ANALYSING THREE-DIMENSIONAL MEANING-MAKING OF THE
RUPTURED LIFE COURSE: CASE STUDY OF THE ADOPTION OF
DISABILITY IDENTITY AS MULTIVOICED PROCESS

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Abstract. Dialogical researchers have proposed a new theoretical foundation for the psychology of the life course (Zittoun et al., 2013) that sees a person's life moving along three intertwining dimensions: time, space and degrees of reality (AS IS, AS IF). Yet, empirical methods for analysing the dialogical meaning-making of the life course are not fully developed. Based on a case study of a life course interview, we aim to demonstrate the dialogicality of the self and the adoption of a disability identity, in particular. Our analysis shows that the identity reconstruction after acquired disability as a life course rupture occurs in autodialogue between a multiplicity of I-positions, involving various inner-Others (e.g., 'healthy people' and 'disabled people' as generalised others, a group of peers as actual others). The temporal hierarchy between I-positions (their location in the past, present and future) includes patterns of dominance and asymmetrical power-relations in a way that serves functions of establishing the moral value of the self and creating coherence between the pre- and post-disability self. The adoption of a disabled identity can be conceptualised as developmental transition – a process which involves identity transformation and learning. It appears as changes in self-awareness of the alternative, but unwanted, silenced and rejected AS IS and AS IF positions (such as I-as a victim), which entails an emotional commitment to the gradually undertaken survivor-position.

Keywords: Life course, disability as rupture, dialogical meaning-making, I-position, developmental transition, life story, case study, narrative.

Deepening interest in the multivoicedness of the self within cultural psychological research reflects the rise of socially-oriented epistemologies that recognize the dynamic, situated and intersubjective nature of meaning-making (Gillespie & Cornish, 2010; see Aveling, Gillespie, & Cornish, 2015). Hermans (1996; see also Wagoner, Gillespie, Valsiner, Zittoun, Salgado, & Simão, 2011) notes, however, that there has been a discrepancy between the level of metaphor of the self and the level of research in contemporary self-psychology; whereas the metaphorical level allows for the inclusion of voice and dialogue, empirical research seems to neglect this aspect of the self. Moreover, there is a lack of established methodological tools for analysing multivoicedness (Gillespie & Cornish, 2014). Aveling et al. (2015) point out that no systematic bridge from conceptualisation of the dialogical self to

actual analysis exists. However, they propose that analyses of multivoicedness within qualitative data should take account of *context*, in particular.

In this article we argue that empirical analyses of multivoicedness also need to identify different functions that the dialogical meaning-making has in different meaning-making contexts and settings (see also Bamberg & Zielke, 2007). The general objective of our study is to demonstrate the dialogicality of the self through a life course interview setting by representing the case study of a middle-aged man – Ismo[1] – who has experienced a major rupture in his life course, as he has been physically injured in an accident a few years prior to the interview. Our empirical analysis of Ismo's case is influenced by the work of Aveling et al. (2015) and the methods of analysis proposed in their 'how-to' guide for analysing multivoicedness. We combine this method with the perspectives of sociolinguistic life story research (Linde, 1993; Komulainen, 1999) and dialogical life course theory (e.g., Zittoun, Valsiner, Vedeler, Salgado, Gonçalves, & Ferring, 2013), which represents a cultural psychological approach to life course. Compared to the traditional approaches within developmental psychology, this theory focuses especially on a person's meaning-making processes and its socio-cultural components.

Dialogical life course theory (Zittoun et al., 2013) sees a person's life moving along *three intertwining dimensions of meaning-making*: time, space and degrees of reality. Time runs from the past to the present and into the future, and space includes the social, material and institutional framing of our experiences. Degrees of reality refer to gradual variations in what is experienced as real (AS IS, i.e., what did happen or is happening), imaginary (AS IF, i.e., what would have happened if, what will happen) or something in between (Zittoun et al., 2013; Zittoun, 2014). We argue that a life course interview and a life story created in it is a unique space for three-dimensional meaning-making, differing from everyday interaction. It is a setting where the temporal reconstruction and organisation of experiences (in the past, present and future) as well as a person's movement between different degrees of reality nourishes the dialogicality of the self in a way that creates meaning and coherence to the life course.

Polarity of meaning-making is common to all people (Josephs & Valsiner, 1998), but especially in illness and disability narratives the narrator considers his/her illness from two opposing perspectives: an illness perspective and the perspective of the healthy person (Hydén, 1997). As Tagaki (2015) points out, especially people with acquired disabilities often negotiate with the non-disabled and to the disabled aspects of themselves (see also Yoshida, 1993). Therefore, we explore Ismo's dialogical meaning-making within bipolar, tensional perspectives – *self-as-disabled and self-without-disability*. We complement our general research aim with three sub-aims:

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[1] Ismo is a pseudonym.

firstly, we ask how Ismo *reconstructs his identity* in a ruptured situation through multivoicedness of the self, and in particular, what kind of dialogue with inner-Others this multivoiced positioning of self includes. Secondly, we ask how this dialogicality enables Ismo to adopt (and resist) disability identity and create meaning and coherence in his life course.

At a methodological level, ruptures of any kind offer natural windows on discontinuities in the continuous change in people's lives (Zittoun & Gillespie, 2012). As acquired disability represents a clear and total rupture in life course, our data provides us with access to studying life course change and development by investigating moment-by-moment changes in Ismo's I-positions, i.e., 'voices of the self, voices of others, and their interactions' (see Aveling et al., 2015). In light of our empirical findings, we thirdly reflect on whether the multivoiced identity reconstruction and the adoption of disability can be conceptualised as a developmental transition – a process which involves identity change, learning, and further meaning-making. In the following sections, we will provide a more detailed view of our perspectives of analysing the dialogicality of the self through the life course interview. Let us first take a brief look at the concepts of rupture, imagination and developmental transitions in the life course.

Life course ruptures, imagination and developmental transitions

According to Zittoun (2009), life courses appear to be characterised not only by 'the regular and progressive establishment of regularities and continuities, but also, and mainly, by the moments in which these continuities are interrupted, reoriented, or challenged'. *Ruptures* are predictable or unpredictable types of changes, events, experiences or thoughts that challenge everyday routines; they are not necessarily external events but may also result from reflexive processes in which persons reinterpret their past and present and create new future scenarios (Zittoun et al., 2013).

Thus, ruptures, such as becoming physically injured in an accident, bring new elements and challenges to the life course (Perret-Clermont & Zittoun, 2002; see Zittoun, Gillespie, Cornish, & Aveling, 2008). First, ruptures call for *new actions*; practical steps are needed to adjust to the rupture and to manage and live daily life. Second, ruptures raise challenges to a personal sense of meaning, and so, in response to a rupture, a person seeks to *make meaning* (Zittoun et al., 2008). People make sense of their own lives and the causes and consequences of the changes in terms of their past, present and future life; they link present changes to past experiences; they need to revise their past plans according to the new situation, to revise their scale of values to accommodate new facts (Zittoun et al., 2013). Third, as persons develop new actions and understanding, they position themselves in relation to the rupture, also developing *new identities* (Zittoun et al., 2008), i.e., seeing themselves, their thoughts and actions as well as their relation to the world from a new perspective.

Unlike regularities, unexpected ruptures and the related discontinuities tend to enhance *narrative meaning-making* (Zittoun, 2008a; Zittoun et al., 2013). Narratives are typically triggered by, and organised around 'incidents': '*a story* is in that case the attempt to restore an order that has been disturbed by a rupture' (Bruner, 1990; see Zittoun & Gillespie, 2012). Narratives allow people to place events in spatial and temporal locations and assume a position towards these events (Zittoun et al., 2013). According to McAdams (2008) people often create "integrative narratives of self that reconstruct the past and anticipate the future in such a way as to provide life with identity, meaning, and coherence" (pp. 109-110). The creation of coherence in life course can be seen as both an internal, psychological demand and a social obligation (Linde, 1993; Zittoun et al., 2013).

In times of rupture, *imagination* often replaces the unknown with a representation in meaning-making. Imagination is a process of engaging in AS IF thinking, i.e., 'possible worlds' (Bruner, 1986), in contrast to AS IS; turning the present and the actual into the possible actually creates options for the future (Zittoun et al., 2013). In turn, because we can only imagine the basis of past experiences, AS IF both relies on and transforms memories. These processes are essential in the construction of autobiographic memory and self-awareness (Zittoun et al., 2013) and also the construction of tools for psychological change. Finally, a life story involves "large-scale systems of social understandings and knowledge"; it relies on the "presuppositions about what can be taken as expected and what the norms are" (Linde, 1993, p. 219). Especially when facing the rupture, people use further social means to make sense of their experiences and life situation and to reduce uncertainty – yet these carry normative expectations for self-positioning (Zittoun, 2008b).

Sometimes ruptures in the life course may enhance *developmental transitions,* which involve processes of identity transformation, learning and further meaning-making. Traditionally, life course development has been conceptualised as a set of changes that include biological and psychological maturation and result from a person's interaction with his social environment. Learning is seen as a particular sort of development that can be short-lived and undone or as 'the acquisition of specific skills and knowledge by a person through specific interactions with the environment' (Zittoun et al., 2013). According to the dialogical approach to the life course, our article questions the traditional views of development and learning and sees learning as a set of self-organizing processes through which individuals encounter and respond to ruptures (Zittoun et al., 2013). Thus, learning in ruptures can be additive, as in learning new skills, but it can also be developmental, involving significant changes in the ways that a person sees himself and the social world, and how he relates to the world.

Dialogicality of the self in a life story

According to theoretical tradition of dialogism and the conceptualisations of self within this tradition, the self consists of multiple voices (Hermans, 1996; Salgado & Clegg, 2011; Zittoun et al., 2013). As noted by Aveling et al. (2015), there are two types of voices within the self. First, there are 'the positions from which the self speaks" (p. 673) and acts – the 'I'; the 'I' can speak and act from 'a multiplicity of different I-positions', each position taken from one perspective (Hermans, 2001). Aveling et al. (2015) state that "while each I-position is initially cultivated in a particular set of social relations and particular context, in a person's psychological life, I-positions from various contexts collide, and within one context or even one utterance, the self may move between I-positions or voices" (p. 673). A person's self-awareness depends upon a coexistence of various I-positions, and some dialogical movement between these I-positions (Gillespie, 2006b); through a constant dialogue between I-positions, a person negotiates the meanings of the situation.

Second, there are voices that are attributed to others, i.e., inner-Others within the self (Bakhtin, 1981; Marková, 2006). In other words, "the self is always infused with and responding to the voices of Others", and often speaks and thinks with the words of Others; a perspective taking occurs through internalized voices of Others (Aveling et al., 2015, p. 2). I and the Other are not two separated existences, but relate with each other (Markova, 2003; see Salgado & Clegg, 2011). Inner-Others can represent actual individuals, but they may also be generalised others (Aveling et al., 2015). Generalised others are at least partially imagined, although based on particular and actual interactions within a given social group (Martin & Sokol, 2011). Inner-Others, in the sense of generalised others refer to 'I-positions which have become detached from any one person or discourse' (Gillespie, 2006b, p. 774). Inner-Others may also reflect sociocultural meanings and discourses associated with particular social positions or groups (Aveling et al, 2015).

According to Gillespie (2006a), voices of inner-Others may appear within the talk of the self in the form of direct or indirect quotes: the speaker gives voice to a specific person or group, or he/she refers to the perspective of another person or group (see also Aveling et al., 2015). Inner-Others play an active role in autodialogue, changing topics, introducing ideas and shifting the positions from which a person speaks (Marková, 2006). In other words, they relate to perspective taking and interaction of different perspectives, i.e., how a person sees himself and the world.

The dialogical self does not only involve the coexistence of different perspectives, but also through continuous (re)organisation of the I-position repertoire, and the construction of hierarchies between the different I-positions (Valsiner, 2007). Thus, the concept of position expresses the spatial and dynamic nature of the meaning-making process (Hermans, 1996). The dialogical dynamics within the self reflect

patterns of dominance and asymmetrical power relations, deriving from the socio-cultural context (Aveling et al., 2015). Accordingly, in the meaning-making process, certain voiced positions within the self may dominate, undermine, marginalise, resist or silence others (see also Valsiner, 2002; Zittoun et al., 2013).

As noted by Hermans (2012), "from a temporal point of view, the self is part of a process of positioning and repositioning" in personal development (p. 1). The temporal continuity of the self is built into the very fabric of narrating one's life story, however (Zittoun et al., 2013). Narrative construction of identity operates through a set of voices hinged together by means of dialogicality. The dialogicality of the self that occurs in the retrospective meaning-making of life course is oriented towards organising a person's 'understanding of his past life, current situation, and imagined future' (Linde, 1993), thereby also creating integration and coherence between the I-positions located in the past, present and future. Moreover, a position taking within the meaning-making of life course has *intentional and agentive* qualities (Zittoun et al., 2013); positions may be motivated towards specific goals of psychological adaptation or maintenance of morally valuable identity, for example.

Data and methods

The data for the present study is a life course interview drawn from a total of 19 life course interviews gathered at the University of Eastern Finland by a group of Psychology students in 2013 during the course 'Psychology of the Life Course'. The course is part of advanced studies in psychology. During the course, students conduct and transcribe a life course interview with a middle-aged man or a woman. Participants were carefully briefed on the aims of the interview, voluntary participation, their right to withdraw from the interview in any phase, data usage for further life course research, processing and archiving, and confidentiality. For the course assignment, students analysed their interviews from life-course research perspectives.

The interviews were thematic life course interviews and maintained a focus on the interviewees' perspective and meaning-making. Close attention was paid to the interviewees' involvement in the meaning-making process by asking open-ended questions. The interview consisted of a set of broad discussion themes[2], which were emphasised in different ways with each interviewee.

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[2] The broad themes were 1) current situation in life, 2) childhood and early school years, 3) adolescence and career choices, 4) education and working paths, 5) family, intimate relationships and parenthood, 6) other social relationships and belonging to social groups, 7) health and well-being, 8) personal values and goals.

Out of the 19 interviews, we chose to focus upon a single interviewee, who will be referred to as Ismo[3]. Ismo is a middle-aged man who experienced an unexpected accident in adulthood and is therefore permanently injured[4]. At the time of the interview, Ismo had lived his "disability life" for several years. His disability is limited to a physical disability, but he has several injuries which affect his mobility. Ismo has a wife and children and he was already married and had had children before the accident. He is academically educated and has worked in an expert position before and after the accident, and is currently working fulltime as well. Among the 19 interviews, we chose Ismo's case because acquired disability represents a clear and total rupture in a person's life course, involving both physical and mental changes and challenges. These changes and challenges presumably enhance multivoiced meaning-making. Thus, Ismo's case is particularly fruitful for demonstrating the dialogicality of the self.

Ismo speaks of himself as "disabled," and therefore we also use that term in our analysis. The accident and subsequent disability are key themes in Ismo's life course interview. He makes constant references to the traumatic consequences that the accident has had in his life, so we can argue that the accident and subsequent disability are perceived as a major rupture in his life. As Hydén (1997) argues, chronic illness significantly changes a person's life because it creates new and qualitatively different life conditions, and may force a person to look at the future from a totally different angle. So, in the abstract and orientation to the "story of the accident", Ismo divides his life into "two chapters": a life before and a life after the fateful accident. In Ismo's life story, the accident and the disability caused by it becomes an epiphany, a moment when the character experiences a life-changing event which changes the rest of the story. In some respect, disability is the vantage point from which all other events are viewed or to which other events are related (Hydén, 1997).

Example 1: Story of the accident

Ismo: You see I was disabled, so my past life and this present life are fairly different - - and it is now coming up to X years since the accident, and that's how long I've been practising this disabled life - - So this is what my life course has been like and the year of my accident, since that year it has been a whole new ballgame - - In (the year) X, I took the infamous trip to the Place Abroad, which was the trip when I had my accident that disabled me. And since then, I have spent my time sitting in a wheelchair.

Our analysis of Ismo's interview applies socio-linguistic narrative (Linde, 1993; Komulainen, 1999) and an analysis of multivoiced positioning (Aveling et al.,

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[3] Ismo's interview lasted 3.5 hours. The interview was transcribed into a text file (a total of 83 pages). In this article, special attention was paid to protecting the interviewee's identity and to ensuring confidentiality; all identifiers were removed from the data and, if necessary, short excerpts were excluded from the data examples. These are marked with the symbol […].

[4] Ismo was the only interviewee among 19 interviewees who had experienced disability in his life course.

2015; Zittoun et al., 2013). These theoretical and methodological tools allow us to explore a life story from the spatial and temporal points of view. The theoretical view on self-in-relation-to-others requires the analysis of voices of the self, voices of others, and their interactions (Aveling et al., 2015).

In our analysis, we firstly *identified narratives* from the interview. We paid attention to complications, i.e., some sort of interruptions in the ordinary flow of events (Labov & Waletzky, 1967), but especially to the evaluation parts of the narratives that reveal Ismo's perspective (i.e., voice) on the events being recounted (Patterson, 2008). In addition, we analysed the end of the interview in which Ismo presents an overall evaluation of his life course. We named the narratives, and analysed them according to the empirical method suggested by Aveling et al. (2015). First, we looked at who is doing the talking by identifying the voices of the self, i.e., the multiplicity of I-positions from which self-as-disabled and self-without-disability speaks (for example, I-as a victim, I-as a survivor). Second, we traced the voices of inner-Others. Although actual dialogue with an interviewer was a part of constructing Ismo's life story, the focus of our analysis was on Ismo's dialogue with inner-Others. The third step was to analyse how the voices of self and Other, I-positions and inner-Others, interact. Thus, we examined the dynamics of the dialogue by looking at the relationship between voices within the self – also in terms of dominance and hierarchies of different I-positions. We paid attention to indications of changing degrees of reality by analysing how the I-positions varied between matter-of-fact descriptions, AS IS, and hypothetical AS IF explorations (Zittoun et al. 2013).

Finally, to examine the temporal organisation of I-positions (past, present, future I-positions), we compared narratives concerning the "two chapters of life." We looked at what kind of multivoiced I-positions were located in the past, present and future, and what kind of patterns of asymmetrical power-relations this autodialogue implied. Moreover, we examined how the autodialogue and the related evaluative comparison of the I-positions over time created coherence (Linde, 1993) in Ismo's life course. To sum up, our analysis traced what kind of I-positions in different degrees of reality (AS IS, AS IF) and in different time (past, present, future) Ismo took in his interview, and how these I-positions interacted with each other.

In the following sections, we will shed light on the dialogical meaning-making of the self in the ruptured life course. As described already in the introduction, Ismo's meaning-making operates from *two different perspectives:* self-as-disabled and self-without-disability, which both consist of a multiplicity of I-positions.

Self-as-disabled

From the perspective of self-as-disabled (see Appendix 1[5]) Ismo takes the position of *'I-as-permanently-injured-yet-privileged'* – someone who has struggled in his path following the unfortunate accident and currently feels himself lucky, although realistically recognizing and accepting restrictions brought about by disability. This position taking requires elaboration of alternative, opposite I-positions, however, some of which are silenced and rejected whereas others are encouraged. In the course of Ismo's interview, these alternative I-positions and the related voices within the self are differently located in the past, present and future in a way that implies *evaluative comparison of the self over time.*

> Example 2: Evaluation of the meaning of the injury in the life course
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> Ismo: And this awareness was a crucial lesson for me there [in rehabilitation]. Seeing how good things really are - - and I have made a conscious effort to, for a long time now I have not compared what healthy people can do, but how well I can do things compared to many other people in this world. Even if I am in a wheelchair, it's like I have won the lottery many times over compared to those healthy people living in circumstances where they have no possibility for a life of their own, where there's war and everything is going to hell.
>
> Interviewer: Yes, I'm sure that is true and certainly the accident will make you reassess your values.
>
> Ismo: It did yes, and what I have left is really important to me.

In the previous evaluation, Ismo takes a position of a lucky man who is capable of seeing the bright side of life. This perspective taking involves an inner-Other voice of generalised healthy people. The dialogue entails *contrasting and relative comparison* between a permanently injured, yet fortunate I and underprivileged healthy people (as a group) through which Ismo avoids seeing himself as an ungrateful person.

However, the *I-position of a victim* also occurs in Ismo's talk; the dialogue implies that there *have been* times when Ismo compared his life as a disabled person to the lives of the able-bodied healthy. The self as a victim is primarily located in the past, whereas the present self has *learned* to appreciate what he has left, instead of worrying about what has been lost. According to Ismo, this learning has required 'conscious efforts', which underlines his persistent character. Ismo's interview includes several other utterances where I-as a survivor located in the present is in dialogue with the I-as a grieving person located in the past: *"I have worried and kept talking too much, way too much - - at worst it was that why me, why me, why me."* However, the I-position of a victim is a potential present position, too, as Ismo is aware of the fact that, due to disability, his *"sphere of life has narrowed."* In the following excerpt, hypothetical (present and future) I, who is blaming other people

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[5] For a similar outline, see Wagoner et al. 2011.

and the conditions and has lost his will to live, is in dialogue with *an emerging survivor:*

> Example 3: Hypothetical embittered person in dialogue with an emerging survivor
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> Ismo: It is just one of those things, I could spend the rest of my life being bitter […] I can't get stuck in it, I could be bitter for the rest of my life but it would do no good. […] it really doesn't do me any good, it would take up all of my energy. And all the energy I have, I have to use on moving forward instead of dwelling on it […] It is life and I can't do anything about it, I just have to live it. And you shouldn't do anything stupid because of what has happened, like I can't live anymore and this is the end of my life. - - No, no, I guess what I want to say is that I don't see the future as a big scary monster, I mean of course the reality is that I have to take care of myself and my condition. […] Some people may already [at this age] be full-on old and complete wrecks and they have not lived at all. Then you see people in rehabilitation, there was this man in the gym with me, he was nearly 100, couldn't hear much or see much, […] but at my age, I still have X years to go before that. X bloody years, there is that alternative also, it's not so bad is it, him working out in the gym, just shows that it's very much up to you what you make of your life and how you live it.

I as an emerging survivor speaks with the optimistic and self-confident voice. He faces the cruel facts of life, has learned to take full responsibility for his life, and has a confident attitude towards the future, whereas *some others* – generalised healthy people – do not know how to live in the first place. However, the I-position of an emerging survivor involves a counter-position of I who "spends rest of his life being bitter," "dwells on" and "sees future as a big scary monster." These opposite voices are located in the AS IF world and rejected in terms of self-ensuring talk, such as "I can't" and "I have to."

Ismo's interview includes less future-oriented meaning-making but when anticipating his future life, Ismo takes the position of a man who intends to stay in a good physical condition. An old, sick and blind man working-out at the gym, as an actual other who Ismo has met when he has participated in rehabilitation, acts as an encouraging example for Ismo's future life.

We suggest that the dominance of the voice of an emerging survivor in Ismo's talk is a response to the cultural discourse associated with disability (disabled people as powerless victims), which, as an internalised voice, is echoing as a part of Ismo's identity reconstruction. The morality of the self in Ismo's life course interview is created through resisting the stigmatic aspects of the disability identity, in particular. The following narrative illustrates that in Ismo's meaning-making, these stigmatic aspects are construed, firstly, through the voice of healthy people as a generalised inner-Other.

> Example 4: A story of a 'bar stool test' for disclosing healthy people's prejudices
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> Ismo: Attitudes are unbelievable.
>
> Interviewer: Really?

Ismo: Like some people probably don't think that people in wheelchairs have any brains at all - that they are stupid and limited and like children and at the same level as children, some people have terrible prejudice.

Interviewer: That sounds really sad.

Ismo: It is, I have come across some unbelievable things; a wheelchair disables people much more than you can imagine, much more than being in a wheelchair. I have done this test a few times in a restaurant; if people want to, I let them try my chair so they can have a go at moving in a wheelchair. They realise the perspective of people looking down on you […] that you are not at the same level and not as smart as others. They don't ask you where you work and what your hobbies are. […] And it is interesting how you feel different yourself in the chair; these are tests you can do if you have a wheelchair, and like I am able to get up on a bar stool. [ ] There is a massive difference when people are sitting at the bar and I get up off my wheelchair and sit between them, and they look at me like I'm on the same level. We are equal, but when I'm in a wheelchair and I'm still the same man but I'm looking up at them, it is completely different. I am no longer worthy, I am either a bit pathetic or stupid or not as valuable.

By taking a perspective of "some people" – generalised healthy others – Ismo challenges stereotypical meanings and labelling aspects of disability identity and *rejects the I-position of worthless and underestimated disabled person*: AS IF just a wheelchair could make an academically educated family man – a professional in his field – appear as brainless and infantile. Ismo is acting as a sort of *instructor* who seeks to improve general attitudes towards people with disability. Interestingly, healthy people are not a homogenous inner-Other voice in Ismo's dialogues. The voice of generalised healthy include the perspective of those who despise and discriminate against them (see example 4) and those who are themselves healthy but otherwise underprivileged (for example, have poor living conditions, see example 2).

Furthermore, Ismo's meaning-making includes inner-Other voices of *disabled people as actual and generalised others*. By taking perspectives of other disabled people, Ismo is able to make relative comparison between himself as disabled and disabled "people" as a group that deviates from a group of "normal" people. Basically, this comparison is about avoiding deviant identity and constructing a moral and legitimate disability identity through *warning and encouraging examples* (Hänninen, 1999), as the following narrative reveals.

Example 5: Evaluation of a peers encounter in rehabilitation

Ismo: I have met colleagues and all kinds of people in rehabilitation, handicapped people from all walks of life, really fine people.

Interviewer: It must have been an eye-opening experience?

Ismo: Yes, it broadened my horizon and opened my eyes - - helped me realise that I am privileged in this group, with my work and my family, things that many people don't have.

Interviewer: Yes, that is true.

Ismo: Yes, it's not like all men in wheelchairs have wives and children, many have fallen due to drink and intoxicants and lost everything fast, and others are Olympic athletes whose life has only begun after they were disabled.

Interviewer: I'm sure that is also true.

Ismo: These extremes are like from different planets, I have learnt all this, that it can also be an opportunity to some. […] Another thing I learnt there [in rehabilitation] is that there are people with no choices left to make, whereas I have so many opportunities and alternatives to choose from. I have not lost everything and I am still alive for now. […] It is a wonderful opportunity and everyone who becomes disabled should […] meet people with a will to live and plans and everything, people who are happy even if they have a progressive illness and life expectancy or something, or a chance that your next stop is a respirator or you face death by suffocation and things like this. And still they carry on. […] and then you have people who will give up if their legs have been amputated but they are otherwise perfectly healthy, but they just can't go forward in their lives […] and others may be quadriplegic and Olympic athletes at the same time, and they have been given an entirely new life and a different way of looking at the world.

Ismo's meaning-making consists of various alternative I-positions of the disabled self, a *"wheelchair man":* a victim/quitter (who doesn't have a job or a family, have a substance abuse problem, have lost everything), a person living a reasonably normal life (have a wife, children and a job) and an exceptional achiever ("Olympic-level athletes"). As a result of this perspective taking and the related evaluative comparison, Ismo is capable of maintaining the I-position of *a developing person:* he talks to himself as well as to other disabled people (as generalised Other) with *a wiser voice.* Accordingly, he positions himself somewhere at the midpoint in his process of personal growth and identity change. Participation in rehabilitation shows itself as an important site of self-searching and learning.

On the one hand, other disabled or chronically ill people who Ismo has met in rehabilitation, actual others in his meaning-making, are called "peers" and a "gang," implying a sense of belonging to the in-group of disabled people. On the other hand, Ismo is not speaking from the "we"-perspective of being a member of the disabled (Zittoun, 2014, 20). Instead, the voices of Others are kind of assessed from a distance when Ismo represents himself as morally superior compared to victims/quitters (although also encouraging himself with the fact that he is still alive). Thus, the I-position of the developing person is *a moral position*: from that I-position, Ismo is able to see his own possibilities and choices as being greater than the possibilities and choices of other people with disabilities, to whom he speaks with an experienced and guiding voice.

Self-without-disability

From this perspective, Ismo speaks from the *I-position of a broad-minded and grown-up* self-without-disability (see Appendix 2). The position taking includes *an alternative I-position of a naïve, foolish intolerant* Ismo. This I-position is rejected and located in the past, whereas the present I is addressed as a survivor who learns from extremely difficult experiences and gradually becomes aware of the priorities of life. Whereas the perspective of self-as-disabled included dialogue with hierarchically positioned Others, in particular, the perspective of self-without-disability consists

primarily of the hierarchical comparison of multiple I-positions that are located differently in the past, present and future. In his meaning-making, Ismo represents the accident followed by disability as an eye-opening event in life, characterised by learning and changes in self-awareness, as the following excerpt show:

> Example 6: *Developing person criticises the naive and foolish self-without-disability located in the past*
>
> Ismo: I must admit that I never used to see disabled people, never looked at them. I didn't see them, I knew they existed but I didn't want to even look at them. I didn't see them the same way that people do not see me now in my wheelchair. I come across a lot of people who will not look at me, and this is something I have been dealing with during these years. Now I have a different circle that I like to move in and they notice me and see me. This contrast is something I have learnt about people with no capabilities and experience, with friends and relatives, for example. They really don't know how to relate. Their attitudes are unbelievable.

In this example, two inner-Other voices actualise. "Them" represents a voice of a generalised group of disabled people, who Ismo in his past (without disability) was not capable of recognising due to his immature attitude. "People" who now ignore Ismo because of his disability, are generalised healthy people those perspective has also been Ismo's own worldview in the past before the eye-opening event in his life.

On the one hand, then, Ismo is critical towards the I-position of an intolerant person that is located in the past. On the other hand, he positions himself as someone who has *always* had a certain awareness of the fragility of life. In another narrative that entails by reflecting the life course (see example 7), Ismo takes the I-position of *a life-long survivor* and speaks to himself with a self-comforting voice. An important actual other in this dialogue is Ismo's own mother, whose warning or encouraging voice is saying that life is full of misfortune and that worry does not lead to anything.

> Example 7: A life-long survivor's dialogue with himself and with the mother
>
> Ismo: I have always known that these things can happen in life, anything can happen. And I suppose that has been my strength that I never thought that my life would be happy and satisfied and smooth always and forever… That uncertainty is the only certainty there is. […] And I've been thinking that it was almost good that someone like me went through this instead of someone who's never had anything happen to them, someone who would completely lose it, but it is impossible to think like that.
>
> Interviewer: And maybe you can't think like that…
>
> Ismo: No, but I have always had this awareness that anything can happen at any time and you have to face facts, and I'll be happy to admit that there's no point in crying over spilled milk, there never was, in my life there's never been any use in crying, that's what my mother always used to say. You just have to pick up the pieces and move on, it has always been my only truism in life.

It should be noted that the generalised inner-Other in this dialogue is also privileged people – "someone" – who hasn't experienced setbacks in his/her life and therefore might not cope with them as well as someone who has suffered a lot. A life-long survivor's dialogue with himself and with the mother gets its meaning from

Ismo's biography as a whole, where he reflects on his tough childhood. In the following story, Ismo takes the I-position of a tough and fearless person, which is a position that characterises the self-without-disability.

Example 8: A story of a tough childhood

Ismo: With this being a life course, things from my childhood are highly relevant here. I feel that I should tell you this now that I have promised. About a very broken family. My mother […] had children at a very young age and married my father […] My father was a bad alcoholic and they got divorced […] But to say that, my childhood was a difficult time. […] then there was the divorce and he left and it must have been a relief for us. […] then this new man came along for my mother […] there must have been good times, too, when we were children. […] This relationship ended in a crisis and my mother got sick […] But that's when our family life started to go downhill at home. […] The pressure was horrible, with me as the head of the family in a way. […] it was very chaotic as we [siblings] had school and exams and they really didn't go well… Of course this made further studies difficult.

The story of a tough childhood is also important in terms of understanding Ismo's I-positioning of *an expert in his discipline*. The opportunity to study at university appears as a revolutionary event in Ismo's life-without-disability, also having important meaning in the identity reconstruction followed by disability and the related rupture in Ismo's life course. The story about the start of university studies underlines the young Ismo's conscious efforts and exceptional perseverance under extremely difficult living conditions before the accident.

Example 9: A story of university studies as the door to a new world

Ismo: You must remember that I come from the Town, and it is a dirty place and not very nice. […] And I was doing dirty work [in the factory] […] They wanted me to work there permanently, but I could see what was going on. […] By then I had seen what factory work was like. Although there was no reason back then to anticipate that the factory would close. […] And everyone told me I was crazy not to accept a permanent job like them, and they bought a car and a house and everything and they were showing off, all this with no qualifications. […] So I was almost left with no qualifications. I didn't have good qualifications. All the time when I worked in the factory, I kept thinking I should go to university and get qualifications […] But luckily I was able to [ ] make the effort after all and […] I started studying at the university, which was a massive turning point in my life. […] You can imagine with my background, a very humble background and all the struggles with other stuff. […] But it [studying] brought with it so many things and an entirely new world. […] I struggled and made it and a lot of good has come from studying. I can say that if I had not started studying, I would not have met my current partner and everything. […] On the other hand, I would not have had the accident if I had not started studying. Then again, now that I have these qualifications, I have been able to work as soon as I started recovering. There are not many jobs I could have done. After all, my disability rate is 75 or 80%, depending on the calculations. […] Which is not exactly a great advantage in the labour market.

Interviewer: But it must make you appreciate your qualifications?

Ismo: Yes, and I have been very lucky with this.

Interviewer: Yes.

Ismo: Of course it has made work more difficult, but I can manage.

The above narrative highlights Ismo's lifelong ability to abandon the old, take new directions, and strive for success in life. In this narrative, Ismo takes up the *I-position of a persistent fighter and ambitious agent* having a dialogue with his former workmates – factory men. The warning and mocking voices of other factory workers (as actual others) from the past (those who went after easy money but ended up losing their jobs) attempt to silence the voice of a persistent fighter. Simultaneously, these voices underline the originality and courage of Ismo's occupational choices in the past. The story contains various *hypothetical I-positions*, too: firstly, a position of a person who remains outside of education and without a partner of life and a position of a factory worker taking the easy road and staying in his first workplace in the 'dirty' suburb. Paradoxically, this hypothetical I-as factory worker would have avoided the accident and disability.

In addition to the persistent fighter and ambitious person, the present Ismo is positioned as an officially disabled person; medical disability classifications and the voice of health experts provide external validation for Ismo's disability. Positioning himself as an academically educated expert enables Ismo to stand out positively from other people with disabilities: his expert work in the office is something he can do successfully despite the physical injury.

There are yet other "integrative memories" (McAdams, 2008) in Ismo's life course interview, in which he draws lessons about himself, important relationships in his life, and the course of his life in general. These narratives represent different temporalities and different degrees of reality. The story of 'a lost future as an expert abroad', for instance, creates the same meanings for Ismo's life course that we have reflected in connection with example 9. In this narrative, Ismo talks about the time before the accident when the whole world was open to him. He tells how he had arranged everything for an assignment abroad. Through imaginative engagement with the past, he takes a position of *a courageous world conqueror* and an ambitious expert in his field, who could have reached almost anything if there hadn't been an accident. Ismo's wife is an actual other in this narrative; "we" perspective implies that moving abroad was supposed to be a huge life change for the entire family, and accordingly, Ismo's accident changed the lives of many. Mother's instructive and warning voice from the past interrupts Ismo's story by offering him the (AS IF) counter-position of a failure-fearing and hesitant person, thereby giving further argument and meaning to the I-position of a courageous world conqueror.

Example 10: The story of a 'lost future' as an expert abroad

Ismo: We were [my partner and I] about to move to X [place Abroad] and start a new life. We wanted to see the world […] in a way we had a chance to conquer a new area and we were going to move Abroad […] it would have been a massive leap for me as I have… My mother has always taught me and warned me not to do anything in life in case things go wrong. It has been my philosophy in life. It was going to be a huge leap, we had booked everything and had jobs and the kids had places in day-care. We both had jobs, and a week

before the accident we were there to check out our city and visit both our new workplaces. And […] I had an accident and nearly lost my life. It changed absolutely everything. We had these excellent prospects and dimensions, bloody brilliant, and all these great plans, and there I am fighting for my life. I'm fighting for my life and realise that I am…I have been disabled for life. It was like… It was really tough.

We suggest that Ismo's meaning-making from the perspective of self-without-disability, which involves encouraging, warning and mocking voices of different actual others and the imaginative engagement with the past enables him to create coherence in his life course. According to McAdams (2008), causal coherence emerges [in life stories] as people link separate events into causal chains; the events themselves become the key episodes for explaining a current aspect of self or a future scenario. In particular, through the multivoiced positioning Ismo contemplates on his present life situation within the wider scope of his life (see Zittoun & Gillespie, 2012) and is able to take, maintain and strengthen the positive I-position of a survivor. Our findings are consistent with the results gained in the recent studies on disability in life course: persons with a disability tend to emphasise positive and unchanged aspects on their (pre-injury) lives (Tagaki, 2015). On the one hand, Ismo sees himself as fundamentally *changed* or in the process of transformation due to his disability. On the other hand, he stresses that he has *always been* a persistent survivor.

Discussion

The general aim of our article was to conduct empirical analysis of the dialogicality of the self in a way that acknowledges context and functions of multivoiced meaning-making. We wanted to demonstrate the multivoiced self through a life course interview setting by representing a case study of a man who has experienced a major rupture – physical disability – in his life. Firstly, we asked how our interviewee reconstructs his identity in a ruptured situation through multivoicedness of the self. We explored his meaning-making within bipolar, tensional perspectives – self-as-disabled and self-without-disability. In particular, we asked what kind of dialogue with inner-Others the multivoiced positioning of self includes. Secondly, we examined how the dialogicality enables our interviewee to adopt disability identity and create meaning and coherence in his life course. Thirdly, we reflected on whether the multivoiced identity reconstruction can be conceptualised as a developmental transition.

Ismo's positioning (voices) towards disability as a life course rupture implied an intentional act which, simultaneously, was dialogical act towards voices of the self (different I-positions) and voices of inner-Others. The multivoiced positioning exemplified Ismo's relations, emotions and attitudes to himself and other people. Based on his actual experiences as a person with disability, he told guiding and warning narratives to himself and to others. In his autodialogue (i.e. dialogue between the voices in the self), Ismo took various I-positions that were differently located in

the past, present and future. This autodialogue involved voices of various inner-Others, such as 'healthy people' and 'people with disability' as generalised others. Dialogue with actual others involved voices of a group of peers (other disables or ill people) in rehabilitation, former workmates, Ismo's own mother, and a childhood family.

There are usually hierarchies and asymmetrical power-relations within a person's I-position repertoire, i.e. different voices in the self, in a way that some of the voices are weakened whereas others are encouraged (Valsiner, 2002, 2007). We suggest that in Ismo's meaning-making, the disability identity is adopted through the confrontation of alternative I-as-disabled positions and through the temporal organisation of this I-position repertoire. Through the dialogue with the multiple Others-in-self, Ismo criticises and rejects the actual and imagined unwanted I-positions and stigmatic aspects of disability identity, in particular. Accordingly, he encourages and convinces his emerging survivor-position, as well as maintains the I-position of an academically educated, ambitious expert.

We suggest that the kind of assertive relation to one's own 'wounded' identity is also an outcome of the recovery from the traumatic life event, within which multivoiced meaning-making has a special role to carry out (see Hydén, 1997). Based on our findings, the multivoicedness of the self helps to transform disability from an individual to a collective phenomenon and into a social identity, and assert and protect one's own identity against and within the social position of "people with a disability"; the collective identity as "people with a disability" might contribute to relief of social stigma (Tagaki, 2015). Importantly, the multivoiced dialogue – and the voices of inner-Others, in particular – serves a function of establishing *the morally valuable* disability identity (Zittoun & Gillespie, 2012). Our results reveal that life stories not only express who we are but "we use life stories to claim or negotiate group membership and to demonstrate that we are in fact worthy members of those groups" and their moral standards (Linde 1993, p. 3).

Life threatening experiences, such as illness or becoming physically injured, constitutes a disruption of an ongoing life and also "threaten people's sense of identity and taken-for-granted assumptions about the temporal framing of their lives" (Ezzy, 2000, p. 605). However, narratives serve as arenas for presenting, discussing, and negotiating illness and how we relate to illness; they "offer an opportunity to knit together the split ends of time, to construct a new context and to fit the illness disruption into a temporal framework" (Hydén, 1997, p. 53). The most important function of the narratives expressed in the life story is to establish temporal continuity of the life course; temporal continuity of the certain I-position is the most basic form of coherence that a person can create (Linde, 1993). In his meaning-making that involves hierarchical temporal organisation and integration of multiple I-positions, Ismo articulates and explains his disability to himself, to the interviewer and to others,

and positions the experience of becoming disabled in time and space and within the framework of the personal biography, thereby doing 'biographical work' that mediates the malleability of his life course (Gubrium & Holstein, 1995). By taking a lifelong position of a survivor he is capable of maintaining a sense of a coherent pre- and post-disability self (see also Tagaki, 2015).

In response to a disruption of an ongoing life caused by life threatening experience, people also experience transformations in values and life priorities (Ezzy, 2000). Ismo's multivoicedness within the perspectives of self-as-disabled and self-without disability implies *developmental transition* that includes processes of identity transformation and biographical learning. Developmental transitions compel one to leave old I-positions, to reflect on oneself, to envisage alternatives, to create continuity between old and new I-positions, and finally, to receive some form of social recognition (Zittoun et al., 2013). Through an evaluative comparison of I-positions over time, Ismo is able to see the accident followed by disability as not exclusively a life tragedy, but also an important learning experience and an opportunity for personal change. Ismo's identity transformation and learning appear as changes in his awareness of the unwanted, silenced and rejected I-positions (such as I-positions of powerless victim and naïve, intolerant person) and the related perspective-taking, which entails an emotional commitment to the gradually undertaken survivor position. The emotional commitment to this position involves an elaboration of alternative AS IS and AS IF I-positions. This elaboration includes patterns of dominance and asymmetrical power relations, such that not all I-positions are equally valued.

In sum, the adoption of a disability identity as a developmental transition can be conceptualised as a multivoiced process of self-organization that occurs in time, social space and with different degrees of reality. We argue that this process entails *the psychological function of adaptation*. As is thought to happen in a psychotherapy setting (e.g., Dimaggio, 2006; Dimaggio & Stiles, 2007), a life course interview at its best facilitates autodialogue in a way that makes room for psychological adaptation. We would like to conclude by noting that good interviewing practice implies returning to less emotionally saturated ground than may have been present earlier in the interview and trying to end on a positive note. It is important for both the interviewee and interviewer to voice how they felt about the experience and to note its meaningfulness (Josselson, 2007). At the end of Ismo's life course interview, he and the interviewer evaluated their experiences. Based on the below dialogue between the interviewee and the interviewer, we suggest that for Ismo, a life course interview represented a meaningful opportunity to "knit together" various life experiences and to fit the disability rupture into a coherent temporal framework.

Example 11: Ismo's evaluation of the meaning of the life course interview

Ismo: This has been like therapy for me, although that was not the meaning, but I have never done this reminiscing. […] And that is why I wanted to do this [interview] and why I took

this opportunity to get a better idea of my life, and to see what has led to what, and to be aware of things. […] Maybe I haven't been your regular… […] I thought that I should also do this life course or life story and see what is where and what impacts what and see what my life has been like and now that I look at it, it has been multi-faceted, there have been many things, except a lot of it has been difficult, but it has been life in general. I've had ups and downs, good times and bad times.

Interviewer: Yes… sort of moving onwards.

Ismo: Yes, there is a kind of a thread, that the man is clearly here in 2013, even if he is in a wheelchair, he has managed, and not done so bad.

Interviewer: Yes, there is a lot of good there.

Ismo: Yes, you don't know, when you move on, whether you make the right choices, where you will end up, you never know, you might be 90 years old and in the gym joking with young physiotherapist ladies, it's not a bad prospect, really (laughs).

Interviewer: Well no it's not (laughs) and thank you so much, it was great to hear this.

Ismo: Yes, thank you, this was very useful. Because initially I thought that I want to give this a go, and this was not strained, I think this was useful.

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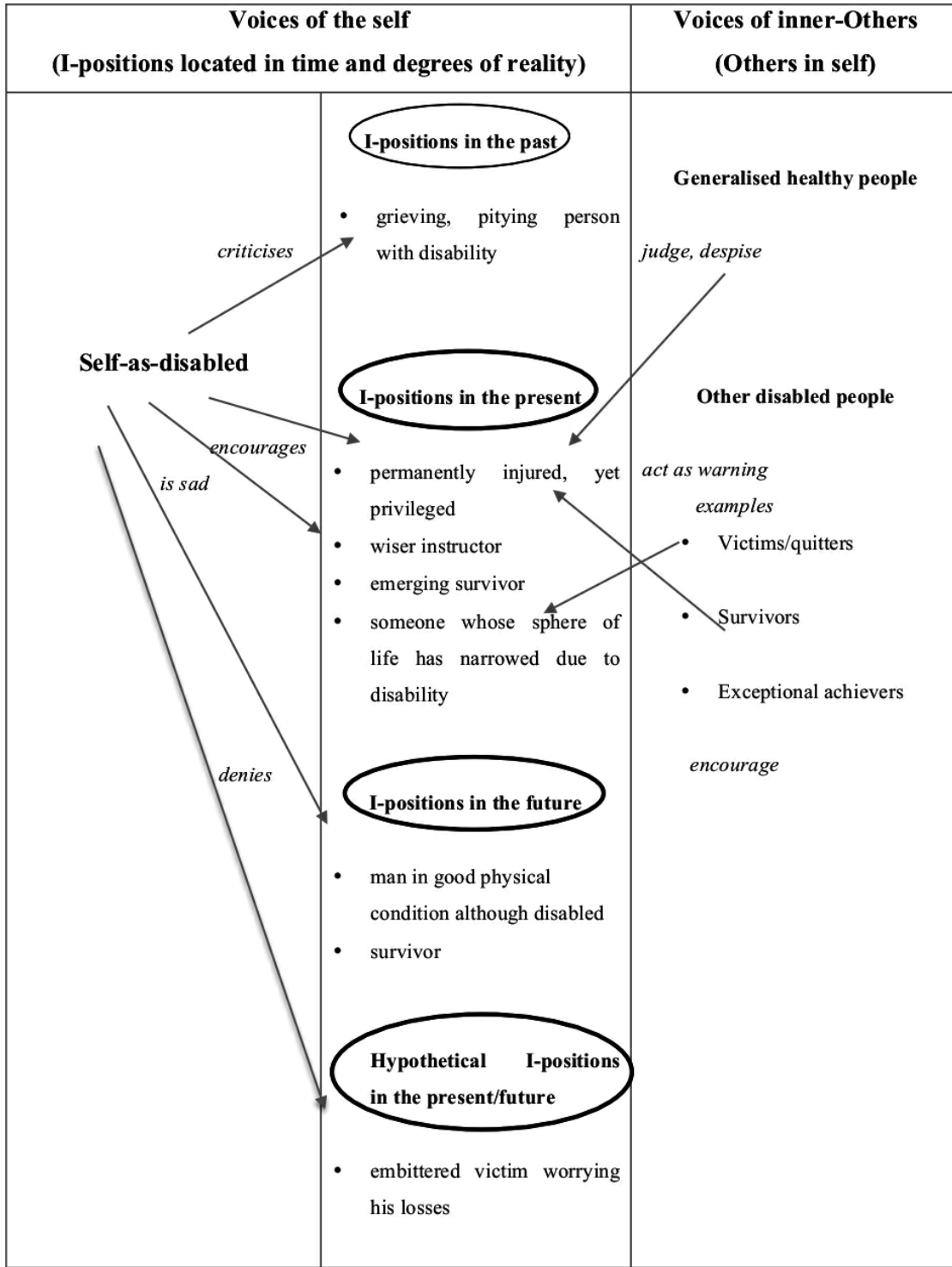
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Appendix 1: *Ismo's dialogical meaning making in the perspective of 'Self-as-disabled'*

Voices of the self (I-positions located in time and degrees of reality)	Voices of inner-Others (Others in self)

Self-as-disabled

criticises
encourages
is sad
denies

I-positions in the past

- grieving, pitying person with disability

I-positions in the present

- permanently injured, yet privileged
- wiser instructor
- emerging survivor
- someone whose sphere of life has narrowed due to disability

I-positions in the future

- man in good physical condition although disabled
- survivor

Hypothetical I-positions in the present/future

- embittered victim worrying his losses

Generalised healthy people

judge, despise

Other disabled people

act as warning examples

- Victims/quitters
- Survivors
- Exceptional achievers

encourage

Appendix 2: *Ismo's dialogical meaning making in the perspective of 'Self-without-disability'*

Voices of the self (I-positions located in time and degrees of reality)		Voices of inner-Others (Others in self)
	I-positions in the past	
feels empathy	• persistent fighter, lifelong survivor • naive and foolish, intolerant person	
criticises	**Hypothetical I-positions in the past**	**Mother** *'there's no point in crying over spilled milk'*
Self-without-disability		*encourages, gives warnings*
is sad	• someone who don't have proper education • factory worker • academically educated expert working abroad	
experiences gratitude, is proud of himself	**I-positions in the present**	**Men working in the factory** *doubt, laugh, make a mockery*
feels confident	• developing, grown and broad-minded person • lifelong survivor • family man • academically educated expert	
	I-positions in the future	
	• expert who is able to work • man in good physical condition • survivor	