Chapter 5 - Personality, Identity and Emotional Development

Introduction:

This chapter explores children's and young peoples' personality and emotional development and also considers the connecting issue of identify formation and development. The chapter takes a critical and psycho-social perspective to the exploration of these issues, going beyond narrow individualistic psychological theories to consider the impact of the environment on such development. The chapter additionally discusses the disconnect between social policy that concerns children and young people, and the realities of children's' emotional development. The example of a recent UK policy, PREVENT, will be used to explore this further. The chapter will lastly consider the implications of such theories for professional practice in the human services. Reflective questions are included throughout the chapter. The chapter begins with a brief discussion about the social construction of childhood itself, a useful starting point in this wide- ranging chapter.

Chapter Objectives

- How is childhood socially constructed and what are the implications for practitioners?
- What is personality and is it fixed?
- What is meant by emotional development and identity?
- Does social policy reflect the realities of children's emotional development?

The Social Construction of Childhood:

The social construction of childhood is one that is not static. Ariès (1962) in his historical research into children's lives, claimed that the notion of childhood is socially constructed and indeed, in medieval times, children were considered small adults and accordingly were not given any special status or privileges as a result of being young. Ariès (1962) contends further that notions of special status, or a need for protection, or any notions that children have distinct needs, has slowly evolved over time. Ariès (1962) work has been criticised on a number of grounds, but the important point of his work, and one that has important implications for social work practitioners, is that childhood is not a universal experience and that it more complex than just a linear and unproblematic biological phase that all children pass through in a similar ways. James and James (2004) argue further, that childhood is therefore very much shaped by the cultural, historical and political context, as well as by the dynamic process between an individual child and how adults behave towards them. For instance, it is not difficult to recognise that a child born into a brutal conflict situation, where child soldiers were the norm, would have a different view of the world to a child brought up in a loving, caring environment where he or she was protected from all forms of perceived harm. The importance of a psycho-social approach to the study of childhood therefore is raised, as such approaches recognise the interplay between the internal world of the child and the external world.

Thes historical shift , from the idea as children as small adults, to children with distinct needs, including a need for protection, became firmly established, both legally and socially in the UK, in the Victorian times. During this period, the rapid growth of industrialisation, with the move from a rural society into a more urban one with new forms of work, meant that poor children were more visible, and used as cheap labour (Simpson and Connor, 2011). The idea that children needed special protection, initially in the workplace grew,

along with the acceptance that government should more readily intervene to protect and safeguard the lives of the populace. Thus the Victorian era saw the introduction of what can be considered the first piece of child welfare legislation, namely the 1833 Factory Act – where it was recognised for the first time, that a "child" albeit it the context of an employee, had a distinct need for protection (Payne, 2005). This Act followed with a range of other protective laws. For example, compulsory schooling was introduced in 1870 which challenged further the idea of children as workers who had distinct needs from adults and so could no longer be considered small adults (Spicker, 2014). This was followed two years later with the 1872 Infants Life Protection Act, which recognised children as being more than just the "chattels" of the father (Dickens, 2010). In other words, children had legal rights and were more than just the property of their father. It is important to recognise, however, that such shifts in how we view children, and accompanying legislation that protects their distinct needs, and indeed, rights, has not been universal or global.

The point of highlighting the ever shifting, changing, socially constructed notion of childhood is an important one for this chapter, as theories of child development are also to some extent constructions of a particular society. Indeed, early research on child development, and also early theorisation of children's emotional, social and developmental needs in the UK, developed rapidly in the post first world war and pre second war world era, often in response to concern about the adverse impact of loss and separation on children. Other external factors also played a part, namely the growth of social sciences and the idea that children have distinct mental health needs. For instance, the work of Anna Freud and later psychotherapists and attachment theorists, pushed this idea further. This is not to criticise this notion, but a point to recognise, not least in our direct professional work with

children and families who have diverse origins. In other words, multiple factors contribute to notions of what is childhood, adulthood, and the so called “norms” of children ‘s development and connected issues around safeguarding. The following case study provides a discussion point about so called norms of child development.

Case Study 5.1

A primary school has raised concerns with social services, that one of their pupils, Adeola, an 8 year old girl of African origin, is travelling to and from school on her own. It takes her about 20 minutes to walk to school and there are several busy roads to cross. One of these busy roads does have a pedestrian crossing however. The school report, that the parents have commented to them, that it is “normal” for 8 year olds to walk to school on their own and they do not feel the child is at risk.

Questions to consider:

1) What are your views about the appropriate age a child can walk to school of their own?
2) What age did you walk to school on your own?
3) What is informing your thinking about whether this issue is a safeguarding concern, or a matter of parental choice?

Discussion

This case study raises the point about how norms of what is considered safe (or not safe) activities for children to undertake at particular ages, as well as how these ideas about safety may change over time in a particular country.

Criticism aside, this is not to say that bio-physical and determinist psychological child development theories have no place in professional practice, clearly they are important to f professionals that work with, or have contact with children and young people. There is however, an obvious need for professionals to refrain from uncritical application of traditional theories (see chapter 1),, not least because they are theories that have developed in the West and can too often, though not always, claim universality rather than recognise diversity. How we understand children's and young people's personality and emotional development, therefore, is inevitably a construction of a particular culture, legal, economic and political system, and is one that as James and James (2004) contest, is subject to constant change (as case study 5.1 demonsrates). This chapter will go on to argue, social policy, often fails to take account of children's developmental and emotional needs, and much psychological theory, fails to take into account important structural and sociological factors that may shape societies responses to children. Such a perspective is also of vital importance in in today's globalised world. The discussion begins with a consideration of what is personality, a concept that is often used by a wide range of professionals uncritically but first it is useful to review your understanding by reading case study 5.2 below.

Case study 5.2

Sajid was a 12-year-old British boy born to second generation migrant parents who originally came from Pakistan. His family were Muslim by culture but rarely attended the Mosque. At home Sajid's family spoke English as a first language and appeared to non-Muslim friends as 'quite Westernised'. Sajid's Muslim peers at school considered him with suspicion whilst non-Muslim peers called him 'terrorist' and 'ISIS-lover'.

Questions:

Why do you think these different perspectives of Sajid developed?

How does an understanding of the context/environment in which Sajid lives and the notion of social construction help social workers here?

Discussion:

Sajid's 'Westernised' family life and perspective may have led his Muslim peers to consider him to be somewhat removed from and antithetical to his Muslim roots and therefore showed a lack of trust towards him. On the other hand, his non-Muslim peers may have been picking up popular stereotypes and applying them to him simply on the basis of his colour, ethnic and religious background. Understanding how people, including both Sajid and his peers at school, develop within a historical, social and political context and that interactions help to form one's approach to the world around can be helpful to social workers and other professionals working with people because it offers a fluid and changeable approach that doesn't see the child or young person as fixed in belief and behaviour but open to further development and change. It is also important in illuminating the influence of the surrounding world in which children and young people live.

Personality:

The concept or notion of personality has received much attention from the psychology community. Indeed, the term "personality" is one we may often take for granted, without thinking about what it might mean in practice. A helpful definition of personality is; "the combination of characteristics or qualities that form an individual's distinctive character"

(English Oxford Living Dictionary Dictionary, date unknown). A further definition is offered by Weinberg and Gould, (1999) who argue that personality representss; “The characteristics or blend of characteristics that make a person unique” (1999:46). Both these definitions can be considered ideographic, (subjective and individual) in that the definitions assume that individual personality traits are inherently unique and cannot be shared by other people. This approach contrasts to nomothetic perspectives, (generalisations or what is shared with others) which sees a range of personality traits or behaviours as potentially comparable, or common across human beings. For example, when we make statements such as “all teenagers are moody and self centred” this is a nomothetic perspective.

Debates about the development of personality often centre around whether personality in a human is fixed, and is biological in origin, i.e. an argument of nature over nurture, or whether certain events or experiences, shape personality in a developing child. In other words, the argument is that personality is nurtured, rather than inherent or fixed, whatever the circumstances are in which a child is brought up. In other words, explanations for differences in personality, which may in fact relate to specific behaviours, or indeed what influences personality can be psychological, biological or sociological. Freud for example, argued that early childhood experiences, - shaped the eventual adult (2003). Personality in later adult life therefore, was shaped by inherent psychological factors that he considered instinctual, and how these instincts were shaped, met and responded to (or not) by the caregivers. ,

This view contrasts with Eysenck, a very prominent psychologist who proposed in 1967, that there were distinct “personality types” that were universally applicable. This for Eysenck, was based on an individual’s biology, i.e. nervous system. He claimed therefore, that there

are two dimensions to personality, introvert/extrovert and neuroticism/stability. For many, this view of fixed personality, universally applied, is difficult now to accept. Surely human beings are much more complicated and diverse? Yet it worth thinking about how prevalent and dominant psychology as a discipline has been in pursuing the idea of personality as biological in nature which continues to this day. Modern applications of such approaches can be seen perhaps by the growing appeal of neuroscience and epigenetics, and the often misused image of a brain of a child who has lived with trauma and neglect compared with the image of a "normal" child's brain. In this image, the size of the brain of the neglected child is much smaller than the other child's image. This image has been heavily used within many professionals training courses and indeed, was significantly reported in the press (see for example, Downey, 2018; Tanner, 2017). The image was originally in a paper by Perry and Pollard (1997) which claimed that children who had experienced neglect by USA parents, had impacted on the children's "physical growth and organisation of the brain" (1997:4). It was later revealed that the smaller brain was that of a young child who resided in a Romanian Orphanage who had experienced severe sensory, physical and emotional deprivation. This is not to overestimate the point, but professionals must be cautious about the evidence base on which such strong assertions are made, and believed uncritically. Wastell and White (2017) therefore, argue strongly that all professionals should be attuned to the reductionist (and unproven) claims of neuroscience and epigenetics. There is also significant research that proves that human brains have plasticity, (known as neuroplasticity) which means that the brain can modify its neural connections or re-wire itself. This is essential for development from infancy through to adulthood and allows brains to recover from injury. Importantly, in terms of professions working with children, the impact of early childhood trauma on the brain (if this is proven), can therefore be

overcome. Yet like Eysenck, some theories, or images, persist over the years with little on the way of critique. However, in order for practitioners to ensure their personal and professional beliefs do not impact adversely on children or young people, such universal and bold claims must be critically and reflected upon . Discussions about personality almost inevitably lead on to socially constructed notions of what are “good” or bad personality traits or behaviours. Of course, what are considered “good” personality traits in adults, may not be considered “good “ personality traits in children or young people. There are also differences in how certain personality traits or behaviours, are viewed amongst women or men, or indeed boys or girls, within different social classes as well as across different racial and ethnic groups. This raises the issue of discrimination therefore and the unconscious bias we all hold about what is ”good” or “bad” or acceptable or not acceptable personality traits, which may show themselves through particular behaviours. An obvious example of this, is about the importance of adult to adult eye contact in western culture, when in other cultures, eye contact with an elder, can be viewed experienced as being rude and disrespectful. All professionals working with children and young people, are therefore required to understand how prejudice, discrimination and oppression occur, who is at risk of discrimination and how to reflect on our own biases and values, which may serve to oppress further at risk and already structurally disadvantaged groups. It is worth reflecting on the following questions therefore:

Reflection Point

1) What personality traits are considered useful, or are valued in my profession?
2) What personality traits are valued more for girls than boys and vice versa?

3) What personality traits are valued in my family and community?

4) Do I believe that personality is fixed, or that it can change and adapt?

5) What do I think are the greatest influences on personality?

Keep your thoughts and refer back to them as you consider Case Study 5.3 later in the chapter.

Personality Development in Children and Young People:

In terms of exploring personality development in children and young people, it is clear that for many professionals, a holistic approach is required, namely the extent to which children's personality development may be shaped by the environment they live in, that ise. the social context, which may include their immediate family, the local community and wider society; a biological approach which explores physiological maturation processes for example individual tempermentality, and children's and young people's developing understanding of themselves as both individuals and as part of the social world, in other words identity. Personality development in children and young people therefore, needs to be viewed, as not nature versus nature, but as the continuous dynamic interactions between the social, biological and representational, i.e. self - identity, aspects of personality development. As the above reflective questions indicated, certain behaviours traits and personality types (if indeed there is such a thing) can be valued differently, in different settings, and when displayed by different people. Indeed, we often ascribe personality traits to entire nations of people! For example, many of us will recall jokes about people

from different parts of the UK, i.e An Englishman, Irish man and Scotsman walk into a bar….This is not to say however that personality is not important, but rathers seeing it as part of a child or young person's continually developing identity and continued emotional development and maturation. In other words, we should avoid seeing personality in children as something fixed but as fluid.

Case study 5.3

Hanna, a 16-year-old Romanian girl lived with her parents and siblings in a large Scottish city. Her parents were Christian evangelicals and required Hanna, her younger brother and sister to attend church services every week and to pray together each night. Hanna considered herself a Christian but had started having doubts about the way her parents conducted their religious lives and the insistence that the children follow. She began to refuse to attend church, bible study and prayer evenings.

Questions:

Think back to the questions contained in the reflection point above and use them to explore your understanding of and approach to Hanna's situation.

Discussion:

As a social worker or professional working with people you need to be aware of the influences on your thinking of your own understanding of who you are, how and why you think or act the way you do as this will have a great impact on those people you work with. For instance, in Hanna's case you may be influenced by your own experiences of religion or by your thoughts towards religion. You may think this is how things are or you may believe

that situations change and can be adapted. These thoughts will influence you as a social work and it is important to be aware and to reflect on them.

Taking a social constructionist approach would see Hanna's actions and thoughts as a unique response to the social world she occupies but one that is shaped and influenced by her interactions with it and with the people close to her.

Emotional Development

Green (2017) argues that a major criticism of developmental psychology is how it has uncritically shaped popular beliefs about what is a good childhood for example, or indeed, what can be considered normal or abnormal childhood behaviours. Traditional life-span and developmental psychological theories propose that all humans will pass through distinct developmental stages, which include emotional, social, cognitive and physical development, and as mentioned previously, distinct developmental stages, that are universally applied. Freud for example, argued that children go through distinct psycho-sexual stages of development at particular ages, these include the anal stage at ages 1-3. Piaget, as we have seen in chapter 3 e, argued that children go through distinct stages of emotional development and most importantly, that children's thinking is different from adults. Within such approaches, the social context within such theories is seen as less important than biology and genetics. For example, a child who won't sit still, finds it difficult to concentrate and takes a great deal of attention from its teachers may be considered to be hyperactive, to have a condition such as ADHD. This may be the case but alternative understandings are

also possible and without a comprehensive understanding of the child's social world such approaches remain limited.

A sociological perspective on the other hand, would argue that a child's social, emotional and cognitive development are not the result of biology, or indeed personality or genetics, but rather from socialisation and the impact of other social structures, namely families and other societal institutions. All these theories however can be criticised for depicting a child as passive in these socialisation and developmental processes. Kitzinger (1997) for example, argues that there is a danger in depicting children as empty vessels, and more importantly the socially constructed notion in many western contexts, of childhood innocence, passivity and asexuality can in some circumstances, not be a helpful position either.

Criticisms aside, it is important nonetheless for social workers to have a broad idea of the twists and turns of children's emotional development, not least to avoid stereotyping or undertaking oppressive work with children and /or young people, but also to identify where there may be concern's about a child's mental health for example. Professionals will also be in a better position to be able to support parents to help them understand emotional developmental norms in their children in the ecological context in which they live. To that end, practitioners do need to have an understanding of the ages at which infants, children and young people can express various emotions and begin to self regulate according to the custom and values of the environment ..

For Life Span psychologists, the focus on emotional development is likely to cut across several areas of development, namely cognitive development (how we learn to think, our thought processes, and how we deal with problems), personal development (how we

develop our sense of self, our emotions and our feelings, and social development (such as relationships with others).

It is important therefore to think about emotional development more broadly, not least to understand what is meant by this broad, rather catch all term. Emotional development therefore can include:

1. how a child exhibits their basic emotions, such as anger, fear, sadness;
2. the development of what Berk (2009) refers to as "self-conscious emotions" (2009:406), namely second order emotions like embarrassment, guilt or envy;
3. emotional self regulation, for example the ability of a child to manage their internal emotional states, and linked to this, developing emotional display rules.

Emotional display rules refer to how children learn to communicate their emotional states and we can see here where societal notions of what is or what is not acceptable behaviour come strongly to the fore. For example, in Victoria times, children were very much expected to be seen, but not heard. Children also need to learn how to understand and respond to others, i.e. the development of sympathy and empathy. However, Berk (2007) also raises the issue of individual temperament, what is very similar to the notion of personality.

Identity

A further term that is often heard is that of identity, which is used by many professionals without critique and the term, like many other concepts, is often contested within the

literature however. A useful and helpful definition of identity can be found in the dictionary and includes:

- The distinguishing character or personality of an individual
- The relation established by psychological identification
- The condition of being the same with something described or asserted
- Sameness of essential or generic character in different instances.
- Sameness in all that constitutes the objective reality of a thing

(Merriam-Webster, date unknown)

Children and young people are therefore engaged in a constant process of identity formation, which means constructing and developing a clear understanding of who they are (Trawick-Smith 2010). It is important to ask, however, in what ways is identity, different from personality? Identity refers to someone's sense of self, who they are, and which specific traditions or values they share. Identity therefore can be personal, social or cultural as the above definition alludes to. Identity therefore, in a psychological sense, refers to questions about who we are or what does it mean to be you? It can include our gender identity, class and ethnic identity to name but a few. In a sociological sense, this might be rephrased as who are we in the context of a particular community or environment? Of course this takes us to be philosophical beliefs about what it means to be a person, or a child or a young person which is beyond the scope of this chapter. However, consider the continuing case study 5.3 of Hanna.

Case study 5.4

As Hanna attended college she developed close friendships with a number of people, some who shared her religious beliefs and some who did not. However, she also began questioning aspects of her developing sexuality, something that made her anxious and, at times, ashamed. She came to the conclusion that she was asexual and non-binary changing her preferred pronoun to 'they'. Hanna's parents believed this was part of growing up and were not concerned by it. Hanna's friends thought they had 'discovered' their identity and who they were?

However, consider the following reflective questions. **Questions:**

1) Do children and young people have an established sense of self and identity?
2) How does your profession conceptualise identity in children and young people?
3) How does an understanding of social and emotional development help you as a social worker to understand Hanna's situation?

Discussion

In Hanna's case we can see that personality, identity are constantly changing and this may change again in the future. As a social worker you will need to balance respect for their identity with an appreciation that this may develop withwithout being patronising. This is no mean feat but understanding some of the theories and models developed to explain social, emotional and personality development can help.

It is important to note that identity is always evolving, is not final and continues throughout the lifespan. However, identity is a difficult concept for professionals to grasp. It has many nuanced meanings which intersect with other concepts, such as personality. Identity as a concept, however does take for granted the interaction of the social and the personal.

Assessing Children's and Young People Needs

In the area of social care, many assessment processes can be said to be psychosocial in origin, and so take account of the individual within the context of his/her family and wider community. Some other professions may not take into consideration as fully the centrality of psychosocial work factors. The Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families, (FACNF) for example, undertaken by social workers, and the Children's Assessment Framework (CAF), a shorter version of the FACNF which can be undertaken by other professionals, adopt an approach that requires an assessment of the individual (in this case the child) very much in the context of their environment.

Reflection Point

1) To what extent are social work assessments psycho-social in origin?
2) What are the underlying assumptions and theoretical perspectives that inform the assessment model/tool?

The FACNF was developed in 2000 and as the guidance states, the approach is rooted in child development theory, is ecological in approach and is child centred (Department of Health, 2000). There are three areas of focus in the assessment approach, dimensions of a

child's developmental needs, dimensions of parenting capacity and family and environmental factors. As part of the assessment of a childs' developmental needs the following areas are included:

- Health
- Education
- Emotional and Behavioural Development
- Identity
- Family and Social relationships
- Social presentation
- Self Care

Whilst undertaking an assessment of this type, the aim is to consider the extent to which a child may be in need, or indeed, at risk of suffering significant harm (see chapter 15), we can still see the significance of emotional and behavioural development and the associated norms about this as well as the importance of identity. The CAF, that can be completed by a range of practitioners, not only social workers has a similar focus on emotional and behavioural development and identity. The FFACNF offers useful guidance however about particular areas of emotional development, namely the focus on the extent to which a child demonstrates appropriate feelings and actions to parents or caregivers and others beyond the family. Also for exploration includes the quality of a child's early attachments:

> "their characteristics or temperament, adaptation to change, response to stress and degree of appropriate self control"

(DOH, 2000:18).

In terms of identity for the guidance suggests social workers focus on assessing:

- the child's growing sense of self as a separate and valued person.
- the child's view of self and abilities, self image and self esteem
- The child's sense of themselves in terms of age, religion, age, gender, sexuality and disability
- Feelings of belonging and acceptance by family, peer group and wider society, including other cultural groups.

(Adapted from DOH, 2000:19)

What is not discussed in this chapter of course, are theories around early attachments and the importance of these in later life. For fuller accounts see chapter 7 in this volume and chapter 6 in Volume II.

Social Policy and Children's Emotional Development:

As we have seen, there is a wide range of theory that tries to understand children's personalities and the interplay of emotional development and identify formation, the interconnections between the self, and other, nature and nurture, and the impact of globalisation. There is also a recognition of the importance of being critical of western theories that imply universality. Given this, it is not surprising that social policy in its

broadest sense, does not always take effective account of children's developmental needs. As we stated at the outset to this chapter, if we accept childhood is a socially constructed notion, then dominant notions about childhood will inevitably shape, and in turn be shaped by, legal and political systems. At this point we will use an example from contemporary social policy in England and Wales to ground some of these theories and to show why they have relevance to understanding as social workers

An obvious example of this, concerns differences across the world in terms of the age at which a child or young person is deemed to be criminally responsible. In England and Wales for example, the age of criminal responsibility, in other words, the age at which a child can be arrested or charged with a crime is ten years old and if prosecuted they are dealt with by youth courts (Muncie, 2015). In Scotland the age of criminal responsibility is 8 years old although a child needs to be 12 before they can be criminally prosecuted in a court and this would only be for very serious crimes (McAra and McVie, 2010). In Sweden, however, the criminal age of responsibility is 15 years old , in Germany 14 , and in Portugal it is 16 (Papadodimitraki, 2016, a,b,c). What this demonstrates are different societal constructs of responsibility, how age is viewed, as well as differences in approaches to children's offending behaviour. Indeed when we view children as "adults" is also socially constructed. In the Uk, 18 years is when one is legally an adult, but of course, developmentally or socially, this may not be the case, for some years. Mortimer and Moen (2016) argue that as economic conditions have changed, and differences in perspectives about post 16 education changed for example , "adulthood", may come later than for previous generations. Indeed, some years ago, leaving school at 15 and entering work would have been the norm. We

now turn to an example of the fluid socially constructed aspects of childhood using one contested aspect of current policy.

PREVENT

The example of the policy known as PREVENT, will be explored as a way of highlighting how the ambiguities and socially constructed nature of childhood (and therefore the concepts of personality, emotional development and identity) may be at odds with government policy and practice. PREVENT is one strand of the UK's overall counter terrorism policy known as CONTEST (Finch and McKendrick, 2019). PREVENT aims to, identify those at risk of radicalisation and extremism, assess the nature and extent of that risk and "develop most appropriate support plan for the individuals concerned, to 'safeguard' children and adults being drawn into terrorism by intervening early before illegality occurs (HM Government, 2012).

In July 2015, the Counter Terrorism and Security Act was passed which made it a requirement for a wide range of specified professions, this included social worker, teachers, early years practitioners, librarians, nurses, and prisons officers , to work within the PREVENT agenda. Such professionals are required therefore to be alert to issues of radicalisation and extremism and to report (or manage) any concerns about radicalisation. In the policy pronouncements about PREVENT, it is clear, that such professional activity in this realm should be regarded as safeguarding work (McKendrick and Finch, 2016).

PREVENT has been subject to a wide range of criticism since its introduction in 2003 and overt implementation some years later. These include but are not limited to, concerns that

the policy serves only to increase mistrust and suspicion on an already discriminated against Muslim community (Awan, 2012) legitimises surveillance on suspect communities (Kundani) communities. Coppock and McGovern (2014), have argued that de-radicalisation programmes are based on individualistic psychological models that do not take adequate account of the wider economic and social contexts and McKendrick and Finch (2017) argue that PREVENT does not take into account the realities of children and adolescent development. Indeed, the government's own policy documents about the possible signs of young people being radicalised, such as growing beards in adolescence or wearing more traditional forms of Islamic dress, does not take into account young people's growing need to develop their own sense of selfhood and identity – be it religious, cultural or indeed, a rejection of familial values. Green's (2017) argument is relevant here, in her concerns about developmental psychologists view of children as "mini adults under construction" (2017:39) who do not possess adequate decision making skills and are simply moulded by biology or the environment, both of which perspectives are essentially paternalistic. The image of the vulnerable child being groomed by radicalisers in therefore a simplistic notion and does not take account of a young person's agency, nor indeed the turbulence of adolescence.

Implications for Practitioners

It can be quite bewildering for many professionals to be faced with so many different competing theories about things we may initially take for granted, for example, personality, emotional development and identity and hopefully the case studies have helped you to apply some of these. Knowledge of theories, however, areas needed for a range of discrete tasks as well as professional skills, for example, this could include:

1) Assessment
2) Promoting well being
3) Safeguarding
4) Developing working relationships with children and young people
5) Challenging stereotypical, so called common-sense, and oppressive practise or beliefs others may hold about children and young people

Conclusion

As it can be seen, there are numerous theories which claim both a universally of children's and young peoples emotional development, many of which might be deemed "grand narratives". Other theories however stress the socially constructed nature of emotional development, and indeed the very notion of childhood. These perspective may have more in common with post modern constructs and within such theories, important, and difficult, critically debated concepts, such as personality, resilience and identity are further raised. For professionals, often working in environments which require evidenced informed approaches, and have to undertake a wide range of assessments of children and young people, this can be a challenge, in how to utilise and balance, both grand theories with post modern constructs. An atheoretical approach however, runs the risk of relying on common-sense approaches which as we saw in the brain imaging scan picture, has little basis in evidence. It is therefore incumbent upon all professionals working with children and young people, to understand the range of constructs and perspectives about what is personality and emotional development as well as the important issue of identity. Professionals need to be clear about the range of meanings ascribed to each term, and

reflect on deeply held assumptions and beliefs we may unconsciously hold about these terms. Returning to this chapter's overall objectives, it can be argued that personality or temperament is not fixed, rather it is a productive of an ever changing interplay between the biological, environment and the political. Emotional development in children and young people relates to the expression and understanding of first and second order emotional states, self-regulation as well as conforming (or not) to the norms of a particular community or society. Identity is much more than temperament or personality, but focuses on broader understanding of selfhood, values and belonging. It is important that practitioners take a critical perspective with social policy directives, that will inevitably be based on particular constructions or notions of childhood and adolescence.

Reflective Questions

1. How will the theories considered in this chapter exert on impact on my professional practice as a social worker?
2. How will this learning change my understanding of some of the children or young people I work with?

Suggested Reading

1. Dowling, M. (2014) *Young Children's Personal, Social and Emotional Development* (4th Edition), London: Sage.

2. Green, L. (2017) *Understanding the Life Course: Sociological and Psychological Perspectives* (2nd edition) Cambridge: Polity Press.

3. James, A. and James, A L. (2004) *Constructing Childhood: Theory, Policy and Social Practice*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

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