occurrences during which the mother's agenda came to the forefront of the dialogue, mother and daughter generally conversed in a similar and equal manner. Throughout their reciprocal, reflexive, and expressive dialogue, each of their agentive selves was able to emerge. By encouraging, supporting, reinforcing, opening discussion, suggesting, providing information, listening, and respecting, the mother helped to create a space in which the daughter could engage, take initiative, envision the future, and begin to take steps to achieve her goals. Perhaps rooted in respect and admiration for one another, this mother and daughter worked together in their interactions, whether as complex as planning for the future, or as straightforward as deciding what to have for dinner.

Father-son dyad – Case Study

This family comprised a single father and a son who was sixteen and in grade nine at the time of the first interview. Interestingly, both father and son seemed quite similar in several respects; they both appeared intelligent, articulate, and adept at reflecting on their own and each other's feelings, thoughts, and behaviours. Their unique relationship was characterized by sensitivity to and awareness of their interaction, while their dialogue was rich with intricacies that reflected the engagement of two complex individuals. Often, father and son engaged in a reciprocal debate, reminiscent of a professor and student embroiled in an intellectual argument over a questionable theory. The fact that the father had his PhD and was employed as a researcher at the university may have been reflected in this kind of didactic reciprocity.

As you will see outlined in greater detail below, agency could be readily observed in this family's intricate conversations. Through the use of descriptive themes, I endeavoured to explicate how both agency and non-agency were evident in the language used by both the son and the father, respectively. More specifically, through the themes reciprocity, reflexivity and awareness, expressiveness, and agenda and engagement, the dance of language and dialogue and its behavioural manifestations for this family were explored.

Reciprocity

In contrast to the other two families studied in this inquiry, this dyad's communication style was slightly less consistent. At times both father and son were engaged in the topic at hand, working with each other to form a reciprocal dialogue where the interests and ideas of both were explored. For example, here, the father opened

the dialogue to his son's direction, while the son, in turn, requested his father's expertise to help build the conversation. As a result, they worked together to shape a sociodramatic bid, envisioning some possible paths for the son's future:

S: Seriously, look okay I don't have a career. I've had a job once okay. I don't know what I'm talking about... You have some clue, although it may not be very much of one, but ...

F: No I don't have much of one as far as that goes either. How do you think you are going to go about picking an occupation?

S: Find something that I - interests you.

F: What types of things interest you?

S: I have already told you that. Computers, electronics.

F: Okay so you have found something that you think interests you, now what?

S: Now you apply.

F: To what?

S: To whatever jobs you can find.

F: What kind of jobs can you apply for?

S: Whatever those that are listed.

F: Suggestions please.

S: Computer stores.

F: To do what?

S: Repair, sell, whatever. Whatever they want you to do. You have to get your foot in the door.

F: Okay and then what?

S: And then you quit your computer store job and go somewhere larger like the ones that makes computers.

Here, the father probed and asked his son open-ended questions that encouraged thought and the elaboration of a relatively detailed vision of the future. The son engaged and responded to his father's line of questioning; however, at times he did so in a more off-handed way ("Whatever those are listed"). Nevertheless, the father did not accept surface-level answers from the son, challenging and inciting him to delve deeper, and in turn, the son engaged and responded in a more comprehensive manner.

Although reciprocal dialogue like the excerpt from above happened regularly throughout their conversations, there were times when the father and son appeared to be much less on the same page of communication. At times the father's agenda moved to the forefront of the dialogue, its force and intensity overshadowing messages being conveyed by the son. For example, during one part of the conversation, the father encouraged the son to consider the challenge of trying to pioneer new technology, rather than simply repair what already exists. The son explained that he was not prepared to risk everything in such a pursuit:

S: I can't risk everything.

F: Well you have to ...

S: Too much to risk.

F: What have you got?

S: I will not get into this.

F: What have you got?

S: One of those things that mom taught me that I actually learned something from.

F: What have you got?

S: Huh, what do I have? I have me.

F: Yeah well you can't ever lose that.

S: I have my family.

F: You aren't likely going to lose that.

S: I have the cat. The cat will die.

F: Yeah.

S: Yeah but what do I got, I guess not a whole lot to make up a computer.

F: What do you have to lose?

S: My piss and vinegar, my vim and vigour.

F: How do you figure you could lose that?

S: You get discouraged.

F: Um, there is nothing like being discouraged before you try and do something.

S: Actually I was saying I wouldn't try it didn't I?

F: Yeah. Your mother is right about something's. A little bit of security isn't a bad thing. But...

S: You are talking about risking everything, that is more than a little bit of security.

F: No it's not actually because you can't ever risk yourself unless you're bungee jumping and you're trying to hit a glass of water that is 4,000 feet down there and something. You could probably lose yourself but you never really lose yourself. Oh, the LSD thing. But those kinds of things are the only kinds of things that you can ever lose yourself. Those are the only kinds of ways that you can lose yourself. Your family, well you could piss your mother off. It's not even possible for you to piss me off. Well, actually you could but I don't think you are likely to do that because that is not the direction you are going in. What else do you have to lose? Your future is what you make it. You can't lose your past because it has already been done. Right. And present is how you get to the future son. There is nothing, there is really not a lot to lose. Like I said, a little bit of security isn't a bad thing. If you have a job and you have to go to work everyday and you don't really like it a lot but you need the money to pay the rent and eat and stuff, and then somebody comes up to you and says gee I'm going to do this like other thing here and do you want to

come and do it with me. Um, I'll give you a job. You might consider that for awhile. You might really consider what is involved in the offer. You know. And you may choose to stay in the job you are in because you don't really believe in this other one. But you are not in that situation now. The biggest kind of security you can have is an internal one and you never lose that one.

S: Sure you do, I've lost it many times.

F: When.

S: When I get really depressed I lose my internal security, I lose everything.

F: What do you get really depressed about. That's not everything.

S: Everything usually goes all grey and black.

F: How often does that happen?

S: Once or twice a week.

This excerpt is like a step in the dance in which the father and son engaged during their dialogue. The father attempted to understand his son's thoughts and feelings and their origins; he tried to draw his son out by probing and asking questions that invited the son to explain his perspective, he acknowledged his son and used some active listening skills that demonstrated empathy, and he endeavoured to reassure him that he would not lose everything by taking a significant risk. In turn, the son expressed himself in a reflexive, articulate, and candid manner. With clarity and agency, he told his father how he felt and why.

However, the father did not always acknowledge his son's fears. In fact, he negated his son's feeling and argued the rationale behind his son's concerns. He also spoke in very long segments of a more didactic nature, without much input from the son. Most often, the son stood his ground in the debate about the validity of his perceptions. Nevertheless, when put on the defensive by his father's sarcasm "there is nothing like

being discouraged before you try and do something, ” the son responded with a typically teenage ounce of belligerence, “Actually I was saying I wouldn’t try it, didn’t I?”, that in turn, may have worked toward shutting down the conversation. However, the son’s disengagement may also have provided a means of self-protection and conflict avoidance.

This example is a pattern of communication that happened relatively often throughout both of the father-son conversations: the father and son seemed to engage in a dance of dialogue, in which they continuously cycled between engagement and reciprocity and disengagement and divergence of agendas. It also provides insight into the language of agency and non-agency utilised by both father and son.

Reflexivity and awareness

As mentioned above, one of the son’s most striking characteristics was his ability to articulate his thoughts, feelings, and emotions in a clear and agentic manner. In his interaction, he appeared candid, sensitive, mature, and extremely reflexive and aware. Although he expressed several insights about himself, his father, and their interaction, he did not always act upon his realisations and awareness. The son acknowledged that his lack of action also affected how he viewed and felt about himself, which, in turn, influenced his ability to be an agent in his life. In the self-confrontation with the researcher, the son explained:

Yeah. When I’m not accomplishing anything I don’t really feel good about myself and it lets me slip into these depressions ‘cause I don’t feel like I’m contributing anything. Umm - He tells me I have to do things a lot of the time. I, I find it pretty easy to forget things sometimes...ummm...and even if I remember it’s kind of hard to force myself to do them.

Of particular interest here is that notion that the son was highly agentic in both his language (use of “I” and an active verb) and his expression of reflexivity and self-

awareness. However, the content of his language described a person who does not take action in his life. Thus, although the son's language was rather agentic, this agency was not manifest in his behaviour, other than engaging in the reflexive dialogue itself.

When looking back on the previous excerpt, in which the father and son debated about taking risks in order to be successful, the son clearly explained his fears: If I take action, then I'm taking a risk. If I risk something and fail, I become depressed and lose my internal sense of security. Given his ongoing struggles with drug use and depression, it seemed only natural that the son would have felt wary of exercising his sense of personal agency through his behaviour.

Interestingly, through the conversations, self confrontations, and journal entries, the father's language and behaviour revealed a similar incongruence. Indeed, the father was extremely self-aware and able to express himself candidly, articulately, and reflexively. This coupled with his sensitivity to his son's feelings and experiences, as well as a particular attention to their interaction, illustrated the father's agency in language. One of the father's main goals was to foster and encourage the development of his son's sense of agency. He talked to his son about envisioning the future, setting goals, and planning the steps to achieve them (as reflected in both conversations, and reported in the father's telephone monitoring forms, and his log book). He encouraged his son to be engaged with and take action in his life. He explained his goals to the researcher,

I mean D's achievements, his personal achievements and stuff, really don't affect me much. I'm not somebody who particularly wants him to be fabulously rich. I could care less. I do however want him to do things that he finds interesting and I want him to have an interesting life. I want him to be engaged in his life. I want him to actually care what happens to him rather than just letting things happen to him.

It is evident, here, that the father's agenda was one of agency for his son. His challenge became taking the functional steps in order to foster his son's sense of agency. Like his son, the father had difficulty taking action to achieve his goals. Although he took heed of and valued his insights and understanding, there was often a block between the awareness and its behavioural manifestation. For example, the father discussed his *modus operandi* in the conversation and the effects it seemed to have on the son:

Well once again I think I'm trying to push him into, I'm trying to push him but D tends to not respond terribly well and all I end up doing is pushing and pushing and pushing. But it, it becomes a monologue. He hasn't said anything since he acknowledged the fact that he said he wasn't going to try to do it. (sigh) Once again this is something that I'm aware of... Well if this has been a year ago I would have said I didn't even realize that I did it. Over the last 6 months certainly I have noticed it numerous times, numerable times. I have a real hard time stopping the monologue. But even when I stop the monologue it, I don't get the response yet. But he feels that he's being pressured to respond and he doesn't want to respond so he just sort of shuts up.

Although the father was aware that his "monologues" were constraining his achievement of encouraging his son to participate in the conversation, he continued to engage in them, acknowledging the challenge of altering his pattern of behaviour. Thus, the father's demonstration of agency in language was extremely similar to his son's. The structure of the language itself and the considerable self-awareness and reflexivity embedded within the language both illustrated a strong sense of personal agency. Nevertheless, these agentic markers were diminished by the father's inability to change his behaviour. For, although he was aware of his own challenges in providing his son agentic space, it was the father's very inability to create this space that demonstrated a deficit of his own sense of personal agency.

In addition, the son noticed the incongruence between his father's language and his actions. The father encouraged the son to set goals and take steps to achieve them.

However, the son was resistant, partly because he saw that his father did not always model the behaviour which he so strongly advocated. The son explained to the researcher:

S: Yeah, I find talking with him about those kinds of things really stressful. He pushes really hard and I don't see that he does any of them... It's just a little hard sometimes.

R: Umm hmmm. That his action is louder than words. But he's saying the opposite-

S: Yeah we're both a little hard on - we don't do very well on the follow through of things. Ummm, the way he lives his life is very unique.

R: Unique, yeah?

S: Yeah, umm, and he doesn't, I don't know exactly what he wants to see me do in mine, but he doesn't want me to do it the way he did.

Here, the son not only acknowledged the similarities between himself and his father, but also the challenges in having a father who modelled behaviour in a certain way, while knowing that his father's desire was for the son to act differently. Again, this passage illustrates the complexities of this father-son relationship and the sensitivity and maturity with which the son interpreted his thoughts and expressed his feelings on the matter. It captures the essence of this theme in which father and son demonstrated their agency through self-awareness and reflexivity, while both struggled with taking action in a way that reflected the insights expressed through their thoughtful, sensitive, articulate, and agentic language.

Expressiveness

Although the son was clearly able to articulate his thoughts and feelings reflexively, there were moments when he spoke in a more distancing and passivising

manner. Often, particularly when participating in a sociodramatic bid of the future, the son used the pronoun "you" when indexing himself. For example:

F: So, how do you make it?

S: Learn more about it. And like talk to people who do it. Read....practice.

F: And then what? I mean all that's-

S: Then you know you can do it. Find someone that's willing to pay you to do it.

F: Okay, so now you go and you apply for jobs. And what makes them want to hire you to do computer stuff?

S: A certificate that says you know how to do it.

F: You don't have to have a certificate that says you know how to do this.

S: You just have to be able to show them how to do it.

Here, although the son was agentic, participating in a "what-if" envisioning of a possible future course, he was distancing his personal investment in this image by using the pronoun "you", or not using any pronoun at all. In other words, the son was generalizing by telling the father how anyone, not just himself, would go about pursuing a career in computers. Thus, the son's language structure was less personally agentic, while the content of his message (being future-oriented) was agentic.

In addition to employing a distancing "you", the son used other forms of passivising language, such as: "There's nothing I can really do, you just sit through [his father's speeches] 'cause he's not going to stop.", "On the things I'm not interested in they sort of fall through.", "[School] gives me the certificate that tells me I know how to do it.", "Well [the monetary compensation for participation in the research project] was a kick in the ass. It got me here. And I'm here and I don't mind."

The theme that runs through all of these statements is that the son's behaviour and actions were often determined externally. He did not always take ownership or agency of what happened to him in his life, but rather rode its tide. More specifically, the son described "things fall[ing] through", rather than discussing his part in letting go of an activity when he lost interest, he passively sat through his father's diatribes, his school certificate was what informed him of his knowledge, and the compensation for completing the research was what motivated him to participate. The son's external locus of control and passivity in his life were encapsulated in one utterance to the researcher: "I feel like I don't really live so much for me, I live to do things for other people."

Nevertheless, the son often spoke in a manner structured by agency, using "I" and an active verb. He took ownership and responsibility for his life through his language. For example, when speaking reflexively to the researcher about a past experience of depression and drug use, he stated, "I totally destroyed my life" and "I made my turn around and here I am."

The son was also able to express his values, attitudes, beliefs, opinions, perceptions and preferences in a clear, agentic, and articulate manner. Even when in disagreement with his father, he could be rather assertive, defending and supporting his argument. Right from the opening minutes of the first interview, father and son found they had diverging images of what constitutes a career. The son, however, did not back down:

S: Ah, I don't agree with a lot of his positions on things.

F: Which part?

S: Most of them. (laughs)

F: (laughs). Like specifically which part on this one?

S: On this one?

F: Yeah.

S: I don't believe in your thing on that careers can be fun too. I don't buy that.

F: You don't think I enjoy it?

S: No.

F: You don't think it's fun? See he does this all the time.

S: Things like that. No I just don't think it happens. If you are having fun it soon becomes work, if you get paid for it. You look at it as something that you have to do and not something that you enjoy doing.

Here, the son was able to express his opinions and career values with clarity and agency, while providing some insight into the rationale behind his thoughts. He demonstrated tenacity in these opinions, even when his father questioned and negatively highlighted his behaviour to the researchers. The son's assertiveness was a reflection of his self-awareness and his ability to express himself reflexively. Not only did he have strong opinions and supporting rationales, but also he possessed and was able to articulate a clear value system, a strong sense of morality, and a rather sophisticated philosophy of life.

Although he appeared to be slightly perturbed by the disagreement ("See, he does this all the time"), the father encouraged argument and the son's expression of his thoughts and rationale. Throughout both conversations, he articulated his own thoughts, ideas, opinions, perceptions and supporting rationales with clarity and agency, providing fodder for his son to develop his own thinking. By probing, asking thought-provoking and rhetorical questions, letting his son know that he wanted to hear his opinions,

assisting his son in concrete explorations, suggesting alternatives, and by using active listening skills (such as paraphrasing, repetition, minimal encouragers, and empathy), the father incited his son to stretch his mind and express himself articulately (see first excerpt for some examples). He explained his purpose when his son protested about the possibility of being “held” to his vision of the future:

I’m not holding you to anything. That’s why we are having this conversation so that you can voice your opinions and I can voice mine and then you can match them up whatever way you like. I’m just trying to spur you on to thinking new thoughts.

Although it was the father’s intention to create a space for open dialogue and exploration of the son’s future, his language did not always foster such a conversational environment. In fact, he described himself as “dominating” the conversation several times throughout his self-confrontations, and even at the end of the first conversation, he said to the son, “You have done more talking today than I have seen you do in a long time, although I still fucking dominate the conversation.” Indeed, the father often spoke at great lengths, without pausing to allow the son the opportunity to comment or contribute to the dialogue. In fact, at his most extreme, the father’s uninterrupted speech was almost a full page length, single spaced, when transcribed. In addition, these lengthy expressions illustrate the father’s dominance not only in terms of air-time, but also in terms of controlling the subject matter during the conversations with his son; rather than being part of a mutual dialogue, the father’s speech became a protracted diatribe with which the son had little opportunity to engage in an agentic way.

The father also employed other forms of utterance and language structure that created less agentic space for the son, such as changing the subject abruptly, asking closed questions, interrupting, trying to convince, and not acknowledging what the son

has said. For example, acknowledging his “dominance”, the father turned the conversation over to his son:

F: Now it's your turn (laughing).

S: I think that the things you were doing with your, with your applications and stuff was cool. I liked the presentation you gave, although I found it kind of hard to understand how you could put so much effort into such a thing, I thought that was kind of a little freaky.

F: I don't understand. What are you talking about?

S: The little presentation you gave about what you were planning on doing.

F: I don't remember doing that.

S: You did. And it was....umm...

F: You mean like last week?

S: Not last week. Weeks ago, months.

F: Months ago? All right, I don't know, anyways.

F: What is it you want to do?

In this excerpt, the father attempted to give his son space to pursue his own line of conversation. However, as it did not fit clearly into the father's agenda, he gave up before understanding to what it was that his son was referring and changed the subject back to his preferred focus. As a result, the son's ideas, initiative, and agency were not acknowledged, encouraged, or reinforced.

In sum, it is evident that both father and son were extremely intelligent and articulate individuals, able to express their opinions, feelings, values, philosophies, perceptions, and preferences with clarity and agency. However, at times both engaged in communication which hindered the reciprocity that characterized much of their

conversations, the son by using passivising or distancing language and the father by dominating the dialogue.

Engagement and agenda

The previous excerpt suggests that the father held some very clear ideas about how and where he envisioned the unfolding of career-related conversations with his son. This agenda often entered into and became so pervasive within the dialogue that the father disengaged himself and did not acknowledge or foster the son's initiative and ideas:

S: Okay like you know the little cards inside your computer.

F: What little cards?

S: Like your video card, do you know how those are made?

F: I have no idea.

S: You do. I know you do. Making of the little chips. You know how chips are made.

F: Yeah I know how chips are made. And you know how they are all soldered. You can't do that at home. It's not possible.

S: You don't understand.

F: The guys who built Apple didn't design the chips. They designed a product; they designed a way of bringing computing into people's homes.

S: You just want another ...

F: No I don't just want another anything, what I want is a, and I don't want this either, I'm just offering this as an alternative. Rather than working for a big corporation is to develop an idea that you have. You're probably at this point too young to be having those ideas. Seriously. You don't know what's all out there. But you know when you're in your 20's you can start having those kind of ideas. By the time you are in your 30's it's probably a little late to be having those kinds of ideas. But it's an alternative and it should be one that you think, no it should be one that you find, no that's wrong too, personally I find it a really attractive idea. I mean those guys are loony tunes a lot of the

time too. The guys in the New York Times are loony tunes, but they had an idea and they risked everything to try and bring that idea...

Here, the father described himself as “stonewalling”, or not listening and shutting down the conversation because he did not believe that his son’s chosen topic was relevant. He did not allow his son to articulate his thoughts fully, thus negating them before they were allowed to be explained. Instead, and although he caught his domineering language (“I’m just offering an alternative”), he injected “what [he] want[ed]” into the conversation. When reflecting during the self-confrontation, the father acknowledged how his behaviour may have impeded the creation of an agentic space for his son to engage equally in the dialogue:

I think I probably, actually I know I did, I came in with sort of a bit of an agenda. Not a real strong one or anything although I hit pretty much every point that I wanted to hit. I wonder if, like if I had just stopped inquiring stop there I wonder if I would have had him say more, but I’m not sure I would have, but maybe I would have.

On the positive side, it was this agenda in which the father encouraged his son to be agentic by setting goals, planning, and taking action. It was his desire that the son not “settle for the lowest common denominator”, but rather be engaged, challenged and fulfilled in life. He did this by inquiring, probing, and encouraging the son to think for himself and elaborate his plans for the future. However, there were times during which the father’s role as teacher overwhelmed the dialogue, the result being a didactic and almost commanding tone (see last utterance of the following example). He related his parenting style to his teaching style:

It's not just connected to D because I do some teaching and stuff too, right. I'm a fairly intimidating teacher. It works really well if students really want to learn the stuff because I'm not actually criticizing them, what I'm trying to do is getting them to think for themselves and if they'll think and then tell me that they're

thinking and have a problem with it, then that's fine. But if they come to me and just want the answer, it's like "No. Show me that you think first."

The father acknowledged that his style could often be intimidating and challenging to his students and to his son. For instance, he continued by saying that his teaching style would be "appalling" with first-year students, who have yet to develop academic confidence and prowess. In essence, the father utilized the same thought-provoking strategies with his graduate students that he employed in dialogue with his sixteen year-old son.

There were many occurrences throughout both conversations in which the son acknowledged his father's experience and expertise and willingly engaged in the teacher-student drawing out and development of thought. Although his father's delivery or expression of this agenda was at times trying, the son was aware of, appreciated, and even agreed with his father's goals for him:

Yeah. Which is a little unfortunate because it's a little hard to deal with sometimes, but it is his style. What else?.....He...we seem to have pretty similar goals... ummmm ...he is really into him on me sort of doing....he wants me to do something that's interesting and something that I'll be challenged with and he doesn't want me to screw up and end up doing something really boring and tedious for the rest of my life. He wants me to do something good.

However, when he was not acknowledged or was negated, the son withdrew from the dialogue:

F: Did you have anything that you were trying to get done?

S: Not really.

F: You tried to find a job.

S: For a while.

F: Yeah, and you had some good possibilities which didn't pan out and I'm sorry about that. I thought that was, I wrote about that in the little book. Then sort

of after that kind of not very much happened. Oh there was one other part right at the end of August after you found out you didn't get the PNE job and we had a discussion, we were in the car and I asked you how your summer had been. Remember?

S: I don't recall what I said.

Here, it seemed quite clear that the son was not engaged in the conversation. His responses became very short and did not contain much content or fodder upon which a more in-depth and reciprocal exchange could be built. This can be viewed as an act of agency, in the sense that the son was protecting himself from negative feelings toward his father: "It's not worth the time expressing anything but indifference... He pushes way too hard and I'm starting to resent it."

At the same time, shutting down completely or becoming compliant and acquiescent during the conversations can also be construed as an act of non-agency. During the self-confrontation the son commented to the researcher on an excerpt in which the father was probing him about his future. The researcher asked him if his father made him think, to which the son replied: "No, he just makes me like spew back garbage". By simply repeating back what he thought his father wanted to hear, the son was not expressing himself in an agentic fashion, unless, of course, one views it as a means of self-protection, as mentioned above.

Ultimately, the father may have been justified in having a strong and pervasive agenda. Not only did he want his son to be a successful and productive member of society as an adult, but he also wanted his son actually to make it to adulthood. Because of the son's social circle, his experimenting with illicit drugs, and his ongoing struggles with depression, the father feared for his son's safety. This obviously made it even more difficult for him to back off and let his son make his own mistakes, especially if they

could possibly have been fatal ones. The father described his dilemma in his monitoring log book:

I try to impose my will on D too often. He's getting too big for that and I'm detecting a fair bit of resentment. Rather than pushing even harder I'm trying to back down a little more. Unfortunately, when I do that it seems to come off as abandoning him to his fate. Previous experience suggests that that is a bad idea.... My biggest fear is that if he is left to his own devices, he'll disappear into the drug scene and will be lost – perhaps forever.

In conclusion, the father and son were both complex individuals with a range of common patterns and responses that emerged from their interaction. While the son was engaged, seeking support and information and taking part in constructing a vision of his future, at times he could also be withdrawing, distant, and difficult. Likewise, his father was at times supportive and expressed understanding and empathy, while providing his son tutelage in the ways of the world. In the next moment, however, he could become dominating, didactic, and even negating of his son's opinions and feelings. Nevertheless, the most striking resemblance between the father's and son's senses of personal agency was articulately expressed through considerable insight and sensitivity into their own and each other's thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. At the same time, the father and son also both shared the common challenge of true agency: the ability to harness their intelligence, reflexivity, and awareness into intentional, goal-oriented action, beyond the behaviour of the utterances themselves.

Father-daughter dyad – Case study

This family comprised a father who was employed as a scientist by the government and a daughter who was fifteen and in grade ten at the time of the first interview. Like the two preceding families, the father and daughter seemed quite similar in several respects; both possessed well-defined beliefs, values, preferences, and opinions from which they were not easily swayed or influenced, particularly by each other. Much of their dialogue appeared as a kind of battle of the wills, not uncommon in the way many parents and adolescents communicate as the adolescent searches to find an identity separate from her parents. More specifically, the father clearly and openly stated his opinions and preferences for his daughter's future, to which she often disagreed. In turn, the father did not necessarily agree with some of the daughter's choices and desires. Both argued and tried to convince one another using similar strategies, which will be discussed in greater detail below.

This particular dyad was characterized by two distinguishing factors. Unlike the other two families, the original nuclear family was still intact. The father and mother were married, and the mother played a significant role, being mentioned throughout the conversations and the other pieces of the original data (self-confrontations, telephone monitoring forms, and personal log books), particularly by the daughter. In addition, the daughter was not an only child, as were the other two adolescents in this study. Indeed, her elder brother was also present in this family career development project.

This dyad's second distinction of interest was that they are of Chinese-Canadian heritage, one of the six families from the original study. The father was born in Hong Kong and moved to Canada (with his wife, who was also native to Hong Kong)

approximately 20 years prior to the first interview. His daughter was born and raised in Canada. They were selected for this secondary inquiry in order to capture diversity and increase the potential to learn about a variety of agentic themes emergent from parent-adolescent conversations about career. Because the very notion of personal agency is defined and propagated by Western culture, I was particularly interested in how agency would take shape in a context influenced by Eastern cultural mores.

Although there are a few differences in the manifestation of agency between this dyad and the other families of European-Canadian descent, it is well beyond the scope of this study to make any inferences about causal factors, such as ethnicity. These three families were much more similar to than different from one another. In fact, in this case study, several of the themes of agency described in the other cases are also explored. Specifically, through the themes of expressiveness, engagement and agenda, and the art of argument, I will endeavour to explicate how both agency and non-agency are evident in the language used, the meanings constructed, and the behaviour manifested by both the daughter and father.

Expressiveness

Much like the two other families, this father and daughter engaged in a reciprocal dialogue, which was often characterized by the parent initiating the discussion and the adolescent engaging and providing her perspective on the topic at hand. For example:

F: So in school what subjects are you interested in now? Your favourite?

D: I like choir but then we're not good at singing. No one cooperates except for me and few other people.

F: Is choir something that you don't really have to work hard?

D: No, because it's singing.

F: Singing is always fun but you don't need to work hard? You don't need to work.

D: I work hard at choir.

F: How about Science?

D: No, I'm not interested.

F: Because of the teacher?

D: No. I just don't like it. I'm good at Science, I just don't like it. I'm getting an A.

F: An A. How about Math, it's okay?

D: It's okay. I like it but I don't like the teacher.

F: When you think that in two years time when you have to go to university and you have to think now about whether you will go into Science or Arts.

D: I'm not going into Science for sure, it's boring.

F: How about Animation?

D: Animation.

F: How do you see yourself?

D: I don't like the Art teacher. They don't have animation courses.

F: I think one time you asked your teacher where you could get this training from.

D: No. She said she would look but she didn't find anything.

F: How about, you don't like Science so you don't want to go into like a Vet and look after animals?

D: No.

F: Um, so at school you say your favourite subject is Art? (inaudible)

D: I like History but I don't like Canadian History. That's all we are doing for grade 8, 9, and 10. I like English.

In this excerpt, the father asked questions, probed, and made suggestions, all opening up the discussion and providing space for his daughter's participation. He encouraged his daughter to engage in a sociodramatic bid, asking her to project two years into the future and describe a vision of herself entering university.

The daughter readily responded to his inquiries, providing her thoughts, opinions, preferences, and some of the rationale behind her ideas in an agentic manner. For instance, "I like choir but then we're not good at singing. No one cooperates except for me and few other people." Here, the daughter also demonstrated her directness in expressing her thoughts, ideas, preferences and rationale behind them. She spoke in an agentic structure, using "I" and an active verb. Indeed, the daughter seemed to be very much in tune to her likes and dislikes and expressed them in a very clear and direct way.

In the same excerpt, however, the father's language changed, creating less agentic space for his daughter. For example, although structured in the form of a question, the father clearly sent a message to his daughter that he did not consider her choir course to fit his definition of "work". In fact, he answered the question as he posed it to the daughter: "Is choir something that you don't really have to work hard?" and "Singing is always fun but you don't need to work hard? You don't need to work."

And, although he asked questions to maintain a steady flow of conversation, he also changed the subject abruptly several times, suggesting that he might have been pursuing a particular line of questioning related to his own agenda. For example, in response to the daughter stating that she "work[ed] hard at choir", the father did not comment. Rather, he inquired: "How about science?" This soon became quite clearly a focus of the father's agenda, which will be discussed in greater detail below.

Not only did the father express himself in a way that may not have been ideal for fostering his daughter's sense of agency, but he also utilized language in a manner that did not reflect his own sense of personal agency. Specifically, instead of using the pronoun "I" to index himself, the father often said "we" or "us", referring to both himself and his wife. For example, the father attempted to explain to the daughter why he deemed it important for her to express herself to her parents: "Well, if you don't let us know, we just don't understand. It's just pretending we are - I try to understand you guys."

At first glance, this seemed like distancing language, even though the father was talking about how he and his daughter engaged and related to one another. However, his use of "we" may simply have been a function of the father operating in English, as opposed to his native tongue, Cantonese. It may also have been a reflection of the fact that the parents were still married and raising their children together. By referring to both himself and his wife when discussing ways in which their parenting had an impact on their daughter, the father's language may also have been reflecting integral aspects of Asian culture: the importance of family and the notion of collectivism (Young et al, in press).

As you will see outlined in greater detail below, the father and daughter often disagreed and argued with one another, particularly regarding the father's desire for his daughter to enter a post-secondary science program and the daughter's clear disinterest in pursuing a future career in this field. After one of their typical disputes, the father employed a new strategy in the attempt to engage his daughter. However, it too was

characterized by a distancing language structure. Rather than continue being shut down by his daughter, the father took a new approach, inquiring about her friend:

F: What are your friends going into? Like M, does she still want to be lawyer?

D: I don't know.

F: Does she ever talk to you?

D: Not about careers. We have better things to talk about.

F: You are grade 10.

D: So. We have better things to talk about, we talk about grad.

F: Do you ever talk about which college you are going to?

D: Yeah.

F: Which one?

D: I don't know, we want to go away.

F: Like which one?

D: She wants to go to McGill.

F: Oh that's her sister's.

D: Yeah I know.

F: She wants to be with her sister?

D: No she just wants to go far away.

F: How about you?

D: I don't know. Somewhere.

F: You want to go far away too?

Again, on the surface, this seemed like a means for the father to distance

himself from his daughter through language. However, in the context of their argument, it may have been a way to connect with her. By talking about the daughter's friend, the father was able to prime, or "warm up" the daughter to the discussion, eventually progressing to probing her about plans for her future. He was able to create a relatively safe and comfortable space in which the daughter could express herself more easily. However, as the father explained his strategy in the self-confrontation, it became clear that, again, his own agenda pervaded the conversation with his daughter:

I think at that time I was trying to change, shifting the strategy a little bit. I was thinking that maybe her friends may have some influence on her. So I was bringing her friend M; M is one of her best friends. So I was asking her "Have you been talking about careers, do you have some plan?" Maybe her best friends may have some influence on her so that is why I poked around that and hopefully find out the truth.

Although the father described himself as strategizing to find more ammunition to further his agenda of convincing the daughter to choose science as a career field, it seems that simultaneously he was able to achieve another goal. By shifting the focus away from the daughter, he was able to open up the conversation for the daughter to express her thoughts and ideas about her own future. By discussing her friend first, the daughter was able to explore what seemed to be some of her own desires, without the immediate pressure of having her father disagree with her. For instance, she was able to test out the waters of going "far away" for post secondary education, and see her father's reaction before telling him that she, too, had considered going away to school.

Throughout the conversations, there were also instances in which the daughter brought others, including her mother, her brother and her friends, into the dialogue with her father. In the second conversation, the father re-introduced the question of where the daughter imagined herself pursuing post-secondary education:

F: So you want to stay at UBC?

D: I don't know.

F: Or go to McGill, or some other school?

D: Yeah, M wants to go away.

F: Where?

D: McGill, probably. Well, she wants to go to McGill.

F: She wants to go to McGill? She likes McGill? You too?

D: I don't know, I guess.

Here, the father directly asked the daughter about her desires for future schooling. Interestingly, the daughter responded with her friend's (M's) plan for university. What is most curious about the turn in this second father-daughter conversation is that this is where the daughter introduced her friend into the discussion. Up until this point, M had not been mentioned at all. It would appear, then, that the daughter distanced the discussion from herself by diverting the attention to her friend. This seemed to work well for her during the first conversation, as her father did not argue, disagree, or try to convince her otherwise when she discussed her friend's desire to go away to university. Again, the daughter was able to test the waters and express her plans and ideas to her father without risking his disapproval. However, although it may have been a functional and therefore agentic way for the daughter to convey her ideas to her father, it was also a use of passivising and distancing language; the daughter did not claim her personal agency by clearly and directly expressing her plans and desires; rather, she projected them on to her friend.

The daughter used other forms of passivising language in this excerpt. Specifically, when the father asked the daughter pointed questions about her future, she responded with “I don’t know” and “I guess”, answers lacking in content and meaning. This kind of language, also including phrases like “kind of”, “sometimes”, “things”, “stuff”, and “I think” are vague language structures that the daughter employed regularly throughout both conversations.

Both father and daughter would often participate in reciprocal dialogue. During these types of exchanges, the father often initiated the discussion by asking questions, probing, and making suggestions, while the daughter expressed her thoughts, ideas, preferences, and rationale in a clear and direct way. Nevertheless, their conversations were often fraught with vague, distancing, and passivising language. However, this seemingly passivising language may have had a very agentive underlying purpose.

Engagement and agenda

What appeared as the father utilizing distancing language (referring to the daughter’s friend’s future) may actually have fostered engagement with his daughter. Similarly, the daughter’s use of passivising language may have functioned in a more agentive manner than appeared on the surface. More specifically, by speaking to her father in an evasive manner and providing responses imbued with vague content and meaning, the daughter may have been employing a strategy to avoid disagreement and ensuing conflict. Perhaps she was attempting to foster engagement with her father, by not providing any further fodder for argument. For example, the daughter explained to the researcher why her answers to her father’s questions were often brief:

Yeah. ‘cause usually it’s like either a yes-or-no answer, like a question, but then, you could go deeper into it, but then it’s harder with parents because you don’t

know how they'll react, and usually it might be a negative reaction. But you don't know... Umm, sometimes I do and then sometimes I just think, I kind of like, I think of how he might react. I think oh, "I think he's going to say this", or "he's probably thinking this", so then I don't bother saying it all, because most likely he's going to think this anyways, so if I tell him then, it will just cause a big problem or something, so I don't bother with that.

In some circumstances it may have been more agentic for the daughter to remain less forthcoming regarding her thoughts, preferences, and desires, particularly in terms of engaging and relating to her father in a positive way. Nevertheless, there were several occasions on which the daughter did clearly voice her opinions and rationales, and entered into a dialogue of disagreement with her father. The father had a strong overriding agenda that he put forth directly to his daughter; he was determined that she pursue a career in the field of sciences. However, this was one area in which the daughter expressed her disagreement with him directly and somewhat forcefully:

F: You can do a lot of things instead of clinics, you can do science and research.

D: I don't like science.

F: Just like them. How about Psychology?

D: Ugh, boring.

F: Just like them. You can study people. How about Dentists?

D: No. It's all science and I would have to go into science.

F: But you are good at science.

D: But I don't like science.

F: But you are good at science.

D: But what does it matter. I don't like it.

F: Do you think you would change your mind?

D: No.

In this excerpt, it seemed quite evident that the father was determined to find some way in which his daughter would concede and consider a future career in science. First, he provided suggestions and alternative career choices (after already having spent several minutes trying to convince his daughter to pursue a career in medicine). The daughter was very assertive in her refusal to consider any form of a scientific career. When his suggestions proved to be unsuccessful, the father revisited his original point of argument and confusion: how can you not enjoy working in an area that you are good at? This line of reasoning did not hold weight for the daughter, who evidently did not equate satisfaction with aptitude ("But what does it matter. I don't like [science]"). Again, she was extremely assertive, repeating her disinterest in science several times. As the father asked for one last shred of hope that his daughter may follow his desires for her future, she again asserted herself. However, it seems in this brief dialogue that the daughter had become almost obstinate in her refusal to consider her father's wishes. She provided little rationale or explanation as to why she would not even contemplate science, aside from one brief statement ("Ugh, boring"). Nevertheless, in the context of having spent the last several minutes standing up to her unrelenting father, it may have been rather agentic for the daughter to respond in a more abrasive manner. Indeed, she may also have been asserting her sense of agency by creating her own distinct and unwavering set of interests. In turn, this may have been an attempt by the daughter to distinguish a separate identity from her father, one of the key elements of the transition from childhood to adulthood.

This type of dialogue, in which the father attempted to sway the daughter while she firmly stood her ground, was quite common throughout both conversations, and was

reported by both father and daughter several times in their log books and telephone interview forms from the monitoring period. They each mentioned feeling frustrated during these periods of argument, and by the end of their participation in the research, the father's overriding goal for the family career development project had changed from a focus on his daughter's future occupation to improving their communication and relationship. He attempted to put aside his original desires for his daughter to pursue a career in science, having realized how his agenda was impeding their relationship. In the final conversation, the father made several attempts to find a way to connect with his daughter, asking her repeatedly if they could find some time to talk during the day. The daughter was quite reticent to commit to such a plan, citing her concerns that her father didn't "understand" her and would "freak out" if she were to tell him what was really going on in her life:

F: How about if I don't freak out, will you talk to me?

D: Maybe.

F: Okay. What makes you think I'm not freaking out? The way I act?

D: Yeah –

F: Okay, so –

D: Freak out.

F: So if I do it calm.

D: You don't. You are calm, you just –

F: Hmm?

D: I can tell you don't like it.

F: Well, not every time I'll show I like it, right?

D: Yeah, exactly.

F: But I don't freak out.

D: You don't freak out, but still, you don't like it. So, why don't you like it?

F: Hmmm... Tell me why don't you want to go to Montreal?

Here, the father made efforts to connect with his daughter by asking questions. He inquired about how he can relate to her in such a way that she would be willing to share with him aspects of her life, what his behaviour looked like when the daughter would tell him things with which he may not approve or agree. Other times throughout this second parent-adolescent conversation, the daughter normally refused her father's requests that they communicate more often. However, in this segment of dialogue, she appeared to soften somewhat and concede that her father would not necessarily get upset if she were to tell him more about herself. Rather, she clarified and rephrased her true concerns about confiding in her father – that he show disapproval for some of her actions and choices. In turn, the father acknowledged his daughter's concern by stating, "Well, not every time I'll show I like it, right?" This appeared to open up some space for the daughter to become more invested in the dialogue. She attempted to delve deeper and understand her father's reasons for disapproval by asking, "So, why don't you like?" Rather than respond to his daughter's question, the father abruptly changed the subject. It seemed rather ironic that once his daughter became more engaged in communicating with her father, that he did not stay with the conversation. Although it was his desire that his daughter open up to him, he seemed unwilling to do the same with her.

In sum, although the father made attempts to foster engagement with his daughter by encouraging her to open up, this did not seem to be very successful. Rather, he

appeared to put forth a very overt and forceful agenda for his daughter's future, for which she had little interest. The daughter did not seem to find her father's arguments compelling, and sometimes obstinately refused to even consider his ideas and desires for her. In turn, both father and daughter expressed their displeasure in participating in these disagreements. Although on the surface their dialogue may have been construed as distant or vague, the use of passivising language actually may have worked to foster engagement by avoiding these unpleasant and frustrating squabbles.

The art of argument

This dyad's frequent disagreements may have been a less-than-pleasant means of communication. Nevertheless, the discussions also may have served the function of furthering the father's agenda, as well as the daughter's assertion of her individuality. Indeed, the majority of both conversations appeared to follow this pattern of disagreement. In addition, both father and daughter employed certain strategies in their arguments. For instance, in the following excerpt, the father expressed his disapproval of his daughter pursuing a career as a Broadway singer. The daughter, however, was not persuaded:

F: It's good to use as a hobby to sing. But you can do something else.

D: But if you are on Broadway and are famous do you know how much you get paid? It's like an actress, you don't have to do anything else.

F: Okay so you get involved in that but you don't get tired singing 24 hours a day?

D: No.

F: How about traveling? You will go everywhere?

D: You can go anywhere you want.

F: You don't want to stay in one place, one city with your friends?

D: Well you can come back and visit.

F: Just like P?

D: No. She doesn't do it anymore.

F: I think before P was in Montreal.

D: Yeah so that was fun because she was with her cast. They were like all friends.

F: But she missed you kind of, right?

D: But we still kept in touch right. She came back often. We were going to go visit her if she stayed there.

Here, it appeared as though the father was attempting to convince his daughter that a career as a Broadway singer would not be satisfactory. He made several points suggesting why the daughter would not, in the end, have really enjoyed the life of a performer. Highlighting some negative aspects of being a Broadway singer, he asked the daughter questions about her preferences ("Okay so you get involved in that but you don't get tired singing 24 hours a day?"). For each question, however, the daughter stood her ground, providing explanations or rationalizations as to why these seemingly unpleasant aspects did not perturb her. As she shot down each of the father's insinuations, he proposed yet another, still attempting to dissuade her from her interest in becoming a singer.

A point of particular interest in this passage is that the father focused on seemingly superficial negative attributes of the occupation. Rather than explain the overriding rationale behind his wariness directly to the daughter, he discussed his concerns with the researcher during the self-confrontation: "I don't want to say 'Hey look

there are so many thousands of people in the world who want to be Broadway singers and only one or two only reach the top.” As a parent, he had a legitimate concern regarding the challenges of becoming a successful performer. However, he went on to explain how he did not want to “dampen” his daughter’s “dreams” and fail to demonstrate “respect” for her choices. So instead, he attempted to convince her in a less direct manner.

The father’s agenda was so pervasive, he had difficulty letting go of it and moving on to another topic, as he explained to the researcher in his self-confrontation: “I just couldn’t get over it. There is a big conflict. Science is my favourite and I see that she is good at it but she doesn’t like it. I don’t know.” Instead, the father took a new but very similar approach. Rather than discouraging her from a career as a Broadway singer, he encouraged the daughter to pursue a career in medicine. The daughter, however, had no interest in becoming a doctor:

D: Yeah but doctors are boring.

F: No.

D: All you do all day is look at people who are sick.

F: Do you like to talk to people?

D: Yeah.

F: See.

D: With my friends but not with strangers.

F: Well how about Broadway singers sometimes they have to talk to strangers too, like different casts.

D: So you would become friends.

F: So is a doctor, you have your own friends and people coming to see you and saying they have problems and you can help.

D: Yeah but there is always stuff going on in the hospitals. Everybody is getting laid off.

Here, the father and daughter engaged in a similar form of argument; however, rather than intimating the negative aspects of becoming a Broadway singer (with the exception of "Broadway singers sometimes they have to talk to strangers too."), the father suggested all the positive aspects of becoming a doctor. In turn, the daughter rejected each of his attempts to prove that she would enjoy this kind of occupation, clearly stating why these qualities were not appealing enough to entice her into a career of medicine.

One particularly interesting characteristic of this dyad's means of argument was illustrated in the following excerpt. The daughter was a member of a relay swim team whose next competition was scheduled to take place the same weekend in which the parents had planned a trip to Montreal to see their son off to university. As the father suggested that the daughter may pursue competitive swimming as a means to improve her chances of university admittance and scholarship, the daughter seized the opportunity to build a related argument:

F: You never you know, now you cut down half a second, and you continue practice, you see a big difference, right? There's always, school teams they're always looking for the right individual or relay member.

D: Yeah, see? Relay is a big deal.

F: Well, yeah relay is a big deal but sometimes depending on time, some other things are more important.

D: What time, what day are you guys leaving?

F: Friday.

D: Can you just leave earlier?

F: Like, why? Then come back early?

D: Yeah, go early and then I can come back.

F: No, they're (inaudible). You can't come back on time.

D: Why?

F: Well, because we have a family trip type of thing. We're going to go down and tour around Montreal, Quebec City.

D: Well, when are you guys coming back?

F: In a week.

D: I thought you guys were going to New York.

F: Yeah, if we have time, we'll go to New York.

D: Well can't I just come, like, on the – what day is Friday, the date?

F: The 21st.

D: Well, can't I just fly over on the 22nd?

F: Why?

D: 'Cause then I can stay for the relay. I can go to Provincials on the 21st and 22nd and then fly over on the 22nd.

F: No flights go up.

D: How do you know?

F: Well, because they don't come all the way from Kamloops to Vancouver. Who's – could give you a ride right away?

D: Well, M can take care of me.

F: She will drive you all the way from Kamloops to Vancouver right away?

D: I don't know. Well, there's other people who are just on relays.

Here, the daughter utilized a convincing strategy to build her argument in an attempt to persuade her father to allow her to attend the swim meet. She exhibited very

agentive behaviour in this discussion. First, by asking many questions the daughter tried to glean information from her father. Once armed with this information, she attempted to problem-solve. As she would suggest a possible solution, her father would find fault with each one. However, the daughter was not discouraged by this; she persevered in collecting information, problem-solving, compromising, and strategizing. In turn, the father acknowledged the importance of the daughter's competition, while also explaining that the value of family was more important in this particular case. Generally speaking, the father did not create a space in which the daughter's agency could be fully realized. He did respond to the daughter's questions, providing the information she requested, albeit in a very brief and almost reluctant manner. Also, he seemed to shoot down all of the daughter's ideas and suggestions without providing the rationale behind his negations. Although he did engage in this discussion with the daughter, it seemed as though he was not truly working with her to find a compromise, but rather humouring her in her quest to find a mutually satisfying solution.

In sum, it seems as though both father and daughter utilized similar strategies when in disagreement with one another. One person generally had a point and attempted to persuade the other. By asking questions, gathering information, making suggestions, providing alternatives, and persevering to meet their goals, both father and daughter tried to convince the other to agree with his or her perspective. However, by responding with vague or little content and finding rationales as to why the other's arguments did not hold weight, they both, in turn, remained steadfast in holding on to their own opinions.

In conclusion, the father generally initiated and directed the conversation, while the daughter answered his questions. Both father and daughter frequently engaged in

disagreement and used similar strategies in building their own arguments. Also, both were similar in their resolve and expression of their respective opinions, perceptions, preferences, desires, and values. However, at times, both utilized distancing, vague, and passivising language structures. Although there were some instances in which the daughter's language clearly demonstrated agency (i.e., strong opinions, rationales, problem-solving), the evasiveness or lack of content in her language may have been a less obvious way of being agentic in the context of dialogue with her father. Similarly, the father's distancing language may have been a functional way to engage with his daughter less argumentatively. Nevertheless, his strong agenda for the daughter to pursue a post-secondary education in the field of sciences often pervaded the conversations, minimizing the agentive space in which the daughter could explore and project herself into a future centred around her interests and desires.

CHAPTER 4 – INSTRUMENTAL FINDINGS

The purpose of this chapter is to outline some of the common themes, constructs, and phenomena emergent from the intrinsic case studies of the previous section.

Although each family's use of agentic language was unique, there were certain shared characteristics and repeated patterns that warranted further explication. By combining my efforts and including an instrumental discussion of all three cases and their distinct themes, patterns, and perspectives, personal agency and its emergent constructs could be conceptualized from a broader scope.

In order to structure this chapter in dealing with the instrumental findings of my inquiry, I have outlined them as they address each of my research questions. First, I illustrated the evidence of the language of agency in the parent-adolescent conversations about career. Second, I explored what characterizes the reciprocity of agency between parents and adolescents in dialogue. Third, I endeavoured to describe the language of agency through the theoretical lens of action theory, illustrating how agency exists at the various levels (elements, functional steps, and goals) and through the interwoven manifestations (manifest behaviour, internal processes, and social meaning) of action.

Question # 1

What evidence is there of the language of agency in parent-adolescent conversations about career?

As I discussed earlier, I had a strong bias that there would, in fact, be evidence of the language of agency. Utilizing Heath's (1999) and particularly O'Connor's (2000) writings as the basis upon which my notions of agentic language were shaped, I found that agency was indeed evident in the language used by both the parents and adolescents

in their conversations. By viewing this language through a thematic lens, I was able to discern some general categories or repeated characteristics of agentic language. Several of the themes were reflected in both the parents' and adolescents' speech, such as expressiveness, and reflexivity and self-awareness.

The theme of expressiveness emerged as a means to aid in the understanding of how the participants elected to communicate with one another. Much of what is subsumed under this theme centres around the way people spoke. Specifically, it is an illustration of how the parents' and adolescents' choice of words and structure of language expressed or reflected aspects of themselves. Did they use the pronoun "I" and an active verb? Did they speak in passivising and distancing language? Did they provide rationale behind their opinions? Did they state their opinions in a clear and direct manner?

For example, in the father-son dyad, both individuals were extremely articulate in expressing their thoughts, feelings, opinions, preferences, values, and philosophies of life. The mother and daughter expressed themselves in a highly detailed manner, both providing rich descriptions of events, experiences, and rationales behind their thoughts, feelings, opinions, and preferences. In contrast, the father and daughter did not express themselves in as much detail as the other two families; their language contained more passivising, distancing, and argumentative structures.

This is not to say that one form of expression is more or less agentic than the other, but rather that agency is expressed and characterized differently, depending on the family. In terms of the father-daughter dyad, what may have seemed like passivising and distancing language, such as speaking about the future plans of the daughter's friend,

rather than discussing the daughter's future directly, may really have been an agentic way of relating to one another. Rather than argue with and alienate each other, they chose silence and distancing as a safer, less conflictual mode of expression.

The theme of self-awareness and reflexivity deals with people's ability to stop and reflect upon themselves, to possess an awareness of their thoughts and feelings, and to have an understanding of what characterizes and contributes to who they are as individuals. It requires a certain level of familiarity and comfort with oneself, coupled with one's ability to view his or her experiences from a more process-oriented perspective. Most importantly, in the realm of conversation and language, self-awareness and reflexivity are greatly enhanced by the ability to express oneself articulately. One may have an understanding of him or herself, but be unable to share it with others because he or she struggles to find the right words. It also requires a certain amount of personal courage to confide aspects of the inner self to others. In turn, a trust in the listener is also requisite for the disclosure of self-awareness and the expression of reflexivity.

The research methodology of the original study was constructed in such a way as to encourage the participants' articulation of their self-awareness and reflexivity. In particular, the self-confrontations, in which the participants were asked to comment on their thoughts and feelings as they watched the video-taped conversations, were especially conducive to the parents' and teens' expression of their internal processes. Many individuals reflected upon their thoughts, feelings, and behaviours and expressed their self-awareness with very little prompting from the research team. Conversely, not all participants from the original study were able to self-reflect easily.

Although a much smaller sample was utilized, the parents and adolescents in this secondary analysis also demonstrated a range of fluency in their expression of self-awareness and reflexivity. For instance, the father and son's agency was most apparent in their intelligent, candid, and articulate means of expressing reflexivity and awareness of themselves and their relationship. While they often engaged in thoughtful, sensitive, articulate, and agentic language, both struggled with taking action in a way that reflected their insights. In contrast was the father-daughter dyad. In fact, the theme of self-awareness and reflexivity was not even represented in their narrative. This is not to say that they were not self-aware and reflexive; indeed, both father and daughter articulated their thoughts and feelings about themselves and their relationship. Also, they were both able to provide explanations of their actions, while expressing personal values, attitudes, and beliefs, as well as their origins and the rationales behind them. However, they were much less expressive and articulate about their internal processes than the other two families. Specifically, both father and daughter were sometimes at a loss when asked about their thoughts and feelings. In addition, they did not discuss their internal processes with each other in the context of their conversations. Conversely, the mother and daughter talked about their feelings openly and freely with one another. In fact, the mother often used active listening skills like empathy, which demonstrated her fluency in the language of awareness not only in terms of her self, but also with regard to her sensitivity to her daughter's experience, and her appreciation of the nuances in their relationship.

There are two qualities of particular interest about the emergent themes of expressiveness and self-awareness/reflexivity. First, in all three cases, the adolescents

expressed themselves and demonstrated self-awareness and reflexivity in ways that were highly consistent with their parents' modes of expression. Second, both themes seem to represent some of the more individualistic forms of agency, those aspects that arise from organismic properties of the agentic self. In other words, how individuals choose to express themselves reflects aspects of who they are. Similarly, one's awareness of and ability to reflect upon the internal shape and origins of oneself is also an intrinsic component of his or her personhood. Indeed, expressiveness and self-awareness/reflexivity are both themes of agency that involve the sharing of facets of the inner self with the outside world. However, although both these themes originate within the self and represent internal and individualistic forms of agency, they nevertheless possess a social component. Expressiveness and self-awareness/reflexivity both involve something originating inward being manifested outward to a social context.

Question # 2

What characterizes the reciprocity of agency between parents and adolescents in dialogue?

This second research question highlights several themes in which the social context of a conversation and the interplay between the parent and adolescent are sites in which the bidirectionality of parent-child influence is readily apparent. Each of the following themes - such as reciprocity; agenda and engagement; initiative, assertiveness and support; and the art of argument - is explored in terms of how agency is jointly constructed within parent-adolescent conversations about career.

First is the theme of reciprocity. Perhaps it seems slightly redundant to label and describe it as its own theme, as my thesis is based on joint action. However, reciprocity,

as is evinced in the case studies, has a particular quality that is not captured in the constructs of joint action and bidirectionality. Here, the interplay emerged almost as its own entity, energized by the parent and adolescent participating in action together. Reciprocity was what took shape in the space between them. Attempting to describe this phenomenon in the intrinsic case studies, I found myself resorting to the use of metaphor; a mere explanation did not do justice to its depiction. Rather, reciprocity emerged as a game of tennis or a dance between the teens and their parents.

Specifically, in the mother-daughter dyad, reciprocity was characterized by a mutual, energized, and balanced exchange of language. It possessed a particular back and forth quality, reminiscent of the rhythm of a tennis game. Like the ball bouncing from player to player across the court, the mother and daughter would capture some of the other's momentum and send the ball back with their own swing, thus further propelling the exchange.

In contrast, the reciprocal nature of the father-son conversations was more like a dance, being less consistent and predictable than the mother-daughter tennis match. Rather, they cycled between a more mutual dialogue, in which they were in step together, and a divergence of agendas, where the dance became more about individual expression than moving synchronically. However, even while dancing independently, the father and son were nonetheless affected by and responsive to each other's paces. Nevertheless, their synchrony brought to mind another analogy, reminiscent of a professor and student embroiled in an intellectual argument. Indeed, there was often a quality of didacticism and intellectual debate in their reciprocal language.

All three families possessed a similar pattern in which the parent initiated the discussion and contributed to its continuous flow by asking questions, probing, making suggestions, and providing support. In turn, the adolescent would respond to the questions, elaborate with their preferences, opinions, and rationales. This was true of the father-daughter dyad, although they often seemed to disagree and argue with one another. Nevertheless, while their conversations could be fraught with opposing desires and opinions, the arguments between parent and teen were also characterized by energy, momentum, and a back and forth quality. There was a definite mutuality and reciprocity in their exchange, whether in disagreement or in more positively framed dialogue.

The second theme dealing with the interplay between parent and adolescent is engagement and agenda. It is akin to the theme of reciprocity as it is similarly characterized, not only by its social context and the interplay of two individuals, but also by the duality in which it is manifested – the symbiotic versus the conflictual. In other words, this theme comprises two divergent components. First is engagement, in which the parent and adolescent met together and worked in concert through joint action. They both demonstrated investment in and attention to the exchange, participating with energy and enthusiasm, while contributing to the interaction through language. In the conversational context, engagement through dialogue was related to and perhaps subsumed under the larger rubric of the parent-adolescent relationship. It centred around communication, mutuality, participation, involvement, and affiliation, such as the fostering and maintenance of positive emotional bonds. Engagement was inextricably linked to connectedness between parent and teen.

In contrast, agenda emerged as the other component of this theme, involving dissention and its resulting divergence. Specifically, agenda was a thematic category discussed in the original research study, in which it emerged as one of five properties of the family career development project. In this context, parental agenda was characterized by the domination of the parent's goals and functional steps to such an extent that it became unclear whether the adolescent's desires were at all reflected in the joint goals of the project (Young, Valach & Ball, et al., 2001). In the present study, the notion of agenda is similarly construed. It reflects how the goals and actions of the parent for his or her child were often quite different from what the adolescent desired or worked toward for him or herself. However, like in the original study, it was the domination of the parent's goals to the exclusion of the child's that distinguished parental agenda from mere disagreement.

Like engagement, agenda contributed to the quality of the parent-child relationship. Here, they emerged as a joint construct in which the parental agenda was strongly pursued by the parent, regardless of its lack of endorsement from the adolescent. By losing sight of the teen's desires, the parent neglected and even negated his or her child's sense of agency. This repudiation was often paired with the adolescent's frustration with, and disengagement and withdrawal from his or her parent. At times, the conflict resulting from the parental agenda fed the parent's concern about the ongoing relationship with his or her child.

For example, in the father-daughter dyad, the father had an agenda that the daughter pursue a future career in the science field. The daughter disagreed with her father's goals for her. At times she would engage in conflict and argument with him, and

at others she would use distancing language, or simply withdraw. Eventually the father relented in his pursuit, having realized how his agenda was impeding the relationship with his daughter. Rather than continue his attempts at convincing her to pursue a career in which she was clearly and sometimes obstinately disinterested, the father decided to turn his focus to encouraging engagement and fostering the relationship with his daughter. Similarly, the son in the father-son dyad would at times argue and at other times withdraw into silence when his father's agenda conflicted with his own. There were many occurrences in which the son acknowledged his father's experience and expertise and willingly engaged in intellectual debate. Although his father's delivery or expression of his agenda was at times trying, the son was aware of, appreciated, and even agreed with his father's goals for him. However, the parental agenda often became so pervasive within the dialogue that the father did not acknowledge or foster the son's initiative and ideas. By "stonewalling" in the conversations with his son, the father would disengage from conflict and disagreement with his son. In turn, when the son was not acknowledged or his opinions and perceptions negated, he withdrew from the dialogue. Again, this form of adolescent distancing fed the father's concern for his son's well-being, and for disruptions in their relationship.

In contrast, the mother and daughter seemed to have a warm, close, and communicative relationship. Having felt controlled by her own mother, this mother strove to raise her daughter with respect. At times, when the mother's and daughter's agendas did not match, the mother would often relinquish her goals and follow her daughter's direction. At other times they would engage in a negotiation, in which the daughter's voice was heard and her goals were considered. In doing so, she created a

space for her daughter to build a sense of agency. However, this mother also had a non-negotiable agenda – that her daughter complete a post-secondary education. Interestingly, the daughter was not in disagreement with her mother. Rather, it was the feeling of being imposed upon, that her choices were being stifled and constrained, that was most disconcerting to the daughter.

The art of argument is a theme that captures how parents' and teens' divergent goals did not function merely as a detriment to their relationship. Rather, this form of conflict may also have been a site for the expression of agency. Disagreement and argument illustrate the strength of conviction in both adolescents' and parents' beliefs, values, preferences, opinions, and goals. However, this theme deals not only with conflicting ideas and actions, but also with the strategies used by the parents and adolescents to stand their ground, or further their own positions.

The art of argument was generally characterized by one person's attempt to convince the other of his or her position. Although certainly present to varying degrees in all three families, it was most evident in the father-daughter dyad. By gathering information, making suggestions, and pointing out both the positive qualities of what was desired and negative aspects of the antithesis of their goals, the father and daughter undertook to persuade each other. Another characteristic of the art of argument was its repetitive nature. Looking back at the transcripts for this family, their disagreements endured pages at a time, during which the father would make suggestion after suggestion, all of which were repeatedly shot down by the daughter. Likewise, he would point out flaw after flaw of what he deemed as the daughter's contentious desires. In turn, she would defend each and every negative quality presented by her father.

With the exception of engagement and agenda, the art of argument was much like the other themes. Specifically, just as the adolescents' means of expression and ability to self-reflect were very similar to those of their parents, so were the daughter's debating strategies like those of her father. When it was her turn to attempt to convince her father of her goals, she was equally unrelenting. By repeatedly asking questions, gathering information, making suggestions, providing alternatives, and persevering to meet her goals, the daughter was similar to her father in attempting to convince him to agree with her perspective. However, by responding with vague or little content and finding rationales as to why his daughter's arguments did not hold weight, the father, just like his daughter, remained steadfast in holding on to his own opinions.

The final theme emergent from the data was that of initiative, assertiveness and support. Also manifesting itself as a circular process between the parent and adolescent, it is similar to the themes of reciprocity and engagement and agenda. However, it is clearly distinct, particularly from the latter, in terms of its relationship-enhancing nature. Initiative, assertiveness and support was most clearly manifested in the mother-daughter dyad. Here, the daughter demonstrated agency by initiating and elaborating topics of conversation with her mother, in her unprompted expression of self-awareness, by taking action to achieve her goals, and through her assertive requests for her mother's support. In turn, the mother responded to the daughter's initiative and assertiveness with excitement, enthusiasm and openness. She provided her daughter with support and assistance and responded to her needs by emotional means, such as encouragement, positive reinforcement, and interest. In addition, the mother acted not only as an

information resource, but also as a physical resource; she assisted her daughter in procuring materials and providing other means to achieve her goals.

Through the themes of reciprocity, engagement and agenda, the art of argument, and initiative, assertiveness and support, the language of agency in the parent-adolescent conversations emerged as a bidirectionally-influenced joint construction.

Question # 3

How is agency reflected or embedded in the organizational levels (elements, functional steps, and goals) and the interwoven manifestations (manifest behaviour, internal processes, and social meaning) of action?

In order to best answer this particular research question, I think it is important to reiterate what is meant by “level” and “interwoven manifestation” in terms of their action-theoretical origins. Action can take place at three levels: joint goals, the functional steps used to reach the goals, and elements, or specific verbal and nonverbal behaviour that comprise the steps (Valach, Young & Lynam, 1996; Young, Valach & Ball, et al., 2000). Likewise, action is not limited solely to observable behaviour. Rather, it is manifest in three interrelated forms: manifest behaviour, internal processes, and social meaning (Chen, 2002; Valach, Young & Lynam, 1996; Young, Valach & Ball, et al., 2000). Manifest behaviours comprise actions taken that are overtly observable to the outside world. For instance, asking a question, walking to the park, typing a sentence, and reading an article are all forms of manifest behaviour. In contrast, internal processes are actions that take place within the individual, such as cognitions and emotions. Although the expression of rationale and affect can be construed as manifest behaviour, the actual thoughts and feelings themselves are forms of internal processes. Social

meaning deals with how we make sense of action that is constructed within a social context. In other words, social meaning is a function of individual or joint interpretation, whose understanding is inevitably composed of and by its social context. Action cannot be meaningful in isolation of its environment.

It seems natural, then, that agency would be an integral part of a theory based on goal-setting and intentional action-taking. However, how is the language of agency manifested in the various levels of action? Firstly, agentic language itself can be representative of the elemental level of action. The actual speaking of the words and the basic meaning ascribed to the speech are fundamental elements of action. For instance, in the original study, the dialogue from the conversations was analyzed utterance by utterance. Each of these speech segments was described in terms of its basic meaning and linguistic function within the context of a conversation. Analysis such as “asks question, probing for more information” is a possible example of how an utterance such as “What dates are those computer courses available?” could have been coded at the elemental level.

Similarly, I explored the parent-adolescent conversations for evidence of agency starting with the level of elements; it served as the foundation of my research methodology. However, in this secondary analysis, as I described the basic meaning and function of each utterance, I also sought to incorporate how agency was being manifested in the parents’ and adolescents’ speech. By utilizing the operational definitions of language and agency provided by Heath (1999) and O’Connor (2000), I looked for agency in the way language was structured. The theme of expressiveness best captures agency at the level of elements, as it deals with an individual’s choice of words and

sentence structures, the fundamental building blocks of psycholinguistic analysis.

Parents and adolescents structured their language in various ways, demonstrating a range of agency. For instance, using “I” and an active verb was construed as an agentic structure. However, indexing the self while using the pronoun “you” was interpreted as a distancing or passivising language mechanism. Indeed, the language of agency was readily apparent at this level.

The language of agency was also evident at the level of functional steps.

Specifically, language structures in the context of a conversation could act as a means for individuals to achieve their goals. The art of argument is a brilliant reflection of language as a functional step. Here, both the father and daughter utilized language as a strategy to convince the other of their perceptions, goals, and desires. Nevertheless, agentic language in conversation is, by its very nature, a functional step. At its most basic level it acts as a means of conveying information to the interpersonal world. In a more complex context, it can assist one in achieving such goals as winning an argument, fostering connection in a relationship, providing and receiving support and guidance, and planning for the future.

Not only is the language of agency a functional step in the achievement of joint goals, but it is also a way of describing and co-constructing what those goals might be. For example, the mother and daughter negotiated what their next step would be in the exploration of the daughter’s future career as an architect. In the context of a conversation, they jointly constructed their proximal and distal goals, such as creating a brainstorming chart of next steps, and looking into university scholarship requirements, respectively. Similarly, the father described what constituted his goals for his son,

namely that he take a more active approach in shaping his life. Through their dialogue, the son, in turn, expressed his own goals for himself – that he was able to get through each day without losing his internal sense of security. By striving to find a way that the son could take action without risking his safety, they participated in a reciprocal process in which their joint goals were negotiated and shaped together. Just as the art of argument is a means of achieving ones goals, it is also an expression, conciliation, and jointly-constructed process of iterating what comprises those goals.

In general terms, the language of agency is clearly evident at all three levels of action: elements, functional steps, and joint goals. If this is the case, how does the language of agency in the context of parent-adolescent conversations about career reveal itself in terms of manifest behaviour, internal processes, and social meaning? Looking at the language of agency from an elemental level can help us to understand agency as manifest behaviour. For example, uttering a sentence is a behaviour readily observable to those in one's social context. By using the particular language structures described above (e.g., "I" and an active verb), one is acting agentially through his or her speech.

However, agency is evident not only in the act of speaking, but also in its various preceding and subsequent behaviours. Through this particular methodology, I was able to see if agentic language was spoken in relation to other forms of manifest behaviour. In other words, if an individuals articulated their goals and possible means of realizing these goals, did they in fact engage in the functional steps set out for themselves? The daughter in the mother-daughter dyad was quite adept at translating her goals into action, particularly in terms of manifest behaviour (such as taking a drafting course). In contrast, the father in the father-son dyad provides an example where agentic language (as evinced

in the form of reflexive language) and goals (such as encouraging agency in his son) were disconnected due to an inability to engage in the appropriate functional steps, or manifest behaviour. In other words, the father was agentic because he articulated his awareness of how his behaviour was impinging on his son's ability to demonstrate a sense of personal agency. However, the father's agentic language did not translate into the manifest behaviour of not dominating the father-son conversations. Thus, the behavioural manifestation of agency involves more than the act of language itself.

However, in terms of internal processes, we can only see evidence of them if they are made accessible to the world outside the self. One means of externalizing thoughts and feelings is through language, in the form of expressing self-awareness and reflexivity. Although the act of speaking is a form of manifest behaviour, the very ability to think reflexively and be aware of one's feelings is agentic. Thus, agency is also evident in internal processes, even though our means of accessing them is through manifest behaviour.

Finally, as human beings, we exist within a myriad of contexts (i.e., personal, sociocultural, institutional, etc.). The interpretation of and meaning ascribed to the happenings in our lives is inevitably construed within these contexts. Therefore, the language of agency can only be deemed as such bearing in mind the socially constructed meaning. In other words, what I deem to be agentic is shaped by the multiple social contexts in which I live. For example, my experience as a student and learning about the construct in classes, my participation as a research assistant, the reading I have done over the last year, discussions with others regarding what agency means to them, being a

member of Western society, and experiencing my own struggles with agency have all contributed to my interpretation and understanding of this construct.

In sum, the language of agency is evident in parent-adolescent conversations about career, as is evinced by the themes of agency that emerged from the analysis. Indeed, parents and teens take joint action in the co-construction of agency within the context of both their dialogue and their relationships. In addition, the theoretical constructs of action theory, such as the levels and the interwoven manifestations of agency, are a complex, multifaceted and comprehensive means to better understanding the intricacies of human agency.

CHAPTER 5 – DISCUSSION

According to the findings of this study, agency is evident in the language used in parent-adolescent conversations about career. It emerged through the themes of expressiveness, self-awareness and reflexivity, reciprocity, engagement and agenda, the art of argument, and initiative, assertiveness and support. In addition, agency as a construct was readily incorporated into action theory, particularly in terms of both the levels and interwoven manifestations of action.

This investigation's unique contribution to our understanding of agency is that its findings suggest that it can be jointly constructed in the context of parent-adolescent interaction. Based on the psycholinguistic analysis of agency in observational protocols and narrative interviews both Heath (1999) and O'Connor (2001), respectively, provided descriptions of how agency could appear in language. Although this study explores agency within the context of dialogue, the language of agency, as operationalized by Heath and O'Connor, was certainly evident. Nevertheless, this innovative research methodology allows us to explore agency while in the process of being co-constructed by two people, rather than looking at how agency is recounted in the language of narratives.

According to Larson (2000), the use of conditionals (if-then constructions), the use of modals (i.e., "should", "could", "would"), getting clarification from others (including what-if questions), and the use of varied genres and voices in speech were demonstrative of agency for adolescents who participated in structured voluntary activities (Heath, 1999). In the current study, all of these forms of agentic language were evident in the adolescents' language. However, most prominent was the adolescents' demonstration of agency by goal-setting and planful action, through the use of what

Heath (1999) refers to as socio-dramatic bids, or "let's pretend" situations (p. 67). These sociodramatic bids of the future were engaged in jointly and frequently by the parents and adolescents. Certainly, participating in conversations about the teens' futures would include some form of envisioning. However, these families did more than discuss hypothetical scenarios. Together, parents and teens not only looked toward the future, but also negotiated the shape that future would take, and jointly constructed some means of achieving their vision. In this sense, socio-dramatic bids emerged as a practical forum in which the adolescent's future could be fleshed out, adapted, and explored, and the functional steps in achieving those images were suggested, initiated, and tested.

The language of agency as defined by O'Connor (2000) was instrumental in this investigation. In fact, it functioned as the foundation upon which the data analysis was conducted and the themes established. Indeed, O'Connor's forms of agentic language, such as verb positioning, use of pronouns, and reflexive language, were not only evident in abundance throughout the conversations, but also highly informative in their interpretation. For instance, the use of the first person and active voice was certainly an indication of agency in both the parents' and adolescents' dialogue. However, as O'Connor cautioned, an agentially structured sentence may only be the surface of an utterance in which the meaning of agency is being deflected or problematized. This phenomenon was evident in the parent-adolescent conversations, but even more common was the occurrence of distancing or passivising structures possibly covering more agentic meanings.

The father and daughter both speaking about the daughter's friend and her future may have been such a circumstance. One possible explanation of their use of distancing

language may be related to their Chinese-Canadian background. Certainly, cultural influences can affect how agency is manifested within particular contexts (Bandura, 2002). When in disagreement with their parents, Chinese-Canadian adolescents tended to acquiesce and withdraw from the conversation, partly because of the cultural value of showing respect for one's parents (Young, et al, in press). In this circumstance, the daughter's distancing and passivising language may have functioned agentically as a means of disagreeing with and expressing herself more respectfully to her father.

Similarly, O'Connor (2000) discusses how using the pronoun "you" when indexing the self in narrative may appear more passivising and distancing than using the first person, "I". However, this "you" may also possess deeper meanings that serve agentic functions. In the current investigation, there was much evidence of this, particularly in adolescents' speech. For example, the son in the father-son dyad often switched to using the pronoun "you" instead of "I" when discussing some of his personal challenges, such as his use of illicit drugs, his difficulties in school, and particularly his experience of depression and accompanying lack of an internal sense of security.

According to O'Connor (2000), the son may have been utilizing an interpersonal form of "you" which involves both the speaker and the listener by bringing about a shared sense of agency. By positioning him or herself as not-so-different from others, and by eliciting empathy, the speaker addresses the listener, as well as a generalized other. Indeed, it is possible that the son meant to elicit empathy and understanding from his father. In addition, his use of the pronoun "you" may also have had an intrapersonal component, in which the son indexed not only his father or the researcher, but also himself, both in the present and in the past. In this circumstance, the use of the pronoun

“you” may have been indicative of the son’s self-reflexive thinking. In other words, while telling of his past experience in juxtaposition with his current self, the son may also have been furthering his own self-awareness, understanding, and insight.

O’Connor (2000) propagates the notion that such reflexivity in language demonstrates personal agency. Reflexive language occurs within the speaker’s commentary about his or her thoughts, motives, and actions. It functions as a means to organise, create cohesion, provide insight into, and foster understanding of the speaker’s experience. Within the context of autobiographical narrative, reflexive language is normally demarcated by a frame break, or a break in the telling of the story to comment on what is being said. However, because the speech investigated in the current study was structured in the form of dialogue rather than narrative, these frame breaks did not occur often. Rather, reflexive language normally took place within the flow of the parent-adolescent conversations, or upon being prompted by the researchers during the self-confrontations.

By placing high value on one’s ability to speak in a language illustrating self-awareness and reflexivity, O’Connor (2000) further explicates the notion of agency. Even if the story being told is not one where agency and personal responsibility are depicted, the frame breaks, self-reflection, and meta-commentary on the narrative are acts of agency in and of themselves. In contrast, this does not appear to be entirely true of this type of language within the context of this study. Although it may be a function of the type of speech being studied (conversation versus narrative), reflexive language is only part of the equation of agency.

For example, within the theme of self-awareness for the father-son dyad, one of the father's main goals was to foster and encourage the development of his son's sense of agency. However, he realized that his actions, such as "stonewalling" and speaking in "monologues" were actually constraining this goal. The considerable insight, candour and sensitivity embedded within the father's highly self-aware and reflexive language illustrated a strong sense of personal agency. Nevertheless, these agentic markers were diminished by the father's inability to change his behaviour. For, although he was aware of his own challenges in providing his son agentic space, it was the father's very inability to create this space that demonstrated a deficit of his own sense of personal agency.

The three interwoven manifestations of action can also help to explain this dilemma, which centres around the discrepancy between highly agentic language structures that occurred in absence of subsequent goal-directed action. For example, the father's and son's self-understanding and intentions were highly agentic. However, both had considerable difficulty in translating their words into action. Certainly, they would not be considered agentic in light of the outcome-oriented, linear conceptualizations from existing theories of agency (Chen, 2002). How can we conceive of this agency through the lens of action theory?

Intentionality, a key element of action theory, is composed of the interwoven characteristics of action, manifest behaviour, internal processes, and social meaning (Chen, 2000). Goal-directed, intentional behaviour can only occur when these characteristics are all in play. According to Young & Valach (in preparation):

Intentionality, in our view, is tied to action. It both prefigures action and arises from it. In the first instance, it is pre-reflective, but when we move to long-term and complex action sequences such as in projects and career, it is clearly

reflective and connected to the sociocultural, normative, and language contexts in which actions, projects and careers occur. (p. 22)

In the case of the father and son, intentionality is evident in their prefiguring of action. However, intentionality in the long run cannot occur unless action has taken place. As mentioned in the literature review, intentions look toward the future, are grounded in the present, but are also informed by past action. Although certainly some intentional and goal-directed behaviour was occurring merely from the agentic way the father and son spoke, the lack of subsequent functional steps that were effective in realizing their goals was absent. From the traditional conceptualization and through the theoretical lens of action-theory, talking the talk without then walking the walk is not a complete manifestation of agency.

Another perspective on this phenomenon also suggests that one member of the dyad's sense of personal agency may affect the other's. Specifically, was the father's own sense of agency interfering with his ability to foster it in his son? Or was the father's unrealized goal of changing his conversational style modelling behaviour lacking in personal agency? In turn, how was the son's sense of agency influencing his father's? Indeed, agency within the parent-adolescent relationship is a complex, multi-faceted, and multi-directional phenomenon, best understood in terms of circular and reciprocal influence.

Indeed, several themes illustrated both bidirectionality and similarities between the parents and their teens in their expression of the language of agency. Heredity of particular personality traits, and the influence of socialization through processes such as parental modelling of behaviour probably play prominent roles in this phenomenon. However, an alternate explanation of the likeness between the parents and their teens can

also be understood in terms of bidirectional influence and a co-construction of agency (Lollis & Kuczynski, 1997; Pettit & Lollis, 1997).

Within the larger context of their relationship, parents and adolescents engage in many instances of interaction, as is exemplified by these conversations about career. Over the course of a lifetime of interactions, both parent and teen are partners in the construction of their relationship. They influence and are influenced by one another. From this perspective, children are not simply the products of their parents' parenting styles; they do not only observe and adopt their parents' means of self-expression. Rather, the children's ways of being in the world also influence how their parents interact with them (Pettit & Lollis, 1997). The teens' ways of communicating also seemed to influence how their parents reflected upon and expressed themselves agentically through language.

Although the teens undoubtedly wielded some influence on their parents, for all three families, there were instances in which the parents' agenda for their child overrode any joint goals that may have been co-constructed. What distinguished agenda from argument was not the fact that parent and adolescent were in disagreement. Rather, it was the lack of acknowledgement from the parent that impeded the adolescent from acting agentically. In other words, it was not the arguing, but feeling a lack of impact on others and control over one's choices that reduced the space in which the teens could act of their own will and accord. Indeed, an individual's sense of agency is predicated on the parent's recognition of their child's impact upon them (Pollock & Slavin, 1998), while one's control beliefs are thought to be crucial elements of psychological well-being and successful adaptation across the lifespan (Smith, et al., 2000). Of course, in their roles,

parents have more experience, insight, and knowledge about how to navigate the world. The adolescents acknowledged and appreciated this; however, it was still important for them to have their voices heard, their impact acknowledged, and their desires taken into account. It was the feeling of having their power taken away by the parent's overriding agenda that created disequilibrium in the parent-child relationship.

Although related to the negotiation of parental agenda, argument poses a unique situation in terms of agency. It can serve to negate a child's sense of agency within the context of disagreement, particularly if the parent's overriding agenda overshadows the goals of the teen. However, at the same time, this form of argument requires strength of conviction. As adolescents present their own cases, or refuse to cede to the desires of their parents, they are committing an act of agency. Although disagreements are a less-than-pleasant means of communication, they also may contribute to an adolescent's assertion of his or her individuality, independence, and separateness from his or her parent(s); indeed, adolescents' use of agentic language in context of an argument with their parents may be a fundamental component of identity development. The development of personal agency is an integral part of identity development in adolescence (Yates & Youniss, 1996), while argument can be a means of asserting separateness, and in turn, one's own identity, from one's parents (Grotevant & Cooper, 1985).

Nevertheless, adolescent identity development is not only about separation and individuation between parent and child. Rather, a large existing body of research corroborates the notion that adolescent identity development is best fostered when both separation and connectedness are present in the parent-adolescent relationship

(e.g., Cooper, Grotevant & Condon 1983; Rice, Cole & Lapsley, 1990). The close relationship between the mother and daughter provides a good example of how both individuation and connectedness work in concert to foster their sense of agency, and possibly their sense of identity. Their sense of connectedness probably helped to fuel a symbiotic interaction in which the daughter's initiative and assertiveness and the mother's support and encouragement occurred in a cyclical and repetitive pattern. The mother and daughter worked together to negotiate joint goals. As the daughter took active steps in reaching her goals by procuring her mother's assistance, the mother became excited about and encouraging of her daughter's demonstration of agency. In turn, this enthusiasm and involvement provided reinforcement and most likely helped to propel the daughter's initiative further. Through this positive feedback loop, both the daughter's and mother's goals were realized. In essence, the daughter was able to practice exercising initiative, always having the connected relationship to return to and fall back on.

When it was originally labelled, the theme of initiative, assertiveness, and support was not necessarily meant to conform with Larson's (2000) definition of initiative. However, it does seem to fit rather well with the daughter's use of language in the context of this theme. In order for an individual to demonstrate initiative, intrinsic motivation, concerted engagement, and a temporal arc must be present. Indeed, the daughter seemed highly invested and internally motivated in her desire to take a drafting course. By doing so, she directed her concentration and effort into testing the waters in the field of architecture. Finally, this attempt at trying out some of the realities of the world of architecture took place over a semester at school. Therefore, the daughter's

enrolment in the drafting course met all the requirements for initiative. However, Larson's conceptualization of initiative neglects one important factor. How would the mother's role in jointly constructing goals with, providing support to, and enthusiastically encouraging her daughter's exercise of initiative be incorporated into this model? Certainly, the social construction of initiative can be understood in terms of parent-adolescent conversations about career. Indeed, Larson's model could be expanded to include how interpersonal and social contexts contribute to adolescents' construction and practice of initiative.

How do the findings of this inquiry relate to existing research describing agency within the social context of conversation? In his study of 71 diagnostic statements, Peräkylä (2002) found that doctors who provided some explanatory evidence in their diagnosis of patients' ailments encouraged those patients to participate more actively in the diagnostic process. Here, patients expressed their agency through agreement, disagreement, and providing their own opinions of their diagnosis, accompanied with their rationale for thinking this way. Similar to the theme of expressiveness in this inquiry, adolescents and their parents demonstrated agency by presenting their opinions, whether in agreement or disagreement, in addition to the rationale behind them. Peräkylä's findings, however, suggest that there may be some direction in which agency can be fostered. If the information regarding the evidence behind their patients' diagnoses was provided by the doctors, their patients were more likely to participate agentically. Similarly, if parents provide information and rationale behind their goals and desires for their children, the adolescents may be more likely to respond in kind.

Although the nature of this extensive and detailed review of the co-construction of agency through parent-adolescent conversations has provided fertile ground in which the language of agency could be better understood, there are definite methodological limitations that must be considered. In this concluding section, I will address these issues, along with the implications for future research and practice that have emerged from my findings.

Limitations of the study

The limitations of the findings from this secondary analysis are similar to those of the original study. Specifically, the self-selection of the participants, the incentive of the honorarium, the reliability of the monitoring procedures, the use of an innovative methodological approach, and the possibility that the procedures might have served as an intervention may all have been limiting factors (Young, et al., in press; Young, Valach & Ball, et al., 2001).

Indeed, the very nature of a secondary analysis of qualitative data poses certain methodological issues, such as questions about whether a qualitative inquiry can occur without face-to-face researcher and participant co-construction, concerns around where the primary analysis ends and the secondary analysis begins, and considerations regarding whether the data are amenable to secondary analysis (Heaton, 1998). However, all of these issues were addressed in the methodology chapter of this thesis.

Another limitation deals with the small sample size of this inquiry. Although there was considerable homogeneity in the findings, which suggests having reached a degree of saturation, it is possible that other agentic themes would emerge with a larger sampling of dyads. Similarly, the interpretive nature of the analysis may also limit the study's

generalizability. Although the ability to generalize the findings to the population at large was not the intent of this inquiry, blind review of the coding system by a second researcher would add credibility to the emergent themes. Nevertheless, guided by the interpretive nature of qualitative case study, a rich and detailed description of the co-construction of agency within parent-adolescent dialogue was achieved.

Implications for future research

Certainly, future research in the realm of parent-adolescent co-construction of agency could work to address some of the limitations of this study. Indeed, the generation of a reliable system to code agentic language would be invaluable in further investigations. In addition, because of its interventive properties, inquiries measuring possible effects of this method on the development of personal agency would be highly informative.

In terms of process, this study combined two existing methodologies to better understand the construct of agency. Data collection procedures from contextual action theory and data analysis procedures from a qualitative case study perspective each contributed unique qualities to this inquiry. By doing so, I was able to explore the construct of agency, not only in terms of its individual and organismic properties, but also as it occurred as a joint creation of two people. Further research using this distinct methodology would be informative and appropriate for investigation of other socially constructed concepts, or for the further exploration of parent-adolescent bidirectionality in their interactions and relationships, as described by Lollis and Kuczynski (1997). In addition, this inquiry was successful in bringing linguistic analysis into the realm of psychology. Here, the study of language structures and meaning contributed to our

understanding of a psychological construct. Again, future research from a social constructionist perspective could certainly make use of this type of linguistic methodology in understanding other psychological constructs.

In terms of studying of the construct of agency, further qualitative research is needed to shed greater light on its specific nature and composition. Additionally, quantitative analysis would be valuable in measuring the effects and perhaps even some causal attributions of the use of the language of agency and its resulting goal-directed, intentional action. Also the co-construction of agency can occur in contexts other than parent-adolescent conversations about career. A variety of individuals present in adolescents' lives, such as peers, teachers, and other family members may also contribute to their sense of agency. Investigations of a variety of social, interpersonal, and historical contexts would be helpful in gaining a fuller understanding of the multi-faceted nature of human agency.

Implications for practice

As Chen (2002) illustrates, the melding of agency within an action-theoretical context can have many positive implications for career counselling. For instance, the client-therapist relationship can serve as a foundation upon which agency is jointly constructed. From this experience, clients' ability to act agentically in joint action with others outside the therapeutic relationship is facilitated. In addition, the multi-faceted and multi-dimensional system espoused by action theory accommodates change and development. It encourages reflexivity, and in doing so, generates new perceptions and understandings. In this forum, the space to build a more agentic way of being in the world is fostered.

As mentioned above, the data collection procedures from the original analysis possess qualities of an intervention. Indeed, incorporating a family career development project in career counselling or agency-enhancement programme could be highly beneficial in bringing families together in the fostering of adolescent identity, goal-directed behaviour, and planning for the future. In turn, parent-education programmes that teach parents what agency might look like in their own and their child's language, as well as how to encourage it in the context of conversations with their children, could be helpful in guiding parents in the creation of agency-promoting family environments.

Similarly, the findings of this study could also contribute to counsellor training in sensitivity, awareness, and fostering of agentic language. According to O'Connor (2000), reflexive language, in particular, is a site in which personal agency can be fostered. In therapy, reflexive frame breaks can be used as a starting point for discussion in rehabilitation, both to foster and build on existing agentic dialogue, to probe omissions and digression and question other forms of non-agentic language, and to create new conversations that acknowledge and reinforce personal and moral agency. Counsellors could benefit from the ability to discern agency in their own language, as well as in that of their clients. Although literature exists on the development of agency as an integral part of the counselling process (Cochran, 1997; Eron & Lund, 1996; Pollock & Slavin, 1998; Stacey, 1997), there is very little research that describes the specific nature of agency in this context.

For example, in her critique of existing protocols for HIV test counselling, Mattson (2000) suggests that agency-promoting discourse recognizes the capacity of clients to define their own concerns and goals, rather than having them imposed by their

counsellors. The relationship between counsellor and client is one where power is redistributed more equally, and in which knowledge sharing, participatory education, and clients' existing narratives are incorporated. Indeed, this client-centred approach, in which the client is treated with respect and compassion, and active listening occurs on the part of the counsellor, would likely lend itself to fostering agency in clients. However, Mattson does not illustrate how specific language structures in this context reflect and promote agency. Although there is ample opportunity within a therapeutic setting for engaging in a client-centred encouragement and utilization of reflexive language as a basis for creating agency, the findings of this study provide clearer descriptions of how this may take shape.

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APPENDIX A

Analysis summary tables for each family case

Father/daughter - Analysis summary notes**DAUGHTER**

- ❖ generally tends to be less argumentative and blocking and more reflexive and deeply expressive with R than with F
- ❖ also is generally less expressive and self-aware than other two teens, or demonstrates this differently (by reconstructed dialogue)

Agentive	Non-agentive
<p>Expressiveness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clearly, concisely, and agentively states her preferences, opinions, desires, interests, likes, dislikes, knowledge, experience, problem-solving - backs up preferences, opinions, behaviours, etc. with information, examples, and rationale (although at times quite brief), and further elaborates them - clear and agentive language used in strong and decisive responses to questions, statements of her personal values and beliefs for career, family, life in general - Expresses self in agentive way – “I” and active verb - Has clear idea and description of what it would look like to get support from parent the way she wants to - Further elaborates understanding by providing examples in which other family members and friends are incorporated, or speaking in their voices, or expressing own thoughts as reconstructed dialogue, reconstructing past dialogue with F to predict future - Assertively correcting F’s and researcher’s assumptions and misinterpretations - Agentive message to F – actions speak louder than words, and your actions belie what you’re saying 	<p>Lack of expressiveness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Some rationale not very clear and not well thought-out, so she shuts down instead, more antagonistic, or doesn’t even provide rationale at all (not that F asks, but she waits and he does it for her) - lack of accuracy – not realistic - making not well thought-out statements (or simply D’s age and lack of perspective?) - Instead of providing rationale behind her dislike of science, making point that she’s good at it - speaks tentatively and vaguely - Not clearly and agentively stating that she doesn’t want to go to summer school – looking for a reason that will appeal to F - can be little bit disjointed and unclear in her explanations - Doesn’t really explain or elaborate what F not understanding means or looks like <p>Passivising language</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Uses “we” instead of “I”, but still kind of in context of conversation – diffusing confrontation by including another - not even using “we” anymore - rather than saying where she wants to go, she talks about where friend wants to go - Still only referring to friend and not self, although obvious D feels the same way - language is non-constructive and non

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clearly and agentively stating her position/perception of their relationship (even though different from F) - Repeats herself to reinforce - tries several strategies to explain what she thinks and how she feels to F when he doesn't understand 	<p>agentive (but she is a teenager, after all) "that's stupid!"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - but using passivising language – distancing "you" – when talking about emotional things with parents - Passivising language – not using any pronouns referring to herself or father, just "this part" and "it" indexing conversation itself, or "your own kids" rather than "me", refers to self as "his daughter", or refers to "they" (both parents) instead of F - When talks about her and mom uses "my mom and I" – agentive language, when talks about F, switches to "a dad and a daughter" in same sentence! - acquiesces - Some passivising language "I think", "it depends", "I guess", "kind of", "in some situations", "sometimes" - And vague "things", "stuff" - doesn't actually convey much content with her words - "I don't know"
<p>Self-awareness and reflexivity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Self-aware and reflexive (moderate), uses relatively agentive language to express feelings - Speaks in other's voice to provide and bring to life an example, also reconstructs her own thoughts in dialogue - An awareness that there are some things that aren't appropriate to discuss with your parents – growing independence and maturity - Somewhat self-aware, reflexive and agentively expressive re varied family relationships (parent vs. brother) - Aware of her own maturation process of coming into her own independence and thinking for herself - Awareness F, their differences, and their interaction – "the more the 	<p>Lack of awareness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Here she answers question with more content than feeling - reflexivity at a kind of surface level – not extremely articulate - Contradiction? – what would make her more upset? Uncertainty? Pressure? Being imposed upon and influenced? - Negative self-description - But, still goes back to same, standard response – not so self-aware, reflexive? Inarticulate? Or just playing it safe with F (cultural?)? - But you don't really do this (listen to F and just do what he wants) – in some cases she argues and tries to convince him of her differing preferences and desires - Lack of maturity, sensitivity and understanding of the complexities,

<p>pushes, the less I want to listen to him”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Further elaborates understanding of F’s modus operandi by providing example of brother - understanding of F’s influence - awareness of her own youth and uncertainty - understanding of an outside perspective – why on the surface the course seems easy - Owns that she perhaps misspoke re him “freaking out” - Awareness of her background, values, and beliefs (religion and respect), what they mean, and what they look like in practice (interaction with F) - Owning fact that she is not always successful being “respectful” toward parents - Has some clear ideas about what defines her - Owning lack of awareness at time of conversation - uses reconstruction of past dialogues with F to help her anticipate future ones 	<p>responsibilities and challenges of adulthood</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Doesn’t own fact that she is not as expressive with F as she is with R - Not much insight or reflexivity, simply an echo of what took place in conversation - Doesn’t sound that way (relationship is ok) from the way you describe it - Respect, face?
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FATHER

- ❖ his strategies for communicating and fostering a better relationship with D (even convincing her that science is the way to go) do not work and he is aware of this
- ❖ still, he is unable to change his strategies and behaviours – still mostly just arguing and convincing

Agentive	Non-agentive
<p>Expressiveness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stating his opinions, observations, perceptions, feeling relatively clearly and agentively – more so in SC - Clear and agentive expression of his experience and relationship with D - providing D with other career options 	<p>Distancing Language</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Refers to D in 3rd person or as “those kids” - Non-agentive language “I guess”, “we”, “us”, “kind of”, “we have to”, “there is a big conflict” - Distancing and involving “you” to elicit

<p>and new avenues (although highly circumscribed) and alternatives for discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - making suggestions, reframing overcome D's concerns - using active listening, acknowledging, minimal encouragers, addressing D's concerns - Agentively describes example and vision of future compromise and able to recount past experience and reinforce by speaking in D's voice - Providing rationale for his own thoughts, perceptions and behaviours - Makes suggestions of rationales for D when she doesn't provide info 	<p>researcher empathy?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Uses example of friend and his daughter – diffusing and distancing - Not spoken totally agentively – “we” – also including mother in this description – distancing, or just ethnic value of family? - he asks question, answers it himself within the question - Telling D how it is – didactic, “you’ve got to” – commanding language - Brings up topic of science again! Almost repeat of first conversation, also does this with not understanding D – limited repertoire - “Right” – more of an “end of discussion” than asking for D's acknowledgement - Totally shuts D down by ignoring her question, not acknowledging her perceptions and feelings, negating or arguing, and completely changing subject, or using sarcasm and hyperbole
<p>Reflexivity and self-awareness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Aware and reflexive of self (thoughts and feelings) - Aware and reflexive of D's experience, feelings, body-language, and position as a teenager asserting herself - Aware and reflexive as of interaction with D - Owns that his actions do not always follow his words - Aware of, reflexive, and expresses agenda and strategies openly – owns how he is trying to influence D - Owns fact and expresses candidly lack of understanding of and concern for D-aware of their differences of opinion - Self-aware and reflexive of the way he was raised and how he wants to do differently with his kids (less traditional Chinese authoritarian way), 	<p>Lack of reflexivity and self-awareness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recounts events without large amount of insight into meaning, sometimes doesn't answer feeling question - Just doesn't get it and still tries to reinforce his agenda because D's reasons do not make rational sense to him, imposing some kind of answer that he could understand - Doesn't get that his career values are different from D (her wanting to enjoy and have fun in her job vs. F's notion of being good at something and that's enough) - Contradiction - says he wants to understand D, but what he talks about doing is more about furthering his own agenda than understanding his D - Contradicts himself - says he wants D to keep open mind to everything, but really, he only wants her to be open to

<p>provides rationale as to why</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Acknowledging that art is not a comfortable area for him because of lack of knowledge - Reflexive and aware of own career values (i.e., security over huge financial gain and risk) and how wants this for D too - Owning fact that his attempts at convincing D and improving their communication did not work very well - Speaking candidly and openly about mixed feelings of D growing up 	<p>his agenda of a career in science</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Doesn't want D to feel he's dominating, but he really is – actions don't match goals - Focus on D and how she's finding excuses, rather than owning notion that his strategies aren't working - Lack of ownership – like arguing or blaming D – “I don't understand because you answer in a closed manner” – not giving D room for agency, is it? Also not claiming agency for self
<p>Relationship/Engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Expressing concern about misunderstanding, attempts to understand D by asking her questions - seeking insight on how to parent and communicate better with his D (externally), because of desire to support and be involved in D's life - brings D's friend and her brother into conversations to diffuse confrontation and make it safer - Asking her to project what it would be like if he did understand D or at least try to - Reaching out to D, making effort to join with her, expressing that he is willing to try to understand her and not freak out, trying different tack to connect with her - trying to initiate conversation and open it up with D, opens new related subject, asks open questions, tries different approaches - Trying to engage D and draw her out on subject of careers, sometimes by witching to more acceptable topic, sometimes by looking for and suggesting alternatives - acknowledging and addressing D's concerns, asks her about feelings 	<p>Agenda</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - not giving space to D: “couldn't get through”, and eventually I'm going to have to impose myself on her, especially if she keeps disagreeing with me just for the sake of disagreeing - direct and dwells on topic that D is obviously not into - totally changes subject back to his agenda and preferred career for D, often changes subjects abruptly and without acknowledging what D has said - completely shuts down this option as a career for D - Still not conveying reality to her, or encouraging D to find out what financial reality is - which is important in creating sense of agency - Circumscription – even though wants to say no altogether, still tries to compromise by suggesting it as a hobby – however, very clear message to D that it is not ok as a career - Not acknowledging D's concerns – just work hard (follow my agenda for you) and everything will be ok - But still wants to reign her in when he sees her doing something different than his desires for her - Wants D to follow in his tried and true

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - asking D to speculate, further elaborate and inviting her again to express her perspective on things their communication/relationship - Asks open question, inviting D to describe what would work for her in terms of their communication – “how should I act?” - Making interesting point - “how can we understand if you don’t talk to us about what’s going on - Awareness that this is a usual pattern of conversation between them 	<p>path – may not be right for her</p>
<p>Arguing/Convincing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - building argument and using strategies to convince D, uses ‘but’, bends reality (student loans), - Convincing and backward, manipulative language (who wouldn’t want to save a baby?) - trying to demonstrate to D why career is less-than-desirable (convincing, negative) - moving on to next subject quickly, before last one covered - Struggling for a foothold to maintain argument - no longer using valid and rational information - “is there any small hope that I can cling to?” - asking for permission to bring up subject again later - fishing for ways to further his own argument by asking what D’s friends want to be - changing to another science topic because last one wasn’t working – agentive for him, but constraining agency for D 	<p>External focus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Asking researchers if other parents have the same feeling - Looking for external guidance and answers - But looking for any means to further his agenda – even going outside the family for help - Repeats researcher’s words. Is this truly accurate? F never alludes to letting it go - As D tries to problem-solve, he shuts her down at every turn with external excuses as to why she can’t go to Montreal - Somehow negative, implying again that it’s D’s fault – other teens are ok, so what makes it so difficult to understand you? - Other focus – external locus of control – talks mostly about D, rather than his own experiences - Needs an external gauge – other parents in similar situation to him - Looking for external help or validation to parent, communicate and connect with D better

Father/son - Analysis summary notes

SON

- ❖ Does his depression, fears of becoming depressed again, of losing his internal security and of not succeeding keep him from acting agentively?
- ❖ In his interaction he is candid, sensitive, mature, and extremely reflexive and aware, but he also counters this with abrasiveness, sarcasm, and the mask of humour and argument
- ❖ So, he's aware that he has the same goals for himself as father does, that he has a difficult time actually doing,

Agentive	Non-agentive
<p>Expressiveness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - creativity in expression and use of language: agentive - Clearly, agentively, articulately describes his desires, opinions, career values and how they fit into present life, focus of his life, likes and dislikes, how he envisions himself in future - Expresses feelings non-verbally (moaning, yawning, embarrassment) - Provides rationale to his feelings, opinions, thoughts, choices, and actions - use of humour, cleverness, sarcasm, and going somewhat off-topic, out there kind of talk - Expresses values of social responsibility, mature attitudes, knowledge and philosophy about the world (incl. life and death) – clear value system - some very agentive language “I totally destroyed my life,” “I made my turn around and here I am” - Describes own experience honestly, even though not what others want to hear “I don’t get anything out of...”, but also in a diplomatic way 	<p>Expressiveness/lack thereof</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - using some passivising language “sort of”, “aren’t necessarily”, “I don’t think”, “I guess”, “maybe” - Uses distancing “you” very often: aphorism, generalization, disengagement – not taking personal ownership of what he’s talking about, or when talking about something difficult (like imagination and pioneering) - language is somewhat passivising and leaves room for relinquishing of responsibility (“seems”, “I can see”) doesn’t use “I” - Not really providing rationale for his opinions of career – evading question (it is a hard one, even for this bright kid) - The proverbial adolescent cop-out and non-answers: “I don’t know”, “nothing” - Very passive language “I’m here along for the ride”, “that’s the way it is, can’t do anything about it”, “getting talked out”, “they sort of fall through”, It “happened” rather than S making it happen - Answering but not elaborating - Uses “it’s” instead of “I feel” - Defeat, regret in language and attitude
<p>Distance/Self-protection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Being a bitchy teenager - Making it clear, asserting himself that 	<p>Distancing/disengagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Taken him three lines and a fair bit of prodding from F to get out this small statement not too enthusiastic?

<p>he is different from F, taking ownership and initiative of his opinion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - disagrees with F and is comfortable enough doing so that he can articulate this - Avoidance of F's question - does he know F is leading him to particular point on his agenda? - simply saying opposite of what F said, engaged in debate with F, being difficult and argumentative - repeating back what F has said with more force – to show him how ridiculous he sounds, for some kind of effect - Going along with what F has said, cleverly turning around F's all-knowing attitude - avoiding topic of his own intelligence and the higher expectations that come with this – self-protective - Using humour, cleverness, sarcasm as strategy to not have to really answer question, to avoid pressure from F - could be agentive as a self-protecting boundary strategy, or way to get rise out of F - standing up to F, making good point and at same time telling F to back off and be realistic - Avoidance of answer – may be better for S not to dwell on his lack of accomplishments due to his fluctuating self-esteem - Lets F go on in his diatribes – better than conflict and argument 	<p>statement – not too enthusiastic?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Non-answer – avoidance “I don't know” - Steering way off track – avoiding tough questions from F? - says something he doesn't really mean just to get a rise? - Belittling F's career? Could be more respectful and direct about it - Or just to play around with words and not really work at furthering conversation - denigrating to both himself and his father - Resisting real answer to F's question, providing very brief answers, only partly engaged – just going along with it? - Yawn is good example of how he is not fully engaged - Shutting F down, not willing to engage, evasive, non-specific, sarcasm and hostility - Not really answering the question – not expressing his perceptions, opinions or feelings really - shutting F and his line of conversation down Closed answer - not engaging, speaking very little, short answers Acquiescing in order to avoid conflict?– not taking action, not doing - Going in circles – not moving to next step of sociodramatic bid
<p>Approach/engage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - makes attempt at coming up with some ideas along F's line - engaged with F – answers his questions - acknowledging lack of experience and looking to father for insight and info - engages in process with F 	<p>Acquiescing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - direct contradiction of what he has said above? Maybe misunderstanding with what F said, or is he acquiescing to F's career values? - Feels like he's just playing along and following F's line, what he expects or wants him to say

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - some cleverness, sarcasm, humour to diffuse conflict - expressed admiration and appreciation for relationship with F - Able to jump in and add to what F is describing, engage in conversation - Acknowledging that he knows how father really cares and tries - Clarifying his own perception that his lack of accomplishment doesn't reflect his relationship with his F, which has progressed - All the argument and disagreement stuff can also be viewed as engagement – this is how they communicate with each other – through debate 	<p>wants him to say</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - describes passively listening to F until he's done "yes sir, no sir..." – acquiescent - Again, contradictions – art as a career, "but not really" Whose voice is this? He's obviously interested in art as a career... where does this come from? Are these his values? - He says what F wants to hear – could also be agentive in reducing conflict and getting F off his back - He knows that F is right, but he feels very stressed, pressured by his method of communication, so the way to cope with F is through passivity - Content/attitude – sit there and take it – non-agentive, although this is a father-son relationship, after all
<p>Self-awareness and reflexivity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Speaks in reflexive manner, almost thinking aloud "where do I...", also uses I-statements when referring to his feelings - Has some idea that his definition of career will evolve (what careers or occupations will fit?), while his opinions and personal work ethic and career values will remain a constant - Break in discussion for reflexivity (like frame-break) of his own process - - Aware of how his behaviour impacts others - Is aware of how his yawn will be perceived by F, so apologizes - awareness and candid ownership of negative feelings too: fear, worry, nervousness, depression, insecurity, limits, comfort zones - reflexive and aware of F and their interaction - immediacy - also has awareness of his strengths, but perhaps not as much faith in them? - Owns that giving up may be a form of self-protection 	<p>External locus of control</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - passive in school (researchers words, but sentiment is there) - it's the teacher's problem and responsibility that he does poorly in school - he is mistreated and misunderstood – it is something he is compelled to do, not what he chooses for himself - "have to" - some passivising language "nothing got down", "I almost died" – I almost killed myself by OD-ing - running away from fears and challenges - or fear of taking action and negative assumption that he will "fall flat on his ass"? - "I don't follow through with big things" - career is imposed on me, I've been the victim of manipulation from others, I don't have the means to create it for myself - he is not internally motivated: Money, an external motivator is was has moved him - He is not participating in research actively, "I'm here and I don't mind" -

<p>self-protection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Asks R for her insight on him – to learn about himself - This is who I am - individualistic attitude with a strong sense of justice and morality - Aware that both he and F don't do follow through well and that not taking action affects his self-esteem and self-worth negatively - actually something that S has taken action and done – feels good about it - Encouraging F – reminding him of what his career values are - during initial conversation it was F who was making this argument about his own career, now it's S who is reinforcing and encouraging F - Clarifying his own perception that his lack of accomplishment doesn't reflect his relationship with his F, which has progressed 	<p>clearly explains how he wouldn't have participated in such a conversation if he hadn't been "made to do it"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "school gives me the certificate that tells me I know how to do it" – he doesn't learn, or earn a certificate or intrinsically know that he can do it - "it's stuff you just have to do" "other than that you die" – defeatist? - was waiting for something to "inspire" him to act and that never happened, rather than just doing "I didn't do anything" - "it never really happened" as opposed to I did not take action to make it happen - Also content – I wouldn't have initiated these talks with my F, I wouldn't tell him what I was thinking unless he asked - "That's - I feel like I don't really live so much for me, I live to do things for other people..." "Whoa – passivity!!! - "what's done is done... nothing I can do now" – lack of taking responsibility – sit and take it
<p>Future orientation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - projecting into future – has some ideas of what it will look like and what is important to him, tries to project things realistically - clearly, emphatically and agentively expressing own desires and values, type of work related to future career - probing for information of how careers work and what would be acceptable to F? Has an idea of a way to blend career values into a reality for future - has relatively clear idea of why here and now (i.e., School) is important for his future - Testing the waters in a sociodramatic bid of future with F – answers his questions - Attempting to set goals and take action 	<p>Non-agentive future outlook</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - also some non-agentive content in how he projects himself into future? Being able to bail if he needs to? "I want something I can walk out on." - always seems to presume negative – that he will get bored and give up - "it WILL fall though" as opposed to "could" - Or is he focused on negative aspects, determined to demonstrate how difficult it will be for him to pursue an occupation? - shooting for the middle is good enough, not having faith in himself to be "top notch" - "easy street quick", "not too time consuming", "screw around all day" - Using humour to avoid further thought and responsibility for his opinions and

through research	planning for future
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FATHER

- ❖ This is crux of F's dilemma – not wanting to take away his S's ability to make decisions about his own friends but wanting to draw the line somewhere before things get out of hand
- ❖ Where is that fine line of fostering agency while still protecting your teen?
- ❖ If he had fostered more agency in S through language would he be in this dilemma?
- ❖ Very self-aware and reflexive, but lack of action to match awareness

Agentive	Non-agentive
<p>Expressiveness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Uses involving "you" to elicit empathy from listeners - Acknowledges S's thoughts, feelings, concerns, ideas, struggles - Uses active listening - empathy, immediacy, minimal encouragers, summary, paraphrase, repetition - Keeping S on track - Expresses self, opinions, experience, feelings, clearly and agentively - Probes, encourages, lets S know he wants to hear him, helps S to explore concrete options and ideas, suggests alternatives, checks in with S, positively reframes - Obvious concern and love for S – wants what is best for S's well-being - softens language with humour and "I guess", "it's not inappropriate" – passivising, maybe, but makes it more palatable and less accusing, controlling, and negating to S - Appreciating, acknowledging, reinforcing S's gifts and successful experiences and what he has gained from them - Reminding S that he is always there for him – encouraging continued 	<p>Expressiveness/lack thereof</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - but his language is saying "this is what I want for you – I'm telling you what to do" (agenda) and "this is how it is", expert-like tone and language (didacticism) - disempowers S in conversation: talks for him, Shuts S down, interrupts, argues, convinces, negates, doesn't acknowledge what S says or validate S's feelings, expresses disapproval of S's ideas, focuses on negatives, asks rhetorical questions (not looking for answer), is critical, uses humour to deflect and avoid, goes off-topic, asks closed questions, changes subject rapidly - almost ordering or commanding S to talk – not exactly opening up space and encouraging - His challenging of S (contradicting himself,) borders on antagonistic and aggressive and he frames things in negative way, assuming so from S – what message does this send to him? - Uses passivising language "kind of... I don't know why... I suppose", addressing S as "you", or generalized other? uses "we", similar to using "you" – distancing of himself and involving others – uses "nobody" instead of "I"

<p>communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Speaks very frankly and candidly, particularly to R, about his fears for S – “I don’t want him to die” - Often engages in dialogue within dialogue 	<p>when talking about his expectations to S</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Using word “should” for S’s behaviour – constraining and judgemental - spends lots of time talking about own opinions, making arguments, convincing, dominating conversation, disagreeing rather than asking S to explain rationale behind feelings, answers questions he asks S himself - Not really using agentive language in taking responsibility for not hearing S – no pronouns or verbs at all – passivising
<p>Role of teacher (providing info)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - providing S with some information of the real world and the realities of career by using examples (including his own experience and reactions) - providing S with information, advice, and alternatives (even going against his own work ethic) and opens up topic to S and invites him to think further, express own opinions and ideas, and elaborate them - Providing info and participating in painting the picture – encouraging S’s sociodramatic bid of future - offering himself as a resource to his S - educating S, using self as a model of comparison, suggesting possibilities, providing his opinion, imparting his own career values, but explains that it is his opinion and experience 	<p>Didacticism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - provides S with info from the real world, but does so in a this is how it is kind of way - Kind of imposing own ideas and experience on S, pontificating - Telling S how to do it from an expert position – could use much less all-knowing language – make suggestions rather than tell him what to do (but, S is asking him for information) - Maybe using humour, but telling S that I need to ensure you read everything that I deem to be interesting to you - What if he had just let S come up with something on his own? If he had been more patient and less eager to fill in conversational space, he might have given his S the space he needs to be more of an agent
<p>Engaging (encouraging thought)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Opens up further discussion for S to express his thoughts, opinions, rationales, definitions, alternatives, interests, perceptions, interpretations - draws S out by asking thought-provoking questions, rhetorical questions, tapping into his interests, encourages S to delve deeper - encourages S to disagree and express 	<p>Agenda (although for S to be more personally agentive!!!)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Suggests alternatives, uses reality, repeats, tries to convince, openly directs conversation, imposes own beliefs to further his own agenda - still somewhat focused on self - changes subject abruptly, or at least before S checking in to see if S has finished elaborating his point

<p>his own opinions in open way, to provide rationale behind them, to back them up with examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - although language is a bit forceful, seems as though he is encouraging S to use his brain and take responsibility for his answers - Invites and encourages S to problem-solve and explore alternate ways he can get what he needs from school - trying to give S space about making career decisions explain himself, direct conversation - Inviting S to discuss how present and future will interact – encouraging S's sociodramatic bid of future and project how his life will take shape - Encouraging S to be agentive and active in his own life – set goals and take steps to achieve them, self-reflect, be motivated - still trying to encourage S to consider reaching beyond and not constraining his possibilities for future - Acts as a model of agency - wants S to recognise his achievements over the summer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not really providing an alternative, but saying that this part is not what he envisions for S - not acknowledging that S has a different conception of career and that he may not want one at all or S's interest in art - wants to dominate conversation with own agenda and convince S of it - talking in terms of winning with S - "triumphant" - S also doesn't view art as a career (although he does contradict himself a bit) - Has his opinion shut down the possibility for S? - "it shouldn't bother me" – translation: "it does bother me" - "it's not fair, he didn't really remember" – what is that? Not fair that you are losing the argument? Not fair that he doesn't see the positives in himself? How would he when the end product or goal is what you measure success by?
<p>Self-awareness and reflexivity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Self-reflexive and aware re thoughts, feelings, opinions, behaviour, strategies, and their origins and is able to express them agentively – talks his thoughts aloud, asks himself questions - Reflexive, sensitive and aware of S, his process, non-verbals, feelings, struggles, areas of discomfort and their origins - Curious about and speculates on S's feelings and thoughts, uses past conversations and experiences to interpret his body language, but doesn't make presumptions - Also tries to relate where S is back to his own experience – looking for 	<p>Lack of reflexivity and awareness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - May not always express his empathy and sensitivity to S - Self-focused in conversation – tells S something that doesn't account for fact that S's experience might be different (re depression), often has to bring talk of S back to himself - Why would he ask his S this when S has made it very clear that he doesn't want to do anything for the rest of his life! - Touch of guilt? Defensiveness? Self-denigrating? Self-deprecating re own career – looking for reinforcement from S as didn't get it the first time? - Something avoidant about the fact that this conversation happens time and

<p>patterns and understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Aware and reflexive re their interaction - Exploring S's feeling by asking open question about it, naming it – wanting to know where S is coming from - Tries to reassure S re negative feelings - Humbling and putting himself on same level as S to foster equality and conversation - taking ownership of fact that he has been driving conversation, his agenda, directiveness, that he didn't hear S and why, that he is unsure of what to do in S's best interest, that he has not achieved his own goals with S, that he is critical of S - Catches himself beginning to use language that takes away S's power and agency and rephrases - Acknowledging and agreeing with S's desire to gain independence, while admitting and explaining why this is difficult for him – fear for S - Reflecting and wondering about parenting strategies – wants D to understand about consequences, but maybe has never really taught him about them - Incredible reflexivity, insight and awareness to the generational interactions and patterns between his father and himself and himself and S 	<p>this conversation happens time and again? No speculation as to why, or discussion about trying a new approach?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - did not act in conversation as he would have liked in retrospect – missed areas worth delving further into - Not sure why he finds it “interesting” that S views his mother's career as the standard for career – not owning up to feelings of not being acknowledged or viewed as the model? - expressing contradiction between feelings in the moment and feelings upon reflection – awareness - what he's doing is not going to foster agency – great that he is aware of this, but he is still doing it - he doesn't know what to do and how to deal with this very serious matter - avoidance of topic? Hurt by what S has said? Upset with self for acting this way, even when he knows not good for communicating with S? - Says he understands, but doesn't elaborate or demonstrate that he does through speech - Content-wise – being an adult is taking responsibility and suffering consequences of your actions – some feelings of lack of control “you don't know what's going to happen next” – is this how F sees his own adulthood
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Mother/daughter – Analysis summary notes

MOTHER

Agentive	Non-agentive
<p>Expressivity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - provides rich and detailed rationale and examples (analogies) behind thoughts and feelings - extrapolates to her ethos of life and to people in general as reinforcement for rationale - expresses values, opinions, and preferences clearly and agentively - initiates and opens conversation by providing topics, asking open questions, trying to engage in D's interests and encourage her to think agentively and toward future - uses active listening skills – empathy, paraphrase, repetition, summary, immediacy - internalizes and expresses D's interest and enthusiasm 	<p>Rationalization/Distancing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - seeks out examples and rationalizes to prove her agenda for D is right - moves into more general descriptions of the world out there - distancing - uses “you” – distancing, involving (eliciting empathy), generalizing (normalizing), and intra-personal (self-reflection) - sometimes gets off-track - makes suggestions for D rather than letting her generate them herself - doesn't always listen carefully to D - sometimes answers her own questions that are directed at D - sometimes changes subject abruptly - goes on-and-on in making a point and loses D's interest without knowing
<p>Support/Guidance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - provides opportunities and resources for D to explore interests and creativity - supports, encourages, reinforces D's abilities and interests – very positive frame - provides information and explains things didactically - makes suggestions on next steps for D while allowing her to make choices of what fits or doesn't - role as supporter, facilitator and resource person - encourages D to stay on-track and focused during conversations 	<p>Lack of Support/guidance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - makes suggestions for D rather than letting her generate them herself - the post-secondary education thing – not allowing D to make a choice in matter - can be a bit directive and pushy (wanting D to pin down a choice now) - doesn't always listen carefully to D

<p>Creating Agentive Space</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - provided D with opportunities to make own choices from an early age - works hard to not push D in a direction that she doesn't want (acting) - instils and encourages an attitude of planning and agency – - encourages D to think look toward future, set goals, plan, and take action - allows D the space to go off-track for a bit and acknowledges and goes with her before bringing her back or following next tack - makes suggestions on next steps for D while allowing her to make choices of what fits or doesn't - models agency in her role as parent 	<p>Agenda</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - has some kind of agenda for D that she subtly encourages and fosters - seeks out examples and rationalizes to prove her agenda for D is right (has a + side too) - leads and directs conversation in ways that suit her agenda - can be a bit directive and pushy (wanting D to pin down a choice now) - sometimes her talk and intentions do not match actions that follow – poor modelling - imposes own values on D - the post-secondary education thing – trying to vicariously fulfil desire through D and not giving her space to make this choice for herself
<p>Reflexivity/Awareness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - self-reflexive and aware - reflexive and aware of D and their relationship/interaction - reflexive of intergenerational process of her relationship with her mother - owns fact that she has agenda for D and can be pushy and directive at times - acknowledges D's feelings and thoughts although may be different from her own - internalizes and expresses D's interest and enthusiasm - aware of and acknowledges role as supporter, facilitator and resource person – her sense of agency stems from this role - sensitivity, interest, awareness of D's developmental process, to D's personal qualities - honours and respects D 	<p>Lack of Reflexivity/Awareness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - not able to fully own idea that she may be trying to fulfil her own regrets through D - seeks and talks about external validation - sometimes her talk and intentions do not match actions that follow – poor modelling - rationalizes as defence mechanism

DAUGHTER

<p>Expressivity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - provides rich, detailed and agentive explanations and background - often initiates and elaborates points of discussion on her own (without probing or questioning from others) - clearly and agentively describes preferences, opinions, values and ethos of life - uses humour - provides rich, detailed, well-thought-out, and reality-based rationale for planning, feelings, choices, opinions - assertive and agentive in clarifying, correcting, collaborating, and disagreeing with others <p>Non-agentive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - may sometimes acquiesce and go along with M's (or even R's) questions and agenda - sometimes quiet and allowing M to initiate conversations (did so in both) - sometimes gets off-track - goes on-and-on in making a point - sometimes some passivising and uncertain language ("I don't know") - uses "you" – involving (eliciting R's empathy) - gives closed answer - avoidance? (may also be a protective factor in this) or disengagement/boredom 	<p>Future-Orientation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - projects self into future – sociodramatic bid and contingency (what-if) thinking and expression - is able to look ahead, set goals, plan steps to achieve them (and then actually carries them out!!!) - provides rich, detailed, well-thought-out, and reality-based rationale for planning, feelings, choices, opinions - checks-in w M in terms of perception of reality and feasibility of ideas and goals - able to draw on past experiences and project them to future to plan <p>***** from 1st interview (see warmup) to end D becomes much more able to project self into more distant future and plan for this – by practicing agency she becomes more agentive *****</p> <p>Non-agentive:</p> <p>sometimes has difficulty projecting self into distant future</p>
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Initiative and Engagement	Reflexivity and Awareness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - draws boundaries if M's agenda doesn't match her own (assertiveness) - often initiates and elaborates points of discussion on her own (without probing or questioning from others) - takes action/initiative on her own (shelf in bedroom) - takes initiative to ask questions and seek out information from M - checks-in w M in terms of perception of reality and feasibility of ideas and goals - seeks out and is able to ask M for support and assistance - is aware of and doesn't like feeling of agency being taken away from her (post-secondary thing with M) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - clearly and agentively describes preferences, opinions, values and ethos of life - self-aware and reflexive re own thoughts and feelings (even own body language) - aware and reflexive re M and their relationship/interaction - expressive re feelings – even to M (feeling unheard) - differentiates self and interests from others (M, friends) - takes pride (and actually says this) in her accomplishments - is aware and articulates own strengths and weaknesses - able to own less-than-desirable feelings and behaviours (unable to make promises re future, feeling embarrassed about control) - is aware of and doesn't like feeling of agency being taken away from her (post-secondary thing with M)