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The Netherlands

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**LOOKING AT “MEANING AS MOVEMENT” IN DEVELOPMENT:
INTRODUCTORY REFLECTIONS ON THE DEVELOPMENTAL ORIGINS
OF THE DIALOGICAL SELF**

Marie-Cécile Bertau
Universität München, Germany

Miguel Gonçalves
University of Minho, Portugal

ABSTRACT. Introducing the articles of the second issue of the *IJDS*, this article first sketches the notion of the Dialogical Self (DS) and then turns to the challenging question of conceiving and investigating DS regarding its developmental origins, be it ontogenetically in observing caregiver-infant exchanges or microgenetically in studies tracing actual changes in the dynamic “landscape of the self”. A second, more implicit challenge is identified at the level of the basic concepts: dialogicality and dialogues, insofar as these have to be thought of in regard to development. Dialogicality turns out to be central, and as working definition the authors propose to see dialogicality as a potency, meaning an expectation of the other's addressivity to oneself. The relationships between dialogicality and language are briefly explored: given dialogicality as potency, language is a complex, semiotized form of realized dialogicality.

Keywords: dialogue, dialogicality, dialogical self, language

As invited editors we are very pleased to present this second issue devoted to the developmental origins of the dialogical self (DS). In the spirit of dialogicality and of the interdisciplinarity of the journal it was our explicit intention to invite contributors from “within” as well as from “without” the DS Theory - as it articulates itself in its conferences taking place every other year. The exchange of perspectives and the discussion of different readings of similar phenomena is not only enriching for DS Theory in itself but also as an opening of this theory to other views. Thus, possibly confronted with other readings and interpretations, DS Theory gains the possibility to develop itself in an open and truly dialogical way. As editors with the privilege of reading and commenting on the contributions and thus *dialoguizing* with all persons writing for this issue, we have to admit that we were the first ones to reap the dialogical fruits: each contribution is the result of extensive dialogues. For that, we have to thank all contributors for their willingness and patience to engage in these dialogues. It is our hope that the outcome, not least due to the commentaries given to each article, will read

AUTHORS' NOTE. The authors are very grateful to Peter Raggatt for helping revise the articles of a number of the non-English speakers and improving the writing of these papers. Please address correspondence regarding this article to either author: (a) Marie-Cécile Bertau, Institut für Psycholinguistik, Universität München, Oettingenstraße 67, D-80538 München. Email: bertau@psycholinguistik.uni-muenchen.de (b) Miguel Gonçalves, Department of Psychology, 4710 Braga, Portugal. Email: mgoncalves@iep.uminho.pt

as a reflection of these dialogical movements – clearly positioned and nonetheless open to further discussions.

The Dialogical Self

The notion of the DS was first proposed by Hermans and colleagues (Hermans, Kempen, & van Loon, 1992; Hermans & Kempen, 1993; Hermans, 1996, 2001). It builds from two contributions: the self psychology of William James (1902) and George Herbert Mead (1934), and the dialogical view of language proposed by Mikhail Bakhtin (1986). The DS notion starts with a conception of the self as multifaceted, but more important multivoiced and dialogical. The polyphonic novel from Bakhtin (1984) was the metaphor for this view of the self: a novel where there is “plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices ... What unfolds in his novels [Dostoevsky’s novels] is not a multitude of characters and fates in a single objective world, illuminated by a single authorial consciousness; rather a plurality of consciousnesses, with equal rights and each with his own world, combine but are not merged in the unity of the events he depicts” (Bakhtin, 1984, p.6). The dialogicality of the self is defined in terms of a dynamic multiplicity of I-positions which can be endowed with a voice in the landscape of the mind. Positions are thought to be internal as well as external (belonging to the extended domain of the self such as my wife, my colleagues, my enemy); dialogues may take place among internal positions, between internal and external and between external positions (see Hermans & Dimaggio, 2007, for new applications of the theory in the globalized reality). In this, the linguistic basis of self-understanding is recognized, and in relating the concept of the DS to Bakhtin's concept of language, Hermans and Kempen, 1993 highlight the dialogical quality of the *forms* that self-understanding is taking. The dialogical form is then thought to characterize the dynamics of selfhood.

This dynamic perspective on selfhood has proven itself to be one of the most promising ways to surpass the old static conceptions of self which viewed the self as a monadic structure capable of relating with other monadic structures (Sampson, 1993), but still each independent from the other. The reality of the individual self was, in this sense, different from the reality of relationships. DS Theory brings relations and interaction patterns to the core of the self. Self and others are two faces of the same coin: the self only exists as it relates to other selves, whom exist as they relate to other selves, and so on. The “self-concept” is thus also defined by the matrix of relationships in which the person is involved: the reality of the self *is* the reality of relationships. This brings to the core of the self a reality dominated by relational and dynamic processes. Between different I-positions (internal and external) relationships marked by tension, agreement, disagreement and conflict are happening incessantly and the meaning-making activities result precisely from these dynamic relations, both at level of interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships. Thus, understanding how these dynamic

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relations occur and what rules are governing their development is an important theoretical problem that needs to be addressed.

The Development of the Dialogical Self

By its dynamic nature, this perspective on the self, poses a considerable challenge: we do not only have a new vocabulary to describe self processes (e.g., I-positions; dialogical relations) but, more importantly, we need to develop tools to study its dynamicity (see Valsiner, 2006). This brings us necessarily to the field of development, be it in terms of ontogenesis or of microgenesis. Undoubtedly, one of the most challenging questions for DS Theory at present is how to conceive and investigate the origins of the DS: how to retrace the ontogenetical becoming of the complex dynamical landscape of self (i.e. ontogenetic research). This reconstruction is fruitfully supplemented by studies that track the dynamical transformations in an already formed self (i.e. micro-genetic research). Both perspectives need a moment-by-moment observation of formation and transformation processes in order to account for identity formation and psychological change. Taking both of these perspectives into consideration corresponds to a view of development as a process going beyond the formative years and happening throughout the life-span; moreover, development reaches into the next generation: “development encompasses the entire manifold of the life course, from conception to death, and into the next generation. Children become parents in their own time, and novelties introduced in one generation can become traditions of the next.” (The Carolina Consortium on Human Development, 1996, p. 5). This statement points to the socio-cultural situatedness of any development, to its historicity as well as its cultural and individual (family) dimensions.

It is in this perspective that the present special issue addresses the question of origins. Thus, the investigations by *Maria Lyra* and by *Andrea Garvey and Alan Fogel* focus on the ontogenesis of self, observing dialogical patterns between infants and caregivers. One important challenge addressed by these studies is how to research the developmental processes of the DS prior to the development of language and how this pre-verbal self is already founded in dialogicality, structuring the way for patterns of dialogical movements in future development. This is one of the issues taken up in the commentaries on these contributions. Thus, *Dankert Vedeler* discusses in his comment on Garvey and Fogel the acquisition of the concept of dialogue in the relational-historical approach to the development of emotion and self (according to Fogel, 2001). *Chris Sinha*, acknowledging in his comment Lyra's methodological innovation and her careful analysis, insists nevertheless on the important distinction between the precursors of the semiotic function and its earliest manifestations.

Seeking origins is asking for development and its conditions, its significant moments. It is of course also asking for causality, although in a very prudent way – especially in the case of disturbances in the development of the DS as addressed by

Filippo Muratori and Sandra Maestro in their article devoted to autism, interpreted by the authors in the context of deficits in primary intersubjectivity. The commentaries on this article by both *John Barresi* and *Livia Colle and Elisa Grandi* refute the (sole) psychosocial explanation related to founding intersubjectivity and refer to neurologically based processing deficits, resulting in the failure to engage in intersubjective activities.

These ontogenetically oriented investigations are followed by three theoretical contributions. Thus, *Marie-Cécile Bertau* is concerned with the notion of voice as a central one to DS Theory. Taking an ontogenetical perspective on this concept, Bertau offers a model of how the experienced voice of a significant other becomes the foundation of inner positions, whereby the process of interiorization is central. *Per Linell* focuses in his comment on Bertau, three dimensions of voice – material embodiment of utterances, personal signature, and perspectives on topics – and ends up asking several questions concerning the relationship between internal and external voice usages. The discourse related to the very concept of internalization is critically discussed by *Noah Susswein, Maximilian Bibok and Jeremy Carpendale* who refute the way internalization as a concept has been used in our theoretical constructions, suggesting instead the concept of “mastery” to account for the relation between social and psychological phenomena in development: children have to succeed in mastering the selection pressures in their social environment. Such mastery involves “following routines, obeying rules, observing social etiquette, coming to agreement and disagreeing, etc.” (Susswein et al., this issue, p. 194). Cognitive development in ontogenesis is seen in parallel to evolutionary environments which select a valid mutation; thus, the authors finally argue that the mind is not dialogical in itself, rather, its makeup is defined and constructed in a context defined by selection pressures of social interaction. *Jaan Valsiner*, in his comment on Susswein and colleagues, offers an alternative reading with a model of interiorization called “laminal model of internalization/externalization”. Both contributions and their respective views on internalization are finally picked up by *Michael Bamberg and Barbara Zielke* in addressing the question of where to look in developmental inquiries. In her comment on this contribution, *Gabriele Lucius-Hoene* points to the concept of dialogicality and questions its empirical status, highlighting an important issue: is the dialogical self a generative metaphor or *the* reality of the self? Arguing for the study of “everyday [dialogical] practices where a sense of self is continuously under construction” (p. 239), Bamberg and Zielke offer a bridge to the closing contributions concerned with dialogues between adults.

The microgenetically oriented investigations by *Filipa Duarte and Miguel Gonçalves* as well as by *Carla Cunha* are concerned with the dynamics of change observable not in everyday discourse but in *provoked* dialogues between researchers and participants. To take this procedure and its consequences into consideration is in

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our opinion one of the most important question DS theory should reflect on, a window opened by *Livia Simão* in her comment on Duarte and Gonçalves. In short, the question is asked what kinds of effects on the dialogicality of the self, on its dialogical configuration, will result from the explicit invitation to engage a dialogue with a listener about self positions this listener assumes to be in a dialogue. Eventually, it is to ask about the formative role of language for the self. These microgenetic investigations show in an impressive way the processes by which new positions and voices are balanced or unbalanced with the familiar ones, sometimes creating stability and at other times allowing changes, be it temporary or more permanent.

Conceptual Clarifications: Dialogicality and Dialogism

A second and perhaps more implicit challenge present in this issue concerns the basic notions different scholars and researchers are using: dialogues and dialogicality has to be conceived in a developmental perspective. Overlooking the contributions, it becomes obvious that the notion of dialogicality is implicitly at the center of discussion. Dialogues - as well as dialogical patterns - gain their theoretical and methodological status from there. In what follows we propose first a definition of dialogicality from which dialogues and dialogism will derive, and then proceed to the developmental perspective on dialogicality as the core notion.

Before developing the specific understanding of dialogicality here proposed, it should be underlined that there exists within the field of dialogical science different directions of theorizing, and thus different conceptions of dialogicality. This is not only because this field is highly interdisciplinary, bringing together quite different perspectives on human beings, but also because of its relative newness. The reformulation of basic psychological notions and theories in terms of a dialogic and semiotic framework is in no way achieved¹, and the reformulations are themselves evolving – not the least through vivid discussions.

As an illustration, two approaches may be pointed at briefly, the second one reflecting a quite different position to the one we are embracing here. First, Lewis (2002) suggests a “neurally realistic model of the dialogical self” and postulates different mental states, ranging from “vague, gist-like sensations to articulated words or phrases” and thus different in degrees of articulation at which “motor (speaking) and perceptual (hearing) events are taking place” (2002, p.179). Lewis assumes a kind of basic dialogical attitude which may be unfolded, but may also remain global and unspecified, un-articulated in terms of positions and thus not manifest as dialogues.² This dialogical attitude develops itself into genuine dialogues when problems are encountered – Lewis' example is a woman miscooking her rice. A similar situation,

1 See Sinha (this issue) in regard to “a recasting of classical genetic epistemology”.

2 A more detailed discussion of Lewis' approach is to be found in Bertau (2004).

requiring problem-solving skills, can be seen in participants solving the Raven's test (Bertau, 1999). But going further, to another kind of problem, namely facing situations of danger, one may ask if the basic dialogical attitude is still functioning. Dimaggio and Hermans (submitted), in dealing precisely with these kinds of situations, and, more generally, with short-term emotional reactions, reject any dialogicality in these reactions. Emotions can be for these authors a form of appraisal, involving peculiar action readiness modes, for example flight in the case of fear; thus, emotions do not necessarily imply another position to whom the self may talk.

Two questions derive from these – far too brief – sketches. First, to what degree of explicitness do dialogues have to be manifested before we may assume dialogicality? Related to this: Is a manifestation in dialogues required at all? Second, does dialogicality of the self (the starting model) apply equally to all and every psychological process? The conceptual clarification we propose can not answer these questions but may open the way to discuss dialogicality as a core concept. It is in this sense that the following suggestions are made.

In terms of a proposed definition, dialogicality means that human expressions are in interrelationships with other's expressions: any single expression, such as a spoken utterance, a written text, a thought (even if not yet exteriorized) is a reply to other's utterances, texts or ideas. In this sense, dialogicality refers to a property that is essential in all human meaning-making processes. Thus, it underlies and determines all psychological and communicative structures and processes. Linell (in preparation) goes beyond the level of expression and addresses the human condition: “The term dialogicality (...) refers to some essence of the human condition, notably that our being in the world is thoughtfully interdependent with the existence of others.”

Extending this view on dialogicality as belonging to human expression, one may also assume certain *artifacts* to be dialogical. Insofar as some objects are ascribed dialogical properties (Salgado & Gonçalves, 2007) they become “dialogical objects” (Bertau, 2007); to the extent that some objects in our culture invite self-dialogue, one may include “objects that foster self-world differentiation” (Morin, 2005, p.116), such as mirrors, photographs of the self, and written material. Dialogicality in these artifacts will be a result of the above mentioned dialogicality of communication-cognition processes, objectified in external entities as well as in the activities involving them (e.g., writing). The most prominent dialogical artifact is language. But this artifact is different from the other ones in that we are *living in it*; it is only thanks to a specific kind of abstraction (literalization) that we can think of it as distant from us, as an object. The dialogicality of language is not due to an attribution process, as is the case for the other

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dialogical artifacts. Rather, it is the human condition itself, as proposed by Linell (in preparation), that constrains the dialogicality of language.³

This description makes it clear that dialogicality is itself founded on a certain *ethos* – a totality of attitudes, of patterns of actions and judgments belonging to a historically concrete life form, and this ethos is comprised in what is called “dialogism”.⁴ With Linell, dialogism is a comprehensive term for a bundle of “theoretical and epistemological assumptions about human action, communication and cognition” (Linell, in preparation, p. 2). This analytical perspective, takes actions and interactions in their contexts as basic analytical units (Linell, 1998, p.7). Every form of human life and every human process of knowing are thought to be basically relational (Salgado & Gonçalves, 2007). Thus, dialogism is committed to a relational perspective on the individual in contrast to viewing the individual as autonomous, *sometimes* entering social relations, *sometimes* undertaking dialogues, *sometimes* positioning itself towards an Alter. For dialogism, dialogicality is inescapable, thus, dialogues (and dialogical patterns) will be the form of the individual's symbolic expression, and dialogues (internal and external) will be the place where meaning is made.⁵ This understanding of dialogism emphasizes especially the linguistic, communicative and cognitive construction involved in the “dialogical appropriation and recognition” of the world (Linell, in preparation, p. 8).

It should be emphasized that dialogism refers to a meta-level. It is a theoretical position leading to certain consequences; it is not an ontological category like dialogue, dialogical patterns, and even dialogicality which is assumed to exist somehow in human beings. Of course, dialogues and dialogical patterns are most obviously ontological; dialogicality is a construct, but assumed to be real, to have ontological status. Dialogism is a paradigm, a set of assumptions determining any concept and investigation in a given domain (psychology, linguistics, philosophy).

Through dialogism, we (scientists) interpret human expressions as determined by dialogicality, and as thus dialogical – no matter what their actual form looks like: this can even be monological. Illustrating this, we may point to the therapist's work confronted with a rather monological expression but simultaneously perceiving the dialogicality of the processes leading to this expression. In this vein, several family therapists propose interview strategies to keep the conversation dialogical (see Andersen, 1991; Anderson, 1997; Seikkula & Trimble, 2005), equating in a sense

3 Thus, written material as well as the writing process itself should be theoretically and empirically treated in a different way.

4 See Elm (2002) for the term “ethos”, and Schürmann (in press) for a discussion of this ethical foundation.

5 Especially with this formulation one can state a deep contrast to Dimaggio and Hermans' (submitted) position, as sketched above.

monological relations between persons with dysfunction. For instance, if we have a family where the same views (and accusations) are repeated over and over again, the therapist will make an effort to allow novelty and diversity to emerge, allowing different voices to be heard. Notice that the monological outcome of the family relationship pattern involves dialogicality if we look at the level of the process of communication and even at the level of (individual) cognition of the members of a family. By repeating over and over the same view (monological outcome), other voices are neglected and avoided (dialogical process). The therapist needs to pay attention to the dynamic of the system to allow these marginalized voices to be heard, creating in this way a new tolerance for difference and ambiguity, given the multiplicity that arises with the transformation. The emergence of a monological output is tracked dialogically by microgenetic analysis. This is what Valsiner (2004) termed hidden dialogism, which means that dialogicality is present even in the more monological presentation. Cunha's article (this issue) illustrates well this complexity, in which dialogical processes could lead to monological expression. Confirming and deepening this aspect, *William Stiles'* comment shows how the methodological tools Cunha developed to study these processes can be enriched by the assimilation model and also, in turn, fruitfully enrich this model.

How Does Dialogicality Arise in Ontogenetic Development?

Taking the developmental perspective, the question is: does dialogicality *exist from the start*, allowing for the emergence of the self, for emotional development and for the dialogical patterns one can infer when studying relationships and the self? Or is dialogicality *developed through social others and their dialogues*? The answer to these questions can be given in distinguishing two pole positions.⁶ In the first position, dialogicality is seen as innate, given, and thus located in the individual. Bråten's (1988) concept of the “inborn virtual other” seems to go in this direction as well as Trevarthen's “inborn primary intersubjectivity”, often referred to by this author and also to be found in the comment by *Maya Gratier and Colwyn Trevarthen* on Bertau (this issue); *Dankert Vedeler's* comment on Garvey and Fogel (this issue), too, takes explicitly the “no blank state-position” and aligns itself to inborn primary intersubjectivity. Dialogues seem here to have a triggering function for the unfolding of dialogicality.

6 Innateness or acquisition? How can the relationship of learning and development be conceived? These questions correspond to an extensive and complex discussion in psychology, also related to the issue of how nature and culture are brought together in humans. We cannot address these issues here; important ideas are found in Baldwin and Vygotsky (van der Veer & Valsiner, 1991; Vygotsky, 1978) and in subsequent cultural psychology as formulated e.g. by Cole (1996). Bruner's (1983) approach viewing humans as, so to speak, biologically determined to live in culture is an effort to overcome the nature-culture dualism.

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The second position would precisely start with a completely blank newborn by whom dialogicality is to be fully acquired through socialization processes. Thus, dialogicality would be located solely in social practices and interactions; and, of course, dialogues are necessary practices, a necessary condition for the development of dialogicality.

Acknowledging the tricky formulation “existing from the start”, one may ask: from which start? Birth or conception? The biological or the imaginative-psychological conception, i.e. conceptualization? This leads to a smoother position situated in the middle of the above poles – a position we privilege. Following this, dialogicality exists from the beginning of life, and even before, since people make meaning about the baby's life; dialogicality would not exist nor develop without concrete social others oriented towards the becoming person. Thus, dialogicality is seen as a *potency*, meaning an expectation of the other's addressivity to oneself; an orientation towards the other *and* towards his/her orientation to oneself – even if this “self” is not yet developed.

This potency is developed by the newborn in the course of her interactions with significant others, not least through the acquisition of dialogical practices – dialogues are thus central to potency's realization. In this position, dialogicality is located in the individual as well as in interactions with others. As the interactants live in a historical and cultural world, these interactions construct a dialogical world – a world existing in and through exchanges with an address-reply structure. Thus, the interactions are dialogical practices with different forms: preverbal, verbal and nonverbal, and can exist in actual social spaces as well as in imaginative personal ones. Finally, the practices will always transport a sedimented, over-individualized dialogicality (see Bakhtin's, 1984 and 1986 reflection on the fact that utterances are used and re-used in the act of speech). This sedimented dialogicality and actual dialogical practices are shaping each other in a dialectical process, allowing for the cultural development of dialogicality.

Describing the development of dialogicality in this way leads inevitably to see language and dialogicality as deeply related. With Humboldt, language is to be understood with regard to address and reply (*Anrede – Erwiderung*, Humboldt 1827/1994). Assuming dialogicality as potency, language is a complex, semioticized form of *realized* dialogicality. In giving dialogicality a form, language shows itself as a formative and generative power: it does more than propose a vestige of an independently developed dialogical entity (e.g., a position of self). As itself dialogical, it develops dialogicality into specific forms. Different cultures with different languages and with different ways of relating subjects to each other account for this specificity. An illustration may be found in the ways cultures allow or suppress self-imaginings as found in the imaginative role play of children, with its specific usage of language (Carlson, Taylor & Levin, 1998); this play form is related to a certain kind of language use, of dialogues, and of plays with positions and voices. As a practice, “being other

people” pretence (Lillard, 2001) may be seen as a precursor activity to the self-practices and processes assumed to take place within the DS.

Thus, culturally shaped dialogicality corresponding to language forms will give rise to differently lived and experienced processes in the DS (types of dialogues, of positions, of voices). Acquiring language can then be seen as accomplishing a qualitative jump in regard to dialogicality: with verbal language, dialogicality is realized in a different way, giving rise to such complex processes as self-awareness and consciousness. Concluding, we would state that language – as spoken and written language or discourse – is a central locus of dialogical development: concerning self and identity, emotions, mind, consciousness.

Less abstract and less complex forms of realized dialogicality are what we like to call dialogical patterns, developing in to real dialogues. Thus, we define dialogues with Linell (1998) as “any dyadic or polyadic interaction between individuals who are mutually co-present to each other and who interact through language (or other symbolic means)” (p.9). That is: referring to actual and mainly verbal dialogues.⁷ The prototype is verbal exchanges between adults in face-to-face situations. In dialogical patterns individuals are also co-present, but they are interacting with language only to some extent; they also interact with paraverbal means, vocalizations, gaze, bodily postures and gestures. The presence of these paraverbal means are prototypical for exchanges between caregiver and infant. From these dialogical patterns the infant will come closer and closer to verbal dialogues (e.g., Bruner, 1983). The notion of *form* is especially important to dialogical patterns, sometimes captured with the notion of frame (Bruner, 1983). The contributions by Lyra, Garvey and Fogel (this issue) address these preverbal dialogical patterns, showing problems and possibilities of the empirical identification, location and description of those fluctuating, extremely time-bound patterns.

We hope that the contributions grouped in this issue will inspire more discussion, theoretical reflection and empirical studies into this fascinating topic, which implies studying a reality that is changing, sometimes dramatically, while we are making efforts to study it and in a sense fixating it with our rather limited (dynamic) concepts and tools. We believe this is the major challenge to the development of this field.

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7 “Mainly verbal” given the characteristic of dialogues to have the possibility of being abbreviated. In these abbreviations, the linguistic factor will be shortened, fragmented, and allusions will suffice (see Jakubinskij 1923/2004).

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ON ABBREVIATION: DIALOGUE IN EARLY LIFE

Maria C. D. P. Lyra
Federal University of Pernambuco, Brazil

ABSTRACT. The development process of the mother-infant communication system is described as historical systems of relationships allowing for the emergence of self-organization patterns of this system. Three organizational patterns are proposed: establishment, extension and abbreviation. Each corresponds to typical manners of dialoguing. I will concentrate on the analysis of abbreviation, with the aim of inferring a concomitant dyadic achievement: (1) the emergence of a new space, broader than the immediate space of the actual partners' actions and (2) the infant's differentiation of his/her own position in the dialogue. Three interrelated characteristics of abbreviation contribute toward the present analysis: decreased duration and turn-takings, increased variability of abbreviated exchanges and the progressive inclusion of new partners' actions in abbreviated dialogues. The dyad abbreviates the dialogical exchanges in flexible and innovative ways, thereby suggesting that the infant learned a totality regarding the relationship, and not a point-by-point contingency of actions. It is my contention that abbreviated dialogues require mutual knowledge in which an emergent new space allows for the infant's differentiation of his/her own position in the dialogue.

Keywords: dialogue in infancy, communication development, self-organizing patterns, abbreviation, infant's positioning differentiation

This paper examines the construction process of the early mother-infant communication development as composing three patterns of organization achieved through this historical process that allows for the identification of the emergence of the self. The third pattern in particular, which I have called *abbreviation*, exhibits a type of dialogical exchange that, mainly through the analysis of the quality of the dyadic mutual knowledge, allows one to infer the emergence of a new functioning space, which I call "virtual space or reality". In this new space, the infant exhibits a process of differentiation of his/her own position in the dialogue.

My argument develops along the line of conceiving the *communication process* as constitutive of an interrelated achievement, the differentiation of the infant's position in the dialogue and the seeds of a symbolic functioning as the *locus* of emergence of the

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infant's self. Regarding the fundamental role of the communication process for the emergence of a symbolic functioning as a necessary condition for the constitution of the human subject, I am aligned with the classical and current socio-constructivist thinkers, such as Bruner (1990), Hermans (1996), Marková (2003), Mead (1934), Valsiner (2001, 2006) and Vygotsky (1986). Focusing on the emergence and development of the self, I am particularly relying on the *dialogical perspective of Mikhail Bakhtin* (1986, 1993). However, based on *dynamic systems thinking* (e.g., Thelen & Smith, 1994), I am proposing an analysis of the development of the communication process as a *self-organized system*, which progressively exhibits *patterns of organization* that demonstrate different characteristics of a mutually constructed, dialogical, shared understanding and knowledge. Through the analysis of the *history of the dyadic shared knowledge* exhibited in the successively constructed patterns of organization of the communication process, the emergence and differentiation of the self can be traced and identified. The careful examination of the characteristics of mother-infant dialogues, especially abbreviated dialogues, as I will suggest later in this paper, is the basis for inferring the emergence and differentiation of the self and the seeds of a symbolic functioning space.

Starting with a short discussion connecting the communication process and the self in infancy, I present dynamic systems principles that are relevant to our understanding of the communication process as a self-organizing system, followed by a presentation of Bakhtin's contributions toward conceptualizing selfhood as a dialogical enterprise. I then introduce abbreviation as a typical pattern of organization achieved through the communication process, discussing the characteristics of the abbreviated dialogues. Lastly, I present and discuss a microgenetic analysis of mother-infant dialogical exchanges in order to support the above arguments.

The Communication Process and the Self in Infancy

The conception that the communication process is the *locus* of the emergence of the self has been proposed by a number of theoreticians and developmental researchers, who adopt different positions regarding the role of semiotic functioning as a condition for the emergence of the self.

Particularly committed to the study of the self in infancy, we find a number of scholars who, in relying on the analysis of the communication process, investigate selfhood as emerging from the mutuality already present at birth and posterior differentiation constructed between partners in dialogue (Bråten, 1998; Fogel, 1993; Trevarthen, 1998; Tomasello, 1999). Anchored in emotional development in the context of communicative exchanges (Fogel et al, 1992; Pantoja, Nelson-Goens, & Fogel 2001) or the analysis of integrative cross-modal sensory information in infants (Rochat, 2003), these scholars highlight the path of the emergence and development of the infant's self before any characteristic of symbolic functioning is required. Such lines of research can

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be traced to Butterworth's findings on an *ecological self* (Butterworth, 1995), also identified by infancy researchers as the study of a *situated self*.

Understanding the partner's intention to communicate seems to be the first step recognized in the literature as demonstrating the infant's functioning in such a way that it is possible to infer that the infant recognizes the partner's role as separated from him/herself in the dialogue; this supposes a functioning space in which the infant can distinguish the partner's intention to communicate from what is communicated by him/her. The age range attributed to this achievement is the nine-month-old turning point (Rochat, 2003; Tomasello, 1999). This is the time of emergence of secondary intersubjectivity, according to Trevarthen and Hubley (1978). The infant's capacity to distinguish the partner's intention to communicate from what is communicated by him/her requires a functioning space. I am proposing that this functioning space exhibits the seeds of a symbolic or semiotic capacity as a necessary condition for the infant's distinguishing these two aspects of communication. However, from what previous achievements does this capacity historically come?

The dialogue between the line of research that examines selfhood as an ecological self, and the line of reasoning that requires functioning in a symbolic space for the existence of selves, appears to be a fruitful task. I am proposing that the analysis of abbreviated dialogues can shed some light on this topic, becoming a bridge between these two lines of research. Moreover, in tracing the historical development of abbreviated dialogues, some light can be shed on the origins of the nine-month turning point.

I turn now to the discussion on the dynamic systems perspective followed by the dialogical perspective, particularly in the work of Mikhail Bakhtin, highlighting the relevance of these two approaches for the present work.

Dynamic Systems Perspective: Establishment, Extension and Abbreviation

Communication development can be conceived as a dynamic process of change that allows the joining together of partners' actions into dynamically stable organizational patterns of dialogical exchanges. These patterns are recognizable on the macro developmental level of analysis as corresponding to three organizational patterns, *establishment*, *extension* and *abbreviation* (Lyra, 1999b, in press; Lyra & Rossetti-Ferreira, 1995; Lyra & Souza, 2003; Lyra & Winegar, 1997). Each pattern corresponds to characteristic forms of dialogue that describe the initiation, continuity and termination of the dialogical event of partners' exchanges.

The importance of the dynamic systems perspective rests on offering conceptual heuristic tools for analyzing and understanding the process of change and the emergence of new developmental achievements from a historical system of relationships. The principle of self-organization and integration in the same conceptual

framework of both characteristics of development, stability and change, are relevant principles to dynamic systems thinking (Fogel, 1993; Fogel, Lyra & Valsiner, 1997; Lewis, 2000; Thelen & Smith, 1994; van Geert, 2003). Together with these two ideas, the emphasis of dynamic systems on the constant connection between a microgenetic and macrogenetic time-scale analysis allows us to address the process of transformation on a real-time scale and the corresponding dynamically stable patterns of organization on the macro level or developmental level (Thelen & Ulrich, 1991; van Geert, 2003).

The system under scrutiny in this paper is composed of partners' actions – those of a mother and her infant – as these actions co-regulate throughout historical time¹. In order to capture the movement of mutual co-regulation and coordination of partners' actions, I have introduced a methodological tool that I call *dialogical highlighting dynamics* (DHD) (Lyra, 1998). Applied to microgenetic analysis, the method allows the researcher to identify actions that are distinguished by the partners in order to initiate, maintain and terminate the dialogical event of exchanges. Thus, DHD helps select actions that are negotiated as well as to determine the beginning and end limits of a dialogue event.

DHD preserves the relational character of all dialogue. It proposes that dialogical exchanges occur through highlighting and, therefore, differentiating the partner's actions. Using an analogy with perceptual phenomena related to the “figure-background” gestalt idea, DHD conceives some partner actions (or at least one action) as working as a “figure” against a “background” of other possible actions that form the constantly changing flow of the dyadic actions. Thus, this process, which is conceived as also functioning for the partners, leads to the stabilization of the dyadic flow of actions and permits the partners to negotiate their actions in order to construct a mutual understanding. For research, it allows distinguishing what actions are the objects of negotiation between the partners.

The concepts of *establishment*, *extension* and *abbreviation* are based on these constructive and differentiated historical characteristics of DHD. Therefore, the observer can identify developmental achievements even when considering the constantly changing movement of dyadic exchanges; they represent periods of quasi-stability of the dynamic patterns of organization in mother-infant communication development.

Considering such ideas, establishment, extension and abbreviation can be defined as exhibiting the following characteristics.

Establishment; throughout successive or concomitant partner negotiations, at least one element (partner action) that composes dyadic exchanges is constructed as

¹ An examination of the socio-cultural dynamic systems approach proposed by Nelson and Fivush, (2004) to analyze autobiographic memory, particularly regarding self emergence, deserves a further and extended exploration considering the age range and the system under scrutiny focalized in this paper.

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shared dyadic knowledge. For example, we have the mutual gaze between partners (in face-to-face exchanges – FF) or joint attention towards an object (in mother-object-baby exchanges - MOB).

Extension; the previously established shared dyadic mutual understanding or knowledge serves as a “background” against which the dyad can negotiate new elements (partner actions) and elaborate extended exchanges, such as “figures”. Considering the mutual gaze as shared knowledge, the dyad can exchange smiles, vocalizations, etc, in an extended way, for example, considering FF exchanges. Another example is a dyad that has previously established joint attention towards an object as shared knowledge; it can then negotiate arm and hand movements towards the object, composing extended exchanges of many turn-takings (MOB exchanges).

Abbreviation; this new organizational pattern of dyadic negotiation is defined by exchanges of short duration with a typical partner adjustment, which is quickly, easily and smoothly performed in a small number of turn-takings. The elements of dyadic exchanges, extensively negotiated and elaborated during the period of extension, now appear in an abbreviated or condensed fashion. Regarding face-to-face dialogues, the dyad can simply exchange a mutual gaze or mutual gaze together with some previously negotiated and shared elements (smiles, vocalizations, etc). Another example is the swift, easy and smooth adjustment of the shared joint attention of the dyad towards an object, followed by the mother offering the object to the infant and the infant grasping and holding it immediately (MOB exchanges).

Considering the characteristics of *immediacy* to initiate the dyadic exchanges, the *quantity of turn-takings* of these exchanges and the *smoothness* of the partner adjustments, establishment, extension and abbreviation present the following configuration (Lyra & Souza, 2003).

Establishment: the exchanges are neither immediately established nor smoothly adjusted and are characterized by a small quantity of turn-takings between the partners.

Extension: the exchanges become immediately initiated and the mutual adjustment of partners grows throughout the extension period; these exchanges have an especially long duration with a great quantity of turn-takings between partners.

Abbreviation: the exchanges are immediately initiated, smoothly adjusted and exhibit a short duration corresponding to a small quantity of turn-takings between partners.

To sum up, based on the conceptual and methodological thinking from the dynamic systems perspective, I can describe the process of mother-infant communication development as a sequence of dynamically organized patterns that allow identification of historically constructed mutual understanding and knowledge between the partners over time.

Dialogical Perspective

I assume an ontological and epistemological dialogical perspective, anchored in the idea that the self emerges and exists as a *simultaneity of different positions* (Bakhtin, 1986). The simultaneity of the self relies on the interdependence of partners in dialogue. However, this interdependence also includes another requisite that states that each partner occupies a *unique place* or position within the interdependent dialogue (Bakhtin, 1986, 1993). The unique place in the world occupied by a unique person is used by the subject to “write” the autobiography of his/her life. This autobiography is written by each individual in the function of *author* of his/her life (Bakhtin, 1986). According to Bakhtin, the condition of being the author of one’s own life is the only possible way to exist. The absence of authorship makes it impossible for dialogue to be conceived as a constructive and creative enterprise.

Bakhtin's notion that states that there is only one unique place with respect to both time and space that a subject occupies in the world is linked to the characteristic of *answerability* (or responsiveness) of this subject (Bakhtin, 1986, 1993). From the unique place the individual occupies there is another requirement for existence, namely, the inescapable necessity to respond to the world, the answerability character of all selves. Bakhtin would say that “there is no alibi” for us, because answering to the world is not a choice, but a condition of existence (Bakhtin, *Estetika*, p.179, in Holquist, 1990, p. 29). This world to which we respond is a world of otherness, a world of selves. As a consequence, dialogue is absolutely pervasive. In other words, the world of dialogue, which is characteristic of the human species, is a social world of selves-in-dialogue. It is from the above-described conception that the dialogical perspective – or, to put it better, dialogism (Holquist, 1990) – is applied in the present work.

It is my contention that the uniqueness and answerability of the self’s condition, authoring his/her simultaneity of different positions, requires the emergence and existence of a dimension or space that allows the subject to function in a dynamic, flexible manner, using past history and projecting the present towards the future. For Bakhtin (1986, 1993), this is the symbolic space in which language works; therefore, it requires a symbolic capacity.

One of the tenets of dialogical approaches is their dependence upon language or a symbolic system (e.g., Marková & Foppa, 1990). This system necessarily mediates the exchange between the subject and the surrounding social and physical world and is constitutive of an individual’s cognitive and affective capacities (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986; Vygotsky & Luria, 1994) and selves (Mead, 1934). Therefore, referring to dialogical communication means that language and symbolic systems are at the center of all considerations. From this perspective, dialogue requires the symbolic system present in the language domain.

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Regarding the beginning of life, one of the most difficult challenges is to trace how the infant enters the dialogical symbolic world. I assume that the infant is born in a “dialogical closure” (Bråten, 1998). This means that the infant is able to establish dialogical exchanges before the establishment of any language or constituted symbolic system² (Fogel, 1993, 2001; Lyra, in press; Lyra & Souza, 2003; Trevarthen, 1998). Moreover, I also assume that the dialogical system of communication from the early beginnings of life is constitutive of the self and responsible for the emergence of a new functioning space that I have called “virtual space or virtual reality”. The term virtual has an analogy with Sinhá’s notion of “virtual cognition”, a dimension of possibilities that exists and functions together with the space of actual actions (Sinhá, 2004, 2005). Regarding symbolic play, Sinha (2005) explains the meaning of virtual in connection with the fictional and the literal dimensions in symbolic play. “Symbolic play is thus an instance of ‘virtual cognition’, in which the imaginary and the real fuse or blend into an experiential arena in which the ‘mental’ and the ‘physical’ are, as it were, dissociated from their customary, conventional or canonical correlations, and reassembled in a new, blended space” (Sinhá, 2005, p. 8). The virtual space of human functioning is, therefore, fictional and literal – fictional in the sense of possibilities of actions not yet actualized but also and always connected with the literal side of functioning, corresponding to actions already concretely realized; “...the fictional character implies the co-ordination of two mental spaces, the literal and the fictional...” (Sinhá, 2005, p. 8). I use the idea of virtual space for the purpose of having a term that presents some characteristics of symbols, as symbols allow one to deal with possibilities for action. In this new space, infant functioning presents new possibilities for actions which allow novelty creation. The actions already known by the infant, throughout the infant’s history guided by the contingent learning of them, are expanded in this new space of possibilities. The virtual plane corresponds to these possibilities and the literal one to the already learned actions. This new transitional space represents a kind of bridge between the co-regulation and coordination of partners’ actions guided by the contingent learning principle toward a functioning space guided by the array of possibilities offered in the symbolic system.

I assume the dialogical character of the partners’ exchanges precedes the emergence of symbolic functioning (Lyra, 1999; Lyra & Rossetti-Ferreira, 1995; Lyra & Souza, 2003; Lyra & Winegar, 1997). Each dialogical exchange event belongs to both partners at once. Therefore, it is impossible to separate the participants and the communication flow as distinct units. This continuous conception of dialogue is opposed to a discrete view of communication (Fogel, 1993; Fogel & Lyra, 1997. Marková (1990). I propose that the conceptual unit of dialogue has a minimum three-

2 The relationship between language and the dialogical character of partners’ exchanges and between the immediate or mediate quality of these exchanges are presented by Jakubinskij in a very interesting way (Bertau, 2005). Particularly, his discussion of abbreviated dialogue merits exploration in the context of dialogue in early life. Unfortunately, I only had contact with Jakubinskij’s work after finishing this paper.

turn composition: (1) the initial turn is the participation of the first partner, (2) the response of the other partner is the second turn, and (3) the third turn is the first partner's response regarding the second partner's turn. This three-step conception of a minimum dialogue unit is coherent with the necessarily creative nature of the dialogue; at the moment in which the first partner responds to the second, he/she has been changed through the necessary participation of the second partner in his/her response. The emergence of novelty is established as a necessary part of this dialogue (Lyra, 1999).

The analysis of abbreviated dialogues needs to investigate how this dynamic organized communicative pattern allows the recognition of the differentiation of the infant's positioning in dialogue. I turn now to explore abbreviation.

Abbreviation in dialogue

One of the main functions of symbols is to "abbreviate" reality in such a way that frees the subject from functioning in an immediate time and space, thereby allowing the subject a more flexible manner of dealing with the world. In the symbolic domain, past and present information blended in swiftly recombined ways are used to prepare the subject for the unknown future in a more adapted manner (Valsiner, 2001, 2006). I am arguing that abbreviation seems to fit the criteria of flexibility and creativity that are characteristic of symbolic functioning.

What happens when partners abbreviate dialogue? The idea of abbreviation, as Vygotsky (1986) elaborates in the famous example of the dialogue between Kitty and Levin from his analysis of Tolstoy's novel *Anna Karenina*, refers to a type or format of dialogue in which only just a few words – or almost no words – are necessary for a mutual understanding between partners. The idea of this phenomenon is that, under certain circumstances and relying on the relationship history, partners abbreviate their dialogue. The interpersonal communication process is achieved by previously constructed internalized mutual knowledge between partners. Therefore, it is not necessary to externalize all elements of the communication message. The externalized communication is abbreviated. However, what are the qualities and characteristics of the internalized knowledge of the partners? Considering the infant, what can we infer from abbreviated mother-infant dialogues? In Vygotsky's terms, this last point would correspond to the analysis of the organizational characteristics of "internal or inner speech" (1978; 1986).

The three characteristics of abbreviation and dialogical exchanges with objects

In order to describe abbreviation I will rely on three interrelated notions that describe the characteristics of abbreviated mother-infant dialogues. The analysis also addresses the nature of the dialogues and the characteristics that it allows us to infer regarding the position of the partners in dialogue, particularly the infant's position. The

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first notion upon which to elaborate is *duration*; the *brief time* spent in the abbreviated dialogues, also reflected in the *smaller quantity of turn-takings* used by the partners in comparison to the typical extended dialogues that take place in the preceding period of organization of the communication process – *extension*. This characteristic suggests an achievement of a different level of mutual understanding and knowledge between partners.

Let us give examples of the mother-infant exchanges with toys (MOB type of dialogues). In these examples, baby and mother are negotiating exchanges with objects, particularly the task of the mother offering the object and the baby taking it – the give-and-take game. The examples below describe what I call *prototypical extension* and *prototypical abbreviation*. These two characteristic ways of extension and abbreviation appear more often in the developmental moment in which these dynamically organized patterns begin to dominate the dialogical exchanges. Both aspects slowly change over time; extension undergoes a process of transformation that becomes increasingly similar to the following pattern of organization, abbreviation, which in turn is transformed, mainly with regard to the increasing quantity of turn-takings due to the inclusion of novelty that sometimes requires a little more time and turn-takings within the dyadic exchanges. Nonetheless, this slight elongation of time in abbreviation is never similar to the period of extension in which actions are slowly introduced into the dialogues one by one, suggesting a contingent learning of the sequence of actions and requiring long periods of turn-takings.

The examples used in this text resulted from weekly video-records (20 minutes each, obtained from the second to eighth months of the infant's life) of healthy mother-infant exchanges registered in a laboratory setting similar to a home living room with a chair, toys and a carpet. The mother was instructed to play with her baby as she would at home. Thus, the mother could choose to use or not use toys.

EXAMPLE 1 (EXT prototypical)

EXTENSION

Dyad J (baby's age – 14 weeks old)

Duration: 37 seconds

- (1) Mother holds a toy within the baby's visual field and squeezes it, making it produce noises
- (2) Baby looks at the toy and moves his arms and hands
- (3) Mother continues to squeeze the toy while shaking it within the baby's visual field

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(4) Baby continues to look at the object while moving his arms and hands

(5) Baby looks away

EXAMPLE 2 (ABB prototypical)

ABBREVIATION

Dyad J (baby's age – 21 weeks old)

Duration: 4 seconds

(1) Mother brings a toy to the baby's visual field and squeezes it, making it produce noises

(2) Baby looks at the toy and reaches for it with his arms, taking it from his mother's hand.

The prototypical abbreviation (EXAMPLE 2) shows a reduction of time (duration) and quantity of turn-takings of the dialogical event in comparison with the prototypical extension (EXAMPLE 1), which is the preceding period of organization of the communication process. This type of shortening of time and turn-takings is very characteristic of abbreviated dialogues and occurred in healthy infants (Lyra, in press; Lyra & Rossetti-Ferreira, 1995; Lyra & Souza, 2003; Lyra & Winegar, 1997) as well as in preliminary studies of two infants with Down Syndrome (Melo, 2006) and one deaf infant (Griz, 2004). A noticeable chronological delay of appearance of abbreviated dialogues was found in the mother-infant dyads with Down syndrome infants, but a less extreme delay was identified in the mother-infant dyad involving a deaf infant.

The other two notions used to describe the characteristics of abbreviated dialogues are *variability* and *novelty*, as both demonstrate the *characteristic of flexibility* of abbreviated dialogues; I am suggesting that flexibility reflects an organized totality that functions in a “virtual space” that simultaneously allows for maintenance and change in dialogues.

Variability is a pervasive aspect of all living systems (Edelman, 1997; Thelen & Smith, 1994; van Geert, 2003). However, how does variability enable moving the system forward? The point I want to make is that variability needs to be analyzed with regard to the quality or characteristic of the status of the system – the dynamically organizational pattern in which variability occurs.

I analyze variability with regard to the frequency and quality of variability, particularly by a comparison between variability during the abbreviated period of dialogical exchanges and that which takes place earlier, mainly during the extension

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period. Both frequency and quality use DHD as a criterion for distinguishing the different ways in which a single organizational pattern of dialogical exchanges can appear in slightly different actions or composition of actions. This means that the format in which the exchanges are negotiated by the dyad is maintained, but can be accomplished through different actions and/or composition of actions. For instance, the mother can offer the object to the baby, talking and smiling as the object approaches the baby's hand, or the mother can merely shake the object as it approaches the baby's hand. The baby can take the object from mother's hand and keep looking at the object, whether vocalizing or not, or can take it and put the object in his/her mouth. Frequency refers to the different actions and/or composition of actions that can be grouped into subcategories. The quality of these subcategories can be analyzed in terms of the inclusion of completely new actions or the recombination and/or elaboration of actions previously used by the dyad. For instance, a new action that constitutes a type of subcategory can be identified if the baby takes the object from the mother's hand instead of waiting for the mother to place the object in his/her hand, or if the mother offers two objects to the baby instead of just one as she did earlier. It is important to notice that these analyses should be carried out while bearing in mind the particular history of each dyad. It is not the specific action or actions chosen by the dyad that create a subcategory, but a particular dyadic history in which actions or composition of actions create different ways of maintaining the same organizational pattern of dialogical exchanges, even when making use of different possibilities of actions. The identification of subcategories is, therefore, an empirical task that uses DHD as an analytical tool.

From the analysis described above, it is possible to check the frequency of each subcategory plotted against the weekly register that corresponds to periods of establishment, extension and abbreviation. Figure 1 displays the plotting of the subcategories in relation to the infant's age (weekly records) in the Dyad 2M record. We can observe that variability increases particularly from the 25th to 26th weeks of the infant's age, when the system or communication achieves a total "preference" for functioning as abbreviated dialogues - at the 26th week, 100% of the dialogues are abbreviated (before the 26th week of the infant's age the "preference" for functioning as abbreviated dialogues was not 100% because we still have dialogues characterized as extension).

I have found increasing variability, measured by the frequency of different subcategories in two of the five dyads analyzed. Two other dyads presented this increase in subcategories from the extension period and the maintenance in the abbreviation period (Table 1).

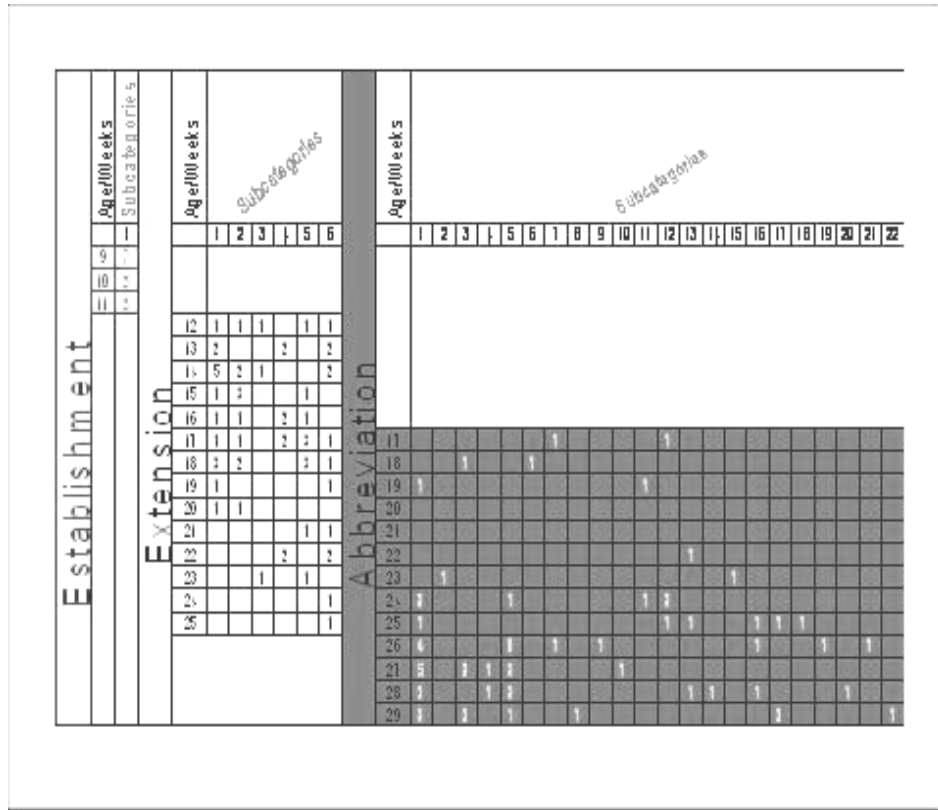


Figure 1. Dyad 2M (Souza & Lyra, 2000). Variability of subcategories (frequency) according to infant's age in establishment, extension and abbreviation - MOB type of dialogue

It is very important to stress that this increase in variability needs to be analyzed in conjunction with the next step of our analysis – the quality of the partners' actions throughout the history of construction of dyadic shared understanding and knowledge, particularly during abbreviation period. Moreover, each dyad presents a particular and unique developmental trajectory that is evident in the inter-individual variability regarding the absolute number of subcategories in establishment, extension and abbreviation (Table 1).

Following this first step of analysis, each subcategory was analyzed in terms of the *quality* of its action components throughout the history of construction. One core characteristic of these exchanges is *novelty*. The introduction of **novelty** is very compelling in the abbreviated dialogues. Novelty emerges as (a) *the transformation and/or expansion of previously used actions*; (b) *inclusion of actions in the previously "tried" dialogical exchanges, but not integrated within the dialogue*; or (c) *new, never-before-used actions*.

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Table 1. Total variability of subcategories (frequency) during establishment, extension and abbreviation in five dyads – MOB type of dialogue

Organizational Patterns	Establishment	Extension	Abbreviation
Dyads			
Dyad 2M (Figure 1)	1	6	22
Dyad 1M	1	6	11
Dyad S	9	20	36
Dyad H	7	15	14
Dyad J	4	6	7

The transformation of and/or expansion of previously used actions³

Let us give the following example of mother-infant dialogues regarding a characteristic game with objects of this age range, a “give-and-take game”. Consider the action of “*tapping the object on the baby’s chair*”. During the period of extension that precedes the abbreviation dialogues in which the dialogical event is expanded and the baby does not yet hold or take the object in his/her hand, this action is previously used by the mother.

EXAMPLE 3 (EXT Transformation & Expansion)

EXTENSION

Dyad J (baby’s age – 17 weeks old)

Duration: 16 seconds

- (1) *Mother taps the high chair (where the baby is sitting) with an object within the baby’s visual field*
- (2) Baby looks at the object

³ This way of introducing novelty in the abbreviated dialogues corresponds to a change process referred to by Pantoja (1997) as “bridges” or “bridging frames” (Fogel, Garvey, Hsu & West-Stroming, 2006).

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- (3) Mother repeatedly brings the object close to the baby and immediately moves it away from the baby
- (4) Baby visually tracks the object
- (5) Mother squeezes the object, making it produce noises
- (6) Baby looks away

However, during the abbreviated dialogues, the mother introduces the action of “*tapping the object on the floor*”, particularly “*tapping the object on the floor by holding the baby’s hand*”, making the baby tap the object on the floor with hand-over-hand.

EXAMPLE 4 (ABB Transformation & Expansion)

ABBREVIATION

Dyad J (baby’s age – 24 weeks old)

Duration: 11 seconds

- (1) *Mother taps the floor with a toy*
- (2) Baby looks at the toy and reaches for it with his arms
- (3) Mother brings the toy close to the baby
- (4) *Baby holds the toy, but does not take it from his mother’s hand*
- (5) *Mother holds the baby’s hand and makes the baby tap the floor with the toy (hand-over-hand)*
- (6) Mother releases the baby’s hand
- (7) *Baby keeps holding the toy and brings it to his mouth*

In these examples, extracted from the same Dyad J, a dyad capable of abbreviating in a prototypical manner (EXAMPLE 2), we find the mother, who has previously used the action of tapping the baby’s chair during the extension period, expanding and transforming this action during abbreviation to *tapping on the floor* and *holding baby’s hand while performing the action*. *The baby does not take the object from the mother’s hand after the mother has tapped the floor*. It seems that the baby waits a little in order to integrate the new action into the dialogical exchanges. However, this is done in a rather swift (the entire event takes 11 seconds) and smooth

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manner. *After the second novel action – hand-over-hand action – the baby keeps the toy and brings it to his mouth.*

Another example (EXAMPLE 5), now from Dyad S, is the introduction of the action of *bringing the object close and moving it away from the baby (several times) before offering the object to the baby, who then takes it.* For this dyad, the action is introduced in the abbreviated dialogues at 21 weeks of age. Earlier (during establishment and extension periods), when the mother uses the action of *moving the object, she does so by moving the object outside the baby's reach and not placing it close to the baby's reach.*

EXAMPLE 5 (EST Transformation & Expansion)

ESTABLISHMENT

Dyad S (baby's age – 15 weeks old)

Duration: 11 seconds

- (1) *Mother moves* the object in front of the baby's face
- (2) Baby looks at the object and immediately looks away

EXAMPLE 6 (EXT Transformation & Expansion)

EXTENSION

Dyad S (baby's age – 19 weeks old)

Duration: 27 seconds

- (1) Mother and baby look at an object
- (2) Mother starts to talk while smiling
- (3) Baby keeps looking at the object while moving his arms and legs
- (4) Mother keeps talking and smiling
- (5) Baby keeps looking at the object while moving his arms and legs
- (6) *Mother moves the object far from the baby's reach*
- (7) Baby moves one of his hands toward the object
- (8) *Mother keeps moving the object far from the baby's reach*

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(9) Baby looks away

EXAMPLE 7 (EXT Transformation & Expansion)

ABBREVIATION

Dyad S (baby's age – 21 weeks old)

Duration: 2 seconds

(1) Mother and baby look at the object

(2) *Mother repeatedly brings the object close to the baby and immediately moves it away from the baby*

(3) *Baby takes the object from the mother's hand when the object is in his reach*

The inclusion of actions in the previously "tried" exchanges but not integrated within the dialogue

The examples to be described from Dyad J show how the mother's action is integrated within the dialogically abbreviated exchanges. Earlier, since the establishment period and during the extension period, the mother had "tried" the same action, but the baby and the mother do not seem to "include" it in the "give-and-take" game. The examples below show a *mother's offering two objects (or more) to the baby at the same time instead of just one, as is usual in these abbreviated dialogues.*

During establishment (EXAMPLE 8), the baby is 6 weeks of age, and during extension she is 14 weeks (EXAMPLE 9). We can observe that the mother offers two objects to the baby at the same time. However, in the first example, *the baby looks away*, and during extension, *the mother again offers the two objects, but maintains them distant from the baby; the baby tries to touch or catch the object(s), but the mother takes them away.*

EXAMPLE 8 (EST Inclusion)

ESTABLISHMENT

Dyad J (baby's age – 6 weeks old)

Duration: 2 seconds

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- (1) *Mother brings two objects into the baby's visual field, making both objects produce noises*
- (2) *Mother immediately moves the objects away from the baby's visual field*
- (3) *Baby looks in the direction of the objects and immediately looks away*

EXAMPLE 9 (EXT Inclusion)

EXTENSION

Dyad J (baby's age – 14 weeks old)

Duration: 7 seconds

- (1) *Baby tries to crawl on the floor*
- (2) *Mother puts two objects on the floor in front of the baby, but out of his reach*
- (3) *Mother and baby start to vocalize*
- (4) *Mother squeezes one of the objects making it produce noises*
- (5) *Baby tries to crawl towards the objects*
- (6) *Mother takes the objects away*

During abbreviation (EXAMPLE 10), *both mother and baby display a dialogue that includes the offering by the mother of two objects and the baby's immediate action of taking one of the two objects offered.*

EXAMPLE 10 (ABB Inclusion)

EXAMPLE ABBREVIATION

Dyad J (baby's age – 22 weeks old)

Duration: 5 seconds

- (1) *Baby is sitting on the floor*
- (2) *Mother starts to talk and puts several objects on the floor in front of the baby within his reach*

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(3) *Baby reaches for one of the objects and takes it*

This abbreviated “give and take” game occurs three more times successively.

The abbreviated dialogues go further (EXAMPLE 11), *elaborating on the mother's action of offering, and now including the mother's action of shaking many objects and the baby taking one of the objects*. This new aspect changes, to some extent, the dialogue from “offering” by showing the objects to the baby to the action of shaking the objects that leads to *the baby's action adapted to this novelty by immediately taking one of the objects, maintaining the characteristic dialogue of the “give-and-take” game*.

EXAMPLE 11 (ABB Inclusion)

EXAMPLE OF ABBREVIATION

Dyad J (baby's age – 23 weeks old)

Duration: 4 seconds

- (1) Baby is sitting on the floor with several objects in front of him within his reach
- (2) *Mother manipulates some of them*
- (3) *Baby reaches for one of the objects and takes it*

New, never-before-used actions

The emergence of completely new actions within the abbreviated dialogues is illustrated by the examples of Dyad J. Let us first describe the prototypical abbreviated dialogues in this dyad (EXAMPLES 12 and 13). The presence of these abbreviations precedes the emergence of new actions. However, these prototypical abbreviations continue to occur in a less frequent manner.

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EXAMPLES 12 (ABB prototypical)

ABBREVIATIONS

Dyad J (baby's age – 16 weeks old)

Duration: 9 seconds

- (1) Mother holds an object in front of the baby and starts to talk
- (2) Baby looks at the object
- (3) Mother squeezes the object making it produce noises
- (4) Baby reaches for the object with his arms and takes it from his mother's hand

EXAMPLE 13 (ABB prototypical)

ABBREVIATIONS

Dyad J (baby's age – 23 weeks old)

Duration: 5 seconds

- (1) Mother brings an object close to the baby
- (2) Baby reaches for the object with his arms and takes it from his mother's hand

Against this background of well-known shared dyadic understanding and knowledge, which is evident in these prototypical abbreviated dialogues, the emergence of new actions in this dyad are undeniable and numerous; mother and baby innovate. The examples that follow (EXAMPLES 14A to 14F) nearly all occurred in a sequence of events involving dialogical exchanges during the same record, corresponding to a single day. All had a short duration, varying from 7 to 12 seconds. These examples are summarized, highlighting the new actions from both partners, as we can observe below.

EXAMPLES 14 (ABB New)

ABBREVIATIONS

Dyad J (baby's age – 23 weeks old)

Duration: 7 – 12 seconds

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EXAMPLE 14A

The mother takes the object from the baby's hand and the baby insists on taking the object back until finally doing so

EXAMPLE 14B

The mother responds to the baby by taking an object after the baby has shaken the object

EXAMPLE 14C

The baby, repeating the mother's way of offering, shakes the objects after having taken them

EXAMPLE 14D

The baby's let the objects drop; the mother takes them and the baby takes the objects from the mother's hand once again

EXAMPLE 14E

The mother retains the object and the baby insists on getting it

EXAMPLE 14F

The baby lets the object drop; the mother looks at the object, makes it produce a sound and the baby takes it again

The most important aspect to be highlighted is the flexibility of the dyad to change, using new actions at the same time that the abbreviated format is maintained in the dialogues. Moreover, the seeds of a reversal give-and-take game, suggesting an inversion of roles between the mother and baby in this game, exhibit an important step regarding the partners' positioning in the dialogue. Particularly, EXAMPLE 14B, *in which the mother takes an object after the baby has shaken the object*; EXAMPLE 14C, *in which the baby repeats mother's action of moving the object*; and, EXAMPLES 14D and 14F, *in which the baby drops the object and the mother takes it, followed by the baby's taking the object again in a swift, smooth and adjusted fashion*, illustrating an inversion of roles between the mother and baby in the give-and-take game.

Examples from dyad 2M again show the introduction of new actions within the abbreviated dialogues. For this dyad, the prototypical abbreviation includes the mother offering the object by throwing it in front of the baby and the baby crawling towards the object (EXAMPLE 15). This is an abbreviated dialogue that is particular and typical for this dyad, as we can observe in the example below. Consequently, the new actions need to be analyzed with regard to the particular way the abbreviated dialogues unfold in the dyad investigated.

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EXAMPLE 15 (ABB prototypical)

ABBREVIATION

Dyad 2M (baby's age – 29 weeks old)

Duration: 10 seconds

- (1) Mother and baby are sitting on a bed
- (2) Mother takes a rattle and tosses it on the bed, out of the baby's reach
- (3) Baby looks at the rattle, moves her body forward, gets on her hands and knees on the bed, crawls toward the object, stretches out her arms, takes the rattle and holds it

The novel action illustrated in the following example (EXAMPLE 16) refers to the way the mother offers objects. *She offers the objects to the baby before placing them on the floor in front of the baby and the baby extends her arms towards the objects before they are placed on the floor.*

EXAMPLE 16 (ABB New)

ABBREVIATION

Dyad 2M (baby's age – 28 weeks old)

Duration: 11 seconds

- (1) Baby is sitting on a bed
- (2) Mother walks toward the baby holding three objects
- (3) *Mother bends over towards the baby, bringing the objects into the baby's visual field and says, "Take them!"*
- (4) *Baby looks at the objects and extends her arms toward them*
- (5) Mother drops the objects on the bed near the baby
- (6) *Baby looks at the objects on the bed, extends her arms toward one of them and takes it*

The next example (EXAMPLE 17) shows *the mother's new action of grabbing the objects from baby's hand, followed by tossing them on the baby's bed and the baby*

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immediately taking one of the objects. Similar to dyad J, in this example from dyad 2M, the seeds of a reversal give-and-take game appear, suggesting that an inversion of roles between the mother and baby can be highlighted here as well.

EXAMPLE 17 (ABB New)

ABBREVIATION

Dyad 2M (baby's age – 29 weeks old)

Duration: 4 seconds

- (1) *Mother takes the rattle from the baby's hand and tosses it on the bed again*
- (2) *Baby crawls toward the rattle and holds it again*

A word needs to be said regarding the flexibility and innovative character of abbreviated dialogues. I have chosen to use examples that stress novelty, considering the motor actions of both partners. Assuming dialogue is occurring at the level of partners' actions, I have two reasons for this choice: First, these motor actions involving objects unambiguously illustrate the novel inclusion of the external word in dialogue, and second, transformations in dyadic exchanges (such as role inversion) can be demonstrated more visibly. However, other dimensions of abbreviated dialogues could have been used to illustrate the creation of novelty. As examples, I could have referred to the baby's vocalizations and the mother's talking, smiling from both partners, and different cadences of joining together these actions with the novel motor actions. However, it is important to highlight that novelty needs to be included within the abbreviated dialogues for both partners. What I want to stress is that it is at the level of mutual understanding that we can consider novelty inclusion in the dialogue.

Infant positioning in the abbreviated dialogue

What can we deduce about differentiation of the infant's positioning in the abbreviated dialogues?

The first aspect to be highlighted is the possibility that the infant is starting to distinguish the intention of the partner to communicate from what is used (what actions) in the abbreviated dialogue. For instance, the mother holds the baby's hand and has the baby tap the floor with the toy (hand-over-hand); the mother then releases it; the baby keeps holding the toy and brings it to his mouth (EXAMPLE 4), or the mother retains the object and the baby insists on getting it (EXAMPLE 14E). These are new actions resulting from either the transformation and expansion of previously used actions (EXAMPLE 4) or the introduction of a completely new action (EXAMPLE 14E). Why

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does the dyad maintain the give-and-take abbreviated dialogue? It seems that the infant and his/her mother understand each other in a way that allows them to “not be surprised” by such novelty introduction. Thus, I am proposing that the dyad, and therefore the infant in his/her partner role, is starting to separate the intention of offering the object by the mother from the specific actions used to communicate. The abbreviated dialogues occur in a swift, smooth and adjusted manner, suggesting that the partners’ mutual understanding and knowledge are well established. This mutuality needs to carry out some degree of separation between the intention of the partner and the actions that communicate such intention in order to accomplish the well-adjusted communicative abbreviated dialogue that includes novelty. It is my contention that the infant is starting to separate his/her own position in the dialogue from that of the partner.

The infant’s differentiation of his/her positioning in the abbreviated dialogue is more clear-cut or “active” in the case of completely new actions (EXAMPLES 12 to 17), particularly the infant's introduction of new actions to the dialogue. One example is the infant insistently trying to get the object from the mother’s hand even when the mother is retaining it (EXAMPLE 14E). In the context of transformation and/or expansion of previously used actions (EXAMPLES 3 to 7) and the context of the inclusion of actions in previously attempted exchanges but which are not yet integrated within the dialogue (EXAMPLES 8 to 11), the infant innovates through his/her “acceptance” of the mother’s new actions, continuing the dialogue as a more “passive” demonstration of his positioning. Moreover, it is also in the first condition – the infant’s introduction of completely new actions – that the mother more clearly exhibits that she “understands” the infant’s capacity to innovate and, therefore, the infant’s differentiation in the dialogical partner’s positioning.

This discussion leads us to the second aspect, which focuses on the analysis of the mother’s innovation within the abbreviated dialogues. The mother innovates because the infant is demonstrating that he/she is taking on his/her position role in the dialogue. Let us elaborate on this point. The history of the dyad allows the mother to “trust” the abbreviated format as a secure ground for introducing novelty. What does this secure ground mean? I propose that it means some degree of abstraction of dyadic functioning in which the mother “knows” that the infant “understands” her action of offering; the infant responds by taking the object in a swift, smooth and adjusted manner, thereby abbreviating the dialogue. This is well illustrated in EXAMPLE 14A, which shows the mother taking the toy from the baby’s hand (giving it back later on) and in EXAMPLE 14B, which shows the mother taking the object that the infant was touching and manipulating. These two illustrations suggest an initiation of an inverted game in which the roles of the partners change by the infant offering and mother taking the object. We can observe the process of partners’ simultaneously differentiating their positioning. Both the infant and mother demonstrate this through their actions. In other

words, as the infant starts demonstrating a distinction between the intention of the partner to communicate from the content communicated, the mother starts elaborating the seeds of a reversed give-and-take game; the infant can now be the one that offers and the mother the one that takes the object. I am proposing that both the mother and infant's innovation *vis-à-vis* their partners initiates a dynamic that exhibits their positioning differentiation. Moreover, this dynamic is characteristic of abbreviated dialogues, as abbreviation requires a mutual and relational “understanding” of the “internalized” role of the partners in dialogue made clear through their actions.

Let us elaborate on the nature of this “understanding”. This third point of focus deals with the nature of the possible predictability of each action within the sequence of actions that comprises the abbreviated dialogues. This refers to the predictability of the exact sequence of actions used in each abbreviated dialogue. I am proposing that abbreviation allows a decrease in this predictability. The basis for this reasoning is the freedom from a type of learning that characterizes the extension period. I argue that the type of learning during the extension period can be characterized by a contingent learning based on a point-by-point contingency of actions. In extension, the dyad has a necessity to put each action in sequence, almost one-by-one, in order to get the infant's attention and interest, and thereby achieve learning. Abbreviation suggests or shows that this type of learning is changing towards a new one characterized by the infant's capacity to learn a totality regarding their relationship, no longer a point-by-point type of learning. This new capacity allows the infant to function in a new space, new reality or new dimension more detached from the immediate space of actions. A totality is abstracted and reconstructed from the immediate and contingent space of actions. Moreover, this reconstruction exhibits a greater flexibility, allowing the swift, smooth and adjusted integration of new actions within the abbreviated dialogue. The place or space in which the partners function is what I have called a “virtual space or reality”, which allows the partners' to maintain the abbreviated format and change it through the introduction of new actions within the dialogue. In this way, abbreviation allows the emergence of self-positioning in a “virtual space” of functioning.

The ritualized nature of abbreviations

Abbreviation as a historical construction between partners functions as the basis for anchoring both novelty introduction and the maintenance of the dialogue. Novelty inclusion in the abbreviated dialogues requires two conditions, maintenance and change. In other words, the abbreviated format is maintained, but the content of the negotiated message can change. My argument proposes that the “virtual space” in which the emergent self starts distinguishing his/her dialogical positioning functions as a relationship between the actual partners' emergent positions – including the infant and the mother – and the constructed history, which takes on a kind of ritualization. This ritualization corresponds to the format of the abbreviated dialogues. The format is updated at every turn in each partner's positioning through their actions *vis-à-vis* each

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other, composing the communicated content that innovates. Under these conditions, we have a dialogue that blends a three-part composition: the history as the ritualized format of the abbreviated dialogues and each partner's positioning contained in the current message of the dialogues.

It is important to stress that symbolic functioning not only requires a differentiation of the partners' positions, but also the emergence, participation and integration of the social and cultural nature of symbols (Marková, 2003; Valsiner, 2006). I propose that this participation and integration are also a concomitant achievement. I am suggesting that the participation of the socially and culturally constructed nature of the symbolic world starts in early infancy through this dyadic history. At least one way of exhibiting this participation is by assuming the ritualized format of abbreviated dialogues. My aim is to determine the dynamic that gives birth to the differentiation of the infant's positioning in the dialogue and to also stress that this dynamic gives birth to a triadic structure of dialogue functioning along the lines of Marková's thinking (2003). This means that the abbreviated dialogues include each partner's contribution and the history of the dyad that assumes the ritualized format of these dialogues. This ritualization corresponds to the third partner in the dialogue. Dialogue requires maintenance and change. Maintenance is achieved through the ritualized abbreviated format. Change corresponds to each partner's contribution, including the introduction of novelty within the abbreviated format. The coordination between the maintenance and change of the abbreviated dialogues shows the interplay between both partners' updated contributions (as far as they occupy different positions in the dialogue) and the constructed history of their dyadic exchanges. It is through this process that the infant starts authoring his/her biography.

Conclusion

Abbreviated dialogues exhibit the first germs of functioning in a space or reality -- a "virtual reality" -- that is different from the one occurring before, during the extension period. In this new space, the infant starts differentiating his/her positioning in the dialogue with regard to his/her mother. The infant and his/her mother have constructed a shared knowledge that allows differentiating the mother's intention from the specific actions that achieve the communicated content. In this context, novel actions can be included in the dialogue. Being able to abbreviate the dialogue means acquiring a functioning space that allows the maintenance and change of the dialogue. Being able to abbreviate also means that individual participation as partners in the dialogue begins to be revealed. The quality of this historically constructed simultaneity of individual abbreviated knowledge suggests an organized totality of possibilities. In other words, the increase in variability and novelty within a maintained, organized, smooth and well-adjusted dialogue indicates the emergence of a different space for the infant's functioning, in which the infant's positioning is a concomitant and necessary achievement. Using an analogy with Vygotsky's notion of internal or inner speech, I

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suggest that the infant's functioning in abbreviated dialogues reveals an "inner abbreviation", the differentiated side of the simultaneity of the dialogues.

Abbreviation can be considered a bridge that relates the development of an ecological self and the emergence of a self that requires a functioning space that exhibits the seeds of semiotic functioning. The ecological self constructs a sense of self based on the co-regulation and coordination of actions within the earlier dialogues. This earlier self does not yet require the quality of the functioning exhibited in abbreviation. Emerging from these earlier senses of self, a new type of dialogical exchange is demonstrated in abbreviation. This new exchange assumed by the dialogue demonstrates the concomitant achievement of a "virtual space" and the first steps in the process of the infant's position differentiation.

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**SELF, SYMBOL AND SUBJECT: A COMMENTARY
ON LYRA'S "ON ABBREVIATION; DIALOGUE IN EARLY LIFE"**

Chris Sinha
University of Portsmouth, UK

ABSTRACT. Lyra presents a methodologically sophisticated analysis of the ontogenetic course of microgenetic processes in infant-caretaker interaction. The article raises important issues concerning the relationship between microgenesis and ontogenesis. Lyra's argument that the microgenetic phase of abbreviated dialogue constitutes a seed of, or precursor to, the semiotic function is convincing. I question, however, both Lyra's extension of this to an assumption that symbolic dialogicality is thereby already established, and her interpretation of the common ground of co-participation in terms of shared knowledge. I conclude by noting that developmental analyses such as Lyra's have an important role to play in the conceptual clarification of dialogic theory.

Maria Lyra (2007, this issue) addresses a fundamental and complex developmental problem: the ontogenetic and systemic roots of the nexus binding symbolization, dialogicality and subjectivity. The theoretical and methodological difficulty for researchers lies in the mutuality and interdependence, not only of the conceptual categories of symbolization, dialogicality and selfhood, but also of the developmental processes that construct these categories as competences and attributes of persons. Lyra herself points this out, by noting that the synthetic notion of the "dialogical self" implies a space of shared symbolic resources and a symbolic capacity. Yet, she maintains, infants already inhabit a shared dialogical space considerably before symbolization and language, even while the latter is as much a condition for, as a consequence of, selfhood as understood by classical thinkers such as George Herbert Mead.

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AUTHOR NOTE. Please address correspondence for this article to the author at the University of Portsmouth, Department of Psychology, King Henry Building, King Henry I Street, Portsmouth PO1 2DY, United Kingdom. Email: Chris.Sinha@port.ac.uk

of persons. Lyra herself points this out, by noting that the synthetic notion of the “dialogical self” implies a space of shared symbolic resources and a symbolic capacity. Yet, she maintains, infants already inhabit a shared dialogical space considerably before symbolization and language, even while the latter is as much a condition for, as a consequence of, selfhood as understood by classical thinkers such as George Herbert Mead.

Lyra’s quest, then, is to explore the emergence of this nexus, in which the very process of emergence implies the partial differentiation of a “threefold cord” (Putnam, 1999) of which self, symbol and dialogic communication are the inextricably entwined strands. Since nothing, ontogenetically, can emerge from nothing, what is the prior, as-yet-undifferentiated wellspring of the symbolic and dialogic self? Lyra’s answer to this is to postulate a pre-symbolic and transitional “functioning space”, which she characterizes as “virtual” in the sense of having some characteristics of a symbolic space, characteristics which permit novelty creation. This transitional space she identifies with a specific interactional format or type that she calls *abbreviated dialogue*.

How can Lyra’s proposal be related to accounts of the emergence of symbolization, theoretically traceable to Karl Bühler’s psychology of language but often currently formulated in terms of joint attention, that emphasize the centrality of *triadic intersubjectivity* (Bühler, 1990; Sinha, 2004; Tomasello, 1999; Zlatev *et al.* in press), and in particular of subject-object-subject interactions? First, and most evidently, the examples that Lyra presents are of infant-caretaker interactions at ages (from about 20 weeks upwards) that are well below those usually advanced as characteristic of proto-symbolic triadic interactions (typically well into the second half of the first year of life, or as Tomasello puts it, the “nine month revolution”). In this respect, we could perhaps say that Lyra is proposing that “abbreviated dialogue” constitutes a transitional phase between Trevarthen’s primary and secondary stages or modes of intersubjectivity (Trevarthen & Hubley 1978; Trevarthen, 1979).

Second, Lyra’s proposal focuses not only on the immediate interactive situation in temporal isolation, but also on the structural transformation of interactive exchanges in a developmental and temporal trajectory. Abbreviated dialogues are recognizable as such precisely *because* they involve the performance of the “same” (type identical) action (often involving the same object) as developmentally preceding interactions, differing only in their structural and temporal characteristics. In respect, therefore, both of the general contours of development, and of the history of specific episodes of dialogic engagement, Lyra’s account emphasizes emergent change and novelty within fundamental continuity, rather than radical discontinuity.

It is precisely this fact, that the abbreviated dialogue has a history within the common experience of both participants, that underpins its structural characteristics and

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developmental status. The phase of abbreviation is the successor to that of extension, in which the negotiation and elaboration of joint action leads to an increase (compared with both preceding and succeeding episodes) in the number and duration of interactive acts. The methodological lesson of the studies Lyra reports is that longitudinal studies are indispensable if we are to fully understand how ontogenesis is articulated with, is in some sense even composed of, temporally ordered microgenetic episodes. However, this cannot be the same as saying that ontogenesis is *reducible* to ordered microgenetic processes. First, it is the overall synchronic developmental state of the organism that opens or potentiates the space of possible microgenetic transformations, not all microgenetic processes being available or prompted at all stages of development. Second, and conversely, there may occur a recapitulation of certain microgenetic processes at different levels of organization (as in the well-known example of U-shaped developmental curves). In the current context, the question remains open as to whether the sequence of emergence-extension-abbreviation is applicable to microgenetic processes of interaction across ontogenetic levels, or whether it is specific to infant development in the first half of the first year of life. More generally, I would have liked to have seen some more explicit discussion of the relations of the microgenetic processes Lyra discusses and analyzes to broader, stage-like characterizations of the ontogenesis of symbolization in the research literature.

Leaving that question aside, we can then ask Why, and How, does the abbreviated dialogue take on its particular quality of concealing, even while transforming, the range and variety of actions making up episodes at earlier occasions? Lyra draws an explicit parallel with abbreviated or elliptical conversational utterances, in which what is said is merely the tip of an iceberg of shared mutual knowledge. Abbreviation, she claims, “is achieved by previously constructed internalized mutual knowledge between partners. Therefore, it is not necessary to externalize all elements of the ... message” (p. 22). Lyra’s contention that what is at stake is *knowledge* is repeated in her conclusion, where she states that “the infant and his/her mother have constructed a shared knowledge that allows differentiating the mother’s intention from the specific actions that achieve the communicated content” (p. 39). In this, Lyra follows a widely accepted assumption that the most appropriate way to characterise the “common ground” (Clark, 1996) that communicators share and appeal to is in terms of reflexively shared knowledge.

In what sense, though, can we really say that *either* participant “knows” either some kind of “content” that is to be communicated (semantics), or something about the best or most appropriate way of going about such communication (pragmatics)? Is “knowledge” the right term for characterising what is shared by infant and caretaker, and is intersubjective engagement always best characterised in terms of intentional states? Sinha and Rodríguez (in press) argue that early intersubjectivity is better understood by prioritising joint action, understood in terms of co-participation, over

mental states such as knowledge and intentionality. Our argument is that by so doing, we can better understand the dialectic of discontinuity within continuity, without making mentalistic attributions whose logical theoretical terminus must be the postulation of innate mental contents.

This issue takes us to the heart of Lyra's contention that infants are "able to establish dialogical exchanges before the establishment of any language or constituted symbolic system" (p. 21). In support of this, she argues, firstly, that abbreviated dialogues manifest a reduced three-turn structural composition, and secondly that the emergence of novel actions indicates an emergent differentiation of communicative intention from the specific actions that are used to implement the communication. In relation to the second of these proposals, Lyra also suggests that, in abbreviated dialogues, the actions become the "object of negotiation" between the communicative partners, implying the externalisation of action and its incorporation as an aspect of the "external" world. We could, perhaps, say that Lyra is proposing that the development of abbreviated dialogues indicates a very early stage of "pre-predication", in which the history of interactions becomes a kind of argument on which novel actions are predicated, permitting the negotiation between the partners of their positioning within the interaction. This would be one way of construing her distinction between responsiveness to point-by-point contingencies and a functioning space "more detached from the immediate space of actions" (p. 38) in which the history of the actions becomes ritualized.

This kind of "detachment", however, is not the same as the distinction between a signifier and its signified, since there is no indication that the infant is communicating *about* something distinct from the actions that accomplish the communication. Furthermore, although ritualization is often recognized as a precursor to true, normatively based conventionality, it is not equivalent to this. In this respect, I would regard it as an over-interpretation to say that infants are able to "negotiate their actions in order to construct a mutual understanding" with the caretaker—the question being, mutual understanding of *what*, other than the engagement in the interaction itself? Signifier-signified (or sign-object) differentiation, displacement and conventionality are frequently thought of as the hallmarks of symbolic sign use proper (Hockett, 1960; Sinha 2004). It is, I think, a mistake to collapse such semiotic and epistemological distinctions in such a way that sign use is seen as characteristic of all modes of participation in socially and culturally constituted interactions.

In summary, Lyra's methodological innovations and her careful analysis are admirable and compelling, and her identification of the microgenetic structure of abbreviation as the seedbed of semiosis is empirically well grounded. My principal reservations about her account are (1) that it nonetheless remains vitally important to distinguish the precursors of the semiotic function from its earliest true manifestations, including those which are "proto-symbolic" in nature; and (2) that the employment of a

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discourse of “knowledge/intentionality” makes unnecessary concessions to cognitivist and nativist developmental accounts of a kind very different from Lyra’s own perspective. These two critical reservations are linked, since the danger of emphasising continuity of engagement over discontinuity in sign use is that it leads us to the conclusion that infant knows everything, as it were, about signs and about communication, long before being able to manifest a genuinely communicative use of signs.

Finally, the issues raised by Lyra, and the questions that I have posed regarding her interpretations, have implications much wider than developmental psychology alone. If we were to accept, with Lyra, that dialogicality is not *per se* dependent on the mastery of discursive symbolization, in what sense could dialogicality still be seen as a species-specific marker of human personhood? And in what sense can human *subjectivity* be seen as a language-dependent extension of a more fundamental dialogical-ecological selfhood, previously constituted in pre-symbolic co-participation (Lemos, 2000; Lightfoot & Lyra, 2000; Nelson, 2000; Sinha, 2000)? Furthermore, in addressing these questions, how far can we assume that the microgenetic patterns Lyra identifies are transcultural? Whatever the answers to these questions, I believe that both developmental and dialogical sciences can only benefit from the recasting of genetic epistemology in a communicative and semiotic framework, as exemplified by Lyra’s innovative and thought provoking article.

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**DIALOGICAL CHANGE PROCESSES, EMOTIONS,
AND THE EARLY EMERGENCE OF SELF**

Andrea Garvey
American River College

Alan Fogel
University of Utah

ABSTRACT. The present paper is grounded on the premise that emotions are an essential component of self development as they simultaneously foster a sense of connection with and differentiation from others. Emotions are viewed as holistic as they dynamically involve the whole body and emerge in dialogical contexts. Emotions involve feelings of being alive (or not) in relationships, experiences that are dynamically lived and developed over time through co-regulated dialogues with others. We contend that the study of early emotions in dialogical contexts constitutes a viable avenue to study how young infants develop their sense of self. A case study of a mother-infant dyad's co-regulated experiences is presented with the goal of illustrating the theoretical and methodological contributions of examining self and emotions as dialogically and dynamically evolving over time.

This paper examines emotions as a crucial and integral component of self development. We argue that emotions are dialogical experiences lived in bodies – bodies that co-exist in relation to other bodies, bodies that engage in alive communication with others, bodies that co-regulate their movements with the movements of others. It follows then that a productive strategy to study how infants develop their sense of self is through the examination of early emotions in the dialogical contexts infants co-created with their mothers. The theoretical underpinnings of the work presented are influenced by dynamic systems theory and the works of Henri Wallon, Mikhail Bakhtin, and David Bohm.

We start by presenting Wallon's efforts to integrate emotions and self development, followed by a short discussion of Bakhtin's contributions to conceptualizing selfhood as dialogical and Bohm's view on dialogue, self and emotions.

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We then discuss dynamic systems principles relevant to our understanding of emotions as developing dynamically over time in dialogical contexts. Lastly, we present a case study of dialogical exchanges between a mother and her infant in the first months of life to demonstrate how a microgenetic analysis of emotions can add to our understanding of self development in infancy.

Henri Wallon: Self, Emotions and Relationships

French psychologist Henri Wallon (a contemporary of Jean Piaget) has long offered a perspective in which self and emotions are viewed as emerging in the context of the dialectical interchanges between the child and his/her social surroundings (Birns, 1984; Wallon, 1951). At a time when dualistic views of self-other dominated psychological discourse (that is, social others were either neglected for the sake of studying the “inner” self or were conceived of as external forces imposed upon the self), Wallon (1954) wrote about the child’s bodily, emotional and dialogical vicissitudes as being central in the development of self; also known as the “body-psycho-social” model. In Wallon’s own words:

For the first individual self awareness emerges from passionate involvements where each person distinguishes himself with difficulty from others and from the total scene in which his appetites, desires, and fears are bound up. [...] The *socius*, or *other*, is the ego’s constant partner in mental life. [...] All deliberation and indecision is a dialogue—sometimes a rather explicit one—between the ego and an objector (Wallon, 1946, p. 96 & 100, emphasis in original).

According to Wallon (1954, 1984), it is through emotionally charged exchanges with others that children simultaneously experience a sense of connection with and separation from others, thereby contributing to their self development. Children’s emotions are not just adaptive reactions to situations; instead, the foremost function of emotions is that of communication between self and others, including others in the family, the school system, among peers, and so on.

When Wallon (1956) describes five stages of self development, he consistently incorporates the child’s emotional and social experiences as an integral part of this developmental process. During the first stage of self development, the *Impulsive Stage*, Wallon contends that an infant’s sense of selfhood in the first months of life is primarily free-flowing and governed by its emotional and physiological needs that are lived and fulfilled through others. During this stage, an infant’s self is predominantly fused with others. The second stage of self development emerges by the third month of life, the *Conditioned Associations Stage*. Infants begin to recognize recurrent relationship patterns associated with their experiences of satisfaction and frustration. As these

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patterns of satisfaction/frustration emerge, infants start to associate certain bodily experiences of pleasure or displeasure with specific routines lived with others.

By six months of age, the third stage of self development takes shape, the *Emotional Stage*. Infants now experience and express a wide range of emotions through their affective relationships with others. This broadening in infants' emotional repertoire is pivotal in facilitating an infant's insight into his self contributions to these affective experiences. For instance, when playing with and smiling at their mothers, infants do not merely respond to their mothers; instead infants actively contribute to the feelings of joy as they participate in an episode of positive emotional communication with their mothers. Likewise, as infants become overwhelmed with their mothers' intensely charged efforts to play with them, infants may attempt to disengage from their mothers by looking away from them, stretching their bodies, while maintaining a somewhat neutral facial configuration. As infants widen their repertoire of emotions through affective experiences with their primary caregivers, they also begin to develop and experience a sense that engaging (or disengaging) in communication with others may escalate (or de-escalate) the flow of that communication. Through these lived experiences, infants embark on a gradual process of differentiation from others, or what we like to refer to as a process of distinguishing their self positioning from that of others.

He [infant] begins to recognize the indications of probable success, soon located in the person of the provider. In this way, his gestures, postures, countenance, and voice enter the expressive realm, which thus has a double action: an efferent action that translates the child's desires and an afferent one for affecting the disposition which these desires encounter or elicit in the other person (Wallon, 1946, p. 95).

The *Sensorimotor/Exploratory Stage* follows the stage just described. The fourth stage of self development occurs between the ages of 8 and 10 months as infants begin to more consistently explore their physical environment by manipulating various shapes and structures. While these exploratory manipulations are relatively more independent due to the infant's newly acquired motor and postural skills (such as sitting upright and holding two objects at the same time), an infant's experiences with others continue to be permeated by "affective contagion and confusion" (Wallon, 1956, p. 28). In other words, the power of emotions to foster a sense of connection with others continues to overshadow the power of emotions to highlight an infant's unique contribution to the flow of these affective experiences. To put it simply, an infant's sense of self has not been fully differentiated from that of their relationship partners (or what Wallon referred to as a child's essential strangers).

Around the third year of life, as the *Personalist Stage* begins, the child now has experimented with various self-positions in playful contexts with a variety of social others. These experiences, referred to as *games of alternation* by Wallon, allow the child to finalize his differentiation process from his relationship partners. An important paradox is highlighted by Wallon: by becoming more fully aware of his separateness from others, the child is also reminded of the dialectical necessity (or what we refer to as dialogical necessity) of others as his position in these “games of alternation” can only be lived in the presence (physical or imaginary) of others.

In sum, Wallon (1946; 1956) suggests that emotions lived in relational contexts involving self and others create opportunities for children to not only connect with others but also to differentiate themselves from others. This is because emotions are powerfully felt experiences that orient the child toward and away from others, they enhance a child’s awareness of his unique self position in relation to others while also facilitating a sense of connection with (or disconnection from) others. It is important to highlight that the child’s sense of separateness is not to be confused with a dualist view of self and others in which the self is conceptualized as a self-contained entity. For Wallon, distinction from others is only accomplished dialectically in the midst of a child’s emotional experiences of relating with others. A classic illustration of this simultaneous experience of relating to and separating from others in the process of self development is a child’s imitation of a model, typically observed during the *Personalist Stage*. When imitating, a child is very selective, often choosing models to which the child feels emotionally close. In mimicking his models, the child temporarily “borrows or becomes these persons” (Wallon, 1965, p. 136), while also slightly modifying the imitated act, endowing it with emotions and making it his own.

Before proceeding to our brief discussions of Bakhtin’s view on dialogical self and Bohm’s view on dialogue, we would like to emphasize that recent research (e.g., Fogel, 2005; Rochat, 2003) on infants’ self experiences has consistently demonstrated that infants as young as 2 months of age are able to integrate sensory information from their eyes or ears, for example, with the coordinated sensations of their bodies. These cross-modal experiences are crucial in the early development of an infants’ sense of self; this sense of self rooted in an infant’s cross-modal, bodily experiences is known by infancy researchers as *ecological* or *situated self*. For instance, as infants observe their hands moving in front of them while also feeling the movements of their hands, infants also experience their bodies as situated in a unique location – a location that is different from the location occupied by others. Similarly, hearing infants recognize their own emotional vocalizations (content or distress) as their sound production is cross-modally associated with different experiences of their throat and mouth as well as the social situations in which these experiences emerge. Therefore, infancy research indicates that an infant’s cross-modal experiences contribute to the early experiences of feeling positioned in a unique location in relation to others.

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When infants experience their own crying, their own touch, or experience the perfect contingency between seen and felt bodily movements (e.g., the arm crossing the field of view), they perceive something that no one but themselves can perceive. The transport of their own hand to the face, very frequent at birth and even during the last trimester of pregnancy, is a unique tactile experience, unlike any other tactile experience as it entails a “double touch”: the hand touching the face and simultaneously the face touching the hand. (Rochat, 2003, p. 723).

While we embrace Wallon’s contributions to our studies of emotions and self development, especially his consistent efforts to integrate children’s emotions and their social experiences as part of the study of self development, we argue that an infant’s bodily experiences of differentiation from and through others can be found in earlier dialogical exchanges between mothers and her infants during the first months of life (a topic we will cover later in this paper). We now turn our attention to Bakhtin’s and Bohm’s contributions on our view of dialogue, self and emotions.

Mikhail Bakhtin and David Bohm: Self in Dialogue

Another important theoretical influence to the work presented in this paper is Mikhail Bakhtin’s view of dialogical self and David Bohm’s philosophy of *dialogue*. Similar to Wallon, Bakhtin offers a perspective of selfhood that is contrasted with the predominant dualistic view of self-other of the early 20th century – a revolutionary view at the time and, to a certain extent, still today (e.g., Holquist, 1994). Bakhtin emphasized that individuals situate (position) and feel themselves in relation to others in the very act of communicating with others. It is important to note that Bakhtin’s philosophy of dialogue is not to be simplified to analyses of interpersonal discourse. Dialogue represents a worldview in which one’s existence, one’s sense of selfhood, is not divorced from the experiences of being with others. It is our contention then that every self experience is a dialogical and emotional experience, whether the dialogue occurs in the context of an interpersonal or intrapersonal communication. As Michael Holquist (1994) put:

In dialogism, the very capacity to have consciousness is based on *otherness*. [...] More accurately, it is the differential relation between a center and all that is not that center. [...] It cannot be stressed enough that for him ‘self’ is dialogic, a *relation* (pp. 18-19, emphasis in original)

This view of selfhood lived as situated in dialogue does not negate self as distinct from others (Hermans, 1996, 1997). Bakhtin often wrote about the lively experiences of selfhood as a “unique and unified event of being,” a being whose unique body, whose unique existence is lived dialogically through mutual movements of

communication with others. But how does this unique self position emerge through dialogue? Part of the answer is Bakhtin's notion of simultaneity in space and time. When engaged in communicative encounters with one another, self and other simultaneously occupy different bodies located in different spaces, thereby circumscribing each individual's position in relation to one another. To better illustrate this notion of simultaneity let us consider a hypothetical occurrence commonly observed in the lives of many young infants. As an infant moves his arm toward an object that is out of his reach, the completion (or not) of that movement will depend on whether or not that object is placed within his reach by another person (say, his mother). In this case, the infant's blissful bodily experiences of successfully reaching the object depends on the motor support provided by his mother as she places the object closer to her infant's reach. If the mother, however, does not place the object closer to her infant's reach as he moves his arm toward it and continues to look at him instead, different self positions are occupied by both mother and infant, influencing the unsuccessful reaching of the object. In these examples one can witness the dynamics of two feeling bodies, simultaneously positioned in two different spatial locations, co-participating in the emotional experiences of successfully or unsuccessfully reaching an object. Therefore, by simultaneously occupying different bodies that are feeling different sensations in relation to one another, mother and infant are dialogically circumscribing each other's self position and, in a way, each other's emotions. What follows then is that from very early on, without the other, there would be no self and emotions; and likewise, without the self, there would be no other and emotions.

David Bohm, a theoretical physicist of our times, further contributes to our view of dialogue as mutually co-regulated movements that emerge when two (or more) bodies encounter one another. According to Bohm, dialogue emerges as individuals engage in emotional communication with one another; or what we called elsewhere *alive communication* (Fogel & Garvey, 2006). Of particular note is Bohm's emphasis on the emotional aspects of being in dialogue with others; emotions are conceived of as a crucial component in the evolution of relationships and one's sense of selfhood. As Nichol (1996) highlights in the Foreword of Bohm's book *On Dialogue*:

As conceived by Bohm, dialogue is a multi-faceted process, looking well beyond typical notions of conversation parlance and exchange. It is a process which explores an unusually wide range of human experience: our closely-held values; *the nature and intensity of emotions*; the patterns of our thought processes; the function of memory; the import of inherited cultural myths; and *the manner in which our neurophysiology structures moment-to-moment experiences* (p. vii, emphasis added).

Emotions are thus a unique phenomenon to be closely examined because emotions inform individuals about their self positions in relation to others as well as the

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significance of their relationships with others. When discussing an individual's experience of selfhood, Bohm (1996) describes the emotions lived in communicative contexts. For instance, when experiencing a moment of anger in relation to another person, an individual might experience changes in his bodily sensations and in his thoughts, while the other might be simultaneously changing his body and his thoughts. "[...] the heartbeat, the blood pressure, the way you breathe, the way your body feels tense; and also the kinds of thoughts that go along with these feelings" (Bohm, 1996, p. 74). Over time, the recurrence of such experiences of anger in relation to that other person will contribute to one's sense of self as an angry and resentful individual and the emotional aliveness of the relationship. Therefore, these bodily changes are essential to one's emotional experiences of selfhood over time.

When considering Bakhtin's and Bohm's contributions, self development is conceived of as an active and continuous process of co-being: whether it is co-being in linguistically-dominated dialogues, in kinesthetically-dominated dialogues, or both. Selfhood thus involves at least three parameters that liaise continuously and actively with one another: self, other, and the relationships between self and other. We now turn our attention to dynamic system's contributions to our view of emotions.

Dynamic Systems Theory: Emotions as Self-Organizing Processes

The linguistic connotation of the term "emotion" is rooted, in part, in the history of emotion theories which have focused on emotions as internal, discrete states to be expressed outwardly through distinct facial patterns (e.g., Ekman & Friesen, 1975, 1978; Izard, 1997). This tradition has led to incredibly detailed analyses of the face, focusing on the different facial muscles in the composition of patterned facial expressions (Demos, 1988).

While detailed analyses of the face have advanced our understanding of the complexity involved in studying emotions; in everyday life, emotional experiences are holistic as they dynamically involve the face and the body and develop over time within dialogical contexts. As we recently discussed elsewhere (Fogel & Garvey, 2006), emotions are alive experiences dynamically lived and developed over time through co-regulated dialogues with others. Influenced by dynamic systems theory and the works of Bahktin, Bohm and Wallon, we view emotions as dynamic dialogical flows of experience that open (or close) opportunities for each person's experience of co-being (Fogel, 2005, Pantoja, 2001; Pantoja, Nelson-Goens, Fogel, 2001). It is our contention that these dialogical experiences embody dynamic co-changes in heart rate, blood flow, hormones, brain chemistry, bodily movements, thought processes, and so on; and together, these experiences coalesce into dynamically stable patterns we call emotions.

Viewing emotions as dynamic processes emerging in dialogue (whether interpersonal or intrapersonal dialogue) is a fruitful approach to circumvent the

inclination toward fragmenting emotions into discrete units contained by the body, especially the face (e.g., Camras, 1991; Fogel, Nwokah, Dedo, Messinger, Dickson, Matusov, & Holt, 1992; Fogel, Dickson, Hsu, Messinger, Nelson-Goens, & Nwokah, 1997; Lewis, 1995; Lewis & Todd, 2005; Messinger, Fogel, & Dickson, 1997, 1999; Weinberg & Tronick, 1994; Wolff, 1987). Dynamic systems theory is thus conceptually relevant in that it provides heuristic tools to examine the dialogical change processes implicated in the dynamic unfolding of self and emotions over time.

Dynamic systems theory strongly relies on the principle of self-organization (Fogel et al., 1992; Granic, 2000; Lewis, 1995; Lewis & Todd, 2005; Liable & Thompson, 2000; Messinger, Dickson, & Fogel, 1997, 1999; Pantoja, Nelson-Goens, & Fogel, 2001, van Geert, 2003). Self-organization refers to the continuous process of interaction among the system's constituents that cooperatively and spontaneously gives form to dynamically stable patterns of co-activity. In other words, self-organization is a spontaneous process of mutual influence among the system's components through which order emerges. To self-organize is "to form intricate patterns from interactions among simpler parts, without prespecified blueprints" (Liable & Thompson, 2000, p. 299). For instance, the various muscles of the face carefully examined by differential emotions theorists are conceptualized as constituents of the system that self-organize into various emotion patterns, thereby allowing for the observable distinction between facial expressions of sadness and joy. As stated by Lewis and Todd (2005) in a recent discussion of emotions and cognition:

Emotion theorists who have taken a dynamic systems approach (Fogel, 1993; Lewis, 1995, 1996; Scherer, 2000) view emotions as evolving wholes, rather than end-points in a cognitive computation or starting points in the production of a cognitive bias. Emotional wholes are seen as cohering in real time through the interaction of many constituent processes, and it is the synchronization of these processes, as well as the properties of the whole, that becomes the focus of investigation (p. 215).

Therefore, based on the principle of self-organization, descriptions of the microgenetic details of humans' *day-to-day experiences* and *over time* are at the core of an analysis of emotions and self development. The face is thus considered herein one among many constituents of emotions. Other constituents include body postures and positions, gestures, vocalizations, activities of the brain, and the dialogical contexts in which human beings are engaged (Fogel, 1993). In other words, emotions are lived dynamically vis-à-vis the actions, postures, gestures, vocalizations, movements and biological flows within the body which emerge through dialogue with others or the self. In a way, emotions integrate the three parameters of a dialogical view of selfhood mentioned previously: self, other and the relationship.

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But how do emotions integrate these three parameters? Let us consider the following hypothetical situation. During a pleasant conversation at a coffee shop, two adults may gradually lean toward each other, relaxing their bodies, slightly tilting their heads, turning their eyes to one another, producing a smile on their faces, and gently raising the intonation of their voices while talking to one another. In doing so, one of the individuals (or both) may wonder or simply feel: “*Does he feel as close to me as I feel to him?*” or “*Is he as connected to me as I am to him?*” Over time, if these dialogical encounters are mutually amplified, both individuals may not only continue to co-create a pleasant inclination toward one another but they also continue to co-create additional opportunities to introduce their unique contributions as separate selves to the flow of their relationship. Therefore, through these emotional fields of dialogical co-activity, dynamic opportunities emerge over time for individuals (including infants) to further contribute to the evolution (or deterioration) of their relationship while experiencing their self positions as moving, feeling and occupying an unique space with respect to one another.

By now, it is rather apparent that our view of emotions as dynamically self-organizing patterns that emerge through dialogue does not deny that individuals experience emotions as their own. Quite the contrary, within this framework, emotions are uniquely experienced by each individual whose body is situated in different locations in relation to others. As stated previously, emotions are lived in bodies, bodies that co-exist in relation to other bodies, but they are not “contained” by the body. As an individual’s body reaches out, leans into, and connects to another body, she may experience openness and relatedness with the other as long as the other is also open to connect and relate to her. Through dialogue, the body will tune into various emotional experiences such as openness or closeness toward others, connection or disconnection from others, and so on, a process called affective resonance (Schoore, 2001).

In sum, this paper is based on the idea that emotions can be thought of as self-organizing patterns that emerge through dialogue with others, contributing to the development of self and the meaningful relationships that compose an individual’s life. We refer to these dialogical patterns of emotion communication *frames*. In interpersonal contexts, frames are segments of co-action that have a coherent theme, that take place in a specific location, and that involve particular forms of mutual co-orientation between participants (for a more detailed discussion on frames, see Fogel, 1993; Pantoja, 2001).

In the case of infants, dialogical experiences with their mothers are particularly relevant because it is with those significant others infants spend a great deal of their waking time developing primary relationships. We now turn our attention to the microgenetic analysis of an infant’s self experiences in dialogical contexts co-created with his mother during the first months of his life as a means to illustrate how self and emotions are developmentally related.

Case Study of Emotions and Self in Dialogical Contexts called Frames

The infant is referred to as Nathan and the mother is referred to as Patricia. Nathan was the youngest child of three of a middle-class Anglo-Saxon family residing in the western mountain region of the United States. Nathan and Patricia visited the laboratory playroom three times a week for a period of four months, starting when Nathan was 10 weeks old and ending when he was 26 weeks old for a total of 48 visits. At their first visit to the laboratory, Patricia was asked to “do what you would normally do at home”. No other instructions were provided. Patricia was allowed to play with Nathan in the sofa and on the floor, to freely talk to Nathan, to change Nathan’s diapers, or to feed him, thereby allowing the information-richness of the dyad’s everyday life be part of the videotaped sessions.

After systematically watching the 48 visits of free-flowing emotion communication between Nathan and Patricia, multiple patterns of emotion communication were identified in the ways Nathan and Patricia engaged in dialogical exchanges with one another. These patterns were reflected in the recurrence of various frames and emergence of new frames (Pantoja, 2000). For the purpose of illustrating the contributions of examining self and emotions as dialogically and dynamically evolving over time through frames, we will focus our analyses on a few frames observed from visit 1 through 20.

Across the first 20 visits analyzed, Nathan and Patricia gradually modified and reinstated their self positions in their relationship through frames. In the first five visits, frames involving the direct connection between Nathan and Patricia without the consistent use of objects were observed: these frames ranged from playful moments involving smiles, vocalizations, and tactile games to more mellow moments between Nathan and Patricia involving mutual gazing and soft touches. In these frames, both Nathan and Patricia were predominantly co-oriented to one another, continually co-regulating their movements with respect to one another. Between sessions 5 and 9, Nathan and Patricia began to more consistently introduce novel activities to their existing frames, including the use of objects. As novelty was introduced, familiar dialogical routines (as reflected in previously observed frames) were also reinstated in their flow of communication and moments of emotional divergence between Nathan and Patricia increased. Lastly, between visits 10 and 20, a phase shift in the dyad’s playful routines was observed: Nathan began to consistently engage in persistent exploration of his hands and/or toys through mouthing, while Patricia quietly observed her infant, often times providing postural support to his explorations.

But how do these dialogical changes in frames and emotions contribute to Nathan’s sense of self? With the goal of addressing this question, we will focus our microgenetic analysis on three frames co-created by Nathan and Patricia over the course of the first 20 visits: social playful frames, emotional asymmetry frames, and interest in

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toy frames (defined below and highlighted in **bold**). These frames are highlighted herein as they represent the predominant patterns of emotion communication between Nathan and Patricia across the 20 visits analyzed.

Tuesday, June 9, 1998

This is Nathan and Patricia's first visit. Nathan is 10 weeks old. Patricia places him on the floor in a supine position while he is crying loudly. His arms and legs are stiff, his mouth open and downward, his gaze directed to the ceiling as Patricia changes Nathan's diapers, talking with a neutral tone of voice, looking at him. As Nathan calms down, moments of positive playful connection between Nathan and Patricia emerge, referred here as to **social playful frames** due to the absence of toys. In these social playful frames, Nathan and Patricia appear to immensely enjoy one another as Patricia plays with Nathan's body, talking with a melodic tone of voice, smiling and brightening her face. Nathan also smiles, looking at Patricia, protruding his lips and vocalizing. These sequences of co-actions that constitute the dyad's playful connection are illustrated in the following segment. Nathan's bodily changes are underlined and *italicized*. Note how Nathan participates in the amplification of the social playful frame by maintaining his gaze toward Patricia, vocalizing, smiling, moving his head up and down, and opening up his body to this flow of positive emotion communication with his mother.

Visit 1, Segment 1. 04:52 Patricia looks at Nathan's eyes, raising her eyebrows, softly talking to him and rubbing her right hand on Nathan's stomach. 04:56 As Patricia continues rubbing her right hand on Nathan's stomach, Nathan jerks his body, abruptly moving his left arm and relaxing his eyebrows. At this point, Patricia makes a mock surprise face saying: "Oh!" and slightly raising her lip corners while Nathan continues staring at Patricia. 05:01 Patricia then begins to gently tickle Nathan, whispering, and raising her lip corners, while Nathan begins vocalizing and grabbing his shirt as they look at one another. 05:16 Patricia removes Nathan's pacifier from his mouth, raising her lip corners even more, opening her eyes wide, and whispering. Nathan begins making cooing mouth movements, at times vocalizing, keeping his mouth open, moving his head up and down, waving his left arm and stretching his trunk, while Patricia raises her lip corners, whispering and gently tickling Nathan. 05:20 Nathan briefly raises his lip corners, keeping his mouth open, while Patricia continues tickling Nathan with her lip corners raised. 05:26 Nathan briefly raises his lip corners again as Patricia continues tickling Nathan with her lip corners raised.

As illustrated above, Nathan's unique contributions to the positive flow of his dialogue with his mother are co-lived through changes in his face and body as Patricia also co-regulates her body and face in relation to Nathan's. While there are many

dialogical moments observed in this first visit when Nathan and Patricia join a convergent emotional orientation by mutually amplifying each other's contributions to the flow of their dialogue, there are also some moments in which Nathan's emotional positioning diverges from Patricia's. These moments are particularly interesting as they offer opportunities for Nathan and Patricia to more explicitly differentiate their unique positions in the flow of their emotion communication. Specifically, there are times when Patricia attempts to resume their previously co-created social playful frames by stretching Nathan's arms, talking with a melodic voice and forming big smiles on her face while Nathan remains calm and content, either looking at Patricia or looking at his surrounds. We refer to these moments of emotional divergence as **emotional asymmetry frames**, as illustrated below. Note how Nathan turns his head to the side and then contracts his facial muscles, while Patricia continues attempting to re-establish their stretching game by moving his arms up and down. It is only after approximately nine seconds of emotional divergence that Patricia begins to gradually surrender to Nathan's persistent position of not mutually amplifying his mother's efforts to establish a more playful frame (underlined and *italicized* below).

Visit 1, Segment 2. 09:44 Nathan *begins turning his head to his right side, opening his mouth* and *bringing his right hand to his mouth, looking at Patricia*, while Patricia stretches Nathan's arms as if continuing their stretching game. 09:53 Nathan *begins to raise his right upper lip, contracting his eyebrows together*, while Patricia continues stretching Nathan's arms up, but briefly pausing it each time Nathan contracts his eyebrows together.

Thursday, June 11, 1998.

Patricia and Nathan start their morning visit to the laboratory playroom welcoming a toy into their communication. With the introduction of the toy, both Patricia and Nathan begin to direct their attention to the toy, mutually amplifying each other's interest in integrating this new element into the flow of their dialogue. Specifically, Patricia holds a toy while Nathan looks at it intently, at times moving his arm toward the toy in a jerky manner, thereby forming the **interest in toy frame**. This inclusion of toys in the flow of their communication is emphasized because this frame will undergo significant transformations across the next 18 visits. The interest in toy frame is illustrated in the segment below. Note how Nathan welcomes the toy by gazing at it and moving his arm while vocalizing (underlined and *italicized*), thereby magnifying Patricia's initial effort to introduce the mirror to Nathan.

Visit 2, Segment 3. 00:00 Patricia is sitting on the sofa with Nathan sitting on her lap facing the room. As Patricia puts the Sesame Street mirror in front of Nathan's eyes, Nathan *looks at it, moving his left arm toward the toy* in a jerky manner, *vocalizing*. Patricia continues holding the mirror in front of Nathan's

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eyes, saying with a neutral tone of voice “Can you stop it?”, pressing the bottom located on the top corner of the mirror. As Nathan *moves his left arm towards the toy, looking at it*, he burps, spitting up. 00:21 At this point, Patricia says “Ooooooh!”, immediately putting the mirror on the floor, reaching out for the tissue box and starting to clean off Nathan’s face.

During this emotionally convergent moment involving the mirror, Nathan is afforded another opportunity to experience his self position as separate from his mother’s while both participate in the maintenance of the flow of their communication. At the same time, the **emotional asymmetry frame** continues to be observed in visit 2. As seen in visit 1, Patricia primarily attempts to engage Nathan in playful social frames while Nathan merely looks at Patricia or his surroundings, appearing non-captivated by Patricia’s ingenious attempts to play. Note in the following segment how both Patricia and Nathan persist on maintaining their divergent self positions during these emotionally asymmetrical moments, thereby further stressing their distinct self positions.

Visit 2, Segment 4. 11:44 As Patricia grabs his feet, rubbing them against one another and vocalizing “psh psh psh”, Nathan *brings his hands and eyebrows together, looking at Patricia*. 11:46 Patricia continues vocalizing “psh psh psh”, rubbing Nathan’s feet together, while Nathan *continues looking at Patricia*, relaxing his face and arms. 11:49 As Patricia finishes her “psh psh psh” vocalizations, releasing Nathan’s feet, grabbing his arms and looking at them, Nathan *continues looking at Patricia, turning his head slightly to his right side, opening his mouth*. Patricia begins stretching Nathan’s arms, *but as Nathan closes his mouth* (11:51), *looking at Patricia*, she puts his arms down. 11:54 Patricia begins touching Nathan’s face with her finger, vocalizing “tsh tsh tsh” in a synchronized way as *Nathan begins yawning*. 11:56 Patricia, at this point, begins watching Nathan yawn.

As illustrated in the four segments described above, Nathan and Patricia have been co-creating a variety of opportunities for Nathan to experience his self positions by co-regulating changes in their bodies and face in relation to one another. Of particular note, some of these self experiences are lived through moments of positive and convergent emotional co-orientation (e.g., **playful social frames** and **interest in toy frames**) as Nathan and Patricia mutually amplify each other’s contribution to the flow of their dialogue. At the same time that mutually creative moments are lived by Nathan and Patricia, they also experience divergent moments of emotional co-orientation (e.g., **emotional asymmetry frames**), which further capitalizes their distinct self positions lived in dialogue. We propose that both emotionally divergent and emotionally convergent moments are essential in Nathan’s process of self differentiation as these

allow Nathan to experience himself as separate from but also connected to his mother (a dialectical process suggested by Wallon).

Friday and Tuesday, June 12 and 16, 1998.

As Nathan and Patricia's first week visiting the laboratory comes to a close, the same multiplicity of frames continues to recur. Specifically, Nathan and Patricia continue amusing themselves in **social playful frames** as they re-establish and maintain their games involving Nathan's body while looking at one another, smiling, vocalizing and laughing. The main difference is that these frames now begin to occur in longer durations as Nathan and Patricia become more playful during these moments of positive connection. The segment below illustrates how Nathan and Patricia continue to closely co-regulate their bodily and facial changes in relation to each other's contributions, thereby participating in the increasing emotional intensity of the social playful frame. From the perspective of accentuating the intricate connection between Nathan's moments of emotion communication and his self experiences, we highlight Nathan's bodily changes by underlining and *italicizing* them. Keep in mind that these changes are mutually co-regulated between Nathan and Patricia, including the closure of the segment described below:

Visit 3, Segment 5. 03:14 Patricia begins rubbing Nathan's feet against each other more roughly, making a synchronized sound "tsch tsch tsch" with her movements and looking at Nathan. Meanwhile, Nathan continues looking at Patricia with a relaxed face and body, sucking on his pacifier. While Patricia continues rubbing Nathan's feet, vocalizing in a synchronized way, Nathan (03:16) produces a long, positive vocalization, looking at Patricia with a relaxed face and body. At this point, Patricia begins moving Nathan's legs up and down, saying "tsch tsch tsch", raising her lip corners and showing her teeth while pressing them together. 03:17 Nathan begins to gradually become more engaged in this face-to-face feet-rubbing game to the point of dropping his pacifier as he vocalizes (03:27). As Nathan vocalizes, Patricia continues rubbing his feet together, keeping her lip corners raised and talking to him softly. 03:29 Nathan begins raising his lip corners, vocalizing and protruding his tongue while looking at Patricia rubbing his feet together with her lip corners raised and talking to him. This goes on until 04:14. At this point, Nathan brings his face and body to a neutral position as Patricia also brings her face to a neutral position with Nathan.

The recurrence of this frame in its previous form combined with its increased vigor and duration may be indicators of the emotional significance of **social playful frames** in Nathan and Patricia's relationship. Most importantly, from the perspective of self development, the intensity of this frame is to a great extent promoted and sustained

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by Nathan's positive vocalizations combined with his smiles. The next example, extracted from visit 4, also demonstrates the emotional significance of the **social playful frame** as it highlights similarities across segments. Furthermore, note how their playful games revolve around Nathan's foot, which is carefully observed by Nathan.

Visit 4, Segment 6. 07:41 As Patricia approaches Nathan's left foot again, opening her mouth and looking at Nathan, Nathan *vocalizes, tonguing his lips, raising his lip corners even more, and shifting his gaze towards his left foot.* 07:43 Patricia stops kissing Nathan's left foot, looking straight into his eyes, keeping her lip corners raised and her teeth showing. At the same time, Nathan *begins opening his mouth while keeping his lip corners raised and his gaze towards his left foot, touching Patricia's hand with his right hand and resting his left hand on his left thigh.* 07:44 As Nathan *shifts his gaze toward Patricia's face with his lip corners raised, he also begins opening his mouth even more, vocalizing a long sound.* At the same time, Patricia opens her mouth, wrinkles her nose, maintaining her lip corners raised, looking at Nathan. 07:44:26 Nathan *slightly closes his mouth, producing another long sound* (a bit louder than the previous one), *maintaining his lip corners raised, his right hand touching Patricia's hand, his left hand touching his left thigh, and looking at Patricia.* Meanwhile Patricia maintains her lip corners raised, her teeth showing and she stops wrinkling her nose. 07:45 Patricia begins approaching Nathan's foot again, opening her mouth and looking at Nathan's foot, while Nathan *continues looking at Patricia with his lip corners raised, his right hand touching Patricia's hand and his left hand resting on his thigh.*

Once again, Nathan and Patricia participate in the mutual amplification of this playful frame by producing big smiles, vocalizing, and alternating their gaze between Nathan's foot and each other's eyes. It is important to note that gaze alternation constitutes an important element within this **social playful frame**. From the perspective of Nathan's cross-modal experiences, by alternating his gaze between looking at his mother and looking at his foot, Nathan is afforded the opportunity to see and feel the distinct experiences of his body moving as a result of his own actions (e.g., right hand touching his own thigh) in contrast to his body moving as a result of his mother's actions (e.g., Patricia touching and kissing his foot).

Interest in toy frame continues to recur during visits 3 and 4. As previously observed, Patricia quietly presents the toy within Nathan's sight, maintaining a neutral face and a relaxed body while Nathan looks at the toy held by Patricia. At times, Patricia whispers or talks to Nathan with a neutral tone of voice, while Nathan moves his arms toward the toy in a jerky manner. During visit 4, however, new actions begin to be observed within this **interest in toy frame**. Specifically, a form of excited interest is introduced by Nathan, as illustrated in the segment below. Of particular note,

movements of excitement become incorporated into this frame and other frames in later visits.

Visit 4, Segment 7. 00:00 Nathan is in a supine position, lying on the floor, while Patricia sits next to Nathan on his right side, holding the Sesame Street mirror in front of Nathan's eyes and softly saying "Do you see yourself in there? Do you see yourself in there?" Meanwhile Nathan *looks at the mirror, protruding his lips, kicking his legs* and *resting his hands on his stomach*. 00:04 Nathan begins to *get more vigorous, kicking his legs more intensely, waving his arms*, and *vocalizing short sounds, briefly raising his eyebrows while looking at the mirror*. Patricia continues holding the mirror in front of Nathan's eyes, finishing her sentence "... yourself in there?"

This dialogical pattern of emotion communication in which Nathan kicks his legs, waves his arms, protrudes his lips, and vocalizes while intently looking at the mirror continues for the next six minutes. Throughout these six minutes, Patricia gradually becomes quieter, holding the mirror in front of Nathan's eyes, at times gently touching his arm, his stomach or briefly raising the intonation of her voice as Nathan's actions become more vigorous. Not only the **interest in toy frame** begins to include the additional emotional quality of excited interest, but most importantly, from the perspective of self development, Nathan further explores his cross-modal experiences of seeing and feeling his movements (in this case, through the mirror toy), while being touched and talked to by his mother.

Moments of divergent emotional orientation between Nathan and Patricia also recur in visits 3 and 4 through the re-emergence of **emotional asymmetry frames**. Starting on visit 3, Nathan tends to be the one who initiates these moments of emotional asymmetry by either introducing an element of another frame or by not mutually amplifying Patricia's efforts to modify the flow of their emotional communication. The segment below illustrates in greater detail the dynamics just described. Starting at minute 04:18, note how Nathan maintains his body and face relatively inactive while Patricia attempts to engage Nathan in more vigorous play involving his feet.

Visit 3, Segment 8. 04:17 Patricia stops rubbing Nathan's face, looking down to his feet, and begins taking off his socks, talking to Nathan softly. At the same time, Nathan *opens his mouth, raises his lip corners* and *tongues his lip while looking at Patricia* who is looking at his feet. 04:18 While Nathan *continues looking at Patricia, he relaxes his lip corners, bringing them to a neutral position*, and *closes his mouth slightly*, as Patricia continues looking at his feet, taking off his socks and talking to him softly. 04:22 Patricia begins rubbing Nathan's bare feet together, moving his legs up and down, raising her lip corners and cheeks, bringing her teeth together, and vocalizing "tsch tsch tsch" in a

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synchronized way with her movements. Nathan, however, *continues looking at Patricia, maintaining a neutral face and slowly closing his mouth completely.*

Almost one week and half have passed. Nathan and Patricia have visited the laboratory playroom four times. Up to now, they maintained frames in multiple forms: playful, serene, relaxed, interest in the surround, interest in toys, and emotional asymmetry. Although these frames were maintained and recognizable across visits, the ways these recurred were not always the same, pointing toward their dynamic stability. At the same time that dynamic stability is observed in the flow of their emotion communication, another form of change is identified: the introduction of novelty (i.e., innovations). Specifically, in the last four visits, toys were first introduced during visit 2 and a new form of concentrated interest in toys emerged. As this novel emotional connection with toys began to be mutually recognized and maintained by the dyad, a new form of dynamic stability is dialogically co-created. Specifically, on visit 4, Nathan became more vigorously oriented to the toy while Patricia participated in this change by continuously showing the toy to Nathan. Lastly, from the perspective of Nathan's process of differentiation between self and other, there were moments in which Nathan and Patricia positioned themselves in emotionally divergent ways (i.e., emotional asymmetry frames).

What might happen next? Will these short-lived innovations observed during visit 4 remain as potential elements for new frames to be established by the dyad? Or will some of these innovations become expanded into new paths of emotional connection between Nathan and Patricia? And how do these changes in frames and emotions contribute to Nathan's self development? The unfolding of Nathan and Patricia's relationship continues to be described in the next pages.

Thursday, June 18, 1998.

This is their fifth visit to the laboratory playroom. Between this session and session 9, Nathan and Patricia start to consistently integrate objects as part of the flow of their emotion communication, as reflected in their use of objects in many of the previously observed frames. For instance, positive playful moments now predominantly emerge through toys. This innovated form of playful connection is now referred to as **social/object playful frame**. Other previously described innovations (i.e., gaze alternation observed in the social playful frame) are also incorporated into other frames, specifically, the **interest in toy frame**. Although brief in duration (shorter than one second), Nathan's gaze alternation between toy and his mother suggests that a distinct emotional quality is added to this frame. Specifically, while Nathan and Patricia's emotional orientation is now mutually directed toward the toy, they simultaneously maintain their serene social connection through Nathan's brief gaze alternations. The following segment illustrates the inclusion of gaze alternation within the **interest in toy frame**.

Visit 5, Segment 9. 04:31 Patricia starts shaking the rattle in front of Nathan's eyes and whispering something. Nathan, at this point, *looks at the toy held by Patricia, bringing his right hand to his chest and jerking his left arm*. 04:35 Patricia stops shaking the rattle, bringing it towards Nathan's left hand quietly. Nathan continues *looking at the toy intently, tonguing his lips*. 04:42 As Patricia adjusts the rattle into Nathan's left hand, she begins talking to Nathan with a neutral tone of voice. 04:42:19 Nathan *briefly looks at Patricia, looking back at the toy* (04:43:03) as Patricia continues adjusting the rattle in Nathan's hand.

In addition to these innovations, excitement begins to pervade the **interest in toy frames**. Although excitement was first introduced as an innovation by Nathan in visit 4 while he looked at the toy mirror, it did not constitute a consistent and predominant component of this frame. At visit 5, however, in almost every instance of **interest in toy frame**, Nathan kicks his legs and waves his arms while intently looking at the toy held by his mother.

In sum, starting on visit 5, Nathan and Patricia appear to begin shifting their self positions in the context of their emotion communication from a primary focus on blissful social games to an emerging focus on interest in toys. This is indicated by the variety of object-related connections that start to pervade the frames Nathan and Patricia co-create. In these dialogical contexts, Nathan intensely waves his arms and legs while looking at the toy held by his mother. At the same time, Nathan and Patricia are able to maintain their social connection by engaging in gaze alternation between toy and each other.

Between June 19 and 26, 1998 (Visits 6 and 9)

As certain frames are beginning to merge together, a familiar dynamics is recaptured by the dyad. Specifically, the relatively forgotten visual exploration of the surrounding starts to re-emerge as Nathan looks around the room while Patricia watches him quietly. In these visits, despite the dyad's increasing emphasis on toys, visual exploration of the surrounding (first observed in visit 1) does not include toys. Furthermore, the **emotional asymmetry frame** starts to appear more often as Patricia attempts to re-establish social playful connections with Nathan and Nathan appears uninterested in playing with Patricia. Starting at visit 6, emotional asymmetry also includes a pull between Patricia's efforts to maintain Nathan's interest in the toy while Nathan becomes persistently more interested in mouthing his own hand. This innovation in the quality of the **emotional asymmetry frame** is illustrated in the following segment with the mirror toy:

Visit 6, Segment 10. 07:10 Nathan *continues mouthing his right hand* and begins *looking away from the mirror* held by Patricia, slightly *contracting his inner eyebrows together*. At the same time, Patricia continues talking to Nathan softly,

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touching his left hand and holding the mirror within his sight. 07:10:23 Nathan relaxes his eyebrows and continues looking away from the mirror and mouths his right hand. 07:11 Patricia gently shakes the mirror while touching Nathan's left hand, looking at him, but Nathan continues looking off to the side intently and mouths his hand.

As with previously observed emotional asymmetry frames, the segment above explicitly highlights the divergent self positions Patricia and Nathan occupy: Nathan's interest in mouthing his hands and Patricia's interest in playing with her son and the toy. Once again, emotional asymmetry frames appear to serve as another dialogical context in which Nathan and Patricia more explicitly distinguish their self positions in the flow of their emotion communication. In this case, despite Patricia's persistent efforts to redirect Nathan's attention to the toy, Nathan continues to mouth his hands while looking away from Patricia and the toy.

Tuesday, June 30, 1998: From now on.

In the next ten visits (visits 10 through 20), a new frame and a few previously observed frames begin to consistently co-exist. Nathan and Patricia have developed a new routine characterized by their mutual participation in **social playful frames** in the first three to four minutes of their interaction followed by their gradual settling into **absorbed interest in toy frames**. The latter now presents the prevailing characteristic of Nathan's quiet concentration on a toy or his hand, mouthing it while facing back Patricia. At this point, Patricia participates in the interest in toy frames by quietly watching Nathan, providing postural support or gently touching Nathan's back, legs and head. Of particular note, the **interest in toy frames** provide additional opportunities for Nathan to simultaneously feel his hand (or toy) in his mouth as a result of his own actions and feel various pressures on his body as a result of being touched by his mother.

At the same time, **emotional asymmetry frames** continue to recur as Patricia attempts to re-establish social playful frames throughout the visit and Nathan maintains his concentrated interest in toys or his serene connection to Patricia by looking at her while mouthing his hand. In fact, starting on visit 11, each time Patricia places Nathan in a supine position while he is mouthing a toy, Nathan begins crying, arching his back, kicking his legs and stiffening his body. As Patricia immediately repositions Nathan back in the sitting position, Nathan calms down and resumes his concentrated manipulation of the toy. From now on, the **interest in toy frame** begins to predominantly emerge as Nathan sits upright, back facing his mother and manipulating a toy, and Patricia quietly watches Nathan, providing postural support. This dynamics is illustrated in the segment below extracted from visit 19 (July 21, 1998). Nathan, at the time of this visit, is 16 weeks old. Note how he asserts his self position of a focused

interest in the toy by protesting to his mother's touching of his feet (screaming and kicking his legs):

Visit 19, Segment 25. 03:13 As Patricia continues inspecting Nathan's toes, Nathan *starts screaming out loud* and *kicking his legs while holding a toy*. 03:16 Patricia stops inspecting his toes and says "Now what?" looking at Nathan with a serious face. At the same time, Nathan *stops screaming, turning his body to the side, bringing his feet together* and *the toy to his mouth*. Patricia starts to watch Nathan quietly.

As visit 20 approaches, Nathan and Patricia appear to have just navigated across a phase shift in their emotion communication from a primary emphasis on mutually amplifying each other's interest in blissful social games to exploring and facilitating Nathan's increasing focus on himself and his toys. In other words, over time, Nathan and Patricia transformed the landscape of their relationship from a predominant emphasis on playful social frames, followed by the gradual introduction of toys as well as the emergence of emotional asymmetry frames, and finally Nathan's increased focus on mouthing his toys and/or his hands. It is important to note that as Nathan became increasingly more focused on the toys and/or his body, emotional asymmetry frames started to occur more often. We argue that frames constituted dialogical opportunities for Nathan to further explore his various self positions, which ranged from mutually participating in playful endeavors with his mother to persisting on mouthing his hands or toy and emotionally diverging from his mother.

Dialogical Change Processes: Familiar Variability and Innovations

An important finding described in the detailed microgenetic analysis of Nathan and Patricia's moments of emotion communication refers to the levels of change observed within the real-time scale (also discussed in detail by Fogel, Garvey, Hsu & West-Stroming, 2006; and Pantoja, 2000). First, there were the changes that appear to maintain the dynamic stability of the frame, referred to as **familiar variability**. These involved nuances in the way Patricia and Nathan interacted with one another while sustaining a pleasant connection with one another or the various ways in which Nathan and Patricia played with toys. We suggest that familiar variability allowed Nathan and Patricia to mutually recognize the meaningful patterns of emotion communication that composed the landscape of their relationship. Furthermore, from the perspective of Nathan's self development, familiar variability served as a background against which Nathan's contributions to the maintenance (or not) of the flow of their dialogue was punctuated, thereby facilitating Nathan's experience of differentiating his sense of self from others through dialogue.

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There were also the deviations that appear to add a new quality to the frame, and consequently a new quality to the dyad's relationship. When first introduced, these changes within the frame were regarded as **innovations**. This is because these changes were noticeably distinct from the usual pattern maintained by Nathan and Patricia, at the same time that they were not completely modifying the dyad's familiar ways of being in dialogue. It is important to note that the identification of innovations in the flow of dialogue requires an historical analysis of the moment. In other words, a particular action cannot be determined as an innovation unless that action is situated in the historical process where it emerged. Take the example of Patricia and Nathan early encounters of the interest in toy frame, usually characterized by Nathan looking at toy while Patricia held it within his sight. A new level of emotion communication is observed when Nathan begins to produce long and loud vocalizations, vigorously moving his body while Patricia holds the toy. As Nathan and Patricia begin to co-create an excited joyful connection through toys, an innovation emerges, adding a new quality to the previously existing frame (i.e., interest in toy frame). The identification of this innovation is only possible if one is able to recognize the dyad's existing dialogical patterns involving toys (i.e., familiar variability of the frame). Furthermore, innovations allowed for Nathan and Patricia to creatively transform the flow of their emotion communication, while also constituted another opportunity for Nathan to experience his unique self contribution to their relational history.

As noted in the microgenetic analysis described above, when innovations were further expanded by Nathan and Patricia, a developmental change in the flow of the dyad's dialogue was observed characterized by Nathan's persistent exploration of his hands and toy through mouthing, while Patricia quietly provided postural support to her infant's exploration. In dynamic systems terms, periods in which a given system is thought to be most susceptible to change, leading to a re-organization of the system, is referred to as **phase shift** (e.g., Fogel et al., 1992; Thelen & Ulrich, 1991). Were the dialogical changes in the frames indicative that Nathan and Patricia were co-creating a phase shift? And, in the process of transforming the landscape of their emotion communication, was Nathan afforded with multiple opportunities to explore his self positions in relation to his mother?

As discussed in great detail above, we argue that as Nathan and Patricia actively participated in the maintenance and transformation of the frames, Nathan experienced various self positions in relation to his mother's, fostering the development of his sense of self in dialogue. As suggested by Wallon, an infant's self distinction from others is accomplished dialectically in the midst of his emotional experiences of relating with others. In our case study, Nathan gradually experienced a sense of self as unique and distinct through his moments of emotional convergence as well as emotional divergence with his mother. In fact, as Nathan became increasingly more focused on his body and the toys (as reflected in the predominance of mouthing in the interest in toy frames),

moments of emotional divergence between Patricia and Nathan increased. Are emotional asymmetry frames an indicator of a phase shift in the relationship? If so, could the emotional asymmetry frame serve as foreshadow to an upcoming change? This is a question that emerged through our microgenetic analysis that deserves further exploration.

The data also illustrated Bakhtin's notion of simultaneity in space and time, discussed earlier. While engaged in various dialogical formats (i.e., frames), Nathan and Patricia simultaneously occupied different bodies located in different spaces – bodies that moved and changed in relation one another. In other words, Nathan's embodied experiences emergent in the context of frames allowed for the development of the distinction between self and others while remaining in dialogue. Furthermore, Bohm's emphasis on the bodily and proprioceptive aspects of emotions lived through dialogue was also prevalent in the data. Recall that according to Bohm, dialogue is continuously emerging as participants engage in emotional communication with others (or what we called elsewhere *alive communication* – Fogel & Garvey, 2006). As demonstrated in the data presented above, Nathan and Patricia continuously participated in the maintenance and transformation of their dialogical patterns of emotion communication (frames), which included moments of emotional divergence between them that further punctuated their unique self positions with respect to the current flow of their dialogue. We thus argue that our data support the contention that an infant's bodily experiences of differentiation from and through others can be found in the early dialogical exchanges between mothers and her infants during the first months of life.

Concluding Remarks

Many theoretical approaches to emotions and self exist, each yielding to diverse methodologies of investigation. Strongly influenced by dynamic systems theory and the writings of Henri Wallon, Mikail Bahktin and David Bohm, we emphasized that emotions, self and communication are inseparable processes that flow together in the day-to-day occurrences of dialogical partners such as Nathan and Patricia. Emotions were viewed as an essential component of self development as they simultaneously fostered a sense of connection with and differentiation from others. Furthermore, self was viewed as dialogical experiences of co-being – co-being in patterns of emotion communication (we called frames). When examined through continuous real-time, microgenetic analyses of frames, we contend that the approach described herein yielded to a fruitful understanding of how emotions and self change and develop over time. For those developmental researchers concerned with the study of emotions and self development, we propose that a commitment to describing in great detail the changes in emotions and self positions as a part of the emergence of frames is helpful. As we discussed earlier, a dialogical view of the self does not deny that individuals feel and perceive their part in communication processes as “their own” contribution. The case

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study presented above favors this dialogical perspective as we suggest that “being” is always and at all time a “being-in-relation.” Relationships open us up to a multiplicity of possibilities, including self possibilities, while at the same time fostering a sense of connection with others.

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**DIALOGUE AND CO-REGULATION: USING DIALOGICAL SELF
TERMINOLOGY IN THE RELATIONAL-HISTORICAL APPROACH. A
COMMENTARY ON GARVEY & FOGEL'S "DIALOGICAL CHANGE
PROCESSES, EMOTIONS, AND THE EARLY EMERGENCE OF SELF"**

Dankert Vedeler

Norwegian University of Science and Technology

ABSTRACT. The relational-historical approach to the study of mother-infant interaction is discussed in the light of the theories of Henri Wallon and Mikhail Bakhtin. The central question addresses the relevance of the concept of dialogue for this area of research. It is argued that an important common ground for Wallon and Bakhtin is the focus on the bodily origin of social interaction. The infant initiates emotional relationships through physical coregulation with persons and things. Differences in the infant's behaviour toward persons and things justify a conceptualization of social coregulation as dialogue. The time dimension is very important to understand the significance of accumulated earlier experiences for the emergence of a dialogical self, also, and in particular, in infants. That is the essence of the relational-historical approach. In order to study development over time, thus conceived, the "frame" concept is central. However, in order to be useful for observing development, the continuity of frames from one observation session to another is as important as changes and transitions.

Keywords: Mother-infant interaction, infant intentionality, coregulation, dialogue, dialectics, frames

The basic idea of the target paper is, that "emotions can be thought of as self-organizing patterns that emerge through dialogue with others, contributing to the development of self and the meaningful relationships that compose an individual's life" (Garvey & Fogel, 2007, this issue, p. 59). The authors convincingly argue that emotions are a crucial and integral component of self development. They also demonstrate that emotions are relational and that they develop in a context of relational histories. The target paper takes its point of departure in Alan Fogel's relational-historical view on the development of emotions and self (Fogel, 1993a, 2001), which I consider to be the most promising approach available. The target paper adds interesting new dimensions to this approach by introducing Henri Wallon's theory on the social significance of emotions and the concept of dialogue as presented and used by Mikhail Bakhtin and David Bohm. This provokes an interesting discussion which, no doubt, will

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lead to a deepened understanding of the relational-historical approach, in particular as applied to the study of infant development.

The main question I want to address in this commentary is: What does the concept of *dialogue* add to the relational-historical approach? What does it mean to say that emotions and self emerge in a dialogical context, and that emotions are dialogical experiences? The present commentary will discuss these questions and will also include a consideration of the relational-historical method as presented in the target paper. In order to deal with these general questions I will focus on the following specific questions related particularly to the target paper.

1. What should we understand with *dialogue*?
2. What is the basis for the “otherness” implied in the Garvey and Fogel quote above?
3. Can Wallon, Bakhtin and Bohm help us to answer the above questions?¹
4. What are the implications of the relational-historical approach for methodology, in particular for the use of the frame concept?

The discussion of these questions will be based on the idea, central to the target paper, of the bodily origin of self and emotion. A body, as a concrete, physical entity is always situated (Merleau-Ponty, 1962) and thus there is always a concrete context, that is, particular details of the situation, that sets the conditions for an interaction between two bodies (or several). The crucial point of Fogel’s approach is to give the situation a time dimension. Thus, the *development* of emotion and self cannot be understood except in their situatedness in time. I would say that the experiences accumulated over time are the *sine qua non* of the emergence of self and emotion in a relational-historical context.

As to the meaning of the word *dialogue*, Garvey and Fogel write, with reference to Bakhtin: “It is important to note that Bakhtin’s philosophy of dialogue is not to be simplified to analyses of interpersonal discourse. Dialogue represents a worldview in which one’s existence, one’s sense of selfhood, is not divorced from the experiences of being with others. It is our contention then that every self experience is a dialogical and emotional experience, whether the dialogue occurs in the context of an interpersonal or intrapersonal communication” (p. 55). This is an understanding of *dialogue* that is also embraced by the authors of the target paper. The concept of dialogue is thus to be understood in a very broad sense — beyond a common sense understanding of the word — and so not restricted to verbal exchanges. In this sense all social interaction, as well as cognition, imply dialogues.

¹ This question will not be treated separately, as reference to these authors will be made in the discussion of the two above questions.

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From there on, the concept of dialogue is often extended to embrace a worldview, where every human activity is considered as imbedded in dialogical relationships: “Everything human is dialogues”. In order to distinguish this worldview from dialogues as communicative exchanges, *dialogue* is sometimes contrasted to the concepts of *dialogism* and *dialogicality*, in order to delimit dialogue to cover only direct communicative interaction between people (Gonçalves & Guilfoyle, 2006; Linell, 1990; Salgado & Gonçalves, 2007). *Dialogism* would then be a better word to denote the worldview. Salgado and Gonçalves (2007) understand dialogism as a worldview where “every form of human life or every human process of knowing is basically relational” (p. 609). That is exactly the same stance as Fogel’s relational perspective. Finally, *dialogicality* would refer to the dialogical nature of human interaction, that is, cases of human interaction are to be considered as dialogues (cf Linell, 2007).

Now we will have to ask, what is the relationship between the concepts of dialogism and dialogue? From the perspective of dialogism, one may say that every human individual is born into a dialogical environment, that is, a social environment filled with communicatively engendered meaning². One way of dealing with this is to consider environment to be imbued with meaning, and individuals to be born into inescapable relationships to others. Every word uttered, according to Bakhtin (see Petrilli & Ponzio, 2005, p. 144ff), is *necessarily* related to the word of others, even in the case where there is no wish to respond to an utterance of another person. Therefore, dialogical acts are not acts of reason by a conscious self, wanting to exchange meaning with other selves. They are not cognitive, do not imply reciprocity or mutual understanding. Dialogues is the way human bodies interact, whether in friendship or hostility. Indifference is impossible.

Although Bakhtin mainly considered words and utterances, I see no problem in extending this view on meaning-related activity to other forms of human interaction with other humans under the label *dialogical acts*.

The target paper addresses an issue of emergence. Garvey and Fogel write: “... how does this unique self position emerge through dialogue?” (2007, this issue, p. 56). However, I suggest that the role of dialogue in the emergence of self should not be taken for granted. For the time being, I do not follow Bakhtin, as read by Garvey and Fogel, in saying that all cases of human interactions are to be considered as dialogues. There may be human interaction that is not meaning-related, that is, interaction where one or both parties are not acting purposefully relative to one another. An example of such interaction would not be a dialogue. Therefore, as long as we don’t have arguments to the contrary, we should leave open whether dialogue, in the very broad sense, is something that emerges in human interaction (similar to the emergence of self

² Very much more could be said about this, see Linell (2007) for a detailed discussion.

and emotion)³. This question will be particularly relevant for mother-infant interaction, where the question of the emergence of infant intentionality also has to be addressed. I will make this a crucial point later in this commentary.

It seems to be a common assumption for Wallon and Bakhtin that self and emotion emerge from the relationships and interactions between bodies, thus, that they have a corporeal basis and origin. The trick is to understand how we get from bodies to selves. Garvey and Fogel stress the role of emotions in this emergence of selves from bodies. The reference to Wallon seems particularly relevant in this context because of the way he links the expression of emotions to muscular tonus. However, the way in which the expression of emotions leads to a dialectical relationship is not fully explained. The example provided by Garvey and Fogel (2007, this issue, p. 56) reduces the interaction to a simple statement of the dependence of self on others and of emotions on self and others, and *vice versa*. The dynamics of the interaction is not accounted for.

Garvey and Fogel seem to make the words *dialogical* and *dialectical* synonymous (p. 54). However, it is often pointed out that Bakhtin's dialogism is not dialectical, at least not in the Hegelian (and Marxist) sense (Jung, 2007; Petrilli & Ponzio, 2005) where an equilibrium end state is strived for. Wallon made extensive use of Marxist theory, dialectical materialism, at the same time as he believed that Pavlov's classical conditioning could explain how emotions acquire their social significance (see van der Veer, 1996). That notwithstanding, perhaps because of his Marxist outlook, he did not conceive of classical conditioning in the usual atomistic way, like Watson, but stressed the wider context of culture and society. The child born into a society is at the outset dependent on social others for survival. Van der Veer (1996, p. 377) even suggests that these ideas inspired Vygotsky, who personally met Wallon in Moscow in 1931.

I will not dwell on the right understanding of Wallon's use of the concept of dialectical, just adding the remark that a useful understanding of the word in this context would rather be in the sense of Heraclitus, (the Greek, Pre-Socratic philosopher) focusing on the *open-ended* dynamic unity of opposites in the universe; that is, development is not heading toward an end state or equilibrium, and the point is to catch the dynamic relationship of entities in interaction, for example, the mother-infant relationship, rather than the outcome of the interaction. This might be a useful way of conceptualizing the relationship between *dialogical* and *dialectical*, to be elaborated further down. More attention should be given to the initial bodily aspects of emotions in the writings of Wallon. He very much stressed the basis of emotions in proprioceptive sensations of the different body parts — mainly through muscular tension — and

³ I will come to another conclusion further down in this commentary, see p. 81.

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interoceptive sensations from the internal organs. In particular, he considered muscle tonus as the most important factor for emotional behaviour, by which the social environment may know the infant's emotions. Infant emotions thus start as bodily reactions to internal stimuli, then more and more they become reactions to external stimuli, and they gradually acquire social significance, through classical conditioning, by the consequences they have in the infant's social environment (Tran-Thong, 1978; van der Veer, 1996; Wallon, 1949). Van der Veer (1996, p. 371) summarizes: "Emotions link the infant to the social world and thereby humanize him."

From Vygotsky one could be tempted to conclude that there is an innate, well developed, sociability in the infant that makes it prepared for communication. Wallon provides a more detailed picture, where the corporeality provides a material basis for the origins of sociability. However, while the physiological basis for the emotions of the newborn are well accounted for, their social dimension is in need of further elaboration. Wallon (1949) seems to make a simple coupling between the effects of the child's expression of emotions on caregivers and the effects of the caregiver's responses, according to a simple classical and operant conditioning scheme, although this takes place in a social setting. Van der Veer (*ibid.* p. 386) also expresses this in terms of an "as if" hypothesis (cf Vedeler, 1987), that is, the emotional behaviour of the infant is interpreted by the social other as an expression of a mental state, and, implicitly, thus eventually becomes one. One finds the same model of explanation in Vygotsky's analysis of the pointing gesture (Vygotsky, 1962). Thus, according to Wallon, the child develops from a state of symbiosis with the mother to eventually becoming an individual, separated from and at the same time in relation to the other. The mechanism of this transition is classical conditioning.

However, when reading Wallon, this explanation is not sufficient. His discussion of the emerging relationship between self and other is more sophisticated than could be expected from a Pavlovian point of view (Wallon, 1984). The starting point for the child is very clearly stated: "The unity of the situation or surroundings on the one hand and the subject on the other is initially all encompassing, and no distinction is discernible" (*ibid.* p. 4). Through anticipation, a provider of comfort eventually emerges in the environment of the child. From there on, the social dimension of the transition from symbiosis to relationship is featured. Reciprocity emerges, for example, through games of alternation, (e.g., the pounding game between mother and infant, studied by de Koeyer & Fogel (2003), and discussed later in this commentary) and it is only in relation to the social other that the child can grasp his or her Ego. However, in my reading of Wallon, *dialogue* is only possible when the child has a unified understanding of self at a mental level. Wallon thus does not embrace Bakhtin's extended understanding of dialogue, and the reference to the concept in the target paper might not be appropriate for the age group covered.

Since the early 1970's our understanding of the capacities of the newborn human infant has dramatically changed. What we know about young infants today has strong implications for our evaluation of, among others, the contribution of Wallon to our understanding of infant self development and, in particular, our understanding of the role of the other in this development. I think Wallon's explanation is insufficient, and propose a separate discussion on *otherness* in infant development⁴.

How does otherness occur in a child's relationship to the environment, be it social or purely physical? The self is a relationship to this otherness, and it is in acting relative to this other that the self emerges. What is it then, that makes the self different from the other? In order to answer that question, I think it is necessary to analyze the relationship between an acting body and an object toward which the action is directed. This relationship is intentional (Vedeler, 1987, 1991, 1993). It is this intentional relationship that differentiates between self and other. Notice that so far I have made no distinction between a social and a purely physical other. Thus, I don't see the word *dialogue* as appropriate for describing this relationship. I will assume that dialogue presupposes some kind of reciprocity between two interacting persons. This runs counter to the Petrilli and Ponzio (2005) understanding of Bakhtin's concept of dialogue. However, I suggest that we use the distinction between dialogue and dialogism, to distinguish between the concrete and particular mutual exchange of meaning, or *semiosis* (Peirce, 1998, p. 411; see also Petrilli & Ponzio, 2005) that takes place at a particular time, in a particular situation, and with particular individuals involved, and, on the other hand, the general and inescapable dependence on the word of the other that Bakhtin has in mind.

The way I have described the intentional relationship, so far, it does not imply reciprocity. This changes somewhat when we consider that the intentional relationship is not static, that it is deployed in time. That is also where emotions will be part of the analysis. The deployment of the intentional relationship in time will accumulate experiences, which are first and foremost emotional experiences, and which successively will change the intentional relationship itself. Thus, the intentional relationship is dynamic, and changes according to the succession of actions and effects (reactions) of the object. This property of the intentional relationship is well captured by Fogel's (e.g., 1993a, 1993b) concept of *co-regulation*.

I remind the reader that still no distinction is made between a social and a purely physical object. In personal discussion with me, Alan Fogel has persistently argued that co-regulation is *not* an exclusively social phenomenon (although I was never guided to

⁴ I will not go into a discussion of Bakhtin's concept of *alterity* (see Petrilli & Ponzio, 2005), related to *otherness*. It might be useful just to make the parallel to the relationship between *dialogue* and *dialogism*: Alterity could be seen as fundamental to dialogism in the same way that otherness is fundamental to dialogue.

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any published work where this point has been elaborated on). In an “as-to-say” rephrasing one could say that you enter into dialogues with physical objects as well as with persons. That would mean that “dead” objects respond to your actions, and provide the conditions for your next actions in the same way as persons do. I take Fogel’s word for it, and have eventually become accustomed to the idea.

Is this what Bakhtin, Bohm, Hermans (e.g., Hermans & Hermans-Jansen, 2003; Hermans & Kempen, 1993) and others mean with dialogue? I don’t think so. They conceive of dialogues as necessarily social, whether inter- or intrapersonal. At least they have a social origin. The other referred to is a social other. So, in the context of mother-infant interaction, the question has to be asked, what is the difference between social and non-social co-regulation?

To start with, there are several observations of a difference in the behaviour of the infant toward things and toward persons (Brazelton, Koslowski, & Main, 1974; Trevarthen, 1974; Brazelton, Tronick, Adamson, Als, & Wise, 1975; Brazelton, 1983; Fogel & Hannan, 1985; Rönnqvist & Hofsten, 1994). I conjecture this to be an interesting point of departure for a discussion on the origin of communicative interaction, and also on the origin of dialogue in Bakhtin’s extended sense, including the idea of a dialogical self. I suggest that Wallon’s and Vygotsky’s account on the emergence of social interaction between, for example, mother and child, based on an *as if* explanation (see above) is not enough. Rather, the newborn infant has a capacity specifically for social interaction, expressed through the difference in the infant’s behaviour toward social others and toward physical objects. In this view, the basis for social interaction would be what Trevarthen has termed *primary intersubjectivity* (Trevarthen, 1977, 1979a).

Thus, through co-regulation, a child establishes emotional relationships both with persons and with physical objects, from birth on, if not even earlier. I see the self as emerging from the accumulated experiences of such emotional relationships. This contradicts Mahler’s, Wallon’s, and others’ contention that the child first passes through a stage of symbiosis (or autism: Piaget!), before having an experience of self. It is compatible, however, with Winnicott’s (1971) theory of object relations, and with Stern’s (1985) theory of self development. What remains for the child, is to go from this bodily, situated sense of self, based on emotional relationships, toward a more cognitive and unified sense of self. But that is another story. Only, for the present discussion, it is worth pointing out that the social other will have an important role in the emergence of this unified sense of self.

My conclusion for the focus of the target paper, the bodily origin of self and emotion, is thus that otherness will have to be given a broader understanding than contended in this paper. Where does the concept of dialogue fit in to this extended concept of otherness?

Here above I have contrasted two fundamentally different positions on the origins of dialogue, on the one hand a “behaviourist”, “blank slate” position — based on reinforcement — and adopted by Wallon and Vygotsky (the *as if* hypothesis referenced above); on the other hand, the “primary intersubjectivity” position where the baby already at birth differentiates between a social other and a physical object. I put my faith in the latter position. This position, however, is in need of theoretical concepts to account for the mechanisms of communication in a way that does justice to their dynamics. Bakhtin, not preoccupied by the origins of dialogue, describes the interactional dynamics of communication in terms of *polyphony* (Bakhtin, 1984) and *heteroglossia*, (Bakhtin, 1981) implying the multiplicity of languages, voices, interlocutors, and, notably, effacing the distinction between speaker and listener (cf. Morson & Emerson, 1990; Zappen, 2000). Zappen (*ibid.*) writes: “Such a dialogization of languages creates a complex unity of oneself with the other, for meaning in a language resides neither in my intention nor in what I speak or write but at a point between my intention and that of another. On the one hand, the word that I speak is already “half someone else’s” (p. 293). It becomes my own only when I populate it with my own intention (p. 293-94). On the other hand, the word that I speak becomes populated in turn with the intention of another, for in the active life of the word my intention is always directed toward the active understanding of the other, which is itself populated with its own intentions (p. 282).” (Page references are to Morson & Emerson, 1990.)

I consider this quote to be a nice illustration of the dialectical dimension (in the sense of Heraclitus) of concrete dialogue. What I say depends on the intentions of the other, and *vice versa*. Thus we constitute a unity of opposites. And from a developmental point of view, this also points to the primacy of this unity over its constituents. In my view, this amounts to the same as Fogel’s (e.g., 1993a) idea on the primacy of the relationship and the mother-infant dyad as the unit of analysis.

Zappen’s quote above may also contribute to the understanding of Fogel’s concept of co-regulation. Throughout the target paper, the concept of co-regulation is used as taken for granted and as having a common sense meaning. I consider it to be a highly theoretical concept, in need of an explicit description. I would have liked the authors of the target paper to expand on the role of emotions in co-regulation processes. What is their “view of dialogue as mutually co-regulated movements that emerge when two (or more) bodies encounter one another” (p. 56)? Fogel (1993a, p. 20) explains the emergence of self as “the infant becomes aware of self in relationship to another person, as a dialogue between self and other”. To this explanation needs to be added the experiences accumulated over time. No doubt, these experiences are primarily emotional, associated to the concrete content of the interaction.

To summarize: The child is born as a social being, within dialogical relations. That is evidenced from the differential behaviour of the infant toward persons — as

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compared to behaviour toward things — referenced above. Therefore, the interaction between a mother and her child is social from the very beginning. Also, from the very beginning, the interaction is co-regulated, that is, it does not consist of a simple turn-taking (e.g., mother speaks while the child is listening and then the roles are reversed, such that the child “speaks” and the mother listens, cf. Bateson, 1975), but features a continuous and simultaneous mutual adjustment of behaviour, notably of emotional expressions, covered by the concept of co-regulation. I consider it justified saying that this interaction is, from the beginning, dialogue in the sense of Bakhtin. Thus, dialogue, in this sense, is *not* an emergent property of social co-regulation, but a *constituent* property of it⁵. Thereby I suggest the concept of dialogue can help us to distinguish between co-regulation between persons and co-regulation between a person and a thing. Dialogues are the essence of *social* co-regulation.

To further advance the understanding of how, from social, dialogical co-regulation, a dialogical self emerges in the infant, we need to introduce the time dimension, and the experiences that accumulate in the mother-infant dyad over time. Fogel (e.g., 1993a) proposes a relational-historical perspective for understanding the development engendered by the social interaction over time, including the emergence of a dialogical self. I caution here to specify how the concept of *dialogical self* should be understood. I suggest it to mean the primary, most basic understanding of self as *interlocutor*. I conjecture this not to be a sudden insight, but a gradual build-up and organization, over time, of emotions in shared experiences in relationships. The infant will eventually develop emotions also in relation to things. However, primarily emotions will develop relative to social interaction in concrete contexts.

In order to deal with the role of the context, Fogel (1993a & b) proposes the concept of *frame*, with reference to Bateson (1956) and Goffman (1974). Garvey and Fogel (this issue) define frames thus: “In interpersonal contexts, frames are segments of co-action that have a coherent theme, that take place in a specific location, and that involve particular forms of mutual co-orientation between participants.” (p. 59). This definition may be complemented by a quote from Fogel et al. (2006, p. 3): “The coherent themes involve shared meanings or goals, implicit or explicit, about the nature and course of the communication.” Also elsewhere (e.g., Fogel, 1995) the concept of frame is elaborated on in a way that clearly underlines the content (“theme” or “topic”) aspect of the concept.

In my understanding of Fogel’s frame concept the historical dimension of frames stands central. Frames are recurring segments of co-action that are on the one hand stable, by repetition of patterns of co-action, in the same or similar contexts, and focused on the same theme. On the other hand they are changing, by co-regulated

⁵ On the possible emergence of dialogues, see p. 79 above, with footnote 2.

innovations in these patterns. In most cases these changes will not change the theme of the frame, and thus not the frame as such, and it may therefore be considered the same while developing. The history of experiences shared by the partners, for example, mother and infant, will be crucial for the development of the frame. Sometimes the changes in a frame may be such that the theme has changed, and a new frame has emerged. Both the historical variability within a frame, and the emergence of new frames fit well into a Dynamic Systems view on developmental processes, with attractor states and phase shifts. Finally, sometimes the co-regulative dynamics of a frame may change to inertia, in which case the same co-actions will be repeated without variation. In such cases the frame is likely to vanish. Goffman's (1974) conception of "frame" seems not to have this historical dimension. Over the different definitions and descriptions of the concept, stability seems to be a central idea to the concept, recurrence of the same, as opposed to emergence of the different. Goffman's frames do not develop; neither do Bateson's (1956).

For the sake of this discussion I would like to distinguish between form aspects and content aspects of frames, with particular reference to the definition of the concept in the target paper. The particular forms of mutual co-orientation between the participants clearly are a form aspect of the frame. The rest, the coherent theme, the specific location, are content-related aspects of the frame, that is, they concern what the co-action is about, and what is the context of the co-actions.

The way the concept of frames is used in the target paper, as well as in Fogel et al. (2006), *does not*, in my view, correspond to the definition given in the target paper and in that same book. The frame concept certainly is hierarchical, that is, frames may be described at different levels of co-action. Within a "Salary negotiation frame" involving representatives from employers and employees, you may identify an "employee task discussion frame" within which, in turn, you may find a frame for each possible task included in the definition of the employee's work definition, etc. However, the above definition will be applicable at each and every level of specific frame description.

The frames described in the target paper, however, are not treated according to the above definition. I would prefer to describe them rather as "patterns of co-action", irrespective of theme, location, etc. They correspond only to the form aspect of the definition of the concept. Therefore the paper does not, in my view, feature frame analysis, but something more abstract, which may be termed "analysis of changing patterns of co-action". In principle, one and the same frame — with a coherent theme and in a recurring context — could be conceived as passing through several of these patterns throughout the development of the frame. In spite of a very careful reading of the narratives for the dyad in the study, I have not found any concrete theme or topic, which could have been followed over the different recordings. Instead the authors describe in general terms the transitions between different patterns of co-action.

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The question now is whether this is enough to draw conclusions on development of self and emotion in a dyadic interaction context.

The narratives in the target paper cover a series of video recordings extending over 17 weeks. These are taken as evidence to account for development of self and emotion during that period. My main problem with the narratives is that they do not give me an idea of the change processes in the development of self and emotion during the period. I conjecture that this would have been easier if the frame analyses from each session identified frames over several sessions, with common themes, where the differences between the same frame from session to session were highlighted. With the abstract frames presented in this paper, that I prefer to call “patterns of co-action”, and that might be different from session to session, it is hard to get at the core observations of the narratives, that is, the development of emotions and the child’s notion of self over the recorded period. In comparison, de Koeber and Fogel’s (2003) analysis of the emergence of intersubjective self-awareness provides a much easier task in reading a narrative focused on a single, and well defined frame, namely *the pounding game*, that is, a well defined coherent theme in a recurring context. There it is possible to follow the development of the co-actions between mother and child from session to session, playing the same game.

Garvey and Fogel first use the frame concept in an ambiguous way, sometimes referring to content, sometimes not. Further down in the paper, it turns out that the conception of frames is about the same as in Fogel et al. (2006), although the denominations and descriptions of the proposed frames are different. It is difficult to point out what is the essence of this difference; a tentative distinction could be that the Fogel et al. (*ibid.*) frames are neutral to the emotional loadings of the interaction, while the frames in the target paper focus on emotional aspects. The patterns of co-action described in the target paper are more an account of general changes taking place over the sessions, rather than recurring coherent themes as defined by the concept of frame. The development of frames is not analysed. Under the frames that are described in this case study, as well as in the other cases reported in Fogel et al. (*ibid.*), development *within* a frame between sessions is not an issue. Instead these studies are focused on the *transitions* between frames. The historical dimension of the single frames is lost.

I am grateful to Garvey and Fogel for raising the issue of self development in the light of Wallon and Bakhtin, giving me the opportunity to take part in a discussion on the implications of these important theories for the emergence of emotion and self in the child. In the history of psychology, the contribution of Wallon has been obliterated by those of Piaget and Vygotsky, hiding the central aspect of the *bodily* origin of psychic functioning, which is more and more taken into account in the present debate, in particular with reference to Merleau-Ponty. I do not want, in any way, to diminish the contribution of Merleau-Ponty. However, it is important to know that Wallon was part

of the intellectual milieu in France in the 1930's and 40's, and that he inspired Merleau-Ponty.

Therefore, in spite of Wallon's theoretical background in Marxism and classical conditioning, his focus on bodily expression makes a crucial contribution to the analysis and understanding of relationship development. Bakhtin, as read by Garvey and Fogel, does not contribute in the same way to the understanding of the *emergence* of a dialogical self⁶.

In this commentary I have tried to pin down the issue of the origin of dialogue, with reference to Bakhtin, concluding on the capacity of the human infant to relate in a specific social way to conspecifics as a basis for dialogue. In the perspective of the history of the social relationships with persons and the physical relationships with things, emotions and self emerge from the accumulated — and situated — experiences of the child in relationships with persons and things. These experiences are dialectical in the sense of Heraclitus, that is, they emerge in the ever-changing field of tension, deployed in time, between persons, or between a person and a thing. The emergence of such experiences is best captured by the concept of co-regulation. This concept constitutes a far more important contribution to the understanding of the *emergence* of a dialogical self than the contributions of Wallon, Bakhtin, and Bohm.

The accumulated and situated experiences of a mother-infant dyad are also central in the relational-historical development of frames, the continuity of which reveals the emergence of a dialogical self in the infant. I have argued that such experiences constitute the *content* (theme or topic) of the frame and that frames should be defined first and foremost in terms of their content in order to capture the development of a dialogical self. This is also necessary in order to capture the time dimension that is so important to the relational-historical approach. The emergence of a dialogical self may not be understood if not seen in the context of concrete co-regulated experiences situated in time and in space.

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⁶ Cf. the Zappen (2000) quote above, for a different reading of Bakhtin.

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AUTISM AS A DOWNSTREAM EFFECT OF PRIMARY DIFFICULTIES IN INTERSUBJECTIVITY INTERACTING WITH ABNORMAL DEVELOPMENT OF BRAIN CONNECTIVITY

Filippo Muratori & Sandra Maestro
Scientific Institute Stella Maris, University of Pisa, Italy

ABSTRACT. Autism is a ‘spectrum’ of conditions all of which disturb the development of interpersonal sympathy. We suggest that differences in behavior, emotion or brain functions are downstream effects of impairments in primary or secondary intersubjectivity. Several research projects have shown that the lack of intersubjective behaviors is the best way to discriminate children with autism from those with typical development during the first year of life. According to new findings on biological maturation of the brain after birth, it is supposed that these difficulties do not allow the neurological experience-dependent system to develop in autism. In this paper we consider early dyadic interactions observed in the home movies of children later diagnosed with autism, of sequential maternal approach and infant’s responses to these approaches. We hypothesize that children with autism show fewer contingent responses to their mothers than non-autistic children, and that episodes of contingency are a function of the type of approach used by the caregiver. It is supposed that more contingent behaviors happen when the caregiver approach is high in intensity and rich in non-verbal behaviors, as motherese. Motherese is supposed to play an important role in creating interactive sequences which are the expression of new cortical and sub-cortical networks in brain development. When these linkages are not properly formed early in life, a variety of downstream effects may occur.

Keywords: autism; intersubjectivity; motherese; contingency; mirror neurons

Autism is a ‘spectrum’ of conditions all of which disturb the development of interpersonal sympathy and collaborative action. In our view, the well-known autistic impairments in language, cognition and social development as well as the tendencies toward self-absorption, perseveration and self stimulation (Volkmar & Pauls, 2003), are downstream effects of primary difficulties in the ability to engage in interactions involving emotional signals, motor gestures and communicative acts directed to others. Although first described by Kanner in 1943 as an inborn disorder of affective contact, information on autism in infants is still limited. Nevertheless, several research projects

AUTHORS’ NOTE. Please address correspondence about this article to Filippo Muratori, Division of Child Neurology and Psychiatry, University of Pisa - Stella Maris Scientific Institute, Via dei Giacinti, 2, I-56018 Calambrone (Pisa), Italy. Email: f.muratori@inpe.unipi.it

based on home movies recorded by parents before diagnosis (see Palomo, Belinchòn & Ozonoff, 2006 for review) and a more recent increase in literature on infants at risk for autism (Zwaigenbaum et al, 2005), have shown that the lack of social abilities are the best way to discriminate children with autism from those with typical development during the first year of life. Different ideas stemming from multiple research now seem to support a theory of autism that is not exclusively based on its secondary deficits. In this paper, we will develop this issue relying both on data that we have gathered from an original research on home movies (see Muratori & Maestro, 2007 for review) and on other biological and theoretical research. Throughout the paper we try to keep in mind the conceptual framework of the dialogical self where others are not simply external, but actually assume, from infancy onwards, a double position: both internal and external (Hermans & Dimaggio, 2004).

Theories on Full-blown Autism

Over the past two decades, different theories of the psychological causes of autism have dominated literature. The theory of mind approach (Baron-Cohen, Leslie & Frith, 1985; Baron-Cohen, 1994) suggests that the underlying cause of autism is impairment of a dedicated mind-reading module, leading to extreme difficulties envisaging the contents of other people's mind. Investigation of the brain bases of this impairment focused on the identification of structural or functional abnormalities within what has been termed 'the social brain' comprising a diverse set of frontal, limbic (amygdala) and temporal lobe circuitry. Other theories have implicated more general information processing deficits (Minschew, Goldstein & Siegel, 1997) or a reduction in the normal tendency to process information in context, labeled as weak central coherence (Frith & Happe, 1994), or poor executive functioning (Ozonoff, Pennington & Rogers, 1991). Moreover, in the attempt to identify the cognitive deficit underlying the myriad of behavioral symptoms seen in autism, other researchers have focused their attention on deficits in imitation (Rogers & Pennington, 1991), impairments in social and affective relations (Hobson, 1993), and impairments in joint social attention (Mundy, 1995).

Each of these theories is a valid description of many aspects of the autistic syndrome but they promote research which too often seems a 'fragmented tapestry stitched from differing analytical threads and theoretical pattern' (Belmonte et al, 2004). Moreover, they describe autism as a consolidated pattern but they are less useful for describing autism at its earlier stages. For example, different authors (Dawson, Munson & Estes, 2002; Yerys et al, 2006) have proposed that the theory of autism based on a primary deficit of executive functions, could be a false notion derived from the knowledge about older children and that it should be considered secondary to an earlier primary deficit of joint attention.

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Autism as a disconnection disorder

As we look at the various deficits described in older children, we can begin by asking whether they might stem from a common pathway and whether the nature of autism requires a model which looks beyond discrete brain functions and incorporates identification of disrupted dynamics in processing. Recent attempts at a theoretical synthesis have focused on abnormal neural connectivity, that is by looking at the mechanisms by which information from the outside world is taken in, processed and integrated in the brain (Frith, 2004). There is some disagreement as to whether this abnormality involves a surfeit (Rubenstein & Merzenich, 2003) or a deficit (Just et al, 2004) of connectivity. Most likely, in the autistic brain, there is a high local connectivity (within neural assemblies) which develop in tandem with low long-range connectivity between different functional brain regions (which can be assessed in terms of the extent to which variations over time in one brain region are correlated with activity in another brain region), perhaps as a consequence of widespread alterations in programmed cell death, cell migration and in synapse elimination and/or formation (Courchesne & Pierce, 2005b). The result is a failure of the orchestration of the balance between excitation and inhibition which usually determines the successful co-ordination of the transient coupling between local and distant assemblies.

This model of distorted information transfer as a consequence of local over-connectivity and long-range under-connectivity has been described by Belmonte et al (2004) as follows. In an over-connected network, sensory inputs should evoke abnormally large activation for attended and unattended stimuli alike, giving rise within sensory regions to an overall increase in activation but a reduction in the selectivity of this activation, and potentially incurring a high load at later stages of perceptual processing as distractors are differentiated from targets. Conversely, brain regions subserving integrative functions will be cut off from their normal inputs and should therefore manifest reductions in activation and in functional correlation with sensory regions.

The link between disorders of sensory regulation and autistic disorders is of particular interest in light of recent works by Casanova (Casanova et al, 2002) on the specific minicolumnar pathology in some prefrontal and temporal areas of autistic subjects. Based on necropsy findings showing more numerous, smaller and less compact cell columns in brains of autistic patients, Casanova argued that at the basis of autism there is a disorder of the arousal-modulating systems of the brain. According to this theory, infants with autism might experience a chronic state of over-arousal and exhibit abnormal behaviors to diminish it. This arousal theory is of interest because it is consistent with a reduction of inhibitory interneuronal activity, which would affect the ability to discriminate between competing types of sensory information.

Evidence now supports the idea that this local connectivity disturbance prevents the developmental formation of neural circuitry in frontal, temporal and cerebellar cortices that is essential for high-order social, emotional and cognitive functions (Courchesne & Pierce, 2005a; Courchesne & Pierce, 2005b). The reason that it is not until the third year of life before it is realized that a toddler has autism, is because these frontal, temporal and cerebellar circuits normally have a late and protracted development and do not normally come on line until the second and third year of life.

Towards a non-static view of early autism

Such evidence of an underlying abnormal neural connectivity suggests a dynamic view of early autism. In fact, connectivity patterns and defects change with development and they are both genetically-based and experience-dependent. This dynamic view of early autism is well represented by Mundy's hypothesis (Mundy & Crawson, 1997; Mundy & Neal, 2001) that autism has its roots in an Initial Pathological Process which only later leads to the secondary neurological disorder. This hypothesis suggests that autism reflects an ongoing dysfunction in a complex cortical-subcortical network, which is, however, partially modifiable through early treatment. It is also based on the fact that, at this early age, brain connections are growing rapidly through the first interactions and that the beneficial impact of intervention increases as a result of early neuroplasticity and of early experiences in shaping brain connections. In fact, the well-known increase in brain size, from birth to age 1, is due primarily to an increase in the number and the complexity of neuronal processes rather than to an increase in the total number of neurons.

The idea of an initial – not rigid – pathological process is also congruent with the early preautistic status as it emerges from the research on home movies. In fact this research has confronted, us and other researchers, with infants with a feeble symptomatic organization and in whom the autistic disorder is organizing around fluctuating deficits in intersubjective skills (Maestro et al, 1999; Maestro et al, 2001). Babies who have become autistic can look and smile at others, they can look back during protoconversation, can have eye contact and warm connections with others. The fact that infants later diagnosed with autism display some of these basic social behaviors once in a while during the first year of life could be the reason for the difficulty at this age to detect a disturbance by parents, and to make diagnosis by clinicians. In fact, parents, and especially clinicians, are prone to think that these single social behaviors will easily become more frequent and develop into more complex and collaborative interactions. Home movies research has also shown that these behaviors are less frequent than in typical babies and that they need to be provoked by others in order to surface. This means that infants with autism are able to respond when actively stimulated by their caregivers in the protoconversation situation, but only rarely do they take the initiative to provoke joyful reactions in others. In other words, there is a lack of an endogenous drive for other persons in the same way that typical infants who usually

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seek others (for example they strive to be looked at by their mother) while the other is not stimulating them. Therefore, we suggest that our home movies finding - of infants with autism who can sometimes be engaged but always with no (or weak) intentionality - could be the expression of a very early lack of the desire to share experiences, activities, and feelings with other persons.

This lack of desire can be described, according to Nagy and Molnar (2005), as a lack of the drive to provoke other persons. These authors have demonstrated, through an elegant experiment, that even newborns are not only able to imitate but they are also able to initiate an action (i.e. tongue protrusion or finger movement) apparently seeking a response from the adult: they conclude that initiation (or provocation – ‘Homo Imitans or Homo Provocans’ is the title of the paper) is present from the very beginning of human life as an essential component of subjectivity and of motivational processes. What we want to underline here is that intentionality and provocation are key items when observing, at the very beginning, the development of the dialogical self which represents the motivational substrate for the development of brain connectivity. To conclude we hypothesize that classic autism could be the final step of a primary disorder of dialogical self which does not allow simple social behaviors to develop into dialogical competencies, so that also simple social behaviors, which can be present during the first year of life, subsequently tend to disappear. In the following sections we will compare this dynamic view of early autism with different research which may help to clear up the mystery of the core deficit in autism.

The Affect Diathesis Hypothesis

Studying frequencies of simple social behaviors, instead of just their presence or absence, has widened our research towards the understanding of the core difficulties of infants with autism to transform simple social behaviors into a series of successively more complex interpersonal relationships. This transition from one state to another includes the implementation of emotional and exciting interactions that are not hardwired into our brains. It seems that early simple social behaviors are expectant for those learning interactions to develop. Humans spontaneously intensify these types of critical emotional interactions in the second half of the first year of life and during most of the second year. Gergely (personal communication, 2005) has called markedness the specific ability of the caregiver to underline emotions during these interactions. Marking is typically achieved by caregivers through the production of an exaggerated version of the realistic human expression, and this exaggeration allows the infant to know that the affect-reflective emotion expression refers to his/her own state and not to that of the parent. Gergely (personal communication, 2005) has proposed that mothers are instinctually driven to saliently mark their affect-mirroring displays to make them perceptually differentiable from their realistic emotion expressions. Through these emotional interactions, brain connections improve and the experience-expectant areas of the brain can develop; at the same time the infant can anchor the marked mirroring

stimulus as expressing both his/her own self-state and self- and other-awareness inside a primitive dialogical self. We will see how this idea is not far from the primitive ‘we-centric’ space described by Gallese (2006) as a shared space that comes before the constitution of a full-blown self-conscious subject.

Markedness is also frequently suggested as a key method for early interventions in autism where the caregiver must intensify imitations, playful back-and-forth smiles and vocalizations in front of the infant to draw his/her emotion out. In the home movies we have observed how during these interactions the infant, through the various marked repetitions of social behaviors, can learn how to use correctly his/her basic competencies inside a more complex interpersonal relationship.

Among the approaches to autism involving a model based on the disturbances of connections and on their expansion through emotional interactions, the Developmental, Individual Differences, Relationship Based (DIR) model (also called ‘Floortime Approach’) has to be considered (Greenspan & Wieder, 1998; Greenspan & Wieder, 2006). It is a kind of treatment that underlines the importance of identifying the individual differences in the modality of sensory and motor information processing; and the kind of interactions that the child establishes with others. The core of this treatment is the strengthening of vivid interactive modalities appropriate for the child’s specific difficulties in information processing and the establishment of more two-way circuits of communication. The theory underlying this approach is that autistic syndrome stems from the infant’s inability to connect emotions or intent to motor planning and sequencing; it is hypothesized that the lack of this critical process, that is the connection between emotions and actions, leads to the symptoms usually seen in older children with autism.

Greenspan (1998) has labeled this hypothesis that explores the connection between affect, motor planning and sequencing, as well as other processing capacities, the Affect Diathesis Hypothesis. In this model a number of stages through which the sensory-affect-motor connections progress is described and it is proposed that what later looks like a primary biological defect may be a part of a dynamic process through which the child’s lack of emotional interactions intensify specific early biological processing problems of sensory information. It is hypothesized that strengthening these interactions could be especially helpful in the development of brain connections in these children; as heightened affects are connected to simple motor actions, infants can become more purposeful and they can establish the capacity to carve the self and the other (or subject and object) out of the dialogical space.

The second semester of life as a critical period for infant development

The 9-12 months of age is of crucial importance for typical and autism development (Baranek, 1999). Prior to 6-9 months the infant is only able to engage with an object or with a person; he/she can alternate attention between objects (for example

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the little butterflies upon the cradle) and persons (for example the mother who is approaching or calling the infant), nevertheless the objects are not a part of their interaction. Around 9 months a radical change happens, when the objects are included in interactions as an experience to share with the other. From then infants are not just able to alternate attention but also to coordinate attention between objects and persons. In the same period infants shift from simple to complex patterns of engagement because they become able to show reciprocity in their interactions. These reciprocal, two-way, dialogical interactions are considered a critical step for the development of connections between emotional intent and purposeful action, which can enable the child to begin participating in back-and-forth emotional signaling.

We have seen in the home movies that infants leading into autistic patterns did not fully make this transition from simple patterns of engagement into complex emotional and problem solving interactions. Even affectionate autistic infants who are capable of an early engagement, do not shift, for the most part, towards this early continuous exchange of signals. They are more often withdrawn and hypoactive, with poor social interaction, difficulties in eye contact, and lack of emotional modulation (Maestro, Muratori & Cesari, 2005a). Nevertheless, many infants who have later evidenced the autistic pattern, could focus, during the first year of life, on objects, experience some affection and warmth, and even enter into simple reciprocal interactions. Perhaps they are able to perform these tasks because these basic social patterns can be carried out by single brain areas; but to engage in complex reciprocal patterns need more complex connections between different brain area which seems the core feature of these children.

The second semester of life as a critical period for the development, or failure in autism, of these brain connections is confirmed by the Courchesne finding (Courchesne, Carper & Akshoomoff, 2003; Courchesne & Pierce, 2005a) of two phases of brain growth abnormality in autism: a reduced size at birth and a sudden and excessive increase in head size in the second semester of life. This neurobiological data is interpreted, by the author, as the expression of a disorder involving brain maturation, with abnormalities in the developmental pruning and apoptosis (or programmed cell death). We have suggested that the clinical correlate of this neurobiological finding can be found in the increasing symptom constellation during the second semester of life (Maestro, 2005a) when, in infants with autism, the shift from simple to complex social behavior does not happen.

Also Baron-Cohen (2005) in his recent revision of the theory of mind system stresses the importance of the 9-14 month period which is characterized by the emergence of the Shared Attention Mechanism or SAM. In the original model, when this mechanism comes in line it allows the overcoming of dyadic representations (that are determined by intentionality and eye direction detectors already present in the infant), and the building of triadic representations. In the new model, Baron-Cohen,

after admitting the key omission of affect in the previous model, proposes that, in the same 9-14 month period and thanks to SAM, the dyadic representation of an affective state can also be converted into a triadic representation allowing for the development of the empathizing system whose dysfunctions are seminal for the understanding of autism.

Autism as a primary deficit in intersubjectivity

Research on infants with autism as they are videorecorded in home movies, has shown that autism is organised around fluctuating deficits in intersubjective skills (Maestro et al, 2001). For example, the anticipation of other's aims is significantly lacking in infants with autism during the first six months of life. In other words, these infants have difficulties in foreseeing the aims of other people, in anticipating other's intentions and therefore they are less interested in the caregiver's actions.

It was about thirty years ago that Colwin Trevarthen proposed that purposeful intersubjectivity is fundamental for human mental development. He described a primary intersubjectivity (Trevarthen, 1979) that is the innate wiring of the newborn to interpersonal contact making synchronic exchanges possible, so that, from the very beginning onwards, infants and mothers show protodialogic behaviours in which they time their behaviour in a bidirectional coordinated way. The infant is thus shown to possess an immediately responsive conscious appreciation of the adult's communicative intentions. Around the middle of the first year, the baby's increasing interest in objects is observed to grow in competition with the earlier motives for protoconversational play, leading, during the second half of the first year, to the elaboration of more lively games with objects. Just before the end of the first year, there is a rather sudden development of joint interest on behalf of the mother and her infant in their surroundings. An important stage in mental activity is represented by the development of joint mother-infant attention towards external objects. The development of these joint attention sequences is, according to Trevarthen, an expression of secondary intersubjectivity (or person-person-object awareness) and has major consequences for the way the adult acts and talks to the child (Trevarthen & Aitken, 2001). Despite the fact that even in the first phases a certain kind of 'other awareness' exists, it is around the end of the first year of age that a discrete and strong sense of self and other is achieved. Along these lines, Stern (1985) has described an emergent sense of self since the beginning of life discriminated from the sense of other; such a sense of self would evolve around the second half of the first year into a sense of self-with-other, allowing more complex states of self- and other-awareness to develop.

As far as intersubjective skills are regarded, we have found that infants with autism showed a specific qualitative deficit in responding to social stimuli, while attention paid to objects did not distinguish autistic from normal infants during the first six months of life; later on, during the second semester of life, there is a tremendous

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increase in behaviors involving attention to non-social stimuli (Maestro, Muratori & Cavallaro, 2005b). Therefore, at the end of the first year children with autism are significantly more attracted by objects than typical children. We propose to interpret the functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) activation of the brain area typically devoted to object perception, during face discrimination in subjects with autism (Schultz et al, 2000) as a downstream effect of this atypical early preferential looking at objects in infants with autism.

The object of desire

Our research shows that the divergent and periodically competing development of object awareness and person awareness, during the first year, is derailed because of the clear preference, in autism, for physical objects. The early preference for objects becomes a specific characteristic of subjects with autism as described by Tony W who said: "I was obsessed with certain things and played in my own way. I make things with Garbage or Junk and play with them...I liked things over people and didn't care about people at all" (see Volkmar & Cohen, 1985, p.47). This distinguishing feature has many clinical and theoretical implications.

Firstly, due to the fact that physical objects cannot predict intentions and have no social relationship, the preference for physical objects can impede the development of both primary intersubjectivity (based on basic social motives of the infants) and secondary intersubjectivity (based on the person-person-object awareness).

As a second remark, the decreased interest in the human face has a devastating effect on the brain, which is programmed to assume that the face (of the mother) is the most powerful visual stimulus for the neurodevelopmental processes underlying infant intersubjectivity. Mother and infant in a face-to-face relationship can be taken as a model of performed intersubjectivity and of the co-construction of the dialogical space (Regina, Fonseca & Bussab, 2006) in which the primitive dialogical self defines self and other in a state of ongoing mutual exchange. Schore (1996) has stressed the importance of eye-to-eye contact in early affective transactions between mother and infant in order to develop the imprinting process. The eyes would be a window through which the infant would have direct access to the affective state of the mother, as well as her infant's eye's having the power to excite her. Eye-to-eye contact is the ideal means for acquiring a dialectical sense of union and of discrimination. So, if face-to-face regular interactions are impaired, the self and other are not carved out from the primary intersubjectivity and the dyad's ability to build up dialogicality could be jeopardised. This defect in the early dyadic social system seems to represent a core feature of autistic disorder, and it is now believed that strengthening dialogical sequences where the children are captured in warm and vivid face-to-face interactions, might provide an important remedial effect in autism. In fact, according to recent insight into the biological maturation of the brain after birth, difficulties in these processes do not allow

for the development of local and long-term connections through which the neurological experience-dependent system grows in typical development. In fact, complex functional brain systems are not ready-made at birth and do not arise spontaneously in development, but are formed in the process of social contact between child and caregivers and between child and itself (Schore, 1996).

As a third remark, the abnormal developmental trajectory of social and non-social attention pointed out in our research on home movies, could prevent joint attention from emerging, thus leading us to hypothesize that joint attention should be considered not only a precursor to later theory of mind development, but also a 'post-cursor' of earlier psychological processes (Tomasello, 1995). In typical development joint attention behaviours emerge between 6 and 12 months and involve the triadic coordination or sharing of attention between the infant, another person, and an object or event. The degree to which a child is monitoring and regulating the attention to person in relation to object determines the severity of the deficit seen in autism. This does not mean that joint attention impairments cause autism; however, it does suggest that joint attention is a critical downstream effect of earlier difficulties (Mundy, 1995; Charman, 2003). Recognition that joint attention is not a starting point but merely a staging post for early social communicative development - and hence a 'postcursor' of earlier psychological and developmental processes - sheds light on what earlier impairments underlie the weakened development of joint attention skills in autism. Tomasello et al (2005) have proposed a three-step ontogenetic pathway for joint attention as a product of the understanding of both intentional actions of the other and motivation and initiative towards the other. Firstly, around three months, infants understand other persons as animate agents, they share emotions and engage with them in a dyadic way. Behaviorally, they look at them. Secondly, at 9 months, infants understand other persons as goal-directed agents, they share goals and engage with them in a triadic way. Behaviorally they see the other. Thirdly, by 14 months of age, infants understand other persons as intentional agents, they share intentions - and attention - and engage with them in a collaborative way. Behaviorally they attend to the other. We suggest that at this point a loop is formed in which others are definitively incorporated into the self (Hermans & Dimaggio, 2004), while the previous steps can be conceptualised as its precursors. In this process towards the establishment of collaborative actions, the key skill is represented by the declarative motivation simply to share attention with others. This uniquely human social motivation is considered by Tomasello et al (2005) essential to transform the general ape line of understanding intentional action into the modern human line of shared intentionality. This intention and attention to share (feelings, experiences, activities), which in other words we would call a drive to the other or desire, is precisely what lacks in apes and is very weak in infant with autism. The attenuation of the typical capacity of the child to enter into motivated triadic engagement can deprive the developing child with autism of the amount of interactions

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that are needed for normal shaping of neural connections involved in the early neurodevelopmental processes (Mundy 2001). We have already described that this transition from dyadic affective state into triadic interaction is also the focus of the revision of the mind reading system proposed by Baron-Cohen (2005), where triadic shared attention is necessary for the full acquisition of the empathizing system.

May motherese help the child out of his autism?

Our research could suggest that the deficit of integration of social and nonsocial attention, which is seminal for the appearance of triadic engagement and for the development of joint intention and attention, has his roots in the early diminished attention to social face-like stimuli. We know that in typical development social interest in faces is associated with specific attention provoked in the infant by the very distinctive manner of an affectionate adult's vocalizations and verbalization in the presence of a baby. Among parental behaviors, solicitations through vocal expressions are paramount. We have observed home movies sequences where, within a very short time frame, a withdrawn infant, who will later develop autism, may begin a joyful interaction when the parent implements a vocal expression using motherese; when this interaction is activated, infants and toddlers with autism can show a social focal attention, their faces light up, unexpected interactive skills can appear, and real protodialogues expand.

Paolo is a six-month-old baby who never looks at his mother, he doesn't orient to her voice, sometimes he looks at his father when he uses a vigorous voice. We have analysed the voice of the mother during an interaction in which she appears very anxious because Paolo doesn't pay attention to her call: 'Paolo, Paolo...look at me...my baby'. The spectrogram of the mother's voice is flat without any prosodic pitch or long pauses. After some minutes the video shows a totally different scenario where Paolo is in a rich verbal and visual dialogical interaction with his uncle. The analysis of uncle's voice show all the characteristic of the motherese. Differences between the spectrogram of the voice of the mother and of the voice of the uncle is plain.

This sequence, along with video sequences of other babies (Laznick et al, 2005) has taught us that the prosodic motherese (or better parentese) is able to capture in dialogical sequences also withdrawn infants with a very weak desire for the other.

Motherese (termed also 'infant-directed speech' because it is specifically and automatically displayed by caregivers when they are in front of an infant, and thus distinctly different from adult-directed speech) has a defined rhythmic, adagio-andante, and melodic feature as well as a prosodic intonation of the voice. It is organised in repeated phrases with heightened pitch, exaggerated intonations, hyper-articulated vowels, fewer syllables in each word or phrase, specific articulations and punctuations, longer pauses. It tends to create slowly changing cyclical narratives of emotion, and it has been found that mothers have a higher affect when addressing their infant with

motherese. A comparison of parent's speech to infants in different languages confirms that these rhythmic and prosodic features are universal (Fernald, 1989; Fernald & Mazzie, 1991). Fernald has also found that when infants listen to recorded words addressed by the mother to an absent child, the strong attention and increased sucking that occur when the mother talks directly to the child are absent, and he has shown that the reason why the infant showed so little interest in the mother language is because typical prosodic peaks were absent in the recorded voice of the mother.

Observations of more complex interpersonal relationships aroused by the motherese demonstrate the important role of motherese in supporting early integrative functions that are otherwise defective. In other words, these joyful interactions in response to motherese suggest that motherese can help the child out of his autism. Other parental behaviours, even though affectionate and responding with intuitive sympathy to the reduced social feedback of an infant developing autism, do not seem sufficient enough to ameliorate the state of abnormal withdrawal in the infant, because he/she does not possess the regulatory motive abilities to escape this withdrawn state; as a consequence the emergent dialogical capacities will become further undermined without the specific support resulting from a vivid and marked interaction as in motherese. Moreover, research at the University of Sidney (Burnham, Kitamura & Vollmer-Conna, 2002) on the prosody of the motherese in normal dyads, has shown that the baby's reactions to the mother ameliorate the prosodic pitch in the motherese of the mother; thus motherese emerges not just as a specific adult language which is activated in front of an infant but a true co-construction inside a very precocious development of dialogical self. It could be of interest that, in our research on social and nonsocial attention, the pathway of the two specular items 'vocalizing to objects' and 'vocalizing to persons' during the first year of life in children with autism has shown, differently from healthy children, a lower increase of social vocalizing and a higher increase of vocalizing to objects (Muratori, Maestro & Laznik, 2005).

Motherese plays a fundamental role in creating social emotional connections. Newborns, like our infant Paolo, while listening to motherese, have increased sucking activity, they focus more on faces, and their attention level increases parallel to the pitch frequency. For this reason motherese is supposed to play an important role for the expression of cortical and sub-cortical connections which are at work in the early development of the brain. When these linkages are not properly formed early in life, a variety of downstream effects may occur. Trevarthen and Aitken (2001) have focused their attention on the child's strong aptitude to motherese and on its central role for the development of neural circuits which allow language as well as emotions and intersubjectivity to emerge. Disturbances in the establishment of these neural circuits in the autistic brain was recently confirmed through different PET and fMRI experiments in adults and children with autism (Boddaert et al, 2003; Boddaert et al, 2004; Gervais

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et al, 2004). The findings of these studies suggest that abnormal auditory cortical processing is implicated in the inadequate response to sounds typically seen in autism.

Our clinical observations and this neurobiological research on the perception of complex sounds, opens a new field of research in autism that needs to be focused on the musicality of language and on its relation with common verbal language. We suggest that the shift of attention from motherese to usual words without musicality, is impaired in these children because of a deep disconnection, or a non integration, between musicality and language. We can also hypothesize that while musicality has more to do with dialogical self, language has to do with the self/other distinction.

Contingency

Autism emerges from our research as a disorder of performed intersubjectivity, that is a pathology of secondary intersubjectivity which has his roots in dysfunctions of primary intersubjectivity and/or dialogical self. According to the concept of subjectivity as an attribute of acting agents (Trevarthen & Aitken, 2001), infants with autism seem able to exhibit some form of subjectivity; however, they are not able to adapt or fit this subjectivity to other people intentions, that is they are not able to develop actual intersubjective skills. The child's capacity to make this connection typically becomes more apparent around the ninth month, as the child moves into complex chains of emotional reciprocity, and passes from dyadic to triadic engagement. This is the reason why it becomes easier to suspect autism after this age. So, can we imagine that all the developmental deficits in autism are downstream phenomena of a core deficit which is already present during the first months of life? To respond to this question Gergely and Watson (1999) have proposed that autism may be related to a dysfunction of the contingency detection mechanism. According to these authors, typical infants, during the first three months of life, are very sensitive to perfect contingencies between responses and stimulus events which are typically provided by cyclic repetitions of body-centered activities during human interactions. It is hypothesized that perfect contingencies provide an important source of self-calibrating information; thus they are essential for the development of a primary representation of the bodily self as a distinct object, leading to the progressive differentiation of the self. However, selective evolutionary pressure is for adaptation to the external environment, and thus typical infant shifts orientation from these perfect contingencies to environment-based contingencies. In fact, by 3 months of age there is a transition in the preferred target setting of the innate contingency detection mechanism which is accomplished by resetting the contingency detection mechanism from perfect to something less than perfect. Thus, typical 5-month-old infants, in contrast to 3-month-old infants, show a clear preference for non-contingent interactions (Bahrick & Watson, 1985).

Successively, Gergely (2001) has suggested that in infants with autism this normal shift, triggered by maturation experience, in the target value of the contingency

detection mechanism does not take place. In fact, in an experimental setting (where 2-3-years-old children sat in front of two TV monitors each displaying a perfectly response-contingent or a highly but imperfectly response-contingent image of the child's hand movement), he has shown that while typical children preferentially orient toward an imitative feedback of their actions (that is a highly but imperfectly contingent feedback), children with autism spent significantly more time looking at the perfectly contingent feedback than at the imitative feedback. Gergely specifies that this does not imply that children with autism cannot detect the high-but-imperfect imitative contingency; in fact they may well do so, but they have difficulties in resetting their contingency detection mechanism. It is not an all-or-none matter but rather a matter of degree, and it is reasonable to say that the dysfunctional resetting of the 'contingency switch' in autism is a matter of degree of the development of dialogical self and of self-and other-awareness. In fact to prefer less than perfect contingencies means that the infant is developing a sense of the other as a more independent agent interacting with him/herself. On the contrary, the fact that children with autism continue to invest in perfect contingencies can be seen as an underlying factor for the difficulties in the co-construction of the dialogical self. The result is a failure in motives to move from dyadic (or contingent) engagement to triadic (or non-contingent) engagement and to collaborative actions. This is probably the reason because, in the home videos of children with autism, the expected joyful intersubjective interactions are both much less frequent and more dependent on the type of approach used by the caregiver such as motherese.

Autism as a modifier of parent-infant interaction

We can also reasonably sustain that the persistent infant's preferred contingent relationship rapidly alters the attitude of the parents towards the infant. In fact, we have seen in the experiment by Burnham et al (2002), that the baby's contingent reactions to the mother are able to ameliorate the prosodic pitch in the motherese of the mother. Doussard-Roosevelt, Joe and Bazhenova (2003) have analyzed sequential maternal approaches and the corresponding child responses to these approaches in a free play situation and have identified specific maternal approaches which are particularly effective in eliciting prosocial responses from the child. They have shown how children with autism showed fewer contingent responses to their mothers than typical children, and how their contingency was a function of the type of approach behaviors their mother used. In fact their responses were more contingent when the intensity of the approach behaviour was high and they were more engaged in the interaction when their mothers used nonverbal behaviours such as increased proximity or objects in the interactions.

The specific modification of parent-child interaction have been described in two recent studies that have utilised the home movies of two sisters, one of whom turned out to be autistic, while the other became typical. Trevarthen and Daniel (2005), through a

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microanalytic study of less than one year old twins have pointed out disorganised rhythm and synchrony in the interaction as early signs of autism. They have described a father who, in his attempt to engage his autistic daughter, receives no reinforcement for the social, intersubjective elements of his behaviour, as he does consistently from the developmentally normal twin. The absence of these normal, regulated social rewards tacitly affects the father's rhythms of interaction, and, as a consequence, he becomes more and more insistent and irregular. With the autistic twin the father misses the shared stages of social tension and emotional build-up; he gives up trying to regulate these shared interactions in favour of frequent periods of physical stimulation. That parental behaviour is interpreted by Trevarthen as a natural adaptive response, on behalf of the father, to the non dialogical daughter.

In the other study, Danon-Boileau (2007) has undertaken a thorough analysis of two parallel situations, involving a mother giving her daughters a bath: the first, who will develop autism, at 5 months of age, and the second, who will have typical development, at 3 months of age. The two bath scenes, which were filmed at a distance of two years, are comparatively similar, and they are considered by the author as a particular moment of intimacy in the interaction where the goal of care is mixed with the goal of play based on pleasure and shared behaviours. The paper is focused on the child's behaviour and on the mother's discourse during this particular early interaction. Posture, facial expression and gaze are quite different in the two infants: the typical daughter clings to her mother's gaze, her body is relaxed and she produces signs that can be interpreted by the mother, and by the observer, as signs of pleasure; while the other has poor eye contact, absence of mimicry and queer posture so that she seems to cling to her own self without any signs of pleasure in the interaction. These differences are taken as an explanation of why the mother, whose language is usually marked by the universal ambition to consider the child as a true partner, doesn't behave and talk in the same way with the two infants. With the infant affected by autism, the mother probably feels that something is going wrong, she becomes insecure about her infant as a potential co-thinker, and consequently, compared to typical daughter, she uses a different type of language. She speaks more to this child, her speech is full of elements with a calling function (interjections, questions, rises, syllable lengthening), the use of the child's name has no vocative function but it is an effort to maintain contact, she uses emotive nicknames more rarely (such as 'my little baby' instead of the real name of the baby), the prosody is quite different for the higher intensity and intonation. Differently, with the typical infant the mother can maintain the contact without using speech, and this enables her to make more assertive statements and her prosody comes closer to what can be observed in adult conversation.

The general impression that arises from these studies is that the parent's attitude depends on the child. If the child is socially attentive and dialogical, the parent behaviour is more natural and there are fewer attempts to attract an infant, who is far

from being dialogical, with more physical or verbal stimulation. This general impression is comparable to those of our new ongoing study based on sequential analysis of parent and infant behaviours in a number of home movies of under-one infants with autism. In these videos, infants with autism receive significantly more solicitations to regulate up their mood and arousal compared to infants with typical development.

All these data seem to demonstrate that parents are 'aware' (very early in time and before any conscious concern) of the abnormal quality of the emotional interaction of their infant and of them as co-speaker and co-thinkers. We have seen that also motherese can be conceived as a co-construction inside dialogicality and it is now possible to hypothesize that it becomes impaired because of the genetically based dysfunction in the contingency detection mechanism.

Autism and the mirror neuron system

A further step in the understanding of the primary difficulties in autism has been achieved starting with the discovery of the mirror neuron system (MNS). This discovery also has many implications regarding the dialogical self and its neurobiological basis. First discovered in the ventral premotor cortex (area F5) of the macaque, mirror neurons fire both while a monkey performs goal-directed actions and while it observes the same actions performed by others (Rizzolatti & Craighero, 2004). This observation-execution matching system is thought to provide a neural mechanism that enables the simulation of the actions of others, thus leading to an understanding of the emotions and intentions associated with those actions. The existence of an analogous MNS in humans has been demonstrated and it has been proposed that its dysfunction early in development could give rise to the cascade of impairments that are characteristic of autism (Gallese, 2006; Iacoboni & Dapretto, 2006). Relevant to a MNS theory of autism is that this system, in concert with activity in limbic centers, may mediate our understanding of the emotional states of others. To examine MNS abnormalities in autism, a group of children underwent fMRI while imitating emotional expressions (Dapretto et al, 2006). Results suggest that, although children with autism performed the imitation task as requested, the neural strategies adopted are quite different compared to typical children. In fact, while typically developing children can rely upon a MNS, whereby the meaning of the imitated emotion is directly felt and hence understood, the MNS is not engaged in children with autism, who must then adopt an alternative strategy of increased visual and motor attention whereby the internally felt emotional significance of the imitated facial expression is probably not experienced. The lack of MNS activity during imitation of emotional expression provides strong support for the hypothesis that early dysfunction in the MNS may be at the core of the social deficits observed in autism.

Complementary to these studies on MNS and its dysfunctions in autism, another brain imaging study (Kennedy, Redcay & Courchesne, 2006) has demonstrated that

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patients with autism fail to show differential activity in the ‘default state’ network (a set of cortical areas that shows tonic, high metabolic activity at rest and that typically reduces its activity while subjects are engaged in cognitive tasks) between rest and a cognitive task. This network is supposed to be related to both self-oriented thoughts and with the processing of external social stimuli. Self and other, similarly to two sides of a coin (Iacoboni, in press), are inextricably linked in the default system; for example the activity in the anterior prefrontal cortex (that fails to deactivate in autism during a cognitive task) is substantially identical when control subjects are performing judgements of self and judgements of others that are similar to self, thus suggesting that to judge others similar to us, we simulate judging ourselves.

The simulation process of the default system (which has to do with the internal aspects of self - and then of the other) provides a reminder of the simulation process in the MNS (which has to do with the external aspects of other - and then of the self). Thus the study on failing to deactivate the default system, together with the study showing MNS deficits in autism, are interpreted, by Iacoboni (in press), as suggesting a unifying principle of the social deficit in autism: what are disrupted are neural systems that support processes related to both internal and external aspects of self and other. We can easily suppose that this disruption represents a core deficit in the development of dialogical self and in the achievement of primary and secondary intersubjectivity.

The dysfunction of the MNS could be also the reason for the difficulties in the anticipation of other’s aim which emerges, from our research on home movies, as one of the first behaviors that is able to distinguish typical infants from infants with autism by six months; in fact, at this very early age infants with autism show difficulties in foreseeing the aims of other people and in anticipating others intentions. We suggest that the lack of the anticipation of other’s aim is correlated to the defective ‘intentional attunement’ which is considered by Gallese (2006) as the expression of a core deficit in the MNS of autistic individuals. According to this author, intentional attunement is experienced when confronting the intentional behavior of others and it generates a peculiar quality of familiarity with other individuals, produced by the collapse of other’s intentions into the observer’s ones. Gallese has proposed that intentional attunement plays a crucial role in intersubjectivity and that most of the social and cognitive deficits in autism are to be ascribed to the lack of a full-blown intentional attunement, probably underpinned by impairments in connectivity and/or functioning of the MNS.

Self and other emerge from the recent literature on MNS as inextricably linked: one cannot exist without the other. It means that in order to see ourselves we must appropriate the vision of others (see Holquist, 1990, about Bakhtin’s ideas). Self and other are co-constituted and they are carved out of a more primary intersubjectivity (that is dyadic engagement, according to Tomasello et al, 2005, or a we-centric space, according to Gallese, 2006, or the dialogical self according to Hermans & Dimaggio,

2004). Thus, the neural system that deals with internal and external aspects of the self might be crucial for the coding of such primary intersubjectivity in the early developing brain. This set of ideas seems parallel to Bråten's (2003) concept of 'virtual other'; this means infants are born with the concept of other, but this necessary concept (or preconception) is not a sufficient condition for the acquisition of dialogicality. An environmental counterpart has to exist in order to allow for the full development of such a feature. Similar to this idea is the following statement by Tomasello et al (2005): "Although the precise nature of the interaction [between the general ape line of understanding intentional action and the modern human line of shared intentionality] is not entirely clear, our general view is that infants begin to understand particular kinds of intentional and mental states in others only after they have experienced them first in their own activity and then used their own experience to simulate that of others" (p. 688).

Conclusion

Throughout this paper we have tried to explore the mysterious question proposed by Courchesne (Courchesne et al, 2006, p.577): "how could the desire for social connection not be there in an infant?" Or, even more mysteriously: "how could the desire appear strongly for a time, only to slowly dwindle away, leaving a strange void?"

Autism affects how a developing person moves and responds in the physical and interpersonal environment. Knowledge of the early stages of autism benefits from a scientific theory of intersubjectivity (Stern, 2004) and of its neurodevelopmental mechanisms. In fact, intersubjectivity can discriminate typical children from those with autism during the first year of life; all other deficits, which are usually described as criteria for diagnosis, develop only later in time, and we have suggested that they are downstream effects of earlier disturbances in the capability to transform simple social behaviors in a real and affectionate way. This theory is based on a typical developing child as an active and experience-seeking infant who grows to master the motives of sympathy in joint action from the newborn period (Nagy & Molnar, 2004). In the different psychological theories of early autism this original state is differently described as dyadic engagement, contingency, we-centric space, primary intersubjectivity, intentionality and eye detection detector, all of which are congruent with the concept of a primitive dialogical self (see Table 1). On the contrary, children with autism have difficulties being aware of and relating to others, and these difficulties interfere with the foundations of dialogicality and addressivity (Bertau, 2004). It is our hypothesis that primary deficits in intersubjectivity impairs dialogical capacity and the chance for caregivers to create dialogical interactions with the baby.

In this paper we have pointed out that this early core difficulty not only has increasingly negative effects on infant-parent-infant interactions but they are also

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**Table 1. Key Events Marking Changes in Development of Dialogical Self
During the First Year of Life**

Age (Months)	Brain & Behavioral Development	Intersubjectivity (Trevarthen)	Engagement (Tomasello)	Empathizing System (Baron-Cohen)
1-3	<p>From the sparse neural circuitry of newborn to the increase in the complexity of dendritic arborizations.</p> <p>Local connectivity & neuronal migration.</p> <p>Maturation of sensory & perceptual systems (maturation of visual focus).</p> <p>At 3 months the neonatal palmar grasp reflex begins to disappear.</p>	<p><i>Primary Intersubjectivity:</i></p> <p>Fixates eyes with smiling. Expressive with face, voice & hands in proto-conversation. Vocal & gestural imitations increase as oral imitations decrease.</p>	<p><i>Dyadic Engagement:</i></p> <p>Shared emotions & behavior. Understanding of animate action. Looking at.</p>	<p><i>Intentionality Detector:</i></p> <p>Automatically interprets an agent's self-propelled movement as a desire or goal directed action, a sign of its agency.</p> <p><i>Eye Detection Detector:</i></p> <p>Interprets eye-like stimuli as looking at me or looking at something else</p>
3-5	<p>Invasion of cortical dendrites by synapses. Neuronal differentiation & growth; dendritic & axonal growth; axonal myelinization. Minicolumn as a fundamental unit of information processing are growing.</p> <p>Smooth visual tracking develops. The baby looks more at the new objects (recognition memory).</p>	<p><i>Person-Person Games:</i></p> <p>Often looks away from partner in communication, attracted to objects. Enjoys body movement games & baby songs. Attracted to own mirror image.</p>		<p><i>Emotion Detector:</i></p> <p>Interprets affective states. Affective states in the observer triggered by recognition of another's mental state</p>
5-8	<p>Tremendous increase in synapse number. Pruning & apoptosis.</p> <p>Reaching with hand is well-directed. Grasping objects. Manipulative play. to reach a goal.</p>	<p><i>Games with Objects:</i></p> <p>Watches partner's hands, attracted to games with toys moved by partner. Imitation of hands, pointing & clapping.</p>	<p><i>Triadic Engagement:</i></p> <p>Shared goals & perceptions. Understanding pursuit of goals.</p> <p>Seeing</p>	<p><i>Shared Attention:</i></p> <p>Interprets if the self & another agent are – or are not – perceiving the same event</p>

(Table 1 continued on next page)

Table 1 (continued)

Age (Months)	Brain & Behavioral Development	Intersubjectivity (Trevarthen)	Engagement (Tomasello)	Empathizing System (Baron-Cohen)
5-8 (cont'd)	Improvement in working memory: baby remember location of hidden objects. Beginning of the child's ability to control behavior	Playful & sociable with family; Timid with strangers. Combines objects in two-handed manipulation. Babbling, & rhythmic banging of objects.		
9-12	Frontal & parietal cortices grow. The earlier maturing sensory & perceptual systems are integrated with the slowly maturing regions, such as frontal cortex, for higher social, emotional & cognitive functions. Strategic, executive thinking. The integration of limbic (amygdala) & endocrine systems into the memory network creates the basis for separation anxiety	<i>Secondary Intersubjectivity:</i> Shares tasks with objects. Shows pride in learned skills & possession of objects. Uses voice & gesture to seek other's attention; complies with gestural & vocal directives; follows gaze & pointing. Imitates first words.	<i>Collaborative Engagement:</i> Joint intentions & attention. Understanding of choice of plans. Attending	<i>Empathizing System (TESS):</i> Allows an empathic reaction to another's emotional state. Ensures that organisms feel a drive to help each other.

inextricably linked to a deviant path of the biological maturation of the social brain. Among the most important we have considered unbalanced local versus long-distance connectivity, activation of neural networks distinct from those employed by non autistic individuals, particularly for socially relevant stimuli such as face and voice, and dysfunction of the mirror neuron system. All these pathways assume an important place in the development of the dialogical self and of the normal dynamic balance between motives for self-directed action and motives for engagement with others' motives. Of particular interest is the MNS hypothesis of autism which, due to its intuitive appeal, has been tested repeatedly in recent years. It provides many insights into the condition of autism and could inspire novel forms for its treatment. According to this hypothesis Gallese has proposed that 'intentional attunement' plays a crucial role in intersubjectivity and that its malfunctioning in autism is the expression of dysfunctions in the MNS.

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As far as infant-parent interaction is concerned we have considered different studies showing that infants with autism display fewer contingent responses to their parents than non-autistic children and that episodes of contingency are a function of the type of approach used by others. In fact, different observations suggest that their responses are more contingent when the intensity of the caregiver's approach behavior is higher and when their parents use nonverbal behaviors such as increased proximity and objects in interaction. We have discussed sequences where infants with autism, when confronted with motherese, show unexpected dialogical competencies. Motherese seems to help the child out of his autism through the creation of dialogical interactions, and we can reason that these sequences are the expression of new cortical and sub-cortical networks which cannot take place in early brain development. But we have also underlined that motherese is a true co-construction between the infant and the mother, which is quite consistent with the conceptual framework of the dialogical self where others are not simply external, but rather possess, from infancy onwards, both an internal and an external position (Hermans & Dimaggio, 2004).

The framework we have proposed is a sort of unification of different levels of analysis; we think that it will not only provide a test case for theories of normal brain and social development but can also provide therapeutic targets for prevention and remediation of the core deficits in autism. We can imagine that an early intervention program delivered in the context of a dialogical interaction and providing compelling social input to the child, could decrease the cumulative effects of the primary dysfunctions of intersubjectivity and it can also ameliorate deficits in the biological maturation of the social brain. Therefore we need to evaluate how far the proposed framework for early autism dovetails with therapeutic approaches that are specifically designed to enhance the ability of children with autism to engage in dialogical interactions (for example anticipation of other's aim could be considered a key behavior that could be used as an effective form of treatment). We hope that to consider the dialogical self and dialogicality as critical targets for early treatment will enhance possibilities to set the stage for creating appropriate early interventions that could help to develop compensatory strategies and limit the downstream effects of the earlier dysfunctions.

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**THE ORIGINS OF AUTISM: A COMMENTARY ON MURATORI &
MAESTRO'S "AUTISM AS A DOWNSTREAM EFFECT OF PRIMARY
DIFFICULTIES IN INTERSUBJECTIVITY INTERACTING WITH
ABNORMAL DEVELOPMENT OF BRAIN CONNECTIVITY"**

John Barresi
Dalhousie University, Canada

ABSTRACT. Muratori & Maestro (2007, this issue) provide a fascinating investigation into the possible origins of autism and how it may begin to show itself during the first year of life. However, one could hope for greater clarity on how the variety of hypotheses that they consider relate to each other and to the origins and development both of autism and of the dialogical self. In this commentary I support a neurological hypothesis on the origin for autism and provide an information processing account of the development of autistic difficulties in social interactions and in forming a conception of the dialogical self.

Muratori & Maestro (2007, this issue) investigate possible origins of autism by studying signs of this disorder that begin to emerge during the first year of life. Because there is as yet no way to assess autism at birth, it takes time to determine whether an infant or toddler has autism, and it is only in the third or fourth year that autism can be clearly identified. However, through retrospective analysis of videos taken of infants who eventually get assessed as exhibiting autism, Muratori and Maestro, and others, have been able to discover possible early signs of autism even during the first year of infancy. And there are now some prospective studies of infants, who are siblings to autistic individuals and later diagnosed with autism (Bryson, et al., 2007; Zwaigenbaum, et al., 2005) that provide some complementary support for findings from these retrospective studies.

The question arising from these studies that is the focus of this article is what is the original cause of autism. A variety of fascinating hypotheses are considered; however, it isn't always clear how these hypotheses relate to each other and to the origins and development both of autism and of the dialogical self. In particular, the psychological and neurological hypotheses that they cover appear to be at odds with each other. On the one hand, they hypothesize that neurological events that happen during the latter part of the first year are downstream effects of earlier deficits in primary intersubjectivity that are the original cause of autism, while on the other hand

AUTHOR NOTE. Please address correspondence about this article to John Barresi, Department of Psychology, Dalhousie University, Halifax NS, Canada B3H 4J1. Email: jbarresi@dal.ca

they sometimes hypothesize that a neurological disorder is the original cause of autism. Because the arguments presented in favour of a neurological origin to autism are more compelling to me than those for a psychological origin, in what follows I will present a unified neurological account and point out how the social psychological hypotheses that are presented fail to deal with issues satisfied by a neurological account.

According to the main neurological hypothesis that is presented there is a neurological basis to autism that makes its first serious appearance in the latter part of the first year when there is a great neural expansion in the frontal regions of the brain that tend to be involved in social functions. Through some genetic or epigenetic neural disorder, possibly associated with the formation of glial cells, the development of “long-distant” cells is inhibited relative to the development of “short-distant” cells in the prefrontal cortex, cerebellum and other cortical areas. Some of the correlates that may emerge during the second half of the first year due to this neural dysfunctional are problems in attention, particularly in joint attention with others, which is important for developing secondary intersubjectivity.

Although not directly considered as such in the present article, this problem could also account for the neural deficiency in the mirror neuron system (MNS) as well as the “default state”¹ system that is found in older children with autism, both of which have implications for social information processing. The MNS, by which one interprets the actions of others through matching one’s own action plans with the perception of action in others, requires closely timed integration of information from distant regions of the brain in order to be operative, and is unlikely to be innately tuned to deal with these diverse sources of information, so they are likely to emerge in development with the expansion of the long-distant neural system. This neural disorder could also cause abnormalities in the default state system found in older autistic individuals (Kennedy, Redcay, & Courchesne, 2004).

There are two important issues that arise with respect to this neurological hypothesis, both of which conflict with the social psychological hypothesis that Muratori and Maestro propose. The first is whether autism is fundamentally a problem in the social domain or whether it is a general information-processing problem that affects most importantly the social domain. With respect to this issue the evidence so far suggests that both social and non-social problems are likely to be associated with these unusual neurological developments. Zwaigenbaum, et al. (2005), have found that between the 6th and 12th month, siblings of autistic children who will eventually be

¹ The term “default state” is used to indicate the activation state of brains of participants in imaging studies during baseline or “resting” conditions, when no stimulus is presented. The brain is surprisingly active during this state, particularly in the medial frontal region. This default activation state has been hypothesized to indicate reflective self-consciousness as well as social consciousness and it seems likely that this system is affected when neural development becomes disordered in autism.

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diagnosed with autism show, relative to other siblings without autism, an increasing inability to “disengage” attention from one stimulus, when a new interesting stimulus appears. This attention disengagement problem seems likely to be one of the consequences of lack of long-distant neural connections and the density of short-distant connections in the frontal region (Courchesne & Pierce, 2005). This inability to shift attention would naturally have an enormous impact on the development of shared attention, because of the necessity to shift attention between another person and objects of attention in triadic interactions, which are the basis of secondary intersubjectivity. However, it would produce other consequences that are also autistic but are not particularly social, for instance, the tendency to focus on one and only one activity to the exclusion of others and the tendency to engage in repetitive actions. So it seems possible on this neurological hypothesis that disturbances in social interactions associated with autism may represent only the major outcome of problems of a more general information-processing sort – in particular, of integrating information from multiple modalities or information sources. Both integrating these sources into complex unities and shifting attention with respect to dynamic social phenomena involving multiple sources of information would then lead to special problems in the social domain.

There is also a second consequence of this neurological hypothesis that also opposes the psychological hypothesis. It is that the infant who will eventually acquire autism need not have any problem in the earlier phases of development, during that period of primary intersubjectivity prior to the latter half of the first year. Indeed, it is not usually until the latter part of the first year that retrospective analyses of videos of infants begin to show clear signs predictive of autism (e.g., Palomo, Belinchòn & Ozonoff, 2006), a result that has been confirmed in a projective study (Bryson, et al., 2007). Yet, on the other hand, and on the basis of their psychological hypothesis, Muratori and Maestro suggest that there is a problem in primary intersubjectivity and the motivation for social interaction during the first-half year in these infants, which is evidenced by differences in social attention in videos taken before 6 months in their own studies (Maestro, et al., 2005; Maestro et al., 2006). Indeed, they suggest that the neurological consequences that occur during the latter part of the first year may be due to these earlier disturbances in primary intersubjectivity.

The hypothesis that these neurological symptoms are the consequence of disturbances in primary intersubjectivity and social motivation early in the first year strikes me as implausible. For instance, it doesn't seem likely that early psychological phenomena of this sort could account to the great expansion in head size during the latter part of the first year found in a large proportion of infants later diagnosed as autistic, or for the disturbances in development of glial cells during that period (Courchesne & Pierce, 2005). More likely is the possibility that an incipient phase of this neurological disorder already displays itself in early differences in social attention

found in videos of infants later diagnosed as having autism, and especially in cases of early onset autism, as opposed to what the authors call regressive autism in Maestro, et al. (2006).

Let's assume, then, that autism has a neurological basis that may exhibit itself during the first year in some cases by affecting primary intersubjectivity in the form of reduced social attention during the first half of the first year, and in many more cases affecting secondary intersubjectivity, through the complex information processing involved in joint attention and other triadic interactions that usually develop during the latter part of the first year. How might these disturbances in intersubjectivity relate to disturbances in the origins and development of the dialogical self?

Near the beginning of their article, when arguing in favour of their psychological hypothesis on the origin of autism, Muratori and Maestro (this issue) assert that “a very early lack of the desire to share experiences, activities, and feelings with other persons” (p. 97) is at the core of the autistic disorder and that problems that arise in dialogical competencies are downstream effects of this original problem. However, toward the end of their article, and more in agreement with the neurological hypothesis, they suggest that it is a “genetically based dysfunction” in “contingency detection” (p. 108) that impairs dialogical activities with others. They go on to discuss the hypothesis that neurological deficits in the MNS and the prefrontal default system in autism may affect the representational system applicable to self and other and that this may “represent a core deficit in the development of dialogical self and in the achievement of primary and secondary intersubjectivity” (p. 109). In partial agreement with the later neurological account, rather than with the earlier motivational account, I believe that problems in contingency matching and dialogical competencies are due to the neurological disorder associated with glial activity and the development of long-distance neural connections and that it is this disorder, which produces deficits in both the MNS and the default system along with contingency matching.

In order to support this hypothesis, I would like briefly to describe a psychological hypothesis that Chris Moore and I proposed some time ago (Barresi & Moore, 1996), and which we have recently described in neurological terms (Barresi & Moore, in press). We hypothesized that in typically developing infants, dyadic and triadic interactions with others provide contexts in which infants share intentional activities with others and become able to match and integrate the first-person information that they have about their own activities with third-person information about these same activities in others. For instance, in shared attention, the infant will match the first-person information of their own attention to an object with the third-person information that they have of the attention of the other individual. The net result is a representation of shared attention that integrates both how attention of a person to an object appears from a first-person point of view and how it appears from a third-person point of view. A later outcome of sharing such experiences with others is the

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development of a capacity to imagine the first-person perspective of another person in an intentional activity when not currently also engaged in that activity. It also results in a capacity to become reflectively aware in imagination of one's own activity from a third-person point of view. It is this later capacity, in particular, that is most relevant to the dialogical self and which is disturbed in autism.

It was our suggestion that because of the information processing difficulties associated with autism involving multi-modal information that they fail to form integrated representations of intentional activities of self and other that include both first- and third-person aspects of those activities. Instead, they develop separate "first-person" and "third-person" representations, which they apply to self and other. More recently, we have related these ideas to disturbances in the MNS and prefrontal areas associated with the default system (Barresi & Moore, in press). The basic idea is that autistic individuals develop a behavior-based third-person model of people that is formed by observing others, but not penetrating to their inner states. On the other hand, they also have an internally based first-person model of people that is peculiarly egocentric and does not take into account how other people might have a different internal perspective. The net result is that they fail to form uniform representations applicable to self and other with both internal and external aspects of intentional activities.

I believe that it is here where the failure to form a dialogical self occurs, and it has its origins, as Muratori and Maestro suggest, in the failure to engage successfully in dyadic and triadic intersubjective activities during the first year of life. However, as I see it, the problem is not originally one of motivation, but one of information processing. The inability to enjoy social interaction is the result of the inability to process contingent matching between self and other and to interpret dialogical encounters with others. Furthermore, since it is through these dialogical encounters that we typically gain an understanding of both self and other, the decrease in capacity of autistic individuals to make sense of these encounters in terms of a uniform model of self and other, eventually leads to a failure in the development of a conception of the dialogical self.

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**SHARED INTENTIONALITY AND AUTISM:
A COMMENT ON MURATORI AND MAESTRO'S "AUTISM AS A
DOWNSTREAM EFFECT OF PROBLEMS IN INTERSUBJECTIVITY
INTERACTING WITH DIFFICULTIES IN BRAIN CONNECTIONS"**

Livia Colle & Elisa Grandi
University and Polytechnic of Turin, Italy

ABSTRACT. Muratori and Maestro (2007, this issue) lay out fundamental issues by highlighting the importance of looking at early signs of autism, essential for early intervention, and by combining the most recent and relevant psychological and neuropsychological approaches to the syndrome. In accordance with Muratori and Maestro, we start from the recent definition of 'shared intentionality' to stress the importance of differentiating the ability to share intentions (neural representation), which has recently been reported to be deficient in autism, from the intention/motivation to share experiences. Intersubjectivity requires both in order to let interpersonal experiences become part of a 'dialogical self'. An inability to understand social interactions, in addition to other cognitive impairments, might lead to an impoverished and distorted internal dialogue, resulting in an incapacity to satisfy the preserved desire to share.

Muratori and Maestro (2007, this issue) do the field of autism research a great service by highlighting how in combination, cognitive (or representational) impairments and affective (a motivation or capacity to share attention) impairments help explain why individuals with autism are not fully able to deal with social interaction. Many recent neurodevelopmental models do emphasize that the developmental and behavioural impairments shown by individuals with autism cannot be explained by cognitive deficits alone [whether in theory of mind, executive function, central coherence or other cognitive processes (for a review, see Burack, Charman, Yirmiya, & Zelazo, 2001)], but instead by a combination of factors that altogether are responsible for development of the disorder.

As mentioned by Muratori and Maestro (2007, this issue), an interesting recent explanation is that the social impairments seen in children with autism reflect a disturbance in the mechanism that normally draws infants' attention to social stimuli and social interactions (Mundy & Neal, 2001; Tomasello, Carpenter, Call, Behne, & Moll, 2005). According to the recent literature the developmental foundations for interpersonal

AUTHORS' NOTE. Please address correspondence about this article to Livia Colle, Center for Cognitive Science, University and Polytechnic of Turin, Department of Psychology, Via Po 14, 10123 Torino, Italy. Email: colle@psych.unito.it

understanding, which involve the domain of registering, responding to, sharing and coordinating attitudes, is the core of human social competence, and is called Shared Intentionality or sometimes ‘We-intentionality’ (Tomasello et al., 2005). It refers to collaborative interactions in which participants have a shared goal and coordinated action roles for pursuing that shared goal. The capacity to share intention with others is unique to human social cognition and makes human social skills very different from those of other animal species. Tomasello et al. suggested that children with autism have a particular problem with shared intentionality and that this accounts for the social-cognitive impairments typical of the autistic spectrum.

In our opinion this new conceptualisation of autism as an early impairment in sharing intentions needs some clarifications.

In their seminal work, Tomasello et al. (2005) include two different aspects in their definition of shared intentionality, both of which are crucial in the development of social competence. They refer to shared intentions, sometimes meaning the possibility to share representations, at a neural and cognitive level, that complementarily exist in different minds. In this case *shared intentions* mean that two or more individuals hold the same cognitive representation when they produce and observe actions (shared neural representation). Sharing intentions seems to be crucial in imitation and to develop cooperative social interactions. The Mirror Neuron System (MNS) provides a possible neural basis for these shared representations (Gallese, 2006).

In other cases shared intentionality seems to refer to the motivation to share experience with others; which is distinct from the capacity to share representations. In Tomasello et al. this motivation is the *basis* for the cognitive representations. We can define this second meaning as the *intention to share* rather than the capacity to share. A prototypic behavioural sign of the intention to share can be considered *declarative pointing*. Declarative pointing describes the infant’s (from 12 months old) attempts to obtain an adult’s attention by pointing to share interest about an object or event. A recent study demonstrates that 12-month-olds begin pointing with the motive of sharing attention and interest with other people, and that they are less satisfied when the adult only looks at the object or event while ignoring the child or only looks and responds to the child while ignoring the event (Liszkowski, Carpenter, Henning, Striano, & Tomasello, 2004). The intention to share has not been investigated yet at a neural level and this distinction between shared intentions and intention to share is particularly important in autism.

Evidence for the lack of a representation of *shared intentionality* can be taken from neuroimaging studies. Some studies report impaired premotor activation in the region thought to be part of the MNS, during imitation of actions (for a review, see Oberman & Ramachandran, 2007) or imitation of emotional facial expressions (Dapretto, Davies, Pfeifer, Scott, Sigman, Bookheimer, & Iacoboni, 2006). It has been

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suggested that children with autism have an abnormal MNS, and that this deficit may play a critical role in weaknesses in imitation performance, poor theory of mind skills and impaired social cognition (Williams, Whiten, Suddendorf, & Perrett, 2001). However no evidence in individuals with autism directly measures activation of the MNS during periods of shared-intention, for example during a task involving joint actions. While there is evidence that the MNS is deficient in children with Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD), leading to impaired performance on imitation tasks, the hypothesis that these low level imitation impairments in ASD are a causal factor in social abilities in these children remains speculative.

More problematic seems to be the second definition of sharing, which refers to the motivation/intention to share with others. In the autistic spectrum, Wing and Gould (1979) identified three types of social interaction, namely, 'aloof and indifferent', 'passively accepting', and 'active but odd' social approaches. This distinction makes it possible to distinguish children with autism who have the intention to share but are not able to pursue it in their motivation ('active but odd'), and children with autism who do not show any interest in sharing experience with the other (the first two types). This distinction seems to us a very important one for clinical practice.

Most children with high-functioning ASD have intact social interest and initiate social contact as frequently as other children do (Frith, 2003). Sigman, Kasari, Kwon, and Yirmiya (1992) suggesting that autistic individuals are not affectively flat, but display socially inappropriate extremes of emotions. Capps, Kasari, Yirmiya, and Sigman (1993) conducted two separate studies (one with mentally retarded autistic children and the other with autistic children with IQs of 75 or higher) in which emotional expressiveness was examined by parental reports and experimental situations designed to elicit empathy. The autistic individuals did not display less emotion or facial expressions, but reacted more intensely than the normally developing subjects. However, the subjects used in the Capps et al. studies were not infants and thus do not have any bearing on infant development.

So, if the core deficit lies in the area of social motivation, it cannot be due to a lack of social interest in general, but because of a more specific reason, for example, lack of interest in other people's mental states. One such form of social interest is joint attention, the coordination or sharing of attentive activities such as gaze - following and looking where someone is pointing – all essential activities for so-called triadic engagement.

Clinical experience shows that at least some high-functioning adults with ASD have a strong – sometimes even fanatical – interest in what other people feel or think: They spend a great deal of time trying to infer what a certain behaviour or utterance means. Often they describe this uncertainty about what is going on in other people's minds as the greatest stressor in their lives. These adults clearly do not suffer from a

lack of motivation to share things psychologically with others, but rather from the conflict between their desire to understand others and their inability to do so adequately. We could argue that they have the motivation to share but they did not develop the cognitive neural mechanisms (shared intention), that would allow them to pursue this desire.

In combining the literature of primary intersubjectivity, mirror neurons and connectivism, Muratori and Maestro maintain the same confusion present in Tomasello. Mirror neurons and connectivism may contribute at a neural level in sharing the same mental representation during an action, but are they also responsible for the genuine desire to share a common goal, and to help or to cooperate with others? We can speculate that primary and secondary intersubjectivity requires both aspects of shared intentionality in order to function well.

From a developmental point of view, we can agree with Muratori and Maestro that the ‘dialogical self’ is based on the experience of intersubjectivity. But to become a ‘miniature-society’ of multivoiced intrapersonal space (Hermans & Dimaggio, 2004), it needs significant interpersonal experiences and several cognitive abilities. During interpersonal experiences, individuals incorporate and make stable the meaning of events which emerge from personal dialogue with significant others.

If intersubjectivity comprises both shared intentions and intentions to share, we can postulate that individuals with autism have incorporated an internal dialogical self, since we have suggested that they develop at least some components of intersubjectivity. However, our hypothesis is that the impoverished and awkward interpersonal experiences that people with autism collect during development, results in an internal dialogue that is poor and often distorted. To give a simple example, children with High Functioning Autism/Asperger Syndrome (HFA/AS), due to their odd behaviour, are often victims of bullying which they cannot defend themselves against properly (Heinrichs, 2003). These interpersonal experiences often generate in them a hypersensitivity to jokes and teasing. They develop a chronic fear of to being teased and ridiculed and they cannot differentiate between situations where people are laughing at them or with them (Reddy, Williams & Vaughan, 2002).

In this case people with autism could develop some internal dialogue, but it seems to be distorted and very rigid compared to those without autism.

Muratori and Maestro also lay out a fundamental issue, which is one of the major foci of recent research, concerning the early sign of the disorder. There is evidence that early detection of autism is important because early behavioural intervention can have substantial impact on the long-term prognosis of many individuals with autism (Oserling & Dawson, 1994; Rogers, 1998). Parental reports and home videos indicate that symptoms of autism exist very early in life, well before a diagnosis is made, and they include lack of response to the parents’ voice, an absence of

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attempts to interact, failure to orient to their own name (Gillberg, Ehlers, Schaumann, Jakobsson, Dahlgren, Lindblom, Bagenholm, Tjuus, & Blidner, 1990; Rogers & DiLalla, 1990), extremes of temperament and other behaviours ranging from passivity to marked irritability (Gillberg et al., 1990; Hoshino, Kaneko, Yashima, Kumashiro, Volkmar, & Cohen, 1987), poor eye contact, reduced social smiling, and lack of pointing and the production of facial expressions.

However, data from these retrospective sources have several limitations. First of all they generally lack appropriate controls. In particular most of these studies do not distinguish infants with autism from infants with mental retardation, so that behaviour recorded at this early age may be related to mental retardation and not to autism per se. It is important for clinical practice and for the understanding of early neurodevelopment in humans to examine whether the above early behavioural indicators are specific to autism.

More importantly observations from home videos are subject to great methodological variability and depend on the particular context selected for taping (Palomo, Belinchon & Ozonoff, 2006). The resulting data is based mainly on interactions made at variable time points and on sampling strategies that are not fully independent of later outcome. Additionally, environmental factors might influence the infant's behaviour on the tape (for example, the number of people present, the type of social occasion taking place and so on). All of these methodological limitations explain why it is still not possible to reliably make a diagnosis of autism earlier than 18 months old.

Another important issue is that the early signs of autism do not involve social signs only, but rather subtle symptoms in different areas, that are present at 9-12 months. Several findings suggest that early assessment procedures need to consider sensory processing/sensory-motor functions in addition to social responses during infancy (Baranek, 1999). There is a dearth of empirical information about the various qualitative aspects of sensory-motor behaviours (e.g., sensory perceptual responses, arousal modulation, movement patterns, object manipulations, postural adjustments) that may be disrupted early on in the development of children with autism. These types of difficulties are reported extensively in older children with autism (e.g., Adrien, Ornitz, Barthelemy, Sauvage, & LeLord, 1987) as well as in retrospective accounts of the infancy period based on medical chart reviews and/or parental reports (Dahlgren & Gillberg, 1989; Gillberg et al., 1990; Kanner, 1943). A variety of specific sensory-seeking behaviours (e.g., scratching fabrics, staring at lights) are also reported retrospectively during infancy. Many of these *qualitatively* different sensory-motor behaviours are not the focus of conventional assessments, and thus, potential markers of autism during infancy could be overlooked by practitioners.

Additionally, autism seems to involve a basic and general impairment in attentional functioning and in the ability to shift attention between different stimuli (Bryson, Wainwright-Sharp & Smith, 1990; Courchesne, Townsend, Akshoomoff, Saitoh, Yeung-Courchesne, Lincoln, James, Haas, Schreibman, & Lau, 1994). Courchesne, Akshoomoff, Townsend, and Saitoh (1995) proposed that attentional impairment might contribute to the profound social disabilities seen in autism because early social exchanges require rapid shifting of attention between different stimuli.

As with other theoretical approaches, such as Theory of Mind and Executive Function, the hypothesis of impaired intersubjectivity, suggested by Muratori and Maestro, seems to account for the early social deficit in autism but it cannot explain other relevant abnormalities (such as attentional shift and sensory-motor peculiarities) typical of autism which also are likely play a role in social development.

We consider the ability to shift attention from one's own perspective to another person's as one of these cognitive components, additional to intersubjectivity, that is necessary to develop a functioning dialogical self. The inability to rapidly shift between different internal representations may cause the internal dialogue of these patients to be less flexible and poorer in function.

To conclude, we agree with Muratori and Maestro that some components of intersubjectivity may be impaired in autism. However, these components are not sufficient to predict if and *how* the dialogical self will develop in these individuals. Other cognitive abilities and social experiences are also responsible for these multivoiced internal dialogues. The complex interaction of several of the developmental components, necessary for a properly functioning dialogical self, may be responsible for an impaired dialogical self in autism. The lack of shared intentions, attentional shifts, mentalization and problematic interpersonal experiences may result in an impoverished, rigid and distorted dialogue with him/her self: autism.

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**ON THE NOTION OF VOICE:
AN EXPLORATION FROM A PSYCHOLINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVE WITH
DEVELOPMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

Marie-Cécile Bertau
Universität München, Germany

ABSTRACT. The notion of voice is explored in two steps. Firstly, Bakhtin's understanding of voice is sketched. Secondly, a psycholinguistic perspective is developed where voice is first of all a concrete auditive-vocal event. Five key concepts are used to describe the phenomenon: indexicality, body, intonation, imitation, and internalization. Indexicality refers to voice as index means for speaker/listeners, pointing to the actual shared situation of communicating persons; further, voice indexes the speaking body which is itself socio-culturally shaped. Intonation is viewed as being deeply socially and dialogically shaped. Imitation and internalization are explored in regard to voice acquisition in ontogenesis. Mutual imitation of child and caregiver in early communication and speech acquisition form an incessant movement from the one to the other, intermingling the voices of both persons. Eventually, the voice of a specific other leads the internalization process, voice being its "semiotic mechanism". As a result, voice is thought to be a meaningful, perceivable and experienced form tied to another person. This form serves as a powerful mechanism of internalization: vivid materiality becomes a psychological process.

Keywords: voice, intonation, imitation, internalization, dialogical psycholinguistics

The notion of voice is fundamental to the theory of the dialogical self (Hermans and Kempen, 1993; Josephs, 2002; Hermans & Dimaggio, 2004). A brief look at the notion's usage in this theory hints at some core ideas related to it, the most important one being voice as embodied entity.

In its connection to therapeutic work, the notion of voice is closely related to processes of change, to the development of new and different positions in the self. The spatialization of self (Hermans, 1996) allows for simultaneously different positions, and for movement between these positions. The I moves in this space, having the capacity to "endow each position with a voice" (Hermans, 1996), thus establishing dialogical relationships between positions. Hence, in "voice" it is the process of *giving* a voice, and through this, to come into a process of change, that matters; voice and position are the basic notions constructing the space of Self, its perspectivity, its stories, its

AUTHOR NOTE.. Please address correspondence about this article to Marie-Cécile Bertau, Institut für Psycholinguistik, Universität München, Oettingenstraße 67, D-80538 München. Email: bertau@psycholinguistik.uni-muenchen.

coherence (see e.g., Raggatt, 2006). Movements in the self are conceived either as centrifugal (multiplicity of positions, discontinuity and innovation, risk of fragmentation), or as centripetal, with emergent meta-positions (continuity and stability, risk of rigidity). These movements are in constant tension and complement each other (Hermans & Hermans-Jansen, 1995). The processes of voicing or silencing can be seen as carrying these movements. Therefore, in the work of Hermans, I would underline the *generating* character as a basic feature in the concept of voice.

Josephs (2002) illustrates quite clearly the constructional process of a voice in the dialogical self in observing the formation of a voice she calls “the Hopi in Me”. Located neither in the person nor in the culture but as an emergent process between person and culture, voice develops in their contact zones. A voice is then “not a role we play” on the background of a “true self”, it is not a fixed trait of the personality. Coming to a positive definition, Josephs (2002) writes:

A voice is rather an emotionally grounded and personally constructed – in short: a meaningful – focus on one's life in the here-and-now. Thus [...] the range and characteristics of the voices populating the self are in principle unlimited, and also unpredictable by anybody but the person her- or himself. (p.162)

In dialogical self theory (DST) the generating character in the notion of voice is taken as a fruitful theoretical heuristic in understanding diverse psychological processes and entities as “voice”. This path is taken explicitly in Dimaggio and Hermans (2006, submitted) when they describe the dialogical self as an entity made up of a multiplicity of parts named either “voices” or “positions” or “characters”; each of them function as a partly independent agent generating specific memories, thoughts, and stories. Thus, following Dimaggio and Hermans, “voice” refers to an *agentive* starting point for a message addressed to any person, or to another part of the self.

Hence, it is not only the possibility of movement and simultaneous multiplicity that is interesting in the notion of voice, but also the aspect of independence and agency. It is with these very notions that Stiles (1999; et al, 2004) is able to conceive experience as embodied rather than as a mere cognitive representation. Departing from the heuristic metaphor of voice, Stiles (1999; Stiles, Osatuke, Glick, & Mackay, 2004) arrives at a literal understanding of voice, where the internal multiplicity can be externally heard and empirically analysed. In these researches, voices are firstly seen as internal, developing as traces from lived experiences, incorporating expressive, experiential, and interpersonal elements (Osatuke et al, 2005), *then manifesting* outside. Starting with the hypothesis that each of these manifesting voices sound different from each other, the authors demonstrate convincingly the identification of different voices within a person, characterizable by distinctive names and by a qualitative description of

vocal and personality features (Osatuke et al., 2004; et al, 2005).¹ Consequently, “voice” comes to be a clearly embodied entity, underscoring “the physicality of psychological self” (Osatuke et al, 2004, p.252). However, these investigations are done in the perspective of an already formed dialogical self, where new voices emerge, or internal ones manifest themselves in certain ways. From a developmental point of view the question remains how voices are formed in ontogenesis, or how the capacity of voicing is acquired.

The following considerations address this ontogenetical issue, and propose an exploration of some of the notion's facets, including a historical approach in order to clarify implicitly transmitted meanings. This is approached relying heavily on the Russian-Soviet idea of voice – not only because Bakhtin is a privileged point of departure for many scholars in the dialogical sciences, but also because this idea shows itself as rooted in a certain conception of *language*. The core arguments in this paper are made from a psycholinguistic point of view, explicitly focused on language as an event taking place between and inside people. Thus, linguistic as well as psychological dimensions of “voice” are addressed.²

Bakhtin’s Notion Of Voice – A Sketch

As mentioned, many current writers in the dialogical sciences refer to the works of Mikhail M. Bakhtin. In order to situate the concept of voice in its socio-historical context, it should be noted that Bakhtin himself was part of a current of ideas emerging in Russia at the turn of the 20th century and further developed in the first decades of the new century in the socio-political context of the Soviet Union. Here, it is not only Bakhtin's relationship to Voloshinov and his way of conceptualizing language and consciousness that is to be mentioned (Voloshinov, 1973), but also some of the main precursors of dialogical thinking: Dal', Potebnya, and Yakubinsky (see Ivanova, 2003; Jakubinskij, 2004; Meng, 2004; Naumova, 2004; Romashko, 2000).

The specificity of the Russian socio-cultural and linguistic context at the end of the 19th century is diglossal: a deep dichotomy existed between the language of the church (Church Slavonic) and the language of everyday communication (Russian). This situation polarized written and oral language, the world of authority and power and the world of the people, and this was taken as the opposition of dead (stiffened) and alive or vivid (see Romashko, 2000). The notions of vividness, dynamism, movement – also in reference to Humboldt's *energeia* (e.g. Potebnya in Naumova, 2004) – are important to the understanding of the Russian ideas on language and thinking of that time. In Vygotsky (1987) this notion is still present and it runs like a thread through his work. It

¹ A similar idea underlies the analysis of thinking-aloud-protocolls of problem solving persons in Bertau (1999), whereby intrapersonally distinct speaking roles could be identified.

² For a linguistically focused approach addressing especially the issue of form, see Bertau (2007, in press).

is also, of course, found in Bakhtin's notion of dialogicality which has two antipodes: the official language characterized by fixed meaning without any ambiguity, and the poetical language which is in Bakhtin's view oriented towards the norms of an official culture. In contrast to these static, monological languages, it is the language of prose that realizes and permits ambiguity, movement, and different positions from where the "sole truth" of the official world is questioned. Here, two positions of meaning, two accents of values, two kinds of consciousness meet: there is bivocality (see Lachman, 1982).

As far as I can see, in Bakhtin "voice" is used as a vanishing point with its start in the notions of word, utterance and answer. From these notions, Bakhtin arrives at voice, thereby describing the foundations of language as a dynamic structure of acts of answering: every utterance is an answer to preceding utterances, every act of comprehension is related to an attitude towards answering, and every utterance is produced in anticipation of an answer (Bakhtin, 1986, pp. 69, 91). For Bakhtin, a living language is not conceivable outside these relations with acts of answering, outside the dialogical movement.

The same attitude relates consciousness with voice. In Dostoyevsky's characters, Bakhtin observes consciousness in continuous dialogues of voices, internal as well as external, representing "the whole person" and having a special "density" and "resilience" (Bakhtin, 1984). Voice becomes the indicator of the "essential characteristics of consciousness":

...for Bakhtin, dialogue is an expression of the essential characteristics of consciousness, which unite it with external, also dialogical existence [...] it is the concrete psychological embodiment and measure of the social quality of consciousness. (Radzikhovskii, 1986-87, p. 18)

Thus, Bakhtin does not view consciousness in itself (as viewed by traditional psychology) but seeks existential characteristics for it which he finds in the dialogue of voices. The social aspect of consciousness "consists in two minds addressing one another internally" (Radzikhovskii, 1986-87, p. 21). Because all reality is interpersonal communication between voices, consciousness is a voiced internal dialogue. It is from the perspective of the spoken word that Bakhtin arrives at a conception of voice which has to be thought of in terms of twofoldness: the "bivocal word" (Bakhtin, 1984) is the point of departure, not singleness. Interestingly enough, there is not only no voiceless word but the quality of the contained voices oscillates between near and far, impersonal and familiar:

Each word contains voices that are sometimes infinitely distant, unnamed, almost impersonal (voices of lexical shadings, of styles, and so forth), almost

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undetectable, and voices resounding nearby and simultaneously. (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 124)

In these different distances one can recognize the realm of typified and typifying language uses to which all speaking is compelled because “we speak only in definite speech genres” (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 78), however “flexible, plastic, and free” they may be. Otherwise speech communication and the exchange of thoughts would be “almost impossible” (Bakhtin, 1986, p.79). I would like to hint at the “resounding” quality of the nearby voices, whereas the far ones are “almost undetectable” - a theme to be picked up further on.

A voice seems to have the function of a carrier: voice carries the speaking subject out of himself, decentering and orienting him toward the other(s) (both face to face, and general social others), supporting and leading the contact. What a voice carries and expresses at the same time is that the utterance is as well “mine” as “other's” (Bakhtin, 1986, p.89). The speaking subject matters only as a decentered and therefore “twofold” subject, endowed with a voice which carries at least two “tones and echoes” belonging to the uttered word. Voice carries the individual expression of contact with the other which is always mingled with some alien components. It supports the necessary multiplicity belonging to the living language in the word. Voice carries consciousness, manifests it. One voice, one consciousness “says” nothing, what is needed are at least “two”:

A single voice ends nothing and resolves nothing. Two voices is the minimum for life, the minimum for existence. (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 252)

Bakhtin's point is about the “individual manifoldness of voices” (Bakhtin, 1979, p.157-159). And in this multiplicity there is movement and life, both ideas serving the counterpoint to monologism. The individual manifoldness of voices is grounded in the social manifoldness of speech (Bakhtin, 1979, p.157), so one can assume that an individual voice is always manifold. It has a multiplicity of expressions, corresponding to the social language needed in the actual situation. This amounts to saying that, for Bakhtin, voice is not a completely individual phenomenon, on the contrary, it always transmits the typifying character of spoken national and social language, and of genres.

Therefore, the concept of voice means the construction of a social person. The ways an individual speaker may express his social identity (profession, gender, social status, age group, ethnicity etc.) include virtually every linguistic contrast: e.g. lexical and syntactical choices, but also on a paraverbal level, intonation, physical voice quality and variations in fluency (see Keane, 2001). So, the physical voice quality is one of the features of the social identity. And, because there is always more than one voice in any word, the concept of voice also means the agonistic interaction of voices. In Bakhtin's notion of heteroglossia differences are what matters. Here, voices are juxtaposed against

one another, even within the discourse of a single speaker. This kind of struggling interaction between voices militates against any notion of harmony one could naively relate to dialogicity – a point underlined by Hermans and Kempen (1993), too. For Bakhtin, difference is the necessary prerequisite of movement and dialogue, the prerequisite of life.

Depicting the cultural-political context of the 1920's in Russia, Gasparov (1982) states that Bakhtin's fundamental viewpoint was the “pathos of the expropriation of the other's word”. The “new artist” of the “new (revolutionary) times” discovers that his linguistic material is completely well-thumbed. Every word was used innumerable by others. From this point of departure, the artist must find a way to express his own thoughts in an alien, inherited language. Linking this Bakhtinian experience with the situation of Russian diglossia and with the new possibilities of the first years after the Revolution, one may claim that Bakhtin and his main dialogue partners, Voloshinov, Medvedyev and Pumpyansky (see Meng, 2004), themselves faced the necessity of finding and forming their voices out of the existing traditional ways of speaking and writing. Due to their transitional situation they were quite sensitive to these ways *as ways*, to the fact that they are only one of many possibilities of expressing reality, belonging to specific ideologies. Bakhtin's dialogical thinking is itself a struggle for formulating an own standpoint which will not be as dogmatic about truth and monological as the inherited one, but includes manyfoldness, i.e. multiple voices. Thus, the socio-historical situation where “voice” emerges is related to a certain pathos of the praise of liveliness, and of the liberation of the individual, allowing for his and her plurality.

A Psycholinguist's Perspective On Voice

Generally speaking, a psycholinguistic point of view is determined first of all by the aspect of processuality of language and language related phenomena such as thinking, memorizing, meaning and understanding. This processuality is seen in actual situations and contexts as microgenesis and as actual genesis, in development as ontogenesis and follows Vygotsky's genetic principle which holds that to understand a phenomenon it is necessary to study its development (1987, chap. 1, 5). With the relationship between speech and thinking being at the core of psycholinguistic questioning, it is almost natural to arrive at a dialogical view, for this relationship addresses the links between a self and the world, understood as other selves, and their common actions. Nevertheless, it is perfectly possible to study language processes in a monological way, to assume a self-contained cognition uttering ready-made language structures for another, to be processed in a similarly self-contained way.³ Applying the theory of the dialogical self to psycholinguistic issues does not only mean to open these

³ See O'Connell & Kowal (2003) for an extensive criticism in that vein.

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closed minds, to see co-constructing processes in speaking and thinking, it also allows and necessitates a radical change in the view of language itself. Addressivity becomes the foundation of this language conception, giving its specific relational form to all thought and speech processes (see Bertau, 2004b), foremost in development. It is this issue which is taken up in Bertau (2004a) with the model of phonicity, where the audible voice of the mother is the starting point for the infant's dialogical self-development, as I discuss later on in this article. So, voice is part of the fundamental concept of addressivity, it is the privileged way humans express their addressivity – which is not to say that the voice already utters words, but that it is first of all a concrete audible event between people in the external world.

From this point of departure two main issues should be addressed in the following: firstly, a description of the notion of voice, integrating different approaches and organized around the concepts of indexicality, body, and intonation. These concepts belong to a voice as a product of a development. The first three concepts are supplemented by two further ones: imitation and internalization accounting for the ontogenetically developed voice. These concepts point to the second issue, corresponding to the question of development which could be termed as follows: How does an internal I-position develop out of external experiences with audible voices? The aim is to arrive, via the five concepts, at a workable construct which is to be elaborated by further empirical work, especially in the field of acquisition. The general hypothesis is that acquiring language and developing a self are deeply related processes, one building link of this relationship being the voice.

Features of voice

Indexicality. The term “indexicality” refers to the context-dependency of natural language utterances, which can include various phenomena including, e.g., regional accent, indicators of verbal etiquette, referential use of pronouns, demonstratives, deictics, tense. The verbal ones are investigated by linguists, implicitly giving a paradigm of indexicality in these forms, mainly pronouns and deictics. But, as Laver (1975) writes:

...just the fact of speaking and allowing the other participant to hear the sound of one's voice, regardless of the actual content of the utterance, provides the listener with some information he needs to reach some initial conclusions about the psychosocial structuring of the interaction. (p. 221)

What Laver (1975) terms “phonetic behavior” is important to the participants when they construct a working consensus for the beginning interaction. The features of the voice serve as an orientation.

When a person speaks, he reveals often very detailed indexical information about his personal characteristics of regional origin, social status, personality, age, sex, state of health, mood, and a good deal more. [...] As listeners, we infer these information from phonetic features such as voice quality, voice-dynamic features such as control of pitch, loudness and tempo, and from accent, as well as to some extent from features of linguistic choices made by the speaker. (Laver 1975, p.221).⁴

A first characteristic of indexical expressions is their co-presence with what they stand for. So, contiguity, not similarity or conventionality is defining for indexicals. Related to this is the fact that they give little or no description of their referents, they function as link to their context, not as designators of objects and properties. Therefore, as a second characteristic, indexicals are closely associated to gestures, such as pointing and showing or handing over (Hanks, 2001). Co-presence and gesture relation stress the fact that indexicals are anchored in a bodily dimension of language. A third characteristic of indexicals is that “they systematically shift in reported speech” (Hanks, 2001, p.120). This point is interesting insofar as the phenomenon of reported speech is closely related to the notion of voice: it is the voice that shifts insofar as it changes perspective and authoring, which is manifested at the phonetic level, too (Tannen, 1989). Finally, the function of indexicals is to direct the addressee “to look, to listen, to take an object in hand” (Hanks, 2001, p.119). Precisely this embodied directing of the other is found in Karl Bühler's (1934/1990) theory of indexicals.

Bühler (1934/1990) associates indexicals as deictic words with the so called deictic field related to perception, in contrast to the symbolic field associated with naming words. Relating both fields, Bühler states that the demonstrating word *individuates* what is named (“that tree”). Bühler differentiates four forms of deixis in the deictic field from which the I-here-deixis will be picked out, for its hints to voice. Departing from the questions “Who is there?” posed behind a closed door and “Where are you?” posed in the dark, Bühler analyses the answers “I” and “here”. Bühler terms “I” an “individual signal”, and “here” a “positional signal” (1934/1990, p.110). Identifying “the place or the person involved” is done on the basis of the *sound*. This sound reveals the individual character as well as the origin of what is expressed. So, for Bühler the core function of the primal “here-word” is to direct the gaze to the position of the speaker. The primal “I-word” does more: it not only demands to seek the speaker with the eyes but also urges the listener to aim at the speaker with what Bühler calls “a physiognomic gaze.”

⁴ Laver is right to put the “linguistic choices” at the end of the list. A. Mehrabian showed as early as 1972 that only 7% of words have influence on communication, in contrast to 38% for voice and 55% for nonverbal, bodily communication.

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These ideas can be followed up in Bühler's analysis of the pronouns “I” and “thou” as indexing persons in a speech drama, therefore not designating anything. And in this, they individuate speakers and assign them a position.

The phonologically imprinted, formed structure ich (I) [...] resounds with the same phonological form from millions of mouths. It is only the vocal material, the auditory shape that individuates it, and that is the meaning of the answer I given by my visitor at the door: the phonematic impress, the linguistic formal factor in his I points out the vocal character to me, the questioner. (Bühler, 1934/1990, p.129)

Following this analysis, Bühler deduces as highly interesting that

the form of something is there to the end of pointing out an idiosyncrasy in which the form is realized. (Bühler, 1934/1990, p.129)⁵

The phonological form has to point to the specificity of the material: which is sound, individually uttered sound from a certain position. So indexicality of voice means to Bühler a *turning toward* the heard speaker with a “physiognomic gaze”: recognizing him/her as him/her in this specific time and place, at this certain position. Voice directs the other to an individual which is to cognize and recognize. The very possibility of understanding uttered words is in Bühler related to the positioning of the person.

With the concept of indexicality one is immediately thrown into a context of time and space surrounding speakers/listeners moving toward one another and toward the indexed actions and objects in that time and space. Actions and objects are shown, are brought into “horizons of relevance” (Schütz, 1982), that is, certain objects and actions are constructed as relevant in respect to certain of their aspects for an actual situation involving concrete persons. But first of all it is the person who shows herself the other *as* a certain one: in this, the indexical process of voicing is discovering. “Indexical claims” (Laver, 1975) shape and constrain the detailed relationship of speakers/listeners. That is, we first have to show and see each other before we can exchange any verbal content. The suggestion made here is that the uttered voice is an important index. Leaving aside social languages and genres, it first of all points to the immediate context, time and space and actual participants.

Regarding interactions that are not face to face, I would claim that they need a basis, the live experience of face to face encounters which are then transposed,

⁵ For this sentence is central to the understanding of the functioning of voice as form it should be given in the original: “die Form eines Etwas ist dazu da, auf die Besonderheit des Stoffes, an dem die Form realisiert wird, hinzuweisen.” (Bühler, 1934/1982, p.113)

transformed and abstracted. Skilful use and comprehension of indexicals outside the bodily co-presence in time and space of the interactants (on the telephone, in letters, in e-mails), are all the more elaborated as they can rely on a solid foundation of interactional practices which include the ability to take the perspective of the listener. Detachment of shared time and space requires precisely the imagination of the other and of his/her communicative-cognitive possibilities. This underscores that any abstracted, detached competence remains rooted in the experienced situation, anchored in the experience of interacting persons, gaining its very comprehensibility from there.

Body. Stressing the anchoring of any language practice, however abstract it may be, in a common, lived and shared experience, which is at least legitimized by the developmental point of view on phenomenon taken as fundamental, I arrive at “voice” from a bodily experience. Voice is a central notion to dialogical psycholinguistics for the very reason it connects speech with body and emanates from this body. The uttered voice shows, indexes the uttering body – as an individual (gender, social status, age etc.) and as a position (sitting there, coming in front of) – and leaves it as a medium of generalized, inter-individual signs, not belonging to any person (see Bakhtin, 1986; Voloshinov, 1973). Voice refers to a physical event that is never mere physics but always includes assigned meaning: meaning as related to verbal signs, and meaning as related to all embodied expressions of humans, themselves socio-culturally determined. So, “voice” is a vocal-auditory event, and it is a concept belonging to a certain socioculturally constructed way of expression. The uttered voice is absolutely individual, coming from a unique body, but this body is located in specific sociocultural contexts and has a history of actions, movements, labels, etc. So, the voice, too. As for every human expression, the voice is individual and societal, both aspects being the facets of a wholeness, and staying in contrast to “natural” (Voloshinov, 1973, p.34).

This understanding expands to non-spoken, written language where the ways of expression are detached from their vocal-auditory dimension, but are nevertheless not completely disembodied. The history of alphabetic writing and reading shows the transformation from an embodied to a disembodied practice, as well as the shift from vocally performed written language to its silent production and perception (Saenger, 1989; Coulet, 1996). This shift into disembodiment suggests a path to the assumption of the monologism of written language (Bakhtin as paradigm). However, from the perspective of the general hypothesis set here, concerning the acquisition of language and the development of a self, written language has an equal status as spoken language. In both, a plurality of voices has to be acquired, belonging to specific genres and languages as well as to the individually developed perspectives on world. Thus, written language is also to be thought of as dialogic and manifesting different voices.⁶

⁶ This line of idea is taken up in an ongoing project investigating how students acquire the

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In saying that the voice is a vocal-auditory event we refer to the double-sidedness of voice perception which may be one of the reasons why humans privilege voice as the medium of verbal communication: voice is perceivable both by the speaker himself, as proprioception, and by the listener - in that respect it is different from gaze; it is a concrete sensitive event, a means to touch the other over space, and as such it encourages transposing and abstractness. This is my proposal for what happens in ontogenesis: the child moves from the voice of its mother as a bodily experience (analogous to her touching and handling) to her voice as medium of signs. Meaning is always there, and always socioculturally shaped, first of all addressed. So, voice offers a meaningful structure in so far as it is directed toward somebody. Body and voice are inseparable. Voice refers to the body it comes from, and the kind of body shapes the quality of voice. Both are social and individual phenomena, manifesting the relationship and tensions between these two interdependent sides.

Marcel Mauss (1936/1999) was the first one to acknowledge clearly that nothing in our bodily expressions is natural, but is rather, specific to cultures and societies and even specific to generations in societies. With the term *techniques du corps* (techniques of the body) Mauss refers to the ways humans use their body, how they hold themselves, how they move, lay down, sit, stand, go, swim etc., even breathe. In his enumeration of the body techniques Mauss lists the techniques of giving birth, where, for instance differences in handling the newborn are worth noting. This is followed by the techniques of childhood, where questions of how and when to hold the baby, ways of breast feeding him/her or not, ways of stopping breast feeding, ways of laying down babies – just to mention a few – matter for the formation of the body morphology and of the attitude of the person toward himself. All forms of touching and handling are saturated by sociocultural meaning and are a means of transmitting these meanings.

Voice plays an important role in raising children. Despite not being in my opinion a technique itself in Mauss' sense, it is a necessary part of the techniques used with babies and children in that it accompanies, structures and rhythmifies all the handlings and touching of nursing. The voice stresses a certain quality of the caregiver's action: slow, smooth, rapid, impatient etc. And it is not surprising that almost all cultures have developed a so called baby talk where, besides semantic and syntactical features that reduce complexity, it is the voice quality of the caregiver that matters: it is at a higher fundamental frequency, slower and with clear intonation; moreover, the caregiver uses a lot of repetitions⁷ – a Bakhtinian social language determined by the age

academic voice needed to write an abstract by analyzing the stages in the writing-correction-revision-process (Karsten, in preparation).

⁷ See Snow (1977) for the first description of baby talk. Repetitions used in infants are to be seen as patterned structuring of time, giving as such orientation and security; they are semantically *not* redundant.

of the listener, with different genres, for example how to speak with the infant when breast-feeding, or when commenting on his/her actions.

Body means orientation in space, wherein “space” is to be understood as socioculturally constructed and organized. In turn, orientation in space means position, and this is perspective: first of all an attitude toward the other and the world, developing from the *techniques du corps*, i.e. from the socioculturally meaningful ways one is held toward other and the world. An emotional-cognitive perspective is acquired together with a body position, from where things are seen in a certain way and from which one can tell certain stories and feel certain feelings. So, the position and its perspective uttered in a voice are closely related to early body experience shaped and formed by others. If one assumes that any perspective and its position uttered in a voice develop out of the relationship others express towards self, one must include a pervasive affective attitude. The expression of such an attitude will then be part of thinking and speech; Josephs' (2002) claim for an emotional ground in voice meets this reasoning. Consequently, cognitive processes are inseparable from affective attitudes which can be expressed in a voice. Vygotsky stresses the need to see thinking as not being isolated from affect:

Every idea contains some remnant of the individual's affective relationship to that aspect of reality which it represents. (Vygotsky, 1987, p. 50)

It only needs to be added that the individual's affective relationship is given and shaped by other's voices as expressions of their socio-individual perspectives.

Intonation. What has been said so far on body and voice is even more clearly to be seen in the nature of intonation. Because of Voloshinov's explicit and radical standpoint on the sociality and addressivity of any utterance and of any word from which a *social essence of intonation* is concluded, the concept of intonation developed hereafter will be based on this author.

Voloshinov, one of the members of the so-called Bakhtin Circle, grounds his notion of language on the idea that the utterance is generated by an experienced extra-linguistical situation (Voloshinov, 1981a, pp. 188-191). So, Voloshinov arrives at language from the outside, so to speak, and he will stress this approach, maintaining the links of verbal and extra-verbal parts. In that, the word does not mirror the extra-verbal situation, nor is this situation to be thought of as an external cause of the utterance, but the word *accomplishes* the situation, makes an evaluation of it (Voloshinov, 1981a, pp. 190ff.). To the relation of utterance to situation Voloshinov adds the relation of utterance to listener. Any utterance is conceived in regard to a listener, i.e., to his/her comprehension and answer, as well as in regard to an evaluating perspective of this listener. The utterance is therefore always directed to the other, to the listener, and this

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leads Voloshinov to take social and hierarchical relations between the interlocutors into consideration (Voloshinov, 1981b, p. 298).

The notion of intonation is developed in the investigation of the form of the utterance. Voloshinov first states that an utterance without words would still have “the sound of voice” which is intonation (Voloshinov, 1981b, p.304). If even this were absent, the gesture would remain.⁸ These last kinds of instances manifest the materiality of communication, a subject extensively developed in Voloshinov (1973).

En dehors de l'expression matérielle, il n'existe pas d'énoncé, il n'existe pas davantage d'affect. [Outside of material expression utterance does not exist; nor does affect exist.] (Voloshinov, 1981b, p.304; emphasis in the original)

Voloshinov distinguishes three fundamental elements which organize the form of the utterance: first, intonation, which is described as the “expressive timbre of a word”; second, choice of word; third, disposition of the word within the utterance. Intonation is emphasized in that it “first of all” relates the utterance to the situation and to the audience. Besides, intonation plays the first role in the construction of the utterance, i.e., the second and the third aspect of form are built *as a consequence* of intonation (Voloshinov, 1981b, p.305). Intonation itself is determined by the situation and the audience. Voloshinov illustrates this aspect with a passage from Gogol where it is shown that a sudden, violent change in intonation occurs at the moment that the situation and the audience of the utterance are modified. Intonation is therefore the phonic expression of the social evaluation (“l'expression phonique de l'évaluation sociale”, 1981b, p.305). Thus, as speakers/listeners we take an evaluative attitude toward the situation and toward one another, giving value accents which are ideologically shaped. Communicating is first the expression of a certain attitude which gives all utterances a certain accent. And attitudes form intonation, which is first an evaluation of the situation and of the audience (“une évaluation de la situation et de l'auditoire”, Voloshinov, 1981b, p.307), in turn calling for the adequate word, and assigning a certain position to this word in the utterance.

The function of intonation of voice is seen by Voloshinov as similar to the carrying function as developed in my reading of Bakhtin. The features of flexibility and sensitivity facilitate its use and make it pervasive. This supports the claim for the centrality of the notion of voice for a dialogical psycholinguistics.

⁸ This, now from another side angle, corresponds again to Mehrabian's (1972) distinctions among words, voice, and nonverbal communication.

L'intonation joue le rôle d'un conducteur particulièrement souple et sensible au sein des rapports sociaux... [*intonation plays the role of a particularly flexible and sensitive leader within social relationships*] (Voloshinov, 1981b, p.305)

The social aspect of intonation is underlined in the way Voloshinov depicts its comprehension. It is only understood when one is familiar with the implicit evaluations of the social group in question, be it a family, a social class, a nation, an epoch. And in the process of producing intonations, Voloshinov draws on the addressivity of any utterance. In the case the speaker can suppose a “chorus of support” in his audience, his/her intonation will be vivid, creative, rich in nuances and self-confident. On the contrary, in the case of a lack of support, “the voice will brake”, its richness in intonation will be reduced (Voloshinov, 1981a). So, what results here clearly is the deeply social character of intonation, more precisely its dialogical character, being in its features dependent on the other as addressee (who can be actually or virtually present, as Voloshinov notes).

Acquisition of Voices in Ontogenesis. In Bertau (2004a, c) I claimed that the voice plays a significant role for the development of the dialogical self. The voice of the caregiver supports and leads the development of the infant and child from diffuse social acts to clear mutual exchanges. In regard to the importance of this primary, real, embodied auditory-vocal event coming from a certain person and addressed to another certain person, the development of voice in ontogenesis was grasped in the model of phonicity. Based on early dialogical structures beyond verbal language between mother and infant (Bruner, 1983), and supplied with important steps for developing intersubjectivity (Rochat et al, 1999; Akhtar & Tomasello, 1998), the child enters speech acquisition as an already dialogical being, aimed at mutual and addressed exchanges (Lyra, this issue). That is, the developing verbal voice of the child, his/her social speech, will manifest dialogical positions which were “offered” to him by the caregiver(s). Thus, in speech there are certain positions related to the structure of turn-taking which are not only a matter of language convention but also socioculturally motivated.

First, the caregiver will take up all the roles and all the non-verbal as well as verbal actions, establishing in this way a model of dialogicity, speaking with more than one voice. Through this, she demonstrates the conventions of turn-taking in verbal exchanges and gives the child the opportunity to learn where and when to take up his/her role by adequate means (Stern et al, 1975; Jochens, 1979). Different voices (and positions) are marked by the role within the turn structure. Thus, a role is first bound to structure, like a scaffold to move onto, and later becomes a genuine role in terms of a position experienced as related to a certain perspective and voice. Dialogue and voice are supporting structures (Nino & Bruner, 1978). There is at first a perceived, voiced outer structure, with which the infant can concretely align. This structure then becomes

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felt and experienced as an inner, meaningful one. The double-voicedness of the caregiver not only demonstrates to the infant his/her dialogical role in conversation but also the fact that a person may speak with more than one voice. And the caregiver uses fictitious voices to amuse her child who fulfils a special, playful role in extending the usage of voices and positions, demonstrating creativity and the possibilities of interacting with the world (see Josephs', 2002, case as an illustration of such an extension). This stage is termed monophonic dialogicity, for there is only the voice of the mother speaking for both the infant and herself.

As soon as the child takes up his/her role in the dialogical exchange, beginning on the verbal level with vocalizations at the right time and place, diphonic dialogicity emerges, enriching and intensifying the exchanges between mother and child. As it develops and refines, this stage leads to mature dialogues between interactants capable of attuning themselves to one another. This stage closely links the first one to the third one: the stage of polyphonic dialogicity, for it takes up the demonstrated mother's multi-voicedness from the first stage (Fogel et al, 2002) and realizes it in the ability to imagine other perspectives and enact them with their voices.

Imitation. An important device in the depicted process, especially in regard to the assumed scaffold the child can move onto, is imitation. Imitation can be seen as a means to slip into the other and his/her perspective. This 'slip into' is particularly interesting for it leads to an inside, rendered possible through the (as it seems) specifically human intersubjectivity. Primary intersubjectivity is related to the affective attunement of infants to their caregivers before the age of 4 months, displayed through contingent smiling, gazing, and other socially elicited gestures (see Rochat et al., 1999). Secondary intersubjectivity starts with the manifested mutual engagement as displayed in joint attention. By the age of 9 months, children begin to be able to include an object in their exchange with an adult, and they both can now behave commonly toward this object. Tomasello (1993) stresses the aspect of perspective taking which I loosely termed as 'slip into': "Joint attention is not just shared visual gaze but a true perspective taking." (p.176). The 'slip into' is also seen in the way humans learn from each other, termed by Tomasello (1993) as cultural learning:

In cultural learning, learners do not just direct their attention to an individual and its behavior, they actually attempt to see the world as the other individual sees it – from inside the other's perspective, as it were. It is learning in which the learner is attempting to learn not *from* another but *through* another. (p. 175, emphasis in the original)

In another study Call and Tomasello (1995) demonstrate that this form of learning is related to imitation, in contrast to what the authors call emulative learning and learning through mimicking observed in different apes. Children clearly used

information from their observations in order to solve the problem presented, imitating aspects of the demonstrated actions. Following Call and Tomasello (1995), imitation is, in contrast to emulative and mimicking learning, based on the understanding of the goals, i.e., intentions of others, the ability to understand the actions of others as goal directed. Recently, Tomasello et al (2005) have deepened this aspect on the basis of new empirical findings. Going beyond the assumption of understanding the intentional actions and perceptions of others the authors suggest “shared intentionality” as a key requisite to human cultural cognition. Thus, the ontogenetic pathway goes from dyadic engagement with shared emotions and behavior, through triadic engagement with shared goals and perceptions to collaborative engagement with joint intention and attention. Highly interesting for the theory of the dialogical self, the authors assume “a special kind of shared motivation in truly collaborative activities” (p.690), this motivation can be described as desire towards the other, as strong drive, in the end responsible for uniquely human cognition:

Our proposal is that the uniquely human aspects of social cognition emerge only as *uniquely human social motivation* to interact with an emerging, primate-general understanding of animate and goal-directed action – which then transforms the general ape line of understanding action into the modern human line of shared intentionality. (Tomasello et al, 2005, p.688; emphasis added)

Some aspects of imitation can be added further to conceive the slip into someone's perspective. First, it should be stressed that imitation is not only quite frequent in adult-child talk, the frequency of the adult imitating the child is also worth noting (see Blount, 1972). That is, in a sole child imitation one can see dialogue which proceeds as follows:

1. child utters / vocalizes
2. adult imitates child's utterance/vocalization
3. child imitates adult's imitation of his/her own original utterance
4. adult confirms child's imitation as genuine utterance

Especially step (3) is highly interesting. The child, in imitating the adult model of his/her own first utterance, imitates or repeats him/herself but at the same time both voices are present in step (3). Of course, the utterance (or vocalization) changes in quality from (1) to (4): it is shaped according the relevance criteria valid for the specific utterance situation. This is the typically identified function of imitation: to give the child the right speech model, confirming and correcting the child's speech. Field (1978) argues in the same vein and highlights the importance of mutual imitation for dialogical development in the sense of coherence in exchange. The notion of a “mimetic spiral”

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reinforces the idea of mutuality in imitation, and has the worth noting effect of changing the initial social context (Gebauer & Wulf, 1995).

Hence, the notion of imitation is a strongly dialogical one: Imitating is done in an incessant movement from one to the other, each one giving and taking parts of what is expressed, transforming it in the course of the movement. In speech acquisition, forms are established for the sake of inter-individual comprehension. It is not only this instructive function which matters, but also its bounding and carrying one which is, of course, highly affect-laden.

Vygotsky was also aware of the important role of imitation in social learning, seeing imitation as a form of collaboration between the child and others. In imitating, the child learns a new behavior, and it is the social group as psychological fact that motivates the imitations of the child. Moreover, Vygotsky depicts exactly what I try to grasp with the notion of the 'slip into' the inside of another:

He [the child] merges in his activity with the one he imitates. The child never imitates movements of nonliving objects, for example, the swing of a pendulum. Obviously, his imitative actions arise only when there is personal communication between the infant and the person whom he imitates. (Vygotsky 1998, p. 236)

In Mauss (1936/1999) one can find the beautiful term *imitation prestigieuse*, which expresses quite well what Vygotsky describes here. Although meant in another context, the term may serve to note that one does not imitate just anybody, but a specific, "prestigious" person: a meaningful other.

In closing these remarks on the concept of imitation it is proposed that the most powerful scaffold for the child to align (and for the adult, too) is in repeating and imitating the voice quality of the other. Thus, the structure of dialogical turn-taking and of the mother's voice intonation function as supports by virtue of a concrete perceptibility (rhythm, prosody) that the infant can imitate. Children in a preverbal stage seem indeed to avail themselves of the intonation in order to come into speech and into specific speech acts like questions and demands. On this point, Bruner (1975) speaks of a "prosodic envelope":

A fourth process [...] consists of the child learning phonological patterns almost as place-holders, imitatively. They constitute, even pre-verbally, a kind of prosodic envelope or matrix into which the child "knows" that morphemes go [...] There is the possibility that distinctive "speech acts" are learned in a primitive fashion by this means – demand prosody involving rising intonation, etc. (Bruner 1975, p. 10)

In recent researches one can find strong support for the position stressing the importance of concrete voice perception in psychological development. Castarède and Konopczynski (2005) take into account the speaking subject who has disappeared in “pure” linguistics, and to highlight with him the vocal relation between two voices. The research reported is mostly undertaken in clinical contexts from a psychoanalytic perspective, centered on the auditive-vocal exchanges between mother and very young infant (see in this line Muratori & Maestri, this issue). Noticeable also is the relation to intersubjectivity theory and to theory and research in music, both approaches being united in Trevarthen's recent research (see Trevarthen & Gratier, 2005; besides, the Special Issue of *Musicae Scientiae*, 1999-2000).

Thus, this approach supports the aspect of voice stressed here as a real auditory-vocal event right at the beginning of development. This leads to the question formulated above: How does an internal I-position develop out of external experiences with audible voices? The concept of internalization will provide a starting point in the attempt to find an answer to this complex question.

Internalization. Vygotsky (e.g., 1978) was the one who pointed to the social dimension of internalization; to view internalization as founded in social processes. Vygotsky deduced that any so-called higher (culturally determined) mental function (such as remembering, attention, thinking) develops by internalization processes out of social interactions and is thus itself fundamentally social. The interactions with others are semiotically mediated, especially by language (see Wertsch & Stone, 1985, for stressing this “semiotic mechanism” of internalization). What is internalized is the social relationship, a dynamic structure of otherness of a certain quality, mediated and at the same time shaped by language. Vygotsky does not assume that external and internal processes are copies of one another but that internalization transforms the social, inter-individual process itself and changes its structure and functions (Wertsch & Stone, 1985, p. 167). In stressing the social, inter-individual origin of individual psychological processes, Vygotsky's approach is quite close to dialogical theory: both employ a notion of alterity. For this reason, this approach will serve to develop the concept of internalization.

Keiler (2002) asserts that there are two versions of the notion of sociocultural development in Vygotsky, the first one dating from 1928 to 1930, the second one, a revision of the first, from 1931. In both versions, internalization is a key concept, whereby the role of the other is slightly changed.

Following Keiler (2002), the third of three main characteristics in the first version of Vygotsky's theory of sociocultural development is that the genesis of higher mental functions is accomplished in four stages. The first is the stage of natural psychology, followed by the stage of naive psychology, itself followed by the stage of outer cultural method with signs which are only shortlived, leading to the fourth stage

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of inner activity: here internalization takes place, the outer means (signs) are transformed in inner ones, they become “ingrown”: “The external means, so to speak, become ingrown or internal” (Vygotsky, 1929, p. 426). This process corresponds to a qualitative transformation of “natural psychisms” into culturally determined higher mental functions. What makes this transformational process possible is the fact that the child takes a “psychological attitude” toward him/herself, and that he/she seeks to control his/her own behavior, including mental processes (e.g., attentional and remembering processes). However, what is not mentioned here is the role of the other in forming the child's “psychological attitude”, and his/her control over the child's behavior. Vygotsky explains this “ingrowing”:

Such “complete ingrowing” is based on the fact that inner stimuli are substituted for the external ones. The traces replace irritation. (Vygotsky 1929, p. 426)

Another metaphor for the transition from the third to the fourth stage is “seam-like ingrowing”: connecting two organic parts together, contributing to the formation of a connecting texture and becoming itself superfluous – like the sign which becomes superfluous after some repetitions (see Vygotsky, 1929, p. 426). Vygotsky's notion so far is that of an organic process where something is growing in a certain way, backgrounding in my opinion the social aspect of internalization Vygotsky comes to underline later on.

In generalizing the four stages to any higher mental function, Vygotsky derives two main age levels where the role of the other is hinted at, the focus however remaining on the child. There is first a process from adult to child in which the child appropriates by an act of synthesizing the originally distributed process. This unified process, however, psychologically remains “distributed”, in the act of *as if* it was done by two persons, relating these persons and their behavior. Doing this, the child is then able to “grow in”, that is, to move from outer use of means to an inner one. I think there is here a structural similarity to the process of imitation as sketched above. In imitation, too, the child takes a behavior from the adult and performs it *as* its own. This is possible because the imitated behavior was originally own's one, imitated by an adult. So, imitating has a double-voicedness, and internalization too, for it brings together other and self in one person.⁹

The revised version is dated by Keiler (2002) autumn 1930 with Vygotsky's conference on psychological systems (Vygotsky, 1997a). The development of higher mental functions is now not limited to purely intrafunctional change, where any function is transformed as such, but to a deep interfunctional one, where the original relations between functions are transformed. From this, Vygotsky derives his well-

⁹ See Vygotsky's work on Pedology, 1931, in Vygotsky, 1998, p. 104.

known claim that any higher mental function appears twice in development: first in a collective form as interpsychic function, second in an individual form as intrapsychic function (see Vygotsky, 1978, p. 57). This leads to the general thesis that any higher mental function is originally a reciprocal, mutual process. Having described the child as taking a “psychological attitude toward his/herself” in his first version of sociocultural development, Vygotsky speaks in late 1930 of the child taking the role of the mother toward his/herself, and coming, through this role reversal, to control his/her own behavior (Keiler, 2002, p. 197). So, the turning around, so to speak, is now given a clear social origin.

In his 1931 published work on “Pedology” (Vygotsky, 1998), Vygotsky heightens the social aspect in his second law on the cultural development of behavior, saying that the relations between higher mental functions are transferred social relations. So, the higher functions are inner social relations, transferred into the personality, but deeply social. Language is in this transfer of critical importance, understood by Vygotsky as a means of influence, of acting on another and – by internalization – acting on oneself (Keiler, 2002, p. 201). This is what permits Vygotsky to write: “Through others, we become ourselves” (1998, p. 170); the development of the child involves the transformation of social relationships in mental functions (Vygotsky, 1997b).

Even though Vygotsky quite precisely depicts the aspects of internalization through the metaphors of “ingrowing” and “seam-like ingrowing” and in the processes of “as if” and role change between mother and child, whereby language leads and shapes the process, I would like to try to come even a bit closer to the mechanism of internalization, stated by Wertsch and Stone (1985) as “semiotic”. I propose to narrow “semiotic” to verbal signs, thus following Vygotsky's acknowledgement of language as a privileged means of internalization – being himself in the tradition of Hegel's view that language is the tool of tools (see Keiler, 2002, p. 188). So, the point would be to come closer to the language process.

It is already clear that imitation and internalization are closely related. Both function through an ‘other’ with whom self is acting. This other is – besides being a prestigious one to whom the self wishes to be related – physically present, a mirror and a former of the self's actions and expressions. The presence of the other is thus active, not just there but directed, addressed to self, literally in touch with self: by means of actual touch or of voice, or of both. And this is done in physical, reiterated patterns: forms giving themselves form in the growing mutuality of an adult and an infant (Lyra, 2007, this issue). Imitation allows an exchange of forms of behavior and forms of expression, an exchange corresponding to a close give and take. Role change distinguishes more clearly between what the one and the other is doing, and allows one, therefore, to be the other for a moment, to integrate this other in self. Again, voiced forms play an important role, giving the child indications about roles and their timing.

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Imitation, role change and as-if acting, which are all found in children's play and in their imaginative dialogues, are devices in the process of moving from the outside to the inside, and between self and other. Lillard (2001) points to the fact that in pretend role play and in imaginary companion pretence “a child practices at being other people” and comes to experience and thereby know the other's thought – thus, pretence is important to theory of mind. Further, in pretend play children construct a “decoupled world”, an operation by which representations are temporarily removed from their usual referents, also described as “conceptual move”. I suggest that this move is akin to the one I posit, leading to a reconstructed and transformed other in self, still speaking, a resounding trace in memory and imagination. The basis of the move is a sensitive experience of the other, and this is the reason for giving the actual voice, in which language is expressed and given to another, a specific status: it is a live form which acts as a carrier leading from outside to inside. This form is form and meaning, or: formed meaning. Meaning which manifests itself in form, not detachable from it. Noteworthy for the process of moving inside, a precise (or adult) meaning need not be established for the form to function as carrier. Indeed, Vygotsky (1987) underlines the contrast between adult's and children's concepts, different in meaning but seemingly the same because of their linguistic form. The child's concept, the inner side of meaning is developing. As Wertsch and Stone (1985) formulate:

One of the correlates of the fact that interpsychological semiotic processes requires the use of external sign forms is that it is possible to produce such forms without recognizing the full significance that is normally attached to them by others. As a result, it is possible for a child to produce seemingly appropriate communication behavior before recognizing all aspects of its significance as understood by more experienced members of the culture. One of the mechanisms that makes possible the cognitive development and general acculturation of the child is the process of coming to recognize the significance of the external sign forms that he or she has already being using in social interaction. (p. 167)

What I suggest is to see the experienced voice of a significant other as mechanism of internalization. The specific intonations and the expressive, idiosyncratic style of the person as manifested in her voice give a specific taste as to what is internalized: this is individual as well as inter-individual, corresponding to the genres of speaking and intoning of the speech community. So, what permits the movement from outside to inside is a meaningful, perceivable social form, tied to a person. I understand the voice as this form, carrying the other into self and self into other, a scaffold: graspable, embodied and thus living materiality. This form offers a meaningful structure in so far as it is always turned toward somebody and because of its appertaining to the inter-individual interactional world it is rooted in. Both ways of having and giving

meaning – in personally addressing and in being inter-individually rooted - are indissociable, assuming that the individual alone is non-existent, solely conceivable as a social being whose psyche and consciousness are socio-ideological facts (Voloshinov, 1973, p.12, 34). As Voloshinov (1973, p. 22) writes, for the animal cry “the social atmosphere is irrelevant”, this cry is bereft of any value accent. But a voice does count on such an atmosphere and it sets an ideological accent, thus belonging to the inter-individual realm.

In the course of development the voice as perceivable form is interiorized, and with it the attitude and perspective of the (social) person the voice belongs to. In the dialogical self, several voices exist on the basis of primary voice experience. Some may retain their relation to a specific person, some may be altered by such processes as condensation and displacement, by imagination and generalization (see Mead's generalized other). A completely abstracted voice is then conceivable as a subject's perspective and conceptual horizon – but the primary experience bound to the perception of a speaking person as present body is the necessary ground.

Conclusion

In my reading of Bakhtin, a voice has the function of a carrier as it carries the speaking subject out of himself, decentering and orienting him toward the other(s), supporting and leading the contact. What a voice carries and expresses at the same time is that the utterance is as well “mine” as “other's” (Bakhtin, 1986, p.89). A voice carries the individual expression of contact with the other which is always mingled with some alien components. It supports the necessary multiplicity belonging to the living language in the word.

It is this idea of a carrier that serves to understand the phenomenon of voice, coupled with the Russian ideas of life or vividness and of the materiality of the verbal sign, existing in concrete verbal interactions (Voloshinov, 1973). Therefore, my own accent in the notion of voice is on its experienced and embodied, material and social dimensions. In this, I meet Osatuke's et al (2004) notion of the “physicality of the psychological self”. Setting the point of departure in ontogenesis, it is the resounding quality of voice that matters, its *experienced form*: thus intonation, understood according to Bakhtin and Voloshinov as belonging to the social and as manifesting ideology, becomes quite a central feature of the notion of voice developed here. The features of indexicality and body stress the participation of voice in the social as well as in the individually perceived and experienced world of humans. With the concepts of imitation and internalization I tried to explain how this experienced form is transformed into a cognitive perspective. In this context, it is central that voice belongs to a fundamental structure of addressivity, and exists only within this structure, expressing and shaping it as well. I call the voice a form which is form and meaning, to be

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understood from perceptual and interactional experience. Thus, I am oriented towards Bühler's notion of form:

the form of something is there to the end of pointing out an idiosyncrasy in which the form is realized. (Bühler 1934/1990, p. 129)

In internalization, this form shows its power. The experienced voice of a significant other is the mechanism of internalization. What permits the movement from outside to inside is a meaningful, perceivable social form, tied to a person. The voice is a form of vivid materiality, it offers a meaningful structure in so far as it is always turned toward somebody. And it is meaningful because of its participation in the inter-individual interactional world it is rooted in.

The idea of language related to this notion of voice is that it is not only and not foremost an abstract system involving elements, rules, and concepts, but that it is first a perceivable event between persons, performed by these persons on the foundations of their structure of addressivity belonging to them as human beings. This event takes place as form, rooted in sensory experience taking place in interactions, thus, developing its specific verbal and voiced form on the basis of preverbal (vocalizations, sounds) and non-verbal forms (rhythms, routines, patterns) of mutuality. The root in sensory experience links language on the one hand to the body, and on the other hand to a physical environment others are the most important part of. For this reason, it is essential that what serves language processes is embodied. Our privileged embodiment is voice: an auditory-vocal event, belonging to the realm of experience, both in self and in other. And able to be detached from this realm in order to enter abstract, symbolic meaning serving intra-mental processes. To understand how language functions, to understand its specificity as a linguistic system, I believe one has to go beyond it – in the way the Russian thinkers, Yakubinsky and Voloshinov, have shown. And the notion of voice as developed here serves this goal, linking language back to our body and to the others.

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BERTAU

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ON BERTAU'S AND OTHER VOICES

Per Linell
Linköping University, Sweden

ABSTRACT. In this short commentary on Bertau's paper, notions of voice are discussed. In particular, the following aspects are in focus: materiality, personal identity and perspectivity.

”What would be worst, the discovery of a new nose on you or the discovery of a new voice from within you?” (Anward, 2002, p. 134)

Most words in natural languages are polysemic; they have meaning potentials which, in combination with contextual factors, can give rise to many situated meanings. The term ‘voice’ and its counterparts in other languages are no exceptions. In the everyday usage of many languages, words for ‘voice’, such as Russian *golos*, German *Stimme*, Swedish *röst* or Finnish *ääni*, can mean both ‘the sounds carrying a person's speech’ and ‘the person's expression of views and opinions’, also as expressed in political elections and the like (the verbs *golosovat*, *stimmen*, *rösta* and *äänestää*, in the respective languages, all mean ‘to vote’). There are of course many other subsenses, but the two of ‘physical sounding of one's speech’ and ‘opinion/view/perspective’ recur in many more languages. They are also part of the scholarly analysis of the concepts associated with the term ‘voice’.

Marie-Cécile Bertau (2007, this issue) discusses many aspects of ‘voice’, mainly in psychodynamic, psycholinguistic and dialogical perspectives. The introduction takes its point of departure in ‘dialogical self theory’ and the idea of I-positions, but Bertau then goes back to the writings of Voloshinov and Bakhtin, and other members or predecessors of the Bakhtin circle. The main bulk of the text is about the child's acquisition of voices, in a psycholinguistic perspective. I shall use this opportunity to summarise some insights, most of which are expressed by Bertau, but I will do so in my own words. (Actually, these words are of course not my own at all, as every dialogist will understand.)

AUTHOR NOTE. Please address correspondence about this article to Per Linell, Department of Culture and Communication, Linköping University, SE-581 83 Linköping, Sweden. Email: per.linell@isk.liu.se

When Bakhtin and particularly Voloshinov developed their “theory of the utterance,” which revolves very much around the concept of voice, they started out from formal linguistics of the time, with its abstract conception of language. The formalists were “monologists”, who promoted a picture of languages as systems of abstract, impersonal and immaterial signs, as structures existing over and above individuals. By contrast, Voloshinov (1929/1986) and Bakhtin argued that languages live only in and through the mouths of real people, in utterances. Utterances in talk are always carried by individual voices. Hence, we should think of languaging in terms of material(ised) (embodied, personalised) words, a view which has later been expressed by other dialogically minded scholars (Silverman & Torode, 1980). To simplify matters considerably, I suggest that the concept of voice involves at least three important dimensions: (a) material or physical embodiment (of utterances), (b) personal signature, and (c) perspectives on topics and issues. I shall deal with these in this order.

First, the point of embodiment and materiality: Language lives in and through the languaging of real people, in their interaction with others. The utterances of language users are always embodied; they consist of “material” words enacted by embodied individuals and carried by their voices. When a person “fills his language with life” (to use a distinctly Bakhtinian wording), he or she adds prosody (intonation, accents, rhythm, etc.) and voice quality to it, in producing utterances. These properties of the voice contribute to sense-making in communication, especially to the emotional flavours attributed to the utterances in context.

The *second* point on personal identity is related to this. The physical voice, with its dialectal features and voice quality, gives off much information about the social and personal identities of the speakers (Laver, 1980; Scherer & Giles, 1979). These features index “the uttering body” (Bertau, this issue, p. 142), the source from which the speech comes, in terms of the speaker’s gender, age, geographical origin, sociocultural group, as well as personality, mood, and personal views. While the voice, particularly its ‘voice quality’, is personal, it also to some extent reflects the person’s biography.

Bertau (this issue pp. 136, 138-139) states that the voice carries the subject out of her- or himself. In slightly different wordings, it provides a “sound envelope of the self” (Anward, 2002, drawing upon Anzieu, 1979). A speaker’s utterances are signed (Morson & Emerson, 1990: 69), and the voice becomes a kind of personal embodied ‘signature’. As Bertau (this issue, p. 138) insists, the social nature of utterances and voices includes their addressivity. But if one speaks in one’s own voice, it is also a mark of authenticity. Jan Anward (2002) analyses particular types of predicament, under which speakers lose their own voices or have to use others’ voices. It is evidently more of a threat to one’s personal identity and authenticity to lose the voice than the nose.

The embodied voice is a thoroughly dialogical medium. The speaker can hear his own voice, almost as he hears the voices of others. Voices can be heard when visual

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contact is excluded, for examples through closed doors or in the dark. Farr (1990) argues that vision is primarily a medium for observing others (we are only rarely objects in our own visual fields), hence in a sense more monological, whereas the vocal-auditory channel is more dialogical. At the same time, however, this reasoning neglects the enormously dialogical and interactional functions of mutual gaze, seeing one another's faces and eyes, explored in the writings of Lévinas (e.g. 1969).

Thirdly, individuals use their signed utterances (sometimes) to express particular ideas and views. This brings us to another, somewhat metaphorical but characteristically Bakhtinian sense of the term 'voice', namely, an expressed opinion, view or perspective, something that the person would typically say and presumably (at least at some level of intention) stand for.

Ideas, opinions, and perspectives on topics are by and large socially and interactionally generated and sustained. They live in the 'circulation of ideas' in conversations, the media etc. (François, 1993). Individuals appropriate many of these ideas and make them their own. They then indulge in voicing, i.e. expressing, these ideas themselves. One might say that they "vote" for these ideas, and others that hold the ideas.

However, there are many opinions and perspectives available in the sociocultural environment around us. Any single human being will, over time, be acquainted with many (partially overlapping) sociocultural communities and pick up many ideas, sometimes partly conflicting perspectives on the same phenomena or issues. This gives rise to at least two, but related, extensions of the concept of 'voice'. One is the idea of a generalised 'voice', or generalised perspective on a topic or topical domain, which is tied to a group of sense-makers, rather than a single individual. Such voices often meet and dialogue with each others in encounters between people. For example, we could talk about the "voice of medicine" as the ways a typical physician would express him- or herself on medical issues in encounters with patients, and the "voice of everyday life", which are ways in which patients approach (what are in some sense) the same issues, at least as long as they stick to everyday life perspectives (Mishler, 1984).

The three aspects of voices: embodiment, signature and perspective, can of course be talked about in alternative terms. One is emotional tone (intonation) of utterances, sources of utterances (who said this, who stands for that?) (Bertau talks about the agentive starting point of a message, this issue, p. 135), and the ideas behind people's discourse. Erving Goffman (1981) made an analysis of the notion of 'speaker' that largely mirrors this threefold division: the speaker may be an animator (the physical source or sounding-box), an author (who puts together the words of utterances) and a principal (the authority whose opinions are expressed or who is ultimately responsible for them).

One other aspect not directly highlighted by Goffman in the above-mentioned analysis is that one and the same person may appropriate, internalise or express several different voices, whether these voices are taken from other individuals or they are generalised voices. Here, of course, ‘voice’ is taken in the abstract sense of ‘perspective on a topical domain’, but notice that these are still perspectives entertained by or associated with human beings (individuals or collectivities), the stake-holders (who may held responsible for them). Moreover, some speakers sometimes even imitate the actual physical voices of other (real or virtual) individuals. This brings us to the heart of the notion of ‘polyvocality’ (‘multivoicedness’) in the self’s internal dialogue or contributions to external dialogue. Consciousness is a dialogical notion and involves the self’s ability to internalise others’ views on self’s own thoughts, utterances and actions. That latter is close to the notion of the ‘authoritative/authoritarian’ voice in internal dialogue (Bakhtin, 1981).

We also have polyvocality and heteroglossia in texts and larger discourses, the latter in a Foucaultian sense. They are often supported by disembodied practices, for example written texts. While literate societies with their use of written texts have strongly contributed to the abstract formalist view of language (there is a ‘written language bias in linguistics’; Linell, 2005), it is important to align with Bertau in insisting that texts too have dialogical properties like responsivity, addressivity, and often polyvocality. Indeed, Bakhtin’s theories were developed mainly on the analyses of literary texts (Dostojevskij, Rabelais, etc.).

Nonetheless, many societies exhibit heteroglossia, the parallel existence of different social languages voicing different perspectives, in which some are more monological and may appear to be supported by artificial means (such strong cultural or social sanctions), others are more ambiguous and dialogical, not imposing only one perspective on its users. Bertau reminds us of the background of Bakhtinian thinking in a Russian society with a conservative church (and, one might add, political regime) and a living everyday communication. This engendered Bakhtin’s and Voloshinov’s thinking in terms of (more or less) ”dead” and ”living” languages. In later Soviet times, this was transformed into the clash between the authority, authoritarianism and power of official discourse (about history and society) and the vernacular ”kitchen talk” among ordinary people (Wertsch, 2002).

Bertau’s concerns are very much about the ontogenesis of voices in the child’s development. This is discussed in terms of aspects of indexicality, body, intonation, imitation and internalisation. Time and space impede me from going into all these aspects (although I have hinted at some of them above). It could be said, however, that her account focuses primarily on how infants learn to internalise, appropriate and integrate others’(caregivers’) voices. It does not seem to go very much into later development. Here, there remain many interesting issues for dialogists to resolve. How and when does the child learn to play with other voices, distinct from their own

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"authentic" one? What is the relation between using different voices in internal dialogue, and the ability to enact and externalise voices distinct from one's own, for example, in imitation and parody? Is there an intrinsic relation in ontogenesis between manner of speaking (physical voice) and type of perspective on issues (abstract voice)?

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**VOICE, VITALITY AND MEANING: ON THE SHAPING OF THE INFANT'S
UTTERANCES IN WILLING ENGAGEMENT WITH CULTURE.
COMMENT ON BERTAU'S "ON THE NOTION OF VOICE"**

Maya Gratier
Université Paris X - Nanterre, France

Colwyn Trevarthen
University of Edinburgh, UK

ABSTRACT. The newborn human voice communicates, and a foetus learns the sound patterns of the mother's voice transmitted through her body. It is our nature to vocalise, to perceive others' vocalisations, and to learn from their messages. Bertau reviews a rich literature on the social voice and its cultivation, how projects different ways of being, and acquires different personal narrative histories through dialogic transactions in the community. In responding, we propose that the life of the voice cannot be separated from the rhythm of human life time, the 'musicality' of moving in company. Infant vocal and gestural games seek affectionate 'holding' from known others and to share adventures of experience in companionship. The mother, influenced by her special intimacy with the baby, becomes a person with several voices, and how she adapts this poly-voicedness indicates her emotional health and the quality of her relationship with her baby, her home and society. The baby too, as it grows in playfulness and self-consciousness, 'becomes' different voices. In a family, a theatre of 'voice persons' is created, which leads the child participate in the living chorus of voices in the community of work and recreation, with its rituals of activity and habits of talk.

Marie-Cécile Bertau (2007, this issue) reviews theories of 'voicedness' between people when they communicate, and within them when they think. She gives special attention to the fertile arguments produced by the Russian school of literary theorists from the 1920s, and examines how voices and selves of children and their mentors shape each other. The vital relationship between the living, embodied and felt self and the shared meaningful context of language is made clear. Voices and their dialogues are internalized over time by stepwise transformation of memories of what they indicate, carrying in their wake laminated histories of shared experiences, stories of existence that eventually become internal dialogues.

Bertau talks of the "living materiality of voice", which, as Bakhtin (1986) has suggested, includes a manifoldness, a plurality of subjectivity and of personalities that

AUTHORS' NOTE. Please address correspondence about this article to Maya Gratier, Centre de Recherche en Psychologie et Musicologie Systématique, UFR SPSE (Bâtiment C), Université Paris X - Nanterre, 200 avenue de la République, 92001 Nanterre Cedex 01, France. Email: <mgratier@u-paris10.fr> or <gratier@gmail.com>. Colwyn Trevarthen, Department of Psychology, The University of Edinburgh, 7 George Square, Edinburgh, EH8 9JZ, Scotland, UK. Email: c.trevarthen@ed.ac.uk

emerges from dialogue. This idea of living materiality is central to Bertau's argument, and productive, for it underscores the dynamic aspect of vocal self-consciousness and its physicality, both of which have the advantage of being observable and measurable. The heard voices of mothers, according to Bertau, give shape to infants' voices that become expressive tools and complex socio-culturally situated identities. The infant is a willing apprentice to this 'education' in the cultural practice of language.

The voice is *vital* in both senses of the word. As an inherently dialogical phenomenon it is the essential basis for social life and, as it is also naturally inquisitive about the external world of others in the discovery of meaning with them, it is by nature a creative living organism.

Sharing the Time of Life

In responding to this essay we propose that voice cannot be separated from the stream of moving in time, from the 'musicality' of it, the rhythms and cadences of its expression and in memory of being in company. In the beginning, the heard voice *is life time*, because for a newborn infant it is the most salient thread of existence between the uterus and the world. The baby is born 'knowing' the mother by her voice.

Voices, emerging from within moving human bodies, like all movements, *make time*, anticipating and adjusting to the experience that they create (Trevarthen & Gratier, 2005). And vocal exchange involves confluence of 'fluxes of inner time' (Schutz, 1951). It implies a creative harmonising of the rhythms in duets.

While we agree that voice acquires a 'thickness' or 'substance' and richly detailed 'forms' within socio-cultural contexts by learning, we would add that human experience is *innately* dialogical (Bråten, 1992; Thompson, 2001). Moreover, in spite of developmental transformations, such as those famously outlined by Vygotsky (1929), human vocalisation can never lose this natural dialogicity, the motives and emotions that are inherited adaptations of the human body and mind for all intersubjective enterprises.

The behaviour of infants in their delicately negotiated engagements with sympathetic partners and playmates demonstrates that there is an *innate intersubjectivity* that enables synchrony of intentional rhythms, expressive gestural forms and qualities of voice with others from birth (Trevarthen, 1979, 1998; Trevarthen & Aitken, 2001, 2003). Discoveries of the past 4 decades require a fundamental reappraisal of our theories of how the making and learning of cultural meaning is motivated, especially of the contribution of the child's sympathetic motives to the genesis of human sociability. The phenomena of infant communication are frequently 'reduced' back to a monological cognitive account, even when the story purports to explain cultural learning by the acquisition of joint attention and the coordination of intentions that blend modalities in a space of action. It is not sufficient to cite only the evidence of assimilations of

intentions and their orientation in a common spatial context to identify forms of interest between child and adult. Like all parents have to do, we must offer respect for the infant's motives and emotions and the purposes and concerns they express (Reddy & Trevarthen, 2004; Trevarthen 2005a). The earliest dialogues are a sharing of the ways movements explore their effects in time. We must listen for the infant's voice, and how it multiplies.

How The Voice the Infant Is Born With Grows

By 6 weeks after birth, infants use their 'voices', the expressions and gestures of all their body with powerful conversational intent. Their vocalisations are invitations to engage in repartee with companions' minds.

Film studies of the development of infants' actions show transitions in motives of 'innate intersubjectivity' adapted for cooperative awareness and cultural learning (Trevarthen, 1979, 1998; Trevarthen & Aitken, 2001). The 'protoconversations' of two-month-olds (Bateson, 1979) use expressions of eyes, face, voice and hands in dialogic encounters that stimulate immediately responsive behaviours of parents, encouraging their affectionate and appropriately contingent support (Murray & Trevarthen, 1985; Nadel et al., 1999). Adult and infant move to the same tempo and mutually regulate sympathetic human contact, with a deliberate 'courtesy' like the address and reply of an improvised and amiable debate. The parent often refers to the speechless infant 'saying' things, or 'telling a story'. Infants not only produce modulated vocal sounds but also produce them at the right moment within an ongoing flow of speech addressed to them. Using a term from the Marxist social philosophy of Jürgen Habermas (1970), this behaviour with its 'dialogue constituent universals' was called Primary Intersubjectivity (Trevarthen, 1979). Soon it becomes evident that babies challenge as well as ask for support and playful elaboration -- in play mothers and three-month-olds create vocal interchange in synchrony and alternation, sharing many emotions by mutual 'attunement' (Stern, 1974, 2000; Stern, Jaffe, Beebe & Bennett, 1975; Stern, Hofer, Haft & Dore, 1985).

By applying computer-aided musical acoustic techniques to vocal exchanges between infants and adults, Stephen Malloch (1999) has clarified how the pulse and expressive/emotional qualities of voices are engaged in improvised 'musicality', creating phrases and narratives that enable parent and child "to share a sense of passing time" (Malloch, 1999, p. 45). Malloch's theory of Communicative Musicality and his detailed acoustic diagrams of the pitch and harmony of voices in time help us interpret the interplay of purposes, feelings and interest in which the infant, even a premature newborn, can play an active and discriminating part. It also opens the way to a general theory of active human communication, applicable in the study of the evolution and development of language, for educational and therapeutic applications, and in the

creation, sharing and teaching of musical art (Gratier, 1999, 2003; Malloch & Trevarthen, 2007; Robb, 1999; Trevarthen & Malloch, 2000, 2002).

Even in the early months of life, the 'inarticulate' voice, aided by face expressions and gesture, has the communicative status of a proto-language (Halliday, 1975); it *is* the means for intersubjective engagement. To assume that language 'replaces' preverbal forms of communication overlooks the fact that voice has a communicative function in and of itself and that it partakes in crucial ways in the shaping of linguistic meaning. Infants remind us of the direct and lively forms of communication that persist in social negotiations of all kinds, spoken and unspoken, and that can give special moral support between persons when there is need of sympathetic help and collaboration with taxing tasks or difficult ideas.

Within a few months, before the end of the first year, and before speech, the steps by which dialogic games lead to sharing 'acts of meaning' (Halliday, 1975) come clear through age-related changes in the infant's motives and interests. A major step forward in the infant's motivation was recorded at the University of Edinburgh in July, 1974. Penelope Hublely, filming a mother and her daughter of 10 months, observed the start of *cooperative person-person-object awareness*, later identified as Secondary Intersubjectivity (Trevarthen & Hublely, 1978). This baby was coupling interests in persons and objects that she had kept separate until then, gaining an enhanced sympathy for the purposes for object use coming to expression in movements of her mother's body.

Research with infants and their mothers from one to twelve months demonstrates increasingly complex playfully mannered patterns that first 'experiment' with 'person-person games', then include objects that infants want to look at or manipulate, making them 'toys' in play 'dramas' or 'person-person-object games', often voiced with onomatopoeic nonsense sounds. Infants participated in small repetitive rituals created with the mothers, gradually taking more initiative in cooperative play. Toward the end of the first year, well before speech begins, infants grasp the purposes of others' actions, extending them, perverting them, noticing when they were accidental or 'absent-minded', and therefore 'not important', sometimes being helpful, often teasing. All of this brings to the infant's attention a wealth of meanings from everyday activities in the community of the family (Hublely & Trevarthen, 1979; Trevarthen & Marwick, 1986; Trevarthen, 1988). We called this 'cultural learning' and relate it to the 'intent participation learning' observed in many cultures where formal schooling is of less importance or absent (Greenfield & Lave, 1982; Rogoff et al., 2003).

Six-month-olds show to others an expression of joyful pride in performing learned displays, such as the actions of a hand clapping song, of making a comical sound with their lips, using the 'show' to confirm affectionate relationships, announcing a social identity or 'Me' (Trevarthen, 1990, 2002). The same baby will act wary and

ashamed with a stranger who, 'stupidly', does not know the game. The young performer thus demonstrates a sense of the moral sentiments that can keep or break social ties, and that may facilitate sharing of meanings and purposes, or make their understanding more difficult (Trevvarthen, 1995, 2005b). Observing these signs of self-awareness we learn how cultural understanding enriches sociability for an infant, and how it changes the infant's voice in society.

Vasu Reddy has demonstrated how this 'other awareness', 'awareness of the self in the eyes of the other', prompts infants to be clowns, even from the second month of life (Reddy, 2003; Reddy & Trevvarthen, 2004). The emotions of a joking, teasing 'Me' are inseparable from the social world in which they are created and accepted. They signal, and strengthen, 'belonging' in a family or small community (Gratier, 2003). Meaning is discovered and celebrated in imaginative performances, rich in mimesis and metaphor, in both of which the expressive quality of acts is the message, making parables that need no words (Donald, 2001; Turner, 1996). More sophisticated linguistic habits retain the value of expressions discovered in 'infant semiosis' as a 'common sense' of signs is built (Trevvarthen, 1994).

Imitations and the Invitations of Initiative Lead to Being An Affectionate Companion, Bold in Play and Proud In Knowledge

As Bertau says, in imitative dialogues, a sequence whereby the infant imitates the mother's imitation of his own vocalisation is clearly a transformation of the self through the other. It involves an experiencing and an exploration of self from the outside where the social self meets the innate self. The introjected Other in Self has both a structuring and a guiding function, exercising a growing 'character' and 'identity'.

The infant seeks to be imitated as much as it seeks to imitate, and affectionate adults imitate infants. Nagy has shown that newborns provoke imitations with partners whom they have previously imitated, and that in the beating of their heart infants show excitement and expectation in these transactions, actively projecting voice and feeling (Nagy & Molnár, 2004). Kugiumutzakis and his students describe the dialogues and emotions of imitation with infants, even premature newborns, confirming that infants stimulate others to imitate them, with emotions of interest and pleasure (Kugiumutzakis, 1999; Kugiumutzakis et al., 2005).

When a happy mother imitates she reproduces the intonational contour and quality of the infant's voice, taking on the baby's voice as one of her own possible voices, and she thereby transforms the baby's expressed self in confirming ways (Stern, 1990). Vocal imitation involves maintaining a degree of sameness or similarity as well as the introduction of variation that expresses changing feelings, self-confidence and intensity of purpose, vital for the regulation of deference and provocation in all social encounters. In play with infants, the expressions of voice, of both adult and child, change, often in extreme ways -- cooing with affection, laughing or squealing with

delight, shouting or screaming with anger or pain. Dramatic imitative games are created and some become the cultural rituals of lullabies or teasing action songs passed on from mother to daughter or son.

Already in infancy peers can be vocal companions with whom interpersonal relations can be negotiated (Selby & Bradley, 2003), but for toddlers the society of voices has become much bigger. Moving freely in the family and playground the child can make friends with all ages and with other children building a 'musical culture' out of many singing, dancing, chasing and story-telling 'voices' (Bjørkvold, 1992).

Voice as Holding

The expressive rhythms of human voices have the potential for holding attention and interest and at times they hold comfort and well-being. Winnicott (1971) beautifully describes the importance of the mother's Holding for the infant, which is inseparably physical and mental. Holding supports the infant's sense of identity and existence. We propose that the vocal rhythms of interpersonal engagement constitute a Holding environment for the infant that is in continuity and coherent with the physical holding involved in caregiver's mothering techniques.

In the contexts of childcare, techniques of the body as defined by Mauss (1934) are ways of moving the body in time; ways that afford anticipations and surprises, inviting others to partake in the collaborative shaping of up-coming action. It has been shown that infants participate actively in their care routines and that they learn the subtle patterns of posturo-tonic engagements associated with their caregivers' beliefs and representations (Stork, 1986). Rhythms of childcare 'hold and contain' children's emotions and excitement, 'cultivating' their expectations of live company. They have a 'regulatory' function because they are responsive to the child's need for engagement and the improvisation of shared patterns of experience. Similarly rhythms of motherese and infant-directed singing hold and contain the infant's attention, excitement and involvement, as the infant's delight holds the mother's affection (Trehub & Trainor, 1998).

The sonic spaces in which the foetus then infant gain consciousness may form what the French psychoanalyst Didier Anzieu (1995) calls an 'audio-phonic skin' which both contains and protects the infants, and, he proposed, supports his capacity to signify, then symbolise. This sonic space bounded by an audio-phonic skin acts as the first mirror or echo, reflecting and refracting not just the infant's self but also his self in others (Anzieu, 1995). Sonic space must be seen as a primordial intersubjective space, one actively created by the infant as well as the mother.

The Many Voices of a Mother

The infant recognises the mother's voice at birth (De Casper & Fifer, 1980) but the voice the newborn knows is not the voice the mother addresses to him. A woman

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speaks to her newborn with the voice of motherhood, which is in itself a 'double-voice'; the voice of her new maternal identity for herself, and the voice responding to the impulses and feelings of the infant mind (Papousek & Papousek, 1987). A mother's voice speaking to her baby delineates the intimate space where Ellen Dissanayake (2000) says Art is born -- a place of dancing, singing inventiveness that makes little dramatic rituals of mutual enjoyment rich in repetitions and surprises. The mother speaks with no one else the way she does with her baby, and fathers and siblings are stimulated by the infant's interest and pleasure to become 'artists' in similar ways.

A growing awareness of this 'special' voice that belongs to the infant, and to the mother, and then to the father with the infant, must be an important basis for the sense of self, confirming a feeling of uniqueness that is recognised and appreciated by the others. From before birth, the voice of the mother is a vehicle for both continuity and change. The foetus knows the mother's voice throughout the last months of intra-uterine life, but what is perceived are the lilts, inflections and cadences of the voice rather than any static 'finger print'. In other words, life before birth presents stable audible and felt temporal contours and signature tunes that can be thought of as preparing for protective maternal care after birth. The mother's familiar voice may be the source of a feeling of 'existence' and a sense of Time.

Motherese should not be thought of merely as an evolutionarily adapted universal behaviour that scaffolds an underdeveloped mind into consciousness, language and rationality. Mothers speak in many voices – and sometimes in many languages - and each voice spins stories that resonate with social, cultural and historical meaning. What is certainly crucial is that, in well-being, infants can hear and experience this unity in multiplicity, that they know all of the voices belong to one loving and caring mother. At the same time they may begin to hear the continuities and overlaps between the mother's voice and those of close others who share similar world-views.

Studies of interactions between infant and mothers suffering from psychopathological conditions confirm this crucial role of 'voice'. Mothers suffering from post-natal depression speak to their infants with monocord, low-pitched voices and have difficulty engaging their infants in lively protoconversation (Bettes, 1988; Robb, 1999). Depressed mothers' speech is not only less musically expressive, it is also less focused on the infant's experiences and agency (Murray, Kempton, Woolgar & Hooper, 1993). Depressed mothers do not take on their infant's voice as much as non-depressed mothers who use a form of 'reported speech' to report and comment on the infant's feelings as though from the inside, shifting perspective by taking on other voices. Perhaps depressed mothers lack the rich multiplicity that makes up 'voice'.

Analyses of interactions between mothers suffering from 'borderline personality disorder' and their infants shed further light on the issue of "the individual manifoldness of voice" (Bakhtin, 1979, p 157-159; cited by Bertau) in mother-infant exchange.

Women who suffer from this disorder have a difficulty negotiating interpersonal spaces for intimacy. Their social lives are often marked by sudden shifts of mood feeding tumultuous relationships. With their infants, these mothers tend to be unpredictably intrusive or withdrawn and to express more negative than positive affect (Gratier & Apter-Danon, in press). Acoustic analyses of vocal interactions between ‘borderline’ mothers and their young infants reveal quite strikingly basic incoherencies in the ways these mothers use their voices. They often sound like many different mothers speaking in turn because the timbre of their voices and the speed of the speech shift markedly, which has a powerful effect on infants who are trying to making sense of their own voice in their mothers’ voices.

Voice and Belonging

A mother’s voice is also the voice of her community. It carries the history of her affiliations. A voice is never one’s own (except perhaps in mental illness), it carries the imprint of close others and communities of belonging through styles of speech, accent, the recurrent use of words or turns of phrases, etc. From the first non-verbal dialogues the infant holds with close others a process of belonging is set in motion. As the infant interacts meaningfully with close others, culture begins to inhabit its body and voice. We have shown that the vocal exchanges of 2-month-old infants carry the imprint of the specific conversational styles of the cultures they were born in (Cowley, Moodley & Fiori-Cowley, 2004; Gratier, 2001; 2003). From the earliest experiences of social exchange infants are picking up the temporal and qualitative shapes of expression most typical of their communities of belonging. This constitutes what can be thought of as a ‘protohabitus’ with reference to Bourdieu’s notion of *habitus* as the regulated improvisation that guides specific social behaviour (Bourdieu, 1990). ‘Protohabitus’ provides the first set of rules for social exchange that an infant can predict in the course of interacting with close others. These ‘structuring structures’ are continually reshaped through everyday encounters with members of a community. Protohabitus grows out of the innate motives for sharing and meaning and gradually roots an infant within more or less defined communities of belonging (Gratier & Apter-Danon, in press).

The rhythms of parents’ vocal styles carry cultural meaning, like flowing rivers, though ever changing, have memories, carrying minerals and sediments from other places and other times. Belonging is first played out in the body and the voice and in the anticipations of how and when the bodies and voices of others will behave -- how the game will be played and how the rules may change or endure. Culture is in the body and in time before it is reflected upon and talked about in consciousness, or literature. This is why culture runs deep and languages leave their traces in rhythmic feel and anticipatory emotion, in life and literary art.

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RECONCEPTUALIZING INTERNALIZATION

Noah Susswein, Maximilian B. Bibok, & Jeremy I. M. Carpendale
Simon Fraser University, Canada

ABSTRACT. Internalization is a familiar notion in many developmental theories. It is an especially important concept in sociocultural theories that emphasize the role of social interaction and dialogue in the development of human forms of cognition. The metaphor of internalization suggests that social relations are an ‘outside’ and minds an ‘inside’ of developing children. We explore why this metaphor is appealing and explain where we feel it is misleading. We argue that thinking in terms of internalization risks conflating logical and empirical relations between social and psychological phenomena, including construing relations in definition as relations of containment. Our appeal to ‘definitions’ and normative standards leads to an evaluation of explicit versus implicit rules. The intrinsic constraints that implicit rules place on development are discussed and an evolutionary epistemological conception of cognitive development is described.

Interest in the idea of the dialogical self (Hermans, 2002, 2005; Hermans & Kempen, 1993) and the dialogical mind (Fernyhough, 1996) raises questions about the nature of development and dialogue. Such approaches share the view that some aspects of the psychology of individuals are relational in origin. That is, individuals’ minds, selves, or persons are in some sense ‘socially constituted’. In other words, “Whether or not you are social in the sense of sociable, you are social ontologically (at least in a major way)” (Bickhard, in press, p. 29). In this paper, we focus on a specific articulation of this general thesis: theories of the dialogical mind. Internalization is a core metaphor for such approaches, a means through which social and psychological phenomena are related. The goal of this article is to examine the metaphor of internalization, and to describe the relations between development and dialogue in less metaphorical terms.

The idea that thinking has its roots in interpersonal dialogue has a long history, dating as far back as Plato. Recent approaches draw upon the works of Vygotsky (1934/1986) and Bakhtin (1981, 1986) (e.g., Fernyhough, 1996), although the same

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point is there in Piaget's (1923/1959, 1924/1928) early work, inspired by Janet (Carpendale, Lewis, Susswein & Lunn, in press). Many developmental theories involve some notion of 'internalization', although these views can differ radically. Social learning approaches (Aronfreed, 1969) assume that internalization involves the transmission of rules that are imposed upon, and eventually adopted by children, resulting in internal control over behaviour. This view contrasts with the view that the internalization involves transformation rather than transmission (Lawrence & Valsiner, 1993). For Vygotsky (1981), the sociality of higher mental functions is characterized as the "conversion of social relations into mental functions" (p. 165). According to Vygotsky, "it goes without saying that internalization transforms the process itself and changes its structure and functions" (1981, p. 163). In Leont'ev's (1981, p. 57) words, "the process of internalization is not a transferal of an external activity to a preexisting, internal plane of consciousness: it is the process in which this internal plane is formed". Rather than stamping social influences into a blank slate, Vygotsky insisted that internalization involves the creation of a specifically human mental plane. However, if 'internalization' is meant to indicate 'transformation' and 'creation', we have to be careful not to confuse internalization, in the ordinary sense of 'drawing into' or 'coming to contain', with this other metaphorical use of internalization.

For Vygotsky (1978, p. 57), "the internalization of socially rooted and historically developed activities is the distinguishing feature of human psychology, the basis of the qualitative leap from animal to human psychology". However, he goes on to state that, "as yet, the barest outline of this process is known." That is, Vygotsky acknowledged that 'internalization' names a phenomenon of interest but does not explain it. We suggest that adopting the metaphor of internalization may actually impede further elucidation of the very relational phenomena that Vygotsky brought to light. Internalization seems to follow from the view that human forms of cognition develop through social interaction or dialogue specifically. If social activity is conceived of as 'outer', and psychological activity as 'inner', then it might seem natural to characterize the relations between social activity and cognitive development as involving a process of 'internalization'. In this article, we explore the metaphor of 'internalization' and the related intuition that certain forms of human thought depend upon dialogue and social interaction more broadly. We argue that social practices including dialogue *define* as well as causally affect cognitive development. In our analysis of these definitional relations, we distinguish between explicit and implicit rules, and finally outline an alternative evolutionary epistemological view of development (Campbell, 1974, 1987).

Internalization

The notion of ‘internalization’ is widely used and is not unique to relational theories of development. For example, in the cognitive neuroscience literature, Moll, Zahn, de Oliveira-Souza, Krueger, and Grafman (2005) argue that the prefrontal cortex “has a central role in the *internalization* of moral values and norms” (p. 804, italics added). In some cases, ‘internalization’ may seem like a harmless synonym for ‘learning’. However, in other cases it is used more as a formal model of cognitive development. It is this second use of the term that we view as problematic (for related concerns see Josephs, 2003, p. viii). Succinctly, when “the line between the metaphorical and the literal becomes blurred...what begins as an explanatory aid often becomes thought of, whether intended or not, as a technical concept” (Slaney & Maruan, 2005, p. 154). The claim that development involves the ‘internalization of dialogue’ requires an explanation of what is meant by this metaphor. As discussed earlier, explanations of what is meant by ‘internalization’ typically involve the notions of transformation, creation, and co-creation. It is not clear that the metaphor of internalization helps to explain these processes. Wertsch (1993) has argued that the term internalization should be abandoned and replaced by the more judicious term ‘mastery’. We aim to expand upon this idea in the second part of this article.

Why is the metaphor of internalization so uncritically accepted? Perhaps because our common-sense conceptual system is subtly but deeply metaphorical (Lakoff and Johnson (1980/2003, 1999). The metaphorical nature of phrases such as ‘hard times,’ ‘hot tempered’ and ‘deeply metaphorical’ is almost invisible because their meanings are so transparent. Another familiar metaphor is the ‘container’ metaphor, which has two main interrelated uses: (a) a “tendency for people to conceive of physical entities as being enclosed (or *contained*) within a larger, non-physical structure”; and (b) to think “of non-physical entities as being enclosed within a physical structure” (Slaney & Maraun, 2005, p. 166). Examples include such conventional phrases as thoughts ‘*in one’s head*’ or feelings ‘*in one’s heart*’ in which a non-physical entities (thoughts and feelings) are conceived of as being contained by a physical entities (heads and hearts, respectively); and being engaged “*in dialogue*”, in which physical entities (persons) are conceived of as conversing within a non-physical structure (dialogue). It may be objected that it is persons as *psychological* rather than *physical* entities that engage in dialogue, and that it is better to say that persons enact or instantiate dialogical structures than to say that they are ‘contained within them’. Our point is that the notion of being ‘in dialogue’ is a familiar phrase *despite* these logical complexities.

It seems fine to say that human beings communicate *in*, or through, dialogue. The metaphor is harmless here because it just means that dialogue is a very important human activity. More broadly, it is common to think of individuals as entities within social and cultural structures or contexts, and to think of minds as the socioculturally shaped interiors of persons. However, ‘internalizing dialogue’ seems to involve a shift

from the first to the second sense of the container metaphor, which is not ordinary in the sense that talk of, for example, doing arithmetic ‘in one’s head’ is. The notion of internalizing dialogue suggests that participating *in* dialogue causes certain of children’s ‘internal’ cognitive¹ abilities to become dialogically-structured. This view can be caricatured as asking how social activities get inside psychological phenomena, an unfair but illustrative depiction. It is perfectly ordinary to ask someone, “What do you have in mind?” It is not ordinary, though, to ask if, or how, children internalize dialogue; that is a request for a theory of development. If we unwittingly expand ordinary metaphorical language into theorizing, relational and developmental processes may be misconceived. We can think to ourselves, “on the one hand X, but on the other hand Y.” Yet, this does not mean that thinking is two-handed; that is obviously concrete thinking. We think that the metaphor of ‘internalization’ has become similarly calcified.

Internal and external

Starting from the intuition that there is something inherently social and linguistic about certain forms of thought, the container metaphor paradoxically suggests that there is something social *in* individuals. However, there is a difference between claiming that human beings *are* social and claiming that we have something social *inside* us. Social cognitive abilities are *individuals’* abilities, although their existence presupposes interaction with others. Because dialogue is such an important form of social interaction and an important context for development, we might also think that cognitive development involves getting some traces of dialogue into individual minds. But it is helpful to examine the convention of conceiving of cognitive abilities as ‘internal’. We speak so casually about the inner and the outer in psychology that it is easy to forget that it is a metaphor. The container metaphor is often used to convey logical relations, as, for example, in Bennett and Hacker’s (2003, p. 86) paraphrase of Frege’s (1956) remark that “you can’t have my pain and I can’t have your sympathy”. Yet, it is subtly metaphorical to say that we can never really look inside another’s mind or get inside their skin. This just means that no person can have someone else’s experience, a logical truth, not an engineering problem. Pain can be *in* a body part and sympathy might result from having a friend’s suffering *in* mind. But the ‘ins’ are different. Perhaps part of the appeal of the idea that thoughts and feelings are inside persons is due to the fact that we can often conceal what we think and feel. However, concealing what we think and feel does not involve hiding those thoughts and feelings in a vessel, as a birthday gift might be hidden in a drawer.

The container metaphor of ‘internalization’ may be used to express causal relations. For example, an ex-patriot noticing that she has ‘internalized’ some of the

¹ For ease of comprehension, we will use the term ‘cognitive’ as is conventional, to refer to both intellectual and volitional abilities (see Kenny, 1989). Although this obscures some important distinctions, such distinctions will not be explored in this paper.

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values of her new culture describes the *effect* of living in a new place. It may also be used to express logical relations, as in the intuition that there is some trace of social relations in individual thought. To clarify the distinction we are drawing between causal and logical relations: A man's marital status determines or defines whether or not he is a bachelor; this relation is logical. If this man has such objectionable body odor as to drive away all would-be wives, his odor causally determines his marital status (Susswein & Racine, in press). It seems that Vygotsky described *both* logical and causal relations when he wrote that "the internalization of socially rooted and historically developed activities is the distinguishing feature of human psychology, the basis of the qualitative leap from animal to human psychology" (1978, p. 57), and "the child's system of activity is determined at each specific stage *both by the child's degree of organic development and by his or her degree of mastery in the use of tools*" (p. 21, italics in original). According to Vygotsky, the higher mental functions are determined both by individual biology and mastery in the use of signs. Here, 'determine' means both 'define' and 'cause'. But it is essential to distinguish between them. It is patently nonsensical to claim that a man's being unmarried causes him to be a bachelor. A man's being unmarried and his being a bachelor are not related as cause and effect—they are synonymous and related by definition. However, not all logical relations are as easy to spot as synonymy.

It may be helpful to employ a technical, philosophical variant of the container metaphor, and distinguish between internal, or conceptual, and external, empirical relations:

Internal relations are those relations that are intrinsic to the nature of one or more of the relata. They are a kind of essential relation, rather than an essential property. For example, an arc of a circle is internally related to the center of that circle in the sense that it could not be that arc of that circle without having that relation to that center of the circle (Bickhard, 2003, p. 101).

Internal relations, such as between 'bachelor' and 'unmarried man,' contrast with external relations expressed by statements, such as "her words caused me to reconsider my views on the issue." Relations in meaning are internal; relations of cause and effect are external.

It seems clear that there are causal relations between social interaction and cognitive development. Human infants do not survive, never mind intellectually thrive, without sufficient social interaction, which would seem to necessarily include some amount of dialogue in later years. Developmentalists have also documented early forms of interaction that have been described as dialogue, or proto-dialogue, in infant development (Trevvarthen, 1977, 1979; Stern, 1985; Fogel, 2002). Any possible effects of experiencing enriched or impoverished dialogues on cognitive development would

constitute external, causal relations between dialogues and minds. Variation in early social interactions may explain *why* some infants develop certain skills earlier or better than others. The relations between biological development and cognitive abilities are also causal, but different. A functioning brain is a *causal precondition* for the development and exercise of such cognitive abilities as engaging in dialogue. Specifying causal preconditions of a particular ability helps explain *how* an organism does what it does, or possesses the ability it possesses. Neuroscience literally seeks to explain cognitive activities by reference to what is inside persons although, as shown above, the metaphor of internalization is often uncritically adopted in this literature as well. Nevertheless, it seems clear that both biological structures and social interaction play causal roles in the development of cognitive abilities. Such external relations between brain, mind and dialogue would be described through empirical investigations.

In contrast, characterizing the internal relations between dialogue and mind requires conceptual investigation. This involves considering *what* we mean by, among other things, ‘thinking’ and ‘mind’, i.e. what activities *count as* thinking, and having a normally functioning human mind. We think that this division of labor between *why*, *how*, and *what* questions (an elaboration of Dupré, (1993) helps to clarify Vygotsky’s idea that higher mental functions are ‘semiotically mediated’. For mastery in the use of signs, and more generally, of social practices, is what *defines* many distinctly human cognitive abilities. For example, losing or failing to develop the ability to engage in reasonably fluent dialogue would be considered to be a serious mental pathology². The ability to engage in dialogue is an important criterion for having a normally functioning human mind. Like the mutually co-defining arc and center of a circle, our ordinary notions of (human) mind and dialogue are internally related. Part of what it means to have a properly functioning human mind is that one has the ability to engage in dialogue. A striking difference between humans and other species is that we speak a natural language. We ask questions, offer explanations, request justifications and clarifications, and so forth. These activities constitute specifically human forms of thought. Köhler’s apes may have been able to solve problems, but they did not explain to their trainers how they approached the problems (Köhler, 1925a, 1925b). That is, although many species act in ways which count as thinking, many forms of human cognition require language.

Certain of individuals’ cognitive abilities are ontologically dependent upon the use of signs. For example, the ability to add presupposes the existence of the sign system of numbers. But there are also abilities which seem more removed from the use

² To be clear, the ability to engage in dialogue conventionally is not the only criterion of having a mind. A person suffering from aphasia who could communicate with gestures would partially fulfill both the criteria of participating in dialogue and of having a functioning human mind. Furthermore, non-language using beings can fulfill other, non-dialogical behavioral criteria of having a mind.

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of signs, such as understanding how close to one's conversational partner one ought to stand. Such an ability is defined, not by the explicit rules of a formal sign system, but implicitly by social practices. The possibility of understanding such social conventions presupposes some standard of what counts as 'too close,' even if few competent conversationalists would be able to explicate that standard in measurement terms: for example, when talking to strangers keep a distance of 4 to 12 feet between the two of you, but 1.5 to 4 feet is fine if you're talking to good friends (Hall, 1966).

We might call these 'practical definitions': definitions in deeds rather than signs. The situation is even more complicated for such cognitive abilities skills as perspective taking abilities, as there both verbal and non-verbal criteria for 'understanding perspective'. One criterion for understanding perspective is correctly describing what another person could and could not see in a given situation. However, this is not the only criterion. For example, in competitive situations there is evidence that chimpanzees know what conspecifics have seen. A subordinate chimpanzee will take food that a dominant has not seen, but will not take food that the dominant has seen (Tomasello, Call, & Hare, 2003).

There are logical relations between social practices and psychological phenomena. However, the relations are not representational nor are they of similarity. To say that individual intellectual abilities bear some structural similarity to dialogue or other social phenomena understates and obscures the relation between psychological and social phenomena. Adults and older children do have the cognitive ability to represent dialogue in the sense that they can imagine dialogue or describe a conversation between two people. Furthermore, they might be able to draw a picture of two persons having a dialogue, and such a pictorial representation of dialogue would bear a structural similarity to the social practice of dialogue. However, it is not clear that the *ability* to engage in, describe, or illustrate a dialogue has any sort of 'dialogical structure.' Nonetheless, a structural *sameness* relation between social interaction and individual thought is often tacitly assumed. Fernyhough (1996, p. 48), for example, argues that Vygotsky-inspired sociocultural approaches to mind are partially defined by, "the assumption that the higher mental functions have their origin in and, therefore, share important features with interpersonal activity". This 'therefore' is tricky. That X causes Y does not entail that Y shares important features with X. If one assumes a process of internalization, it might seem natural to suppose that "higher mental functioning involves...an internal version of the interplay of perspectives that takes place between individuals on the external plane" (p. 51). However, clarifications which follow hinge upon explaining how this internal interplay is *different* from real-world dialogue.

We sometimes think in the form of imagined dialogues, and an ordinary example of the container metaphor is to think of such thoughts as taking place "in our minds". When we imagine conversations, we might say that there is a structural

similarity between our thinking and social activity. But we do not always think that way. This fact strains theories that assume a more generalized sameness relation between thought and dialogue. For example, Fernyhough (1996, p. 48) qualifies his claim that, “the higher mental functions share important features with interpersonal activity”, by explaining that throughout development, dialogical thinking is abbreviated so that the process of internalized interlocutors comparing and contrasting perspectives on a given topic no longer takes place sequentially, but simultaneously; “Dialogue...does not always manifest the temporal patterning of conversation” (p. 52). Moreover, there is not “any necessary structural resemblance to the ‘give and take’ of conversation” (p. 52). Furthermore, dialogical thinking takes place without any actual speakers:

Another way in which the dialogic higher mental functions extend beyond conventional notions of verbal thought as a "conversation in the head" lies in the extent to which the dialogue is abbreviated...a continuous process of syntactic abbreviation, particularly the development of "predicativity" (whereby the "psychological subject" of an utterance is gradually eliminated, while the "predicate" is preserved) (Fernyhough, 1996, p. 52).

Consequently, dialogical thinking bears no similarity to “a conversation in the head”. It is not sequential, and involves no speakers. So it is not clear how dialogical relations between persons are reproduced in such a form of thinking. Rather, it seems that intuitions regarding internal, definitional relations between mind and dialogue are dealt with by proposing that the minds inside of individuals are dialogical in nature. We see this as illustrating how good ideas can get trapped in the container metaphor.

‘Internalization’ was intended to denote a process of transformation, especially through dialogue and interaction more generally. We have argued that conceiving of a transformation in abilities as an ‘internal’ transformation is a potentially misleading consequence of employing an ordinary language container metaphor. So how should we characterize this transformation? What is dialogical or more generally social about this transformation? Almost all theorists would accept that social interaction plays an important role causal role in development. However, in, for example, modularity or information processing approaches to psychology, dialogue is essentially viewed as triggering or as providing inputs to computational processes. Although these approaches may conceive of dialogue as necessary for cognitive development and certain forms of cognition (e.g. ‘understanding an utterance’), they fall far short of a ‘dialogical theory of development.’ They fail to account for the intuition that that there is something deeply, or essentially dialogical or social about cognitive abilities. It seems that we are looking for a relation that is stronger than necessity. Might it be ‘necessity plus sufficiency’? Does it help to claim that dialogue is necessary and sufficient for higher mental functions? Probably not, as it is clear that biological factors are part of the

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complete *casual* story of cognition. So perhaps what seems missing from non-relational accounts of development are not more or stronger causal relations, but a different type of relation entirely.

It is the logical relation of ‘definition’ that explicates the intuition that there is something essentially dialogical or social about cognitive development and cognitive abilities themselves. Transformations in relations with the other persons are what *constitute* such important developmental achievements as forms of perspective taking. And it is the exercise of social cognitive abilities that defines those abilities. For example, gaze following is a primitive form of the family of actions which *count as* ‘understanding attention’ (Susswein & Racine, in press; Racine & Carpendale, in press). Being able to report what another person can and cannot see is a criterion for ‘understanding perspective.’ Stating that a person will look for something where she last left it is one criterion for understanding false beliefs (Wimmer & Perner, 1983). Voluntarily sharing a cookie with a playmate is a criterion for ‘understanding sharing’. And so on. How is that we assess whether or not a child has ‘internalized’ a concept or value? We assess her actions in the real world. The convention of describing cognitive abilities as ‘internal properties’ should not obscure the fact they are *defined* by ‘external’ actions and interactions. Furthermore, even if we persist in describing experience as involving an ‘inner world’, it is clearly not the quality of a person’s *experience* of, for example, doing addition ‘in their head’ that determines their level of skill at it. A person’s skill at arithmetic is independent of whether or not they enjoy calculating sums. And although it surely possible to compute a sum ‘in one’s head’ without reporting the results in a particular case, the existence of calculating depends upon there being a *general* standard of what counts as correct or incorrect. Now, it is not clear that there is something dialogical or social about *all* cognitive abilities. For example, searching for a hidden toy beneath a blanket constitutes understanding object permanence and it is not clear that this ability is dialogical or social in an important way (Piaget, 1937/1971). Nevertheless, many if not most of the cognitive abilities that we are interested in—to play games, to obey commands, to reason about others’ thoughts and feelings and express one’s own—are defined by social and often more specifically dialogical practices.

Although it is not our focus here, we note in passing that this same analysis can be applied to the notion of a dialogical self as well. What we call self-awareness is largely a matter of being able to distinguish between our own and others’ movements, predict one’s effect on others and, later compare oneself to others. It not an ability to perceive dialogically structured ‘inner’ entities qua thoughts and feelings. Thus, rather than a dialogical self being constituted by internalized others, we might say that what is social or dialogical about selves is that self and other are internally related—mutually co-defining, like the arc and center of a circle. Human selfhood is tied up with human sociality, because we *are* social, but not because there is something social ‘inside us’.

We have questioned the metaphor of internalization as an explanation for the development of higher mental functions and argued that individual abilities are relational or social in the sense that they are defined by social practices, and 'semiotically mediated' to the extent that they are defined by fluency in the manipulation of signs. In contrast, the metaphor of 'internalization' suggests that development entails getting interpersonal relations into the relata of individual persons. If, in Geertz's picturesque terms, "mind extends beyond the skin" (1973), the container metaphor is inadequate to express this idea. If minds are in some sense dialogical or relational, then they cannot be self-contained. In the following section we outline an alternative, mastery-based account of dialogical development. This requires an examination of the process of mastering rules, and evaluating explicit versus implicit conceptions of rules.

**Internalization as Mastery: Rules as selection pressures [error detection] on
'higher mental functions'**

Dialogical accounts of human psychological functioning focus on how the social environment affects the development of children. Evolution also focuses on the relationship between an organism and its environment, and it is sometimes helpful to compare the process of development to that of evolution. As well as the parallels between evolution and development, there are differences in how these two processes are typically, although uncritically, conceptualized. Non-relational developmental theories typically focus on the individual, and although the environment is acknowledged as a source of individual change, it is conceived of as a relatively static context upon which the individual actively confers meaning. Evolutionary theories, in contrast, typically focus on the environment as being the sole determinate of change in a species. The environment is viewed as imposing selection pressures (environmental demands that organisms must satisfy if they are to survive and reproduce) or constraints, upon individual organisms that passively acquiesce to the process of natural selection.

Human development involves both an active child who constructs meaning, and an environment of selection pressures that constrains the child's activity. Moreover, as social environments predate the children who are born into them, the selection pressures in the social environment take precedence over the activity of the child in guiding the trajectory of his or her development. Although there are reciprocal effects between a child and his or her social environments, for example, with parents adjusting their communication style to accommodate the temperament of their child, it is unlikely that such accommodations by the social environment would extend to the child's learning of social conventions, such as language. It may be true that as adults we can negotiate with others regarding the social conventions in which we mutually participate, but such negotiation presupposes prior conventions that allow us to reach agreement. That is,

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before children can reciprocally influence social and cultural conventions or rules, they must first learn those conventions or rules as understood by the people already engaging in those conventions. Otherwise, children will be unable to enter into negotiation with those persons already engaged in those conventions, and therefore, will be unable to reciprocally influence those conventions through their participation. For this reason, outside of the immediate family context, social environments and conventions predate the children born into them and who will later learn to interact with them. Only after children have first mastered the selection pressures in such social environments do those environments become amendable to reciprocal influence by the children; to break the rules one must know first what they are. An adequate developmental account of the relation between social and psychological phenomena must address how children succeed in mastering the selection pressures in their social environment.

To clarify the relation between social and psychological phenomena, consider for a moment an analogous example of the relationship existing between the trait of an organism and its environment: the wings of a robin. They have a structural-functional makeup that allows the robin to fly. The relation between the structural-functional makeup of the robin's wings, and the air through which the robin flies, is definitional in nature, not causal. The wings are not an effect of the air through which the robin flies. That is, the air in the environment of robins did not cause them to have the wings that they do, but rather defined a set of selection pressures (principles of aerodynamic flight) that individuals in the species were required to meet if they were to enhance their survival through the capacity for flight. The wings of robins and the air through which they fly are related in the sense that for robins to fly their wings must conform to the requirements of the environment, but the environment does not select or determine the specific physical instantiation of their wings, only that for an organism to fly its functioning must accord with the interactive, aerodynamic demands of the atmosphere. For example, butterflies, robins, and bats can all fly because the species specific instantiation of their wings accords to the same aerodynamic principles of flight; penguins, however, have wings but as their wings do not accord with aerodynamic principles they cannot fly. "From this perspective, the fitness [of a trait] is *not* seen as an objective function to be optimized, but as an *expression* of environmental requirements" (Eiben & Smith, 2003, p. 16, italics added). More simply stated, this scenario is akin to when a boss tells an employee, "I want it done now, and I don't care how you do it." What is 'done now' is an outcome, in this case successful flight, and 'how you do it', in this case the specific structure of a bird's wings, is unimportant so long as it 'gets the job done'.

Although it is a common short-hand to speak of the environment as a causal factor in evolution, as in the environment of robins 'caused' them to have the wings that they do, this is potentially misleading. The evolutionary success (fitness) of organisms is defined in terms of reproductive success. This necessarily entails that the organisms

have managed to survive up to that point in time. To survive organisms must maintain the continuity of their life processes in the face of environmental perturbations that may potentially undermine that continuity (Maturana & Varela, 1987). Evolution is the process by which organisms adapt over time to such perturbation so that they maintain the continuity of their life processes. That is, the adaptiveness of a trait is indexed to the ability of that trait to contribute to the maintenance and continuity of the organisms' life processes; it is *not* indexed to the environment, nor is it a representation of environmental perturbations (Christensen & Bickhard, 2002). The reason for this is that given the organism as the point of reference (*not* an observer watching the organism), what defines death for an organism is the break down of the continuity of its life processes (Maturana & Varela, 1987). Environmental perturbations, by undermining the life processes of organisms, do not specify what traits organisms will evolve in response. This is because the context that defines a trait as adaptive is the prior organization of the life processes of the organisms (Christensen & Bickhard, 2002). How the life processes of organisms are organized is independent of the physical environment with which they interact. This organization is not an isomorphic representation of environmental perturbations, as if the environment causally impressed organization into organisms. The environment does not cause this organization, as such organization is caused by its own internal self-organizing dynamics, and which is arranged in such a way that the organization maintains its own continuity and reproduction (Christensen & Bickhard, 2002; Maturana & Varela, 1987). The environment does, though, implicitly define the parameters in which such organization can take place (Bickhard & Campbell, 2003). That is, the environment constrains and limits possibilities of organization, but does not 'cause' such organization. Selection pressures, therefore, define a space of possible organization that will lead to outcomes of survival and reproductive success, but are not efficient causes of that organization; "Nature selects for outcomes,' and is indifferent to how they are achieved" (Lehrman as cited in Griffiths & Gray, 1994, p. 279).

What then does any of the preceding have to do with the social or dialogical development of mind? This: What makes 'higher mental functions' inherently social is that community standards of correctness *define* what performances by a child will count as possession of the higher mental function 'X', much in the way that evolutionary environments 'select' what mutations will ultimately count as adaptive for an organism in those environments. Human cognitive development includes mastering social conventions involving normative standards of correctness and the use of language. Such mastery involves following routines, obeying rules, observing social etiquette, coming to agreement and disagreeing, etc. It does not necessarily involve representing those routines, rules, and conventions, however (Bickhard, 1980). Cognition is not 'about' rules (excepting cases such as in this article, in which we are thinking about social conventions), just as the wings of a bird are not 'about' the principles of aerodynamics.

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Rules delineate boundaries in the social environments in which children interact. The cognition of children is negatively (as in a negative of a photograph) or implicitly defined by the social rules and conventions with which they interact.

To presuppose that the ability to act and interact consists of representations that permit actions and interactions begs the question as to why it is that DVD cases do not know anything about the contents of the movies they contain, although the cases contain an impression, a representation, of the video disc. The reason DVD cases have no knowledge of their contents is because they do not perform any actions – they do not *do* anything. We take the philosophical position that knowing is grounded in activity, not in representations (Bickhard & Terveen, 1995; Brooks, 1991, 1995; Bennett & Hacker, 2003; Maturana & Varela, 1987; Piaget, 1970/1971; Varela, 1995); “Knowing is effective action, that is, operating effectively in the domain of existence of living beings” (Maturana & Varela, 1987, p. 29). *Possessing* abilities differs from *containing* them. Possession entails an agent, containment a vessel. Representations cannot contain their own meaning, as representations are not vessels, and meaning is not an object. The meaning of a representation is the logical relationship between the representation and the original object presented (Bickhard & Terveen, 1995; Campbell & Bickhard, 1986). However, only an epistemic agent with access to both the original presentation and the representation can actively construct such a connection and know that it is in place. This necessarily defeats the purpose of epistemic agents containing representations, for the whole point of having them was to grant such agents knowledge of the world. Thus, conceiving of knowledge as the containment of representations presupposes what it is meant to explain (Campbell & Bickhard, 1986).

To clarify this point, consider a tourist in a foreign country. The tourist as epistemic agent, exists independently from the society with which she interacts on her holiday. In contrast, children’s epistemic agency develops in the context of their native culture. Good tourists prepare themselves for such encounters by learning the language, customs, and social norms of the country before they set foot off the plane. That is, they prepare themselves to be able to interact with others in the society they are about to visit. The notion that development involves internalizing the rules of society, or patterns of social interaction, has something in common with this tourist view, as if learning how to act and think reasonably consisted in building models of reasonable dialogues. However, children develop, or evolve, their cognitive abilities within the relations and interactions they have with people in their immediate social environment (Bibok, Carpendale, & Lewis, in press; Carpendale & Lewis, 2004, 2006). They do not, as epistemic agents, precede the social environment in which they interact. Children come to implicitly understand social rules as they develop within their societies. In the context of the tourist, at least some of the social rules acquired are explicitly understood by the tourist.

It helps to conceive of social rules as standards of error and well as of correctness—they define when the social conduct of a person is in error or not. As children develop, their conduct is guided or channeled by these rules. This does not require, though, that children explicitly understand such social rules to engage in social conduct (Bickhard, 1980); that is the job of the tourist. Rules select for, or define, what counts as outcomes of successful social interaction; rules do not select for a specific instantiation of the cognitive processes that lead to successful outcomes of social interaction. Instead, rules define a class of parameters to which a given cognition must accord with in order to be successful, *but do not* determine the structure of that cognition or how it satisfies those parameters; “system organization cannot be passively imposed from the environment—it must be constructed from within” (Bickhard, 1992b, p. 34).

The question is though, how do children ever learn all of these implicit rules? The implicit rules in this case are standards of error, whereas for the tourist the explicit rules are standards of correctness. The tourist matches her conduct to the rules and knows that she is greeting strangers in the culturally correct way. Even the rules for what not to do in the foreign country are also explicit, in that she compares her lack of conduct to the rules in the travel guide and is correct for not having done that behaviour. But children growing up in a society, with the exception of explicit instruction, do not have explicit rules against which to compare their behaviour; they do not have Fodor’s Travel Guide to Local Folk Psychology.

In cases in which social rules are implicit, the feedback children receive during social interaction (i.e., faux pas) implicitly defines a possible logical class of potential conduct that would be considered to lead to successful interaction and the achievement of shared social goals. With continued feedback, children will vary and modify their conduct in order to continue successfully interacting with others. This can occur in one of two ways: by reasoning or learning. In instances where children are able to predict the outcomes of their conduct, they can be said to have engaged in a process of reasoning about knowledge already known rather than a process of learning something new. However, in instances where children are developing social understanding beyond their current ability, reasoning is insufficient. Instead, given their current level of understanding, children must experiment and vary their conduct, with no guarantee that any of those variations will be successful. As children are learning to interact socially they necessarily will be blind to the potential outcomes of any new conduct variation they perform (Campbell, 1974); to state otherwise presupposes a circular prescience: children would be trying to learn that which they already know (Bickhard, 1992a).

In instances of learning, variations in social conduct that are successful in meeting the requirements of the selection pressures of social rules will be retained and carried forward to future social interactions (Campbell, 1974, 1987). With each successive retention of some mode of conduct, the capacities of children for social

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interaction increases as the mastery of new social rules builds upon previous successes in a recursive manner (successful conduct is not merely accumulated, but fed back into the process of conduct variation) (Bickhard, 1992b). Concurrent with this process, each prior success imposes intrinsic constraints upon the possible future constructions of the child (Christensen & Bickhard, 2002); that is, to be successful, each new construction must accommodate and be internally consistent with previously acquired knowledge. Such intrinsic constraints foster development by channeling or guiding the next round of variation and selection, thereby conferring directionality and order upon development. Consequently, with each retention of a new form of conduct, the problem space that children face of having to coordinating their activity with those of others becomes progressively smaller (Bickhard, 1980). Moreover, as children learn to combine different modes of conduct in new ways, the net result is a combinatorial explosion whereby children's capacity to engage in social interaction increases exponentially; learning to engage in social interaction is not additive in nature. Although children do occasionally receive explicit rule instruction from their parents, such as, "look both ways before crossing the street," most of our rules are implicitly known and never verbalized. Perfect examples of such implicit rules are social space and eye contact during conversations. Many people have had the uncomfortable experience of talking to someone from a different culture and discovering that he or she either stands too close or too far away from oneself, and may or may not maintain what we consider appropriate eye contact. Such rules though are not explicitly taught to children, at least to the best of our knowledge.

The conduct of children does not reflect an explicit understanding of these rules. Children are unaware of the existence of such rules; their cognition does *not reproduce* by these rules, but *accords* with these rules. Because implicit rules are defined in terms of error, they exercise their effect on children's development *after* the child has engaged in social conduct, not *before* the conduct takes place. For this reason, rules do not have any causal relationship to the cognition of the children, but a definitional relationship. The rules logically define what conduct may or may not count as socially efficacious, but they do not causally determine how that conduct is to be cognitively performed by the child.

As a result of this process, the cognition or 'higher mental functions' of children are constrained by the social rules in which they develop. This is why, for instance, when we talk to someone we assume the proper speaking distance from them. This is what we do; we do not need to consult any rules, because such knowledge of rules is already endogenous in the very functioning and structure of our cognition. This is why such things come naturally to us; our cognition developed directly in the constant presence and selection pressure of those rules. Our social cognition, and who and what we are that makes us *native* members of our society, is a direct consequence of our cognition developing in that very social environment. It is only for tourists that such

things do not come naturally. That said, there is a continuum of ‘naturalness’ here, with individuals with autistic spectrum disorders at the far end and the non-clinical but interpersonally insensitive individuals falling somewhere in the middle.

Needless to say, the resulting cognitions display an extraordinary functional fit with their social environment. So much so in fact that to a casual observer it would almost seem that such cognitions were *designed* to match the social environment. These cognitions are so functional, and so accurately *match or correspond* to the social environment that it seems that they must have been imported from the social environment itself, as if children had ‘internalized’ them. From such a transmission view of internalization, the children develop social understanding through coming to contain a cognitive structure that resembles, represents, or correlates with the social environment. That is, social rules are seen as the *means of production* of social outcomes, rather than as endogenous to the structure of cognition and thus the *means of authenticating* social outcomes. Thus, from the transmission perspective, internalization is seen as the process by which children mentally recapitulate features of social environment in order to successfully interact with that environment. Although this is a criticism often leveled against transmission accounts of internalization, it is equally applicable to transformational accounts. Transformational accounts, by stating that social relations becomes transformed by children, do not address the relationship between those social relations and the transformed and internalized correlate that children are said to acquire. Despite the transformation, the acquired ability of the child still correlates with the social environment in which it was acquired. That is, the acquired ability still stands in a representational relationship with the social environment, all be it now in a different form. That is, a defining characteristic of representations is that there is a correlation between something that is a representation and the thing represented (Bickhard & Terveen, 1995). The two need not be identical, for it is the logical relationship between the two that creates the representational relationship (e.g., signs can represent things in the world, but do not look like the things in the world). Transformational accounts, therefore, still suffer from the same problem as transmission models, for although the process of internalization has changed (from transmission to transformation), the outcome is the same in that cognitive organization correlates directly with the social environment. This is erroneous because social rules constitute or define the problem space (i.e., coordination between people) that social interactive outcomes are meant to solve or accord with, yet defining a problem space does not entail one knows how to solve the problem. A description of a solution is not the means to the solution.

The process of scaffolding offers a ready example for highlighting the differences between viewing social rules and norms as ‘means of production’ rather than as ‘means of authentication’. Traditionally, scaffolding is presented in light of the “zone of proximal development,” the difference between a child’s solitary ability and

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her socially assisted ability in solving a task (Vygotsky, 1978). This difference in ability results from a more capable peer or adult decomposing the task into smaller units and engaging the child in dialogue regarding how best to approach the now simplified task. Once a zone of proximal development is in operation, it is often said that the child's cognition is distributed; that is, the cognition which a child exercises to complete the scaffolded task is not a property of the child, but rather is a property of the social interaction through which the child solves the simpler task units. Through dialogue and interaction, the child comes to internalize this distributed cognition, and thereby solve the original task on her own. Such internalized distributed cognition can include the alternative perspectives on reality offered by the tutor (Fernyhough, 1996), the dialogical structure of their interaction, and the cultural tools by which the original task was reduced in complexity (e.g., principles of problem solving, external cognitive support by the tutor: attentional control, working memory, reflective question asking, etc.). This is one account of how scaffolding works.

What this account of scaffolding accurately reflects is that decomposing tasks into smaller units does facilitate children's development. However, this account views internalization as the process by which the gains occurred via the zone of proximal development are retained by children so as to allow for independent mastery of the original task; via internalization, children import the cognitive supports provided by the scaffolding situation and so solve the task independently (Bickhard, 1992b). Vygotsky did not view internalization as a straight transmission model, but rather one of transformational activity on the part of the child (Wertsch, 1985, 1993; Wertsch & Stone, 1985). Nonetheless, what is being transformed is still something that was originally social in nature and external to the child's agency (Bickhard, 1992b). It is these transformed cognitive supports that allow children to *produce* the correct solution to the task.

However, if social rules and norms are viewed as 'means of authentication', then the account of how scaffolding achieves its effects changes accordingly. Under the authentication account, the original task may be viewed as a problem space that children must navigate to arrive at the correct solution. The correct solution is defined in terms of social rules and norms that act as selection pressures on the children's conduct. At first, the problem space is too complex, and therefore, beyond the cognitive ability of children to solve; that is, the selection pressure of the correct solution disqualifies any potential solution by the children to the task, such that progress on the task by the children will be extremely hampered (Bickhard, 1992b). By decomposing the task into smaller units, what a tutor effectively does is to reduce the problem space in which children have to work. This reduced problem space allows children to achieve partial understanding of the original task that would be impossible to achieve otherwise if the children's progress was compared against the solution to the original task. However, this partial understanding is not something internalized from the scaffolding situation.

All the tutor has done in this situation is to define a reduced problem space in which children must still construct their own understanding via the feedback they receive from the tutor. With each successive task decomposition and reintegration by the tutor, children effectively recursively feed their partial understanding back into their constructive activity, thereby enlarging the potential problem spaces with which they can potentially cope. Eventually, children come to be able to solve the original task independently.

At no time in this process have children internalized anything external to their own constructive activity (Bickhard, 1992b). The zone of proximal development is not achieved via socially provided cognitive supports, but through a muting, or reducing, of selection pressures that define the problem space of the task (Bickhard, 1992b). Such reducing of the problem space is definitional in nature, not causal; the manner by which children construct such understanding is independent of social rules and norms that define those understandings as either correct or incorrect. The higher mental functions by which children attain mastery of the task are their own construction, but that construction could not occur outside of the definitional space of social rules and social interaction.

Conclusion

Throughout this paper we have pointed out that the pivotal intuition underlying dialogical accounts of development is that the development of the individual is intimately related to social interaction. We have argued that the metaphor of internalization may impede understanding these relations. The metaphor of ‘internalization’ was intended to capture a process of transformation, but the container metaphor of the ‘inner’ and the ‘outer’ does not seem to be of help in characterizing this transformation. We have characterized the sociality of thought as a matter of definition. Human forms of thought are social to the degree that social rules define what conduct counts as possession of a specified higher mental function. In the process of ontogenesis, rules, conventions, and practices, by acting as selection pressures on development, define what higher mental function is to develop. This approach avoids the contradictory corollary of ‘internalization’: that social or dialogical phenomena are contained within individuals. Rather than involving the containment of more or better representations of social practices, cognitive development involves *mastering* those practices.

Some may ask, “without some notion of internalized dialogue, what is dialogical about the mind?” The issue turns on how dialogicality is understood. The metaphor of internalization suggests that mind is explicitly dialogical in that its contents explicitly correspond to the social interactions of individuals. That is, although such social interactions may undergo transformation when internalized, those transformed interactions are representations of previous social interactions. We argue, instead, that

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the mind is not explicitly dialogical, but rather that the structural-functional makeup of mind is implicitly defined and constructed within an interactive context that is defined by the selection pressures of social interaction. That is what makes mind irreducibly and implicitly social in nature; if it was not for social interaction minds could not develop, yet those minds do not contain explicit representations of social interaction.

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**CONSTRUCTING THE INTERNAL INFINITY: DIALOGIC STRUCTURE OF
THE INTERNALIZATION/EXTERNALIZATION PROCESS – A
COMMENTARY ON SUSSWEIN, BIBOK, AND CARPENDALE’S
“RECONCEPTUALIZING INTERNALIZATION”**

Jaan Valsiner
Clark University, USA

ABSTRACT. Susswein et al’s analysis of the existing discourse on internalization in psychology continues the dialogue within the socio-cultural field on the prioritization of person-centered (focusing on the “inside” <> “outside” separation) or communion-centered (emphasizing the core meanings of “participation”, “mastery”) tactics for theory construction. Taking the latter axiomatic stand, Susswein et al. decide not to build their account through the use of the internalization concept, persuading their readers to accept the notions of mastery and adaptation instead. In contrast, I start from the axiomatic perspective within which internalization is necessarily the central concept. My theoretical construction prioritizes subjective experiencing as culturally mediated through the personal construction of the self that coincides with re-construction of the cultural (semiotic) mediating devices. The multi-layer model of internalization/externalization guarantees the production of novelty and openness to innovation together with selective buffering of the intra-psychological affective and mental worlds through dialogical processes at the always ambiguous quadratic boundary of the unity of INSIDE/OUTSIDE and PAST/FUTURE functionally related opposites. Possible forms of dialogical processes at the transfer *loci* are discussed.

Keywords: internalization/externalization, adaptation, axiomatics in science, process models, boundary

Dialogical science starts from the axiom of *dialogical relationship* that dynamically organizes the being and becoming of the particular phenomenon that is deemed to be of interest to the scientist. Where our observations give evidence of singularity (A) a dialogical scientist posits the underlying structure of plurality—at least duality (A and non-A—see Josephs, Valsiner & Surgan, 1999), or most likely plurality (Bakhtin, 1934/1975, 1981; Valsiner, 2006a, 2006b). This plurality can be found at all levels of organization of the living beings—biological, psychological, and social. The

AUTHOR NOTE. Please address correspondence about this article to Jaan Valsiner, Clark University, Department of Psychology, Worcester, Ma 01610, USA. E-mail: jvalsiner@clarku.edu

need for dialogical science—a perspective that posits functional relations between some (or all) parts of the plurality field grows out of the need to make sense of the dynamic process of the given system’s adapting to the always ambiguous demands of the environment.

Back to Basics: Theories Instead of Social Positions

Much of our contemporary social sciences suffers from the effects of the post-modern malaise—where generalized knowledge has been denied, and “local knowledge” elevated to the status of an ideal for empirical work which is closely linkable to the socio-political uses of such knowledge. The result is a social science within which generalized knowledge construction is replaced by social positioning games. The latter happen on a battlefield of ideas where the generals are social institutions who direct the social scientists as fully loyal “foot soldiers” to conquer some knowledge domain in ways that fit the political agendas of the historical time, given country, and its set of social representations (Bongie, 2005). Persuasion efforts in favor of a social position replace detailed theoretical construction examples, and the maddening displays of F or p-values, small-but-significant correlation coefficients, and inconclusive conclusions-- fill the pages of peer reviewed journals that proudly publish empirical research results. This commerce of the data proceeds by its own consensual rules—elevating Thomas Kuhn’s notion of “normal science” to the pedestal of high desirability. We are drowning in the new knowledge of “the right kind”—without its impact on general life philosophies or even practical applications.

The new effort to build dialogical science acts in opposition to such normalization of science. Its basic axiom—*what is one is (at least) two* – is counterintuitive from the viewpoint of the common sense. Yet it is a viable axiom. The only function of any axiom is in the range of theoretical frameworks it affords us to construct—and hence counter-intuitive ideas are as good as any—or better¹. Theories are constructive fictions that—thanks to their abstractive generalization value—allow us to see the reality in ways that transcend our common sense. Theoretical languages make us relatively free from the confines of the everyday language meanings—hence the value of theoretical construction for basic science. Psychology in the 21st century is caught in the tension between keeping its theories close to those of common language (Siegfried, 1994; Smedslund, 1995) and abstracting crucial features from the common sense/language for the generalized abstraction level of conceptualization². The latter is the way for science.

¹ Examples here are: the heliocentric planetary system, Riemann-Lobachevsky geometry, and many others.

² In chemistry a similar tension was present at the end of the 18th century, and was resolved a century later through the adoption of Mendeleev’s periodicity table (Brush, 1996; Roberts, 1991). Psychology

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The question of axioms<>theories relationship in any science can illuminate the specific dispute here. Susswein et al. prefer to build their theoretical construction on the axiom of inherent embeddedness of the person within the social context. They worry about the possible loss of the relational nature of human psychological development (p. 184) and reject the use of the term internalization as a “harmless synonym for learning” (p. 185) and the assumption of structural sameness notion as applied to interaction and thought (p. 189).

Their worry is well founded— psychology is filled with re-labeling tricks that create illusion of new perspective and new understanding (e.g., consider the shift from ‘ideas’ to ‘cognitions’ between the mental science of early 20th century and cognitive science of our times). Re-labeling is not theoretically constructive—and hence replacing ‘learning’ by ‘internalization’ renders nothing new for our understanding. Yet the dispute with the internalization notion is one about the axioms to build upon—and is therefore inconsequential. The effort to persuade the readers to prefer “mastery talk” to “internalization talk” is a question of axioms. It is only after an elaborate theory is built on the authors’ preferred axioms that their usefulness for our general knowledge can be evaluated.

Susswein et al. do not go very far in the construction of their own theory. Instead, it seems that they enter into precisely the same trap that they see the others caught in—the assumption of sameness of two posited domains. Their rejection of the “container metaphor” (and of the INNER/OUTER distinction) renders their own efforts of theoretical elaboration to make statements of axiomatic “implicit unity” (p. 198-199) of the mind and social interaction. The conceptual problem they face is the duality of meanings—by getting rid of the INNER the OUTER also disappears (by the rules of co-genetic logic—Herbst, 1995). It is replaced by the notion of unity—yet unity of what, in contrast with what else, and how? That unity is structured by the notion of what could be called “external” learning—the developing person is expected to learn (or master) the “social rule systems” that set up “selection pressures” upon social interaction.

Almost paradoxically, theirs is a re-formulation of the INSIDE/OUTSIDE distinction in terms of the new structure posited for the (former) OUTSIDE. The notion of “container”—discursively denounced by the authors as the core for internalization—now becomes re-created as a kind of boundless unity of the persons whose task becomes to “fit into” the social world-- through the work of “selection pressures” and by “fitness”.

How does this theoretical system present what is going on? The person is *inherently social* (embedded in the social context, fully interdependent with it, no

seems to be caught in conceptual distancing act similar to that of emerging chemistry’s relations with the occult symbolism in the 17th century (see Vickers, 1984).

INSIDE/OUTSIDE distinction is axiomatically allowed). The person is involved in the ongoing social interaction process -- and the social interaction process fully includes the person. The two are inseparable. Within that process of social interaction the mastery (or learning) of “social rules” is going on. If these rules exist *before* the current social interaction process comprises we *de facto* re-introduce the separation of the PAST ESTABLISHED NORMS and CURRENT SOCIAL INTERACTION PROCESS³. Under the conditions of that duality-- the past and the present relate in the process of learning (or mastery) that is guided by “selective pressures” that exist within the immediate process of social interaction. According to Susswein et al, the sameness of the domains—person and social rules—is attained through the elimination of the inner/outer duality through the notion of adaptation. *Mastery* here becomes another “harmless synonym for *learning*”—with *learning* taken as a given. As long as the notion of learning entails the notion of transmission—rather than re-construction (transformation, creative synthesis) it serves as a theoretical dead-end for both internalization and mastery concentrated theoretical accounts.

By getting rid of one duality (INSIDE/OUTSIDE) other dualities (PAST/PRESENT or NON-MASTERY/MASTERY) necessarily enter into theory construction. This is not a criticism of the authors’ intention-- it is simply impossible to build a theory that focuses on the unified field of phenomena (person in social interaction) without making distinctions that delimit such field-like phenomena. And—last but not least—making such distinctions is the necessary starting point for dialogical science.

Internalization (and Externalization) Reconstructed

Contrary to Susswein et al. (2007, this issue), I build a theory of internalization within the general framework that could be located at the intersection of personology and socio-cultural (semiotic) psychology (Valsiner, 1998). I start from the intuition into personal existence—all psychological phenomena entail INSIDE (intra-psychological, subjective world) and OUTSIDE (perceivable external world upon which the organism acts in the process of progressive adapting) separation. The phenomenological reality of myself in relation to the outside world is given by my self-reflection upon me-within-the world—yet I do not confuse myself and that world. I relate with it—at times intensely (e.g., moments of communion, or of orgasm), at other times-- from distance. My relating with the world makes it possible to flexibly move—both in real space and

³ If, however, these social rules are being constructed concurrently with the ongoing social interaction, then the question of “selective pressures” is even more critical for theory build-up here. How does the unity of the person, social context, and “selection pressures” (which are also inherent in the immediate context, I presume) lead to the *emergence* of the social rules? Once their emergence is theoretically accepted it becomes interesting to understand what mastery means—mastery of making (new) social rules (cf. Sherif, 1936) or emergence of (unpredicted) social rules and immediate conformity to them?

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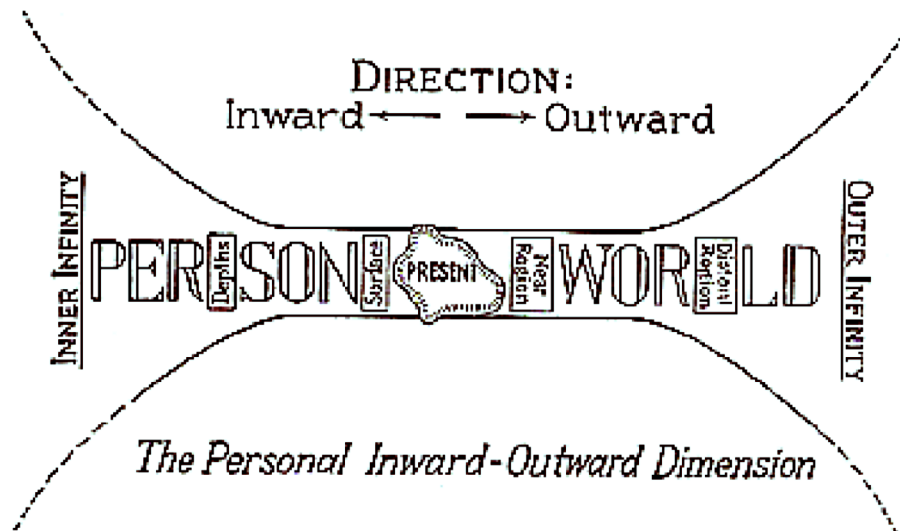


Figure 1. William Stern's depiction of the Person \diamond World relationships (from Stern, 1938, p. 94)

in the psychological realm—close or further away to/from a person or a setting in the world.

In my theory construction, these two worlds are *inclusively separated* (Valsiner, 1997) from each other so as to make it possible to make the processes of their relating open for investigation. Inclusive separation preserved or preserves the relation between the separated parts—hence keeping the unity of the system together. Both parts thus separated entail “open ends”—in William Stern's terminology (see Figure 1) these amounted to “internal” and “external” infinity. The existing person—and especially developing person— moves towards constantly open horizons both in the interior of one's *Psyche* and in the exterior of one's exploration of the external world and creating its meaningfulness through signs (Rosa, 2007). The person is social because s/he is constantly transcending the immediate social context through semiotic mediation—personal experiencing is the ego-centered core for all human sociality.

Sociogenetic Personology

In the framework of classical personology, each person has one's own-- person-relevant -- "personal world"-- a world of the person's own construction (Stern, 1935, p. 126). The interdependent nature of that world is beyond doubt:

However great the power exerted by the world to make the individual fall in with its trend, he nevertheless continues to be a "person" and can react to its influence only as a person, thereby modifying and deflecting its very tendency. And vice versa, however strikingly novel and penetrating the effect of the impress by which the genius of an artist, the founder of a religion, a statesman, puts a new face upon the world; since this modified world has no creative genius, it can absorb novelty only in a diluted, simplified form; and since it meanwhile follows its own laws and is subject to other influences, it perforce modifies all acquisitions. (Stern, 1938, p. 90)

The personal world affords both continuity and change within the person. The person's assimilative/ accommodative processes transform the encoded information from/about the world into internalized personal knowledge. These processes were summarized by Stern in a general scheme (Figure 1).

The personal world is constructed by two parallel processes-- by participation in the world (the centrifugal direction: spontaneous actions guided by the material character -- Stern, 1938, p. 388), and the world's impression upon the person (centripetal direction: relating to the demand characteristics of the world). The two processes feed into each other—hence the whole human personality is inherently dialogical *as every moment of experiencing is co-created by the centrifugal and centripetal processes* relating at the boundary of the person/world relation.

The Dialogue Between Infinities: Quadratic Unity

The person \diamond world relationship exists between two infinities—the inner (intra-personal) and the outer (extra-personal). Note that neither of these two infinities utilizes the “container” metaphor (as it has been disputed by Susswein et al. here, as well as by many others over the last three decades)—yet they specify the bi-directional nature of the relations between the person and the world. The locus of construction of new psychological phenomena is precisely within the boundary zone—in between—of Stern’s “two infinities”. In fact—the theoretical (inclusive) separation of the INSIDE and OUTSIDE (both infinite-- not “containers”) *makes it possible to delineate the arena for the study* of the unity of the person and the social world (including social interaction) what needs to be studied. Psychological phenomena are proximal phenomena—they emerge at the boundary of the person and the external world, and of the future and the past (which is currently the present, Valsiner, 2007). In fact we can think of quadratic unity of two dualities of infinite kind—the INSIDE/OUTSIDE (along the lines of Figure 1) and PAST/FUTURE (after C. S. Peirce—Valsiner, 1998, p. 243, also Abbey, 2006, p. 35). Figure 2 (see next page) depicts the map of such quadratic unity. New adaptation process takes place precisely at the intersection of the two dualities—INNER/OUTER tension between the uncertainties of subjective and social kinds, and PAST/FUTURE tension of the uncertainties about the future.

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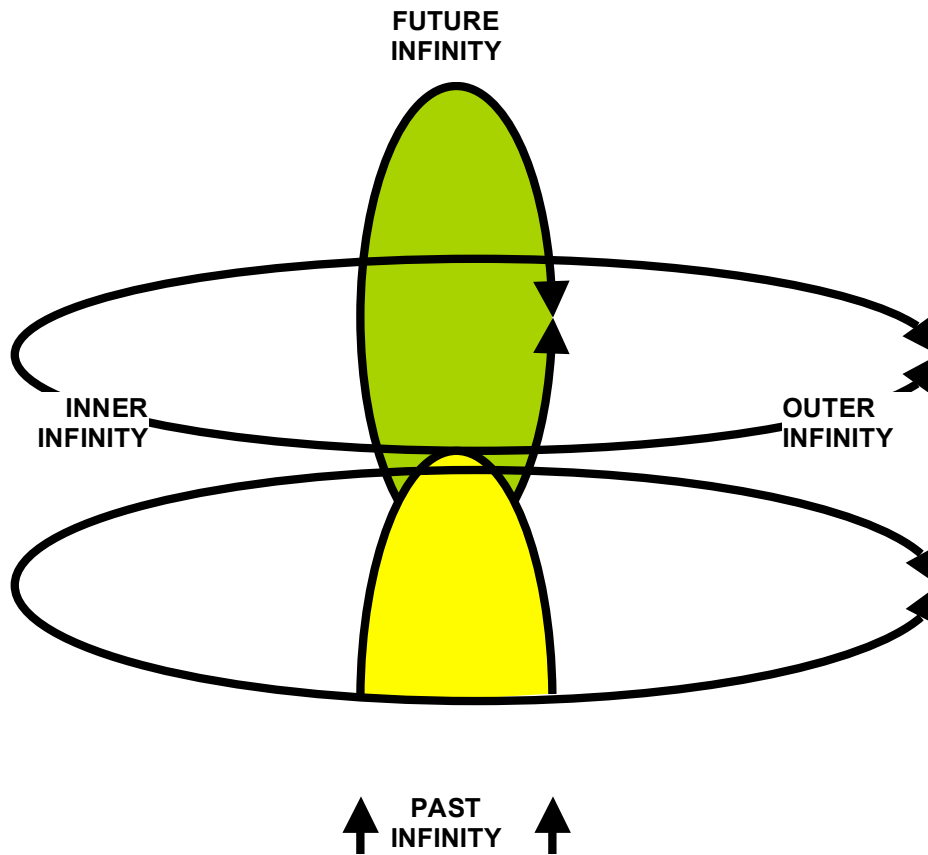


Figure 2. Quadratic unity of $INSIDE \diamond OUTSIDE$ and $PAST \diamond FUTURE$

A Dialogical Elaboration of the Internalization/Externalization Processes

The laminal model (Valsiner, 1997, ch. 8) of the process of internalization/externalization is given in Figure 3 (see next page). It involves a sequence of boundaries that distance the internal personal infinity *with* that of the outer world. This language use is intentional—distancing *within* the context (rather than *from* it) entails the dialogical unity designated by inclusive separation—a boundary creates a relationship between the two sides distinguished by it (Lawrence & Valsiner, 1993, 2003). The internalization process needs to pass through two layers -- I and II in Figure 3 -- before reaching the "inner" sphere (III). The number of specified layers is not important, I use 3, but it could be any other number. It is the principle of viewing the boundary as a zone—a field of structured kind—that is the core for theory construction here.

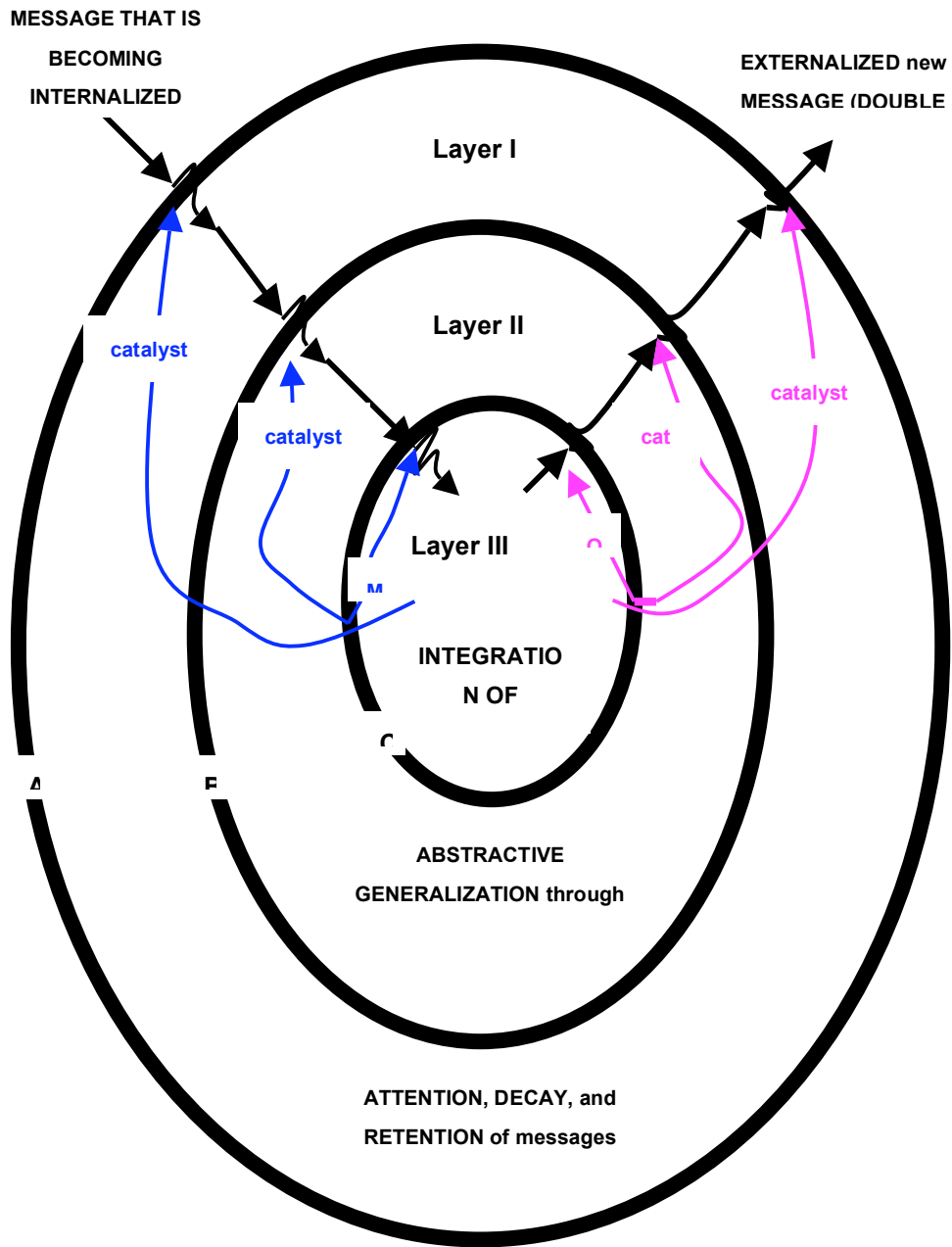


Figure 3. Laminar model of internalization/externalization as *double* transformation.

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The externalization process is viewed to proceed correspondingly, in the direction reverse to that of internalization. The model involves transformation of both internalizing and externalizing messages—hence it can be considered that of *double transformation*. The first re-structuring of the incoming message occurs as that message is moved through the sequence Layer I → Layer II → Layer III. In each layer the initial message becomes transformed into a maintained, generalized, and integrated one. Internalization is a sequential constructive process that operates on the basis of dialogical synthesis of person's previous system of meanings (Valsiner, 2002) and I-positions (Hermans, 2001, Salgado & Gonçalves, 2007) through dynamic ambivalence (Ferreira, Salgado & Cunha, 2006). It is through such process that James Mark Baldwin's (1915) notion of *persistent imitation* operates in the course of development.

A similar transformation process takes place in the externalization trajectory. An integrated and generalized personal-cultural self-organizer—a “value”—becomes transcribed into concrete meaningful actions through its transformative contextualization as it is moved through Layer III → Layer II → Layer I → “OUTSIDE. As a result, there is no “sameness” implied between the two “outside” materials-- the message that was becoming internalized, and the one that emerges as a result of externalization. The model also localizes the areas where the transformation processes take place on the boundaries of the layers, and specifies the conditions (catalytic centripetal inputs K, L, M for internalization and Q, P, O for externalization). The process is viewed as entailing the oppositions of action and counter-action.

Three boundaries (a, b, c) are to be penetrated by the internalization/externalization process. Since the process is constructive, the "inner core" of the person regulates each of the boundary crossings by specific social (semiotic) regulating device. First, the outmost boundary can be selectively open for some communicative messages from the external social world, while remaining closed for others. The specific "boundary regulator" -- **K** -- recognizes those messages that the person is ready to internalize, and ignores or blocks others.

Once a message is brought into layer I, it becomes potentially internalizable. It is noticed as a message by the intra-psychological system, but not integrated into it. The latter requires opening of boundary **b** for the message-- by way of the “social regulator”—performing a catalytic function-- **L**. The latter's action upon the message guides its transformation into a new form, as in layer **II** the message becomes generalized. This generalization in and by itself is not yet part of the structured intra-psychological world (layer III). It creates the basis for its potential integration-- if it is let through the boundary **c** under the action of social regulator **M**. If that happens, the generalized and reconstructed message becomes integrated into the structure of the intra-psychological phenomena (in layer III).

Phenomena that can be viewed as located in layer I are most widespread in our introspective worlds. For example, a tune (or phrase) from a TV commercial may keep reverberating in my mind for a long time. Any effort to suppress the silly reverberation may be ineffective, I do not bring that material to any form of generalization (which would indicate its layer II state), nor do I ever integrate it in my intra-psychological personal sense structure. After some time, the tune or phrase "dies out", yet the memory of my suffering from the futile efforts to suppress it can be re-activated later. Thus, the message was clearly noticed, maintained, and limited to the outermost layer of the internalization/ externalization system.

Once a message from layer I is brought to layer II, it is observable by the act of generalization in the introspective sphere. Yet that generalization remains just that-- it is not integrated into the personal sense system. It remains an abstract generalization, without adding to it the person's feeling tone.

Most of ordinary human interactions on issues of politics, business, and psychology may be of such layer-II type. Discussions of abstract problems that are sufficiently far from one's own "core self"—which is infinite in its dynamics-- may be an activity that seems to create an image of the person's participation in social issues. Yet that participation remains at the level of abstract discourse. In contrast, if any of the eager talkers oneself encounters "the problem", it may become taken into the layer III realm, and the person may find it too difficult to externalize any (or some) of the personally senseful aspects of the newly integrated phenomenon.

Orhan Pamuk and His Father: Opening the Suitcase

An (externalized) example of the laminal process of internalization/externalization can be found in the Nobel Lecture by the Turkish writer Orhan Pamuk (2006) where he gives tribute to his father's role in his own personal life course as a writer. Two years before his death, Pamuk's father brings to his son a suitcase filled with his notebooks, asking the son to read them when he is "gone." The suitcase—familiar to the son through all his childhood memories—became an object recognized and cherished—yet it was not easy for Pamuk to open it:

This suitcase was a familiar friend, a powerful reminder of my childhood, my past, but now I couldn't even touch it. Why? No doubt it was because of the mysterious weight of its contents.

The first thing that kept me distant from the contents of my father's suitcase was, of course, the fear that *I might not like what I read*. Because my father knew this, he had taken the precaution of acting as if he did not take its contents seriously. After working as a writer for 25 years, it pained me to see this. But I did not even want to be angry at my father for failing to take literature seriously enough ... *My real fear, the crucial thing that I did not wish to know or discover,*

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was the possibility that my father might be a good writer. I couldn't open my father's suitcase because I feared this. Even worse, I couldn't even admit this myself openly. If true and great literature emerged from my father's suitcase, I would have to acknowledge that inside my father there existed an entirely different man. This was a frightening possibility. Because even at my advanced age I wanted my father to be only my father – not a writer (Pamuk, 2006, paragraphs 6-7, added emphases).

In terms of the laminal model (Figure 3) we can observe the operation of the catalyst L at the intersection of Layer I and Layer II. The content material that activated L comes from Layer III—the reflections by Pamuk upon one's own life course as a writer in comparison with what he imagined—cherished and feared—could be his father's "real self".

When finally the father's suitcase is opened, the catalyzed ambivalence continued:

So this was what was driving me when I first opened my father's suitcase. Did my father have a secret, an unhappiness in his life about which I knew nothing, something he could only endure by pouring it into his writing? As soon as I opened the suitcase, I recalled its scent of travel, recognised several notebooks, and noted that my father had shown them to me years earlier, but without dwelling on them very long...

...What caused me most disquiet was when, here and there in my father's notebooks, I came upon a writerly voice. This was not my father's voice, I told myself; it wasn't authentic, or at least it did not belong to the man I'd known as my father. Underneath my fear that my father might not have been my father when he wrote, was a deeper fear: the fear that deep inside I was not authentic, that I would find nothing good in my father's writing, this increased my fear of finding my father to have been overly influenced by other writers and plunged me into a despair that had afflicted me so badly when I was young, casting my life, my very being, my desire to write, and my work into question. (Pamuk, 2006, paragraph 16, added emphases)

The opening of the suitcase created the possibility that its contents—material brought into Layer II through the act of reading the father's notebooks—might lead to re-organization of Layer III. This entails deep subjective intuitions about "my father", "my father as (potential) writer", "myself as a writer", "being authentic"—the inflow of Layer II material into Layer III could have been difficult to stop (by catalyst M).

Of course Pamuk's highly elaborate introspective externalization of the episode of the contact with his father's suitcase—which was actually his abstractively

generalized philosophical statement about the living by a human being in the role of a writerverb missing in this sentence?. It was not an episode of locally relevant sequence of social interaction, but a personally hyper-generalized message for communication with all of the “outer infinity” we might call humanity. The secluded private lives of writers become—in the form of generalized messages—semiotic organizers of deeply subjective infinities of other human beings.

Conclusion: What Kind of Theoretical Advancement Do We Gain from the Internalization Model?

This paper sets up a contrast within unity. The unity is clear-- both Susswein et al. and my coverages build on the focus on the mutuality of the person and the social world. However, the two theoretical constructions proceed in different directions.

The internalization model leads to the recognition of the *relativity* of person's participation in external activity contexts (i.e., moving between central and peripheral roles in a joint action setting). This freedom to modulate one's participation has its counterpart in the intra-psychological sphere. In the laminal model it is organized by way of maintaining different kinds of internalized materials in different layers, and selectively (and episodically) letting them to become integrated into the personal sense system. The person is a *relative*-- sometimes peripheral, sometimes central-- *participant in one's own life*, thanks to the differentiated system of internalization/ externalization. Agency is maintained—without reducing the social embeddedness of the person.

This commentary is also meant to illustrate the focus on theoretical construction based on axioms in ways coordinated with phenomena. Contemporary social sciences confuse theoretical and axiomatic statements in the art of creating general conceptual schemes of their objects of investigation. This brief exposure of the laminal model of internalization/externalization is given here to illustrate what kinds of questions concerning internalization, externalization, learning, mastery, or—ultimately—dialogical self, are in need for elaboration. Concrete elaborations of how the posited processes operate—be those internalization/externalization (as in my example here), or appropriation or mastery (as suggested by Susswein et al.)—are necessary to move the field ahead beyond discussions about preferences for axiomatic bases.

The elaboration in this paper has clear limits—we have not discussed the issue of relationships between levels of development (microgenetic, mesogenetic, and ontogenetic). For full understanding of the use of evolutionary ideas (recommended by Susswein et al, 2007, this issue) this issue needs to be addressed. The notion of *selection*—as brought into their theorizing from evolutionary psychology—has two limitations for productive theory building. First, it operates at the level of phylogenesis (in strict evolutionary theorizing) and its application at the level of individual organisms is problematic (Valsiner, 1989). Secondly—and more importantly—it is a concept that

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fails to make sense of the process of emergence itself—prior to being selected, different versions of whatever are under the “selection pressure” need to be generated.

The crucial question of such emergence of not-yet-selected (and not yet fully formed) novel forms is at the core of all developmental theorizing from Baldwin, Bergson to Vygotsky and Piaget, and to our contemporary developmental science (Carolina Consortium on Human Development, 1996; Fischer & Biddell, 2006; Gottlieb, 2003). Contemporary evolutionary psychology with its mixing of levels of organization and uncritical adherence to axioms of population genetics may have less to offer for solving the problems of development than the post-1960s epigenetic revolution in protein genetics. It may be time for psychology to constructively internalize (and externalize) the theoretical creativity of contemporary biology—rather than remain involved in the mastery of statistics-based theoretical models (Gigerenzer, 1993) the axiomatic bases of which are non-fit for both developmental psychology and dialogical science.

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FROM DIALOGICAL PRACTICES TO POLYPHONIC THOUGHT? DEVELOPMENTAL INQUIRY AND WHERE TO LOOK FOR IT

Michael Bamberg
Clark University, USA

Barbara Zielke
Technische Universität Chemnitz, Germany

ABSTRACT. In this contribution we start with a critical reading of assumptions that have led to the postulation of a dialogical and polyphonic self. We critically review the empirical basis for these assumptions as resulting from therapeutically informed techniques according to which clients/participants are led to engage in particular modes of self-reflection and conclude that the *positions, valuations, and their connections to affect* are predominantly constructs designed for the purpose to assist in ‘self-reflection’—with the aim to intervene and change the subject’s self positions. This leads to the questions what actually is to be ‘acquired’ and where to look for empirical evidence. We will argue that it is not necessary to anchor dialogicality and positioning *in the self*; that is, we do not need to equip the self with a priori positions and dialogicality. Instead, we suggest that situated, actual conversations may result in positions and that speakers taking these positions subsequently can be described as *dialogical* and *polyphonous*—but that the occasionings of positions best serve as the actual sites for developmental inquiry into their genesis—in contrast to a person’s interiority.

Keywords: : dialogue, positioning, narrative identity, developmental inquiry

DIALOGUES, DIALOGICALITY AND THE SELF

Meeting someone in public, let’s say on our way to work, who talks to him- or herself, will strike most of us as odd. This kind of behavior is considered unusual and strange; we may easily jump to the conclusion that there is something wrong with this person.¹ In case we needed to use a fancier, seemingly more descriptive term, we certainly would not describe this activity as somebody “dialoguing” with himself, but rather as “monologuing.” However, this is exactly what a strand of psychological theorizing, calling itself ‘dialogical science,’ would want us to call this kind of behavior.

AUTHORS’ NOTE. Please address correspondence about this article to either author: (a) Michael Bamberg, Department of Psychology, Clark University, 950 Main St., Worcester, MA 01610. Email: mbamberg@clarku.edu (b) Barbara Zielke, Lange Zeile 19, D-90419 Nürnberg, Germany. Email: Barbara.zielke@gmx.de

¹ Goffman (1981) explicitly addresses self-talk and its inappropriateness in public as socially situated. When the first author of this contribution recently sat in the public space of an airport in Australia and “skyped” with his partner in the US (i.e., using a communication system that enables the communication by speaking into the microphone of the laptop), he earned looks that communicated that he was talking to himself (or worse: to his laptop).

“Why this?” we may want to ask. Why do scholars in the Academy constantly make things up and seemingly more difficult—calling talk ‘discourse,’ thinking ‘cognition,’ stories ‘narratives,’ and now monologues ‘dialogues’?

The answer is not straightforward, since often an analytic vocabulary, particularly one that sounds counterintuitive, may assist in the revelation of insights that our everyday terminology conveniently covers up.

Something along these lines may be found in the claims that have recently been proposed by ‘dialogical scientists’ who have argued that the self is “dialogical.” More specifically, the argument is that the self is made up of “internal” characters, called ‘voices’ and that these characters differ in terms of their valuations and stake out positions vis-à-vis one another: They dialogue (and even argue) with one another. This kind of claim is built on Vygotsky’s notion of ‘inner speech,’ James’ I-Me distinction, and Bakhtin’s concept of the ‘polyphonic self,’ and it has recently been elaborated by scholars such as Hubert Hermans, Jaan Valsiner, and James Wertsch. And from here this concept made its way into a number of empirical investigations that attempt to make use of the dialogical self. Obviously, the move to base monologues that a person is holding with him- or herself on a dialogical ontology of the self is nothing but a metaphoric extension. This is exactly true: The two usual entities of two people or two parties, who differ in perspectives and consequently dialogue with one another (see Wierzbicka, 2006), have been metaphorically extended into two separate meaning systems or perspectives that are in the process of an interchange. And, so the argument goes, these two (or more) perspectives can be viewed to be housed *in the same* self. The argument moves on with the claim that this metaphorical extension may become practically relevant when doing applied work in the world of teaching, counseling, and helping or working with people in particular institutional settings.

Now, turning the issue one notch up, the question how we acquire—that is, came to use—the kinds of dialogical perspectives that scholars attribute to our deepest interiors, we are facing the dilemma where to look. In other words, what counts as evidence in early childhood that displays that thought is actually ‘inner speech’ and that what is going on inside the mind is actually ‘dialogues’ in the form of contrasting or opposing ‘voices’? One way of answering this question is by the use of strict cognitive research into the forms and patterns of thought in order to show that (and how) these forms and patterns display questions and answers, agreements and disagreements—or other forms of dialogue. Developmental research within these premises typically sees this ability or competence as being rooted (most likely) in some form of (genetic) endowment and maturing under the influence (or with the assistance) of particular

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environmental conditions and influences.² The other way of answering the above question is to turn to ‘real’ dialogues between child and caregivers and document how these interactions gradually transform into what is internal in the form of internal dialogues or voices. The latter actually exists in the form of a long lasting research tradition that attempts to document and build on how early talk slowly transforms into ways of making sense that then begin to freeze (or fossilize) into what we assume to be cognitive or mental abilities. In essence, these two strands of research into how the dialogical self emerges follow two different orientations: one that credits and equips the mind (and even the brain cf. Hermans, 2001a, 2002) with the phenomena under investigation and from early on investigates its unpacking (cf. Fogel, de Koeper, Bellagamba, & Bell, 2002), the other as looking into the socialization processes in which the child slowly acquires dialogicality through and in interactive practices that are taking place as “scaffolds” or in “zones of proximal development.” Interestingly, however, this second strand of developmental research into the notion of dialogicality is very much in concert with a research tradition that attempts to explain how children develop what has been termed ‘communicative competence’ (cf. Ervin-Tripp, 1973; Habermas, 1984, 1987; Hymes, 1972).

Thus far, it remains somewhat unclear what dialogicality/multivocality is and where to look for empirical grounds to demonstrate its acquisition or development. If it is *just* a particular way to talk, a genre, we would most likely look at the level of actual dialogues and how they emerge between mother and infant as aspects of the child’s pragmatic, communicative development. If dialogicality is *just* a particular way to think and conceptualize the (modern) world in order to make sense of (modern) self and (modern) others, we would look and empirically investigate these conceptions as part of the child’s cognitive development. And here we would have a number of options between more traditional cognitivist approaches that attempt to decontextualize and universalize the human mind and more contextual, sociocultural approaches that view the development of the mind as situated in some form of historical and communal practices—at least to a certain degree. If, however, dialogicality is more than *just* a particular way of thinking and speaking, we would have to look more fully and closely into the practices that assist in accomplishing this sense of identity and identity formation. However, as we all know, the relationship between speaking, thinking, and being in this world as active agents is more complex than that, forcing us to more deeply reconsider and question the basis of dialogicality in order to better position ourselves for the answer to where to look for the empirical grounds to investigate its acquisition and development.

² It is the theory of Trevarthen (1992, 1998) that is most often quoted in this context (see Hermans, 2001a, and Marková, 2003).

In our contribution to this special issue we will not take sides with either of these three developmental orientations. Rather, we will scrutinize the dominant versions of dialogicality and multivoicedness, and we will orient the reader toward their potential but also to their inherent contradictions. Here we will particularly focus on the problems that arise from “building in” the notion of dialogue into the self and suggest that this orientation leads developmental inquiry in the wrong direction. In contrast, we will suggest a developmental orientation that is based on continuous processes of change—within which the notion of the development of the self (as agentive participant in social practices) is nested. We will develop this notion by shedding more light onto the phenomenon of dialogicality and argue that dialogicality first and foremost of all is a particular form of speaking—a genre, a discourse mode. Even though this discourse mode often has become privileged as self-disclosure or confession—and as such is equated with giving more direct access to a self’s self-reflections—we are weary of this conclusion and see it as another form of re-essentializing the self. In contrast to this position, we argue for a de-essentialization of the person, with the effect of ‘dethroning’ and returning the dialogical self into the real-world of empirical dialogues and conversations. In particular, we will call for a return to an investigation of (real) dialogues in everyday, mundane situations before we can credit the person with dialogicality as a privileged territory for investigations.

The Emergence of Self and Identity—Dialogicality Built in?

Current theorizing about self and identity faces a number of dilemmas, if not aporias. The three most pressing ones center around (i) issues of ‘identity and sameness,’ posing the question how it is possible to consider oneself as the same in the face of constant change; (ii) issues of ‘uniqueness and sameness,’ whether it is possible to consider oneself as unique in the face of being the same as everyone else (and vice versa); and (iii) around issues of ‘construction’ (or ‘who-is-in-charge’), asking whether it is the person who constructs the world the way it is or whether the person is constructed by the way the world is.

Responding to these dilemmas in terms of the dialectics between (i) constancy and change, (ii) uniqueness/specificity and generality/universality, and (iii) two directions of fit, the person-to-world and world-to-person direction of fit, points up correctly that these three dilemmas are highly interwoven. It can easily be argued that the construal of the person as same and different across time forms a presupposition for construing others and self as same and different, which in turn can be said to be a basic building block for constructing and changing the world in a productive way. However, when it comes to doing empirical work within the domain of identity research, that is, exploring how actual changes and constancies play themselves out and are made sense of in the lives of human beings, in particular from the perspective of those who live these lives, we are confronted with an additional dilemma: We are perfectly able to

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differentiate between two perspectives on what appears to be the same ‘object’ or ‘event’, we are not able to take the perspective of both of the opposing principles *simultaneously*. Rather, we are forced to choose between one aspect forming the figure, so that the other can become the ground. For instance, when viewing the ‘vase’ in the shaping of black-and-white lines, we can’t see the ‘face’ simultaneously, and vice versa (cf. Bamberg, in press). Being struck with these dilemmas, and still engaging productively in the business of identity research, the concept of the dialogical self is innovative and seemingly productive in a number of ways. It constructs the subject as agentive, though simultaneously situated and contextualized in a sociocultural context; it starts from the assumption that the self is not locked into stability but rather that it exists as something that is multiple, contradictory, contextual, and distributed over time and place. Therefore, it is not confined by just *one* societal discourse and can change and transform and consequently better adapt to the challenges of historical changes and their increasing cultural multiplicity.

Taking up Marková’s definition of dialogicality as “the capacity of the human mind to conceive, create and communicate about social realities in terms of the ‘Alter’” (2003, p. 249), we would like to begin with a clarification as to who this ‘alter’ is. If this ‘alter’ is the a priori, generalized, other, any excursion into the acquisition of abilities to dialogue with others in everyday, mundane situations is based on the innateness doctrine. Dialogicality along these lines is not a newly developed genre of multivocality that emerged with the novel in parallel to the modern self (Bakhtin, 1986/1993, 1929/1993; Elias, 1974, 1982), but it is assumed to pre-exist this historical and cultural formation process—maybe for the last 200,000 years or longer. In contrast, if the ‘alter’ is the situated, concrete, other, who in the form of communal practices engages and dialogues with the self (and vice versa), we are operating with a different presupposition.³ In this latter case, there is no need to take dialogicality as the resource onto which all concrete conversations and interactive practices have to be built. Rather, concrete, situated conversations are the resources out of which and within which concrete others *and* situated selves are continuously constructed and reconstructed, and, no doubt, out of which ultimately also a notion of ‘alter’ as a generalized other (and also ‘self’ as abstracted from situated practices) can emerge. Whether, and if so, to what degree, these generalized ‘alter’ and ‘self’ become generators for concrete dialoguing should remain an empirical question and not a priori be answered in one or the other way.

In the following, we will develop two critical arguments, both marshaled to locate dialogicality not in the mind of the person, but *in the practices* that we, as human

³ We assume that it is this position that Marková alludes to when she writes: “Ego-Alter exist only within the realm of communication” (2003, p. 257).

beings, engage in with others. First, these practices are aimed toward an attunement and slow integration into how individuals manage themselves as same and different from others and as being the same in the face of constant change (navigating the uniqueness and the identity dilemma, cf. Bamberg, in press). Second, at the same time, but only subsequently, these practices also constitute the site for the emergence of dialogicality *inside* the reflective self. That is, they have the potential to result in what we commonly consider to be the ability to take on different positions seemingly at the same time, to ponder, sort out—in a word, to ‘*reflect*’ various constructions of self (and others) critically and in a seemingly more abstract way. It goes without saying that these reflections can result in the creation of alternatives that subsequently can result in new action potentials and possibly even in new activities. However, it also needs to be clear that this does not need to be so—and that reflection is not the only resource for novelty in actions and in thought.

Bakhtin, Self-Narratives, and Dialogues

The concept of the dialogical self, presented by cultural psychologists Hermans and Kempen (1993), is a theoretical attempt that lets the individual self be absorbed in social practices, contexts, and dialogues: Mental processes, functions, or states that play a role for the self and identity (e.g., emotions or abilities to act) are results of being involved in dialogical communications. This new psychological concept of self is supposed to transcend the “culturally determined boundaries of individualism and rationalism” as it no longer understands the self as a unity but rather as a “multiplicity of positions” (Hermans, Kempen, & van Loon, 1992, p. 29).

For the authors, the concept of narrativity is seen as a “basic mode of thought” and is at the heart of their theory of self. The (self-)narrative is a particularly apt possibility of ordering events, experiences, and actions in a meaningful way; the self-narrative is an important element of modern identity. The distinction between the narrating and the narrated *I* receives particular attention and is formulated following William James, whose original distinction, according to Hermans and Kempen, between *I* and *Me* can be reformulated in narrative and then in *dialogical* terms. The first step is to understand the *I* as author and the *Me* as actor (Hermans et al., 1992, p 27; see also Sarbin, 1986). In search of a strong theory of dialogicality as feature of self, this distinction then is enhanced in the sense that a narrative self does not need to be a coherent construction but can accommodate radically different, conflicting, or even contradicting narrator positions. However, and in contrast to what may be considered the established reading of James’ approach, the connection to the Jamesian *I* is not meant to imply any kind of reflexive competence of the self.⁴ On the contrary, the *I*

⁴ For Bakhtin himself the meaning of “decentering” of the self (and of word meaning in general) implied the dialogical *reflection* of the contexts through which a word has “passed” as

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functions to *destabilize* the reflexive component of the self, because the second step from the Jamesian Self to a dialogical self results in what may be called the polyphonic transformation of a theory of narrative identity. Within the dialogical self, the authors emphasize, “there is no overarching I organizing the constituents of the Me,” but only a “decentralized,” heterogeneous *multiplicity* of I-positions. These I-positions, imagined as authors of different narrative projections of self, on the one hand, function within any self narrative in a “relatively autonomous” manner (Hermans & Kempen, 1993, p. 47); on the other hand, they are in *dialogical relation* with each other.

This may suffice as a brief sketch of how the authors attempt to incorporate Bakhtin’s concepts of dialogicality and polyphony into their theory of self (Hermans et al., 1992, p. 29). The term dialogicality, in their psychological theory, not only stresses the connectedness of the modern, self-designing human being in real-world dialogues with others but also the structure of the modern self as constituted of polyphonous dialogues, outside of which there is no personal position or point of view at all. Like in musical polyphonous compositions, where the individual voices or instruments are juxtaposed, complement, and break each other, so, too, the characters of a “polyphonic novel” do not simply have different roles in the *one* narrated world. Rather, they themselves produce, each for themselves autonomously, a multitude of different worlds and perspectives, of which the author is just one amongst many (p. 27). This constructivist and pluralist understanding of the self is at the center of the theory. We may state at this point already that due to the strong emphasis on decentralization, it is not entirely clear who within such internal dialogues stands in dialogue with whom and what precisely is the meaning of *dialogue*, since the various communicating voices or identities often are described as incommensurable and merely juxtaposed—and not organized in an integrative or synthesizing manner. In order to examine the concept of dialogicality (in/of the self) more precisely, we propose to look briefly at the root metaphors *dialogue* and *polyphony*, as used originally by Bakhtin, and askew will pose the question how they translate into social-psychological categories of thinking in terms of the *alter*.

Dialogue and Polyphony as Psychological Functions?

Whereas the concept of “polyphony” was first and most impressively coined in the work on Dostoyevsky’s novel (Bakhtin, 1929/1993), the concept of *dialogicality* was introduced in the context of analyzing spoken language, sentences, utterances, and

well as the “reflection of the interrelation with other persons” (Bakhtin, 1979/1986, p. 354). The self, according to Bakhtin, is formed and forms itself in self-reflection and in the reflection of others (cf. Volkman, 2001, p. 41). Many contemporary interpretations go beyond Bakhtin when they view the “merging” in communicative relationships as a total rejection of a coherent speaking, writing, reading I (see also Marková, 2003).

as the subject to a theory of (word) meaning. *Polyphony*—the idea of independent narratives constituting different aspects of a novel’s narrative—seems to connect well with the study of narrative identity in the cultural sciences. However, how is the polyphony of voices to be understood when referring to persons instead of text and intertextual relations? From a social-psychological point of view, it remains unclear how the polyphonous type of self (internally fragmented and driven by heterogeneous, differing, even contradictory I-positions) is able to remain fundamentally anchored in social relationships and dialogues as the notion of the *dialogical self* seems to suggest and demand. In order to enter and keep up (intimate) relationships, one needs to be able to show commitment as well as distance (Argyle, 1992). In this way, a deeper social relationship, and even the participation in dialogic interaction, requires the ability and willingness to take up one’s own (and to a certain degree, coherent) position in order to resume and communicate a point of view—or, the perspective from which events are seen as related and making sense. The postulation of a (relative) autonomy of the different I-positions *within* the self makes it difficult to imagine this point of view or perspective. Such an unconnected juxtaposition may be regarded as a sign of diversity, but it is not necessarily a dialogical process that moves something within the dialogical self and enriches it.

Dialogue and Polyphony as Social Practice

Keeping this in mind, we might critically ask whether the often anonymous *voices* that not only represent radically different positions but often act for themselves fleetingly and (potentially) inconsistently, are really able to conduct a dialogue—be it a real world dialogue or one that takes place *within* the person. If they do, can this be a dialogue that assumes at least some kind of responsive understanding/taking turns, thus taking this as a minimal definition of the term dialogue? Or do certain popular readings of the Bakhtinian principle of dialogicality resemble more closely a babble of voices in which many different, incommensurable perspectives exist side by side? What does a dialogical relationship mean, and how does the dialogue change the positions that are involved in it? Also, what does this again tell us about *personal* competencies or qualities that may be named *dialogical self*?

Concerning our *first argument*—that dialogicality is always part of or realized in social practices—we find that dialogical practices as any kind of social practice must fulfill certain requirements: From a social and cultural point of view, it cannot be ignored that dialogues or talk-in-dialogues lead to questions of acknowledgement that goes along with turn-taking. Dialogues or talk-in-dialogues also lead to the question of communicative participants interacting with one another in general. A notion of dialogue based on hearers and speakers that are no longer able to sequentially arrange each other, or, from a more reflective position, give reasons for and defend *their* positions (because of just being confronted with independently differing I-positions),

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scarcely permits such questions—let alone a look at issues of agency and intentionality in dialogues.

Concerning the *second argument*—that dialogicality as a result of socially participating in dialogical practices has the potential for the emergence of a reflective self—we would like to insist that the autonomous status of the I-positions must not lead to a “selfless” self. Empirical investigations have repeatedly shown that even when taking into account the immense choreography of radically different possible self-constructions, one personal goal that remains significant for young persons and adults is to reflect upon the differentiability, plurality, and heterogeneity of possible action and life orientations and make relevant (self-determined) choices as well as carry out the relevant deciphering that enables such choices in the first place. Furthermore, it is an empirical fact that a large number of people seem to want to hold on to the project of personal identity—that is, they tend to retrospectively interpret and anticipatorily design their life in a way so it can be attributed to them as *theirs*—at least as a partially self-determined story of accountable/responsible subjects (cf. Leu & Krappmann, 1999; Straub & Zielke, 2005).

Furthermore, and this adds a third layer to our argument, it seems important from a methodical and methodological point of view that if dialogicality indeed implies a highly reflective notion of self and self-awareness, it is something that has to be acquired *in talk* or *in interaction*. It cannot be examined or evaluated using methods that focus exclusively on the cognitive (dialogical) functions or competencies of persons. Methods used for the evaluation of the dialogical features of selves, if assumed to exist *inside* the person, will most likely have to concentrate on the analysis of social interaction, social practice or talk, and thereby prolong an inside-outside distinction that may get in the way of good developmental microanalysis. We will take a closer look at this topic in our concluding section.

Self-Confrontation, Evaluations, and Narrative

In this section, we try to catch up and critically scrutinize how the concept of dialogicality as *inside* the self is put to use in empirical investigations. We will rely here on two publications by Hermans (1997, 2001b) where he developed the method of self-confrontation as a procedure that is based on ‘valuation theory.’ This method, consisting of a structured interview technique, centers on a number of relevant life events serving to make the client or participant self-reflective so he/she can engage in procedures of self-investigation. While life story interviewing traditionally is set up to make the participant self-reflective (see Bamberg 2006, in press, for some critical reflections on this approach to narrative), Hermans’ method of self-confrontation adds another layer of reflection to the issue of ‘reflexivity’ that we already identified as problematic. In the data reported in Hermans (1997), Nancy, a 45-year-old female research participant, was initially asked to name and then reflect on her two dominant traits and subsequently to

give accounts about herself with these traits as dominant themes. More specifically, she was asked to “think and feel” in terms of a character with each of these traits, respectively, and to reason about the relevance of these traits—in these two versions—for her own past, present, and future. Thus, asking Nancy to reflect on particular objects and persons that may have been of relevance to her and her life contrasts starkly with the way traditional life story approaches orient their participants toward telling their stories (cf. Fischer-Rosenthal & Rosenthal, 1997; Wengraf, 2006): While life story approaches lead the participants to reflect on their lives by way of narrating, self-confrontation leads the participants to first reflect and through reflection to a form of accounting that has little resemblance to narrating.

In another example in which the client’s pseudonym also was Nancy, the method of self-confrontation is exemplified within a therapeutic setting (Hermans, 2001b). In this case, Nancy was 47 years old and presented with a number of particular self-describing attributes that had been pulled from previous therapeutic sessions (e.g., listening, vulnerable, faithful—these are termed *internal positions*). Thereafter, Nancy was asked to rank (on a scale from 0-5) the relevance of these attributions in relation to particular others (e.g., her child, her father, her partner—these are termed *external positions*). After a relevancy matrix had been established of the overall position repertoire, Nancy then was asked by the therapist to account for relevant moments and people in her past, present, and future in terms of which influences have been/are/will be most influential. It is crucial that the therapist was leading the client through these answers by systematically making the positions clear, the way they had been set up and scaled as relevant earlier, from which the client then was expected to answer (Hermans, 2004, p. 182). The way this kind of interaction is framed in terms of the ‘self-confrontation method’ is that the client is “invited” and given an “optimal opportunity for profound self-reflection” (2001b, p. 343). These reflections subsequently are supposed to lead client and therapist to the deeper insights of what is seemingly inflicting pain to the client, (ideally) opening up the opportunity for inceptions of self-change. To be absolutely clear: While it may be possible to justify this kind of communicative strategy for therapeutic ends, there are absolutely no empirical grounds for why these types of induced reasoning strategies should be argued to form the ontological grounds for what we can call a ‘sense of self.’

We hope to have sufficiently demonstrated that the method of confronting selves to self-reflect essentially targets participants’ argumentative discourse repertoires and reasoning skills. In addition, we have clarified that this interview method does not encourage participants or clients to narrate their stories the way they typically result in more overt valuations of self and others. Instead, this method interrupts the narrative flow of sequentially arranging what happened; it interrupts how storytellers typically begin to reflect on their very own and specifically subjective narrative employment in the course of their telling. Starting with the evaluation and giving attributes of self in

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relation to other characters automatically brackets and frames what is to follow as event sequence. This way of consistently self-confronting subjects/clients gives a very different reasoning and argumentative flavor to the accounts elicited. Although it is very well possible to talk about these accounts as ‘narratives,’ they are very different when compared to spontaneous, everyday narratives. They are different even when compared to narratives elicited in the life story interview method in terms of their structure and interactive purpose and most likely also in terms of the topic and content. Nevertheless, these kinds of verbal responses in these highly structured interviews are taken to represent voices/positions that the participants have brought with them to the interview encounter; that is, they are assumed to have been held *in* the person previously. The interview method of confronting the participant/client with different attributions and valuations of themselves (though with regard to other characters) is taken to constitute the means to tease them out.

While we clearly see the value of viewing participants, or any conversationalist for that matter, as having access to a repertoire (or better: a vocabulary) of self descriptions (the *polyphonic self*), it is unclear what the positions or voices are made up of. It sounds as if these positions have been practiced previously in real-time and real-place conversations and from there they apparently have become settled, sedimented, decontextualized and fossilized (“*internalized*”—cf. Lawrence & Valsiner, 2003) in the form of a repertoire in the person’s mind. As such, they are assumed to be available to be called up and practiced in real-time conversations whenever needed. Self-confrontation then is an interview method that apparently can shortcut into this repertoire, where the positions are sitting on a shelf, in an orderly but highly decontextualized fashion. Here they are easy to access, and if executed well, this method can bring the client/participant to rework reflectively the valences of these positions, with the ultimate prospect “to achieve a unity of the self via its polyphonization” (Hermans, 2001b, p. 363).

Although this approach sounds attractive, there are central ingredients of positions and positioning that remain unclear if not problematic. First, it remains unclear who is doing the positioning of the different voices/positions within the mind or how it is accomplished without the assistance of the self-confrontation method. Second, although claimed to rely on ‘narrative,’ we wonder whether the method of self-confrontation actually may rather be considered as ‘anti-narrative.’ Third, we are afraid that the notion of the reflective self that engages in the activity of self-reflection and self-reworking may actually resemble too much the highly rational though abstract mind—closely related to the Sunday activities that recently have come under scrutiny in narrative theorizing (cf. Bamberg, 2006, in press; Freeman, 2006; Georgakopoulou, 2006). Lastly, we are beginning to wonder how the notion of voices and positions as speaking agents inside the mind is any different from the notion of a unitary self and whether dialogical approaches to self and identity are really replacing the traditional

self. In the following, we will briefly work through these four concerns and elaborate them.

(i) Bakhtin himself often had to face the critical question that it was not clear who was “orchestrating” the different voices in the polyphonous novel. The same critical question arises concerning the dialogicality of self: If the dialogical self is characterized by diverging I-positions which somehow are communicating *in* the person and are successfully making sense of each other in an “authorless” way, then, who is telling the mind (in case the mind is making the decisions for how to act) how to choose one position over the other? Or to put this dilemma more simply: Who is winning, and why? After all, it seems to be difficult to presuppose that “opposed” positions are always already dialoguing with and against each other and that somehow, miraculously, something good will come out of it. The response to this kind of critique points to the only “relative autonomy” of the differing voices (e.g. Hermans & Kempen, 1993, p. 88; see also Hermans, 2001a) and emphasizes that—despite the absence of any unifying entity like a persistent, stable self—there must be some kind of “synthesizing force” within the self. It can be assumed that this synthesizing “force” will determine the meaningful constellation of I-positions towards one another, which we may refer to as “dialogical.” Already in 1993, Hermans and Kempen conceded that there must be such an orchestrating instance and coined the (capitalized) name “Self” for it:

The Self can certainly be considered an *I-position*, too, but it is of special nature. It has the capacity to juxtapose and interrelate the other positions that neither apart nor in their incidental relationships can achieve any synthesis of the self as a whole. (p. 92)

Only a few pages later, however, part of this is taken back by the claim that “the Self is always threatened by the dominant aspect of dialogue” (p. 95; cf. also Hermans, 2001a). This “explanation” may rather be called a good problem definition than a problem solution (see critically Straub & Zielke, 2005; Zielke, 2006).

In sum, we are lacking an explanation for how what can be considered a potentially self-*destabilizing* dialogicality can become an essential feature of the person/the self. From a developmental perspective, fundamental steps in the parent-child-relationship have been claimed to enable the infant to pursue something like dialogical communication (e.g., Fogel et al., 2002; Rochat, 2000). In order to place this dialogical achievement within the person and to be able to explain how the self may gradually achieve dialogicality as a central feature of self, the metaphor of internalization is borrowed for describing how “external” dialogues are somehow converted into an “internal” capacity or characteristic of the person/the self. We will come back to the question of internalization below.

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(ii) While it can be assumed that all stories are shot through with a certain amount of self reflection, life stories or life-forming and life-transforming event stories are based on a particular kind of self-reflection. Typically, the elicitation conditions for life stories are likely to position the participant to account for life as a coherent or at least somewhat cohering string of events (cf. Bamberg, 2006, in press)—resulting in the answer to the request to explicate one’s ‘sense of self.’ In other words, asking participants in life story and life event interviews to account for a coherent life presumes and results (most likely) in what is easily interpreted as an underlying unitary origin from where the self-narrative has been put together. Asking participants in interviews that follow the method of self-confrontation to take different and even contrastive positions and argue them out pull for something very different. From the perspective of the life story interview, such interview strategies interrupt the narrative flow that can lead to the construction of a coherent sense and force the participant to account for different perspectives and even orientations. In this sense, confronting participants with differing perspectives and engaging them in a sort of reasoning discourse that justifies these different positions is “anti-narrative”, that is, it disallows the narrative powers to integrate and unify. This is not meant to imply that life story interviews are in any way a better methodology when compared with the self-confrontation method. Rather, while one pulls for a more unifying orientation vis-à-vis self and identity, the other pulls for diversity.

(iii) In sum then, both interviewing strategies, the life story as well as the method of self confrontation, are dialogic techniques that pull for different forms of reflection that subsequently are claimed to be at the essence of the subject. In contrast to both theories, we have argued (Bamberg, 2006, in press; Freeman, 2006; Georgakopoulou, 2006) that this focus on reflection (and in particular self-reflection) in recent strands of identity research seriously underplays and undertheorizes people’s participation in practices that are more everyday and mundane but nevertheless self-constructive. Simultaneously, life story method and self-confrontation overemphasize (which, however, is similarly not sufficiently theorized) people as mental, cognitive information processors who seem to act on the basis of cognitive (rational?) decisions. It is important that this argument is not misunderstood as the denial of the possibility that people engage in self-monologues or as denying the existence of cognition, information processing, and rationality. However, to ground a sense of self (and others) in internal (psychological) constructs seriously underestimates and undermines the dialogical/discursive origins of our interiors and underplays the role of practices as sites for self-construction.

(iv) Bringing these points of divergence together, it remains unclear whether a polyphonic self that is grounded in interactive techniques of self-confrontations is any different from the unitary self that is assumed to originate from self-reflections elicited by an explicitly narratively-formulated life story interview technique. In sum, rather

than engaging in debates between which notion of self is more adequate or real, we are suggesting to engage in deeper explications of how these different notions are produced (or co-constructed) in different interactive/dialogic practices. None of them has an intrinsic predominance over the other. At best, it can be argued that different construction strategies of self may come in as productive for different purposes such as therapy or counseling. Rather than looking and trying to find the subject ‘behind’ what is said in these interview situations, we suggest to seek the self as self-constructing in such situations. In other words, the situations in which a sense of self is coming to existence when dialoging with real others, such as in interviews, but also in other, more mundane and everyday situations, are telling enough. While it seems to be a tendency in traditional research on self and identity to start from an abstract and reified notion of self, we suggest going back to the study of the actual processes in which selves talk to others and in these processes form a sense of who they *really* are.

The Development of Dialogues—Concluding Remarks

In our concluding remarks, we intend to return full circle to the question that guided our ruminations on dialogicality and the multivocality of the self. If dialogicality and multivocality are taken to be basic principles that make us humans individuals and social, what is it that is to be acquired? More specifically, how can this ‘acquisition process’ be approached in the form of empirical inquiry?

In contrast to Hermans, who places positioning in the mind of the individual, we have argued for anchoring the notion of positioning in interactions (Bamberg, 1997, 2003, in press). In other words, we suggest taking positioning out of the mind—at least if it is posited there as an a priori category the person seems to come equipped with—and viewing positioning as first of all taking place in concrete situations that are historically and socioculturally embedded. Thus, these situations are situated and situating the participants; at the same time, the participants actively and agentively position themselves and each other in these situations. Consequently, the ground for empirical studies, including developmental inquiries into positioning and dialogicality, is what is happening in these situations, that is, what people-in-interactions do—how they position themselves (and others), and in positioning themselves become positioned.⁵

Our critique of Hermans’ notion of self-positions is very much in agreement with Lysaker (2006), who asks:

⁵ A different formulation of the same dialectic is to see people in interactions as positioned first—and their actions and interactions, that is, the way they agentively position themselves and others, as consequent of how they are positioned. We will have to say more about this dialectic process in the following paragraphs.

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Should we regard them [self-positions] as positions adopted consciously or unconsciously by some persistent “I,” such that an “I” is the source of movement and animation in the dialogical self, or should self-positions be understood as semi-autonomous forces, an impersonal sea upon which inner speech bobs, doing its best to describe the darting it witnesses as something like a course? (p. 44)

And we similarly align with Goffman (1969), who argues that

a status, a position, a social place is not a material thing, to be possessed and then displayed; it is a pattern of appropriate conduct, coherent, embellished, and well articulated. Performed with ease or clumsiness, awareness or not, guile or good faith, it is nonetheless something that must be enacted and portrayed, something that must be realized. (pp. 65-66)

Having somewhat clarified our position on positioning,⁶ it should be clearer that this is not anything the person is born with as his/her internal equipment, and neither is it first “out there,” in what seems to be a ‘social’ realm,’ only to be picked up—sooner or later—to be incorporated into the mental realm of the self. Rather, positions are actively taken as parts of practices that manifest themselves in the form of everyday and mundane activities such as arguments, descriptions, and narratives but also in conversing, dialoging, flirting, debating, lecturing, and entertaining. The list is seemingly endless. Of course, it is possible to reflect on these mundane activities and pull them together under some reflexive umbrellas; in the above we have alluded to reflections in the form of life stories and/or in reflections that can be elicited in situated self-confrontations. However, it seems to be evident that inquiries into when and under what circumstances it is possible to engage children in life stories or self confrontations—although answers to these questions may be illuminating—have nothing to do with the developmental question of dialogicality and multivoicedness.

For the remainder, we will only touch briefly on the question of a developmental approach to dialogicality that follows up on our stance on positioning and dialogicality. Taking up on the debate in this issue between Valsiner (2007, this issue) and Susswein, Bibok, and Carpendale (2007, this issue), we find ourselves in agreement with Susswein et al.’s criticism of the container metaphor of internalization as too restrictive as well as with Valsiner’s response that Susswein et al. fail to resurrect a viable alternative. Their debate, nevertheless, is highly illuminating with regard to the larger question of what it is that is developing and how we can empirically approach the phenomena that

⁶ Positioning has become a central concept in the empirical work of the first author of this article (cf. Bamberg, 1997, 2003; Korobov & Bamberg 2004a, 2004b).

represent the issues under investigation. Following Susswein et al., we also consider the domain for empirical inquiry into dialogicality and positioning to be the sites where ‘being social’ and ‘being individually unique’ are at display and continually practiced in the form of reiterated, habitual, and ritualized performances. It is at these sites where the properties of positioning and dialogicality emerge, hailing subjects into being, and where these iterative performances also (in a subsequent way) present themselves for the potential of empirical inquiry. What Susswein et al. fail to show, which opens up their suggestions to Valsiner’s critique, is how these practices result simultaneously in a sense of continuity and discontinuity as well as uniqueness and generality, and last but not least, who is in charge in the construction process. It is with regard to the latter that Valsiner jumps in and charges Susswein et al. with not being able to account sufficiently for relating the person to the world and the world to the person.

Let us briefly elaborate. Any developmental approach is confronted by the following three dilemmas: (i) *the Identity Dilemma*, that is, how I can be the same in the face of constant change (and vice versa); (ii) *the Uniqueness Dilemma*, that is, how I can consider myself unique in the face of all the sameness with others (and vice versa); and (iii) *the Construction or Direction-of-Fit Dilemma*, that is, who is in charge of what—the person of the world, or the world of the person?⁷ While Susswein et al. use the site of practices to establish ‘mastery’ as the organizing developmental principle and attempt to legitimize their approach within “an evolutionary epistemological conception of cognitive development,” it is Valsiner’s attempt to resurrect and hold onto the agency of the person. Valsiner correctly points out that Susswein et al. are not addressing the *Construction/Direction-of-Fit Dilemma* and fail to incorporate into their approach that and how the person’s agency plays an important, if any, role in what Susswein et al. credit to ‘mastery.’

In the hope of contributing to some resolution of the debate and simultaneously to clarify further our own position, we suggest that both parties fail to differentiate between two levels of abstractions: While it is absolutely necessary on one hand to argue at a more abstract level that opposing forces are at work in the constitution of self and identity in the face of these three dilemmas, it is of utmost importance on the other hand to realize that there is no resolution. To build a story of self and identity requires taking positions: it is *either* change *or* constancy; it is *either* uniqueness *or* what I share with others; and it is *either* I who did it *or* it was/is done by external forces to me, whereby I am being placed in the role of an undergoer. Although it is possible, after the invention of the novel, to weave these different perspectives together in a story that consists of fluctuating moments, each of these moments is constructed from an *either/or perspective*.

⁷ For a more detailed account of these dilemmas see Bamberg, in press.

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The implications for developmental research on issues of positioning and dialogicality are relatively straightforward. If we can not take positions as a priori housed in the mind as our starting point, it may be reasonable and opportune, as Susswein et al. suggest, to start at the level of practices. Although it may be possible to look at certain practices and their changes over time in terms of ‘competency’ and ‘mastery,’ and how the accomplishment of a certain level of mastery may feed back into new practices and in turn into new levels of mastery, this way of longitudinally mapping out developmental achievements is not the only way and often also not a very productive way. As we have suggested elsewhere (Bamberg, in press; Korobov & Bamberg, 2004b), there is an alternative way to study development by investigating moment-by-moment changes in actual dialogues in a microanalytic fashion. Taking this orientation, we are not forced to study solely or even predominantly how children become masters of adult practices but can turn to everyday practices where a sense of self is continuously under construction. And when it comes to the study of the emergence of dialogicality, this is exactly what we end up suggesting.

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**ON THE GAINS AND LOSSES OF METAPHORS:
A COMMENTARY ON BAMBERG & ZIELKE'S
"DEVELOPMENTAL INQUIRY AND WHERE TO LOOK FOR IT"**

Gabriele Lucius-Hoene
University of Freiburg, Germany

ABSTRACT. The commentary takes up some of Bamberg and Zielke's (2007, this issue) points of discussion of the concept of dialogicality in the "dialogical self", mainly their critique of building in the notion of dialogue into the self. The status of the self in the "dialogical self" concept, its origin in Bakhtin's metaphorism, and dilemmas in the narrative constitution of self and identity are discussed. The main argument focuses on the problems and critical aspects which arise when Bakhtin's metaphor of the "polyphonous voices" is reified in the construction of the "dialogical self". Furthermore, Bamberg and Zielke's notion that narrators have to take a position towards three dilemmas of narrative identity construction is questioned

Right from the start and already announced in the question mark of their subtitle, Bamberg and Zielke leave no doubt about their sceptical stance towards the concept of the "dialogical self" as a paradigm for studying self and identity in a context of developmental research. In their article, they present critical points which result from a theoretical and conceptual perspective as well as from the standpoint of empirical research, underscoring the weak points of the dialogical self concept.

In my commentary I want to highlight some of their points of discussion which center around the use of the concept of dialogicality. In Bamberg and Zielke's argumentation, "...building in' the notion of dialogue into the self" (this issue, p. 226) poses the main problem and leads to inconsistencies about its role in development. Their main thesis is that dialogicality is "a particular form of speaking - a genre, a discourse mode" (this issue, p. 226) and that any attempts to equate this form of speaking and self-disclosing with a direct access to the self's self-reflections is another form of re-establishing an essentialist notion of self. Against this, they claim to "dethrone" the re-essentialized self and put dialogicality back into real-world dialogues and conversations.

There are three points out of Bamberg and Zielke's extensive and multi-faceted text on the dialogical self on which I will ponder: the status of the self in the dialogical

AUTHOR'S NOTE. Please address correspondence about this article to Gabriele Lucius-Hoene Department of Rehabilitation Psychology and Psychotherapy, Institute of Psychology, D 79085 University of Freiburg, Germany. Email: lucius@psychologie.uni-freiburg.de

self, Bakhtin's metaphor of "polyphonous voices", and dilemmas in the narrative constitution of self and identity.

On the first point, Bamberg and Zielke formulate several objections against the concept of decentralization and autonomy of "voices" in the dialogical self,. One of their strongest critical arguments lies in their pointing out that "a large number of people seem to want to hold on to the project of personal identity - they tend to retrospectively interpret and anticipatorily design their life in a way so it can be attributed to them as *theirs* - at least as a partially self-determined story of accountable/responsible subjects" (this issue, p. 231). This is also supported by a plethora of scientific data about the need for a feeling of self-efficacy as a precondition for health (e.g. Antonovsky, 1987) which corresponds to a sense of a sufficiently coherent sense-making about one's life. This is the rationale for many psychotherapeutic interventions far away from the field of the dialogical self concept (e.g. Omer & Alon, 1997) which aim at the construction of a sense-making and future-oriented narrative, giving the sense of "This is my story" and "I am the hero of my story" as the central figure capable of acting. One might argue that sense making processes of persons who face dilemmas of decision making and action, systematically try to reduce "voices" or arguing and contrasting positions by ruling them out in their ongoing narrative constructions. Moreover, therapeutic work based on the premises of the dialogical self concept does pretty much the same, helping clients to come to terms with antagonistic and overwhelming or disintegrated voices and to render them capable of action by helping them "to put together a better organized, clear and coherent story" (Salvatore et al., 2006, p.205), to reduce a multiplicity of positions to one only which represents an "integrative mixture" (Hermans 1999, see also Herman & Hermans-Jansen, 1995) or to "achieve a metacognitive point of view" (Dimaggio & Semerari, 2004, p.263).

Another sceptical stance against the vanishing of a self furnished with the means of establishing an authoritative instance which can manage and decide on different positions is the crucial role of the I's "power of imagination" in the conception of the dialogical self (Hermans et al., 1992). How can the creation of a multiplicity of positions and their worlds as well as the construction of imagined dialogues be initiated and managed without an intentional and strategic agent? (Straub & Zielke, 2005).

Bamberg and Zielke also question how a multiplicity of arguing voices may be able to maintain sufficiently coherent, lasting and responsible social positions towards other persons in real life, and towards each other in dialogicality within the self. As the authors point out, speaking of dialogue and dialogical intercourse to describe what is going on in a person's mind demands certain features in order to be justified, for instance, complex patterns of turn taking, of forward and backward oriented interpretation, and of securing understanding and mutual acknowledgement. Using the term dialogicality for what seems to go on in a person's mind means blurring the boundaries between metaphorical and descriptive speaking rather than sharpening the

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tools for coming to terms with empirical phenomena. Seen in this critical light, persons' tendencies to talk about their inner lives in terms of competing voices and argumentative positions may rather be a form of communicative as well as self-reflexive competency which is acquired in early relationships with significant others. As a part of communicative skills for living in a culturally globalized world with a high demand for intercultural competency, it may even be a desideratum (Hermans et al., 1992).

My own conclusions lead to the assumption that several of those points of criticism can be traced back to the dialogical self's origins resting on Bakhtin's metaphor of the "polyphonous voices" as one main pillar. Why should Bakhtin's theory of the polyphonic novel (a novel as a piece of artful work which, after all, comes from the pen and the creative mind of a real-world author) be applied to the self, a psychic structure, and in what sense? It is the clinging to a metaphor which stems from literary criticism and undergoes the double refraction of metaphoric speech and of being transferred from one phenomenal domain (a literary text) to a totally different one (psychological concepts of the self). This may be the origin of some of the inconsistencies in the dialogical self theory. The metaphor seems semantically overstrained and empirically underdetermined (or even undeterminable). Hermans himself aims at linking theory and empirical research: "Conceiving self and culture in terms of a multiplicity of positions with mutual dialogical relationships entails the possibility of studying self and culture as a composite of parts. This enables the researcher to move from theory to detailed empirical evidence and, back, from empirical work to theory" (Hermans, 2001a, p. 243). Nonetheless, a lot of empirical research done in the context of the dialogical self seems to presuppose the adequacy of the concept and to look for empirical data that offer illustrations (and save the metaphor) rather than to test its limits and constraints. Seen from a viewpoint of empirical investigation, dialogicality lies itself at the heart of all methods of data collection whenever participants give accounts of their thoughts and reasonings. When referring to their inner worlds, they necessarily adhere to interactional rules and practices which bring researchers into negotiations and procedures to secure understanding. Methods work by the very same processes of dialogicality which are meant to be the research phenomena in question, but may be artefacts. To ascribe to dialogically produced data the status of representing the structure of the self, seems to neglect their origin in interaction. This point is elaborated in Bamberg and Zielke's analysis of the valuation method favoured by Hermans (Hermans, 2001b) which by its instructions to the participants produces exactly the sort of evidence needed for the theory.

As Bamberg and Zielke rightly point out, there is a demand for empirical work on dialogicality in every form of its appearance in social contexts. This might be those fluent and ephemeral mundane interactions as Bamberg (2006) and Georgakopoulou (2006) put forward with their research program of "small stories". It might, as well, be

done with elicited life stories or self confrontation activities, in psychotherapies or in ethnographic and culture-oriented studies.

Apart from these critical points, I would like to mention some aspects of the dialogical self concept which I consider as seminal. For research, one of the most important merits of the dialogical self approach may be its cultural sensitivity and its openness to non-western conceptions of self, thus stimulating the intercultural dialogue which is fervently promoted by researchers from non-western psychologies (e.g. Chaudhary & Sriram, 2001). As mentioned earlier, due to its openness the dialogical self conception seems to offer common ground and to provide answers to questions about cultural globalization and heterogeneity. In this approach the self can be considered as culture-inclusive and culture can be considered as self-inclusive (Hermans 2001a). Empirical data originating from cross-cultural research on self and dialogical practices may challenge and broaden the view in identity and narrative research, as well as criticize and clarify our culture-bound metaphors and their tendency to reify our images.

Another highly instructive domain of research is the question of the character and genesis of intruding voices and of the special features of disorganized and fragmented narratives which, by their destructive impact on everyday life must undoubtedly be called pathological (e.g. Dimaggio, 2006; Dimaggio & Semerari, 2001; Neimeyer, 2000). As in other fields of research, looking closely at disturbed and destructive processes may provide insights into less overt everyday skills and underlying structures.

One final point of Bamberg and Zielkes argumentation, however, does not seem to be convincing to me. Based on the conception of the three dilemmas of the opposing forces at work in the narrative constitution of self and identity - change or constancy, uniqueness or sharing self with others, and whether I did things (direction of fit person-to world) or things were done to me by external forces (direction of fit world-to-person), they argue that on a pragmatic level there is no solution to the dilemma and that the building of a story of self requires us to take a specific position. This conception is backed up by another concept which can only be taken metaphorically: the famous gestalt figure of the vase and facial profiles, which, in a given moment, allows us to see one side only and never both perspectives simultaneously. It remains unclear whether this problem of having to take sides in the dilemma is a problem of research concepts and methods of data analysis, or whether it also has to be faced by everybody doing his or her identity work. From the perspective of the analysis of empirical narratives and conversations, I believe this argument is flawed. Everyday dialoguing and narrating shows that positions are not linguistically fixed. They can be left vague and ambiguous, making use of the built-in vagueness of language games as a resource. Persons in dialogues - or in autobiographically informed accountings as well - need not clarify

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whether a fluid and momentarily actualized I-position is situated on one or the other side of the dilemma or, so to speak, presents the vase or the face.

The allure and the intuitive appeal of the concept of dialogicality as the basis of the self demands that we empirically scrutinize its heuristic and theoretical value and its limitations, instead of using data that fit easily into the concept. It could be most rewarding not to look for evidence for the dialogical self, but to explore how and when - under what communicative obligations and chances - persons interactively make use of positions and voices to shape and back up certain positions.

The dialogical perspective is undoubtedly a most creative and intriguing cornucopia of ideas, a research heuristic and a creative battlefield, but it should not yet be considered a theory of the self. To make use of another metaphor, rather than being a precise navigational instrument, the dialogical self theory may be better thought of as a flotilla of boats out on the sea, looking to discover new lands.

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NEGOTIATING MOTHERHOOD: A DIALOGICAL APPROACH

Filipa Duarte & Miguel M. Gonçalves
University of Minho, Portugal

ABSTRACT. This study assumes a dialogical perspective towards the processes of identity construction during the transition to motherhood, and it relies on a methodology that invites the participants to deal with the dualities of the dialogical self (Dialogical Articulation Task - DAT). Using this semi-structured interview, we ask the participants to identify the various self-descriptive dimensions of their selves and to give an independent voice to each of them. These voices are conceptualized as discursive I-positions, and the person is asked to perform the exercise of alternately moving between each of the positions and activate dialogues among them, as well as between them and the significant interlocutors. Transition to motherhood implies the construction of a new maternal identity, but it also involves a necessary re-organization and accommodation of the previous identity positions that constitute the personal repertoire. Assuming that this transition is informed by a constant interplay between different and sometimes demanding identity positions, we explore the meanings constructed in order to elaborate this experience, focusing on the ways women negotiate their new maternal identity. Ambivalence and tension between the different meanings constructed by women concerning motherhood are evidenced through the semiotic analysis of the interviews.

Keywords: dialogical self; self-regulation; semiotic mediation; life transition; motherhood

The topics of motherhood, and specifically of transition to motherhood, have been devoted a great deal of attention, resulting in an expanding body of research and literature. Consequently, we have now at disposal a consistent wide range of studies that point out the complex and diverse character of this personal experience, whether focused in a more quantitative approach intended to isolate the variables influencing the psychosocial adjustment to this transition (Glade, Bean & Vira, 2005), or oriented towards a qualitative exploration of the individual experience of these women (Nelson, 2003). Despite the knowledge that the transition to motherhood constitutes a highly challenging task that presents many emotional, affective and social nuances, the cultural view of this life event continues to emphasize the element of self-fulfilment of the fem-

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ine nature that motherhood experiences also carries. Several authors have highlighted the fact that motherhood, more than a mere biological event, constitutes a social phenomenon, loaded with inherited cultural and ideological images and lay theories that influence the experiences of any new mother (Woollett, 1991; Letherby, 1994; Sévon, 2005; Johnston & Swanson, 2006). In social discourses there prevails a traditional idealized view of motherhood as a source of significant personal fulfilment, development and enjoyment of intense positive emotions (Solé & Parella, 2004; Leal, 2005). This narrow vision of motherhood also carries a set of beliefs and stereotypes around what is socially and culturally accepted, in contemporaneous western societies as an adequate practice of “mothering”. These are largely sustained by the myth of motherhood as a universal need and “natural” choice of women and by the expectation of full-time mothering (Oakley, 1984; Solé & Parella, 2004; Johnston & Swanson, 2006). This myth of an “intensive motherhood” as the reflection of what constitutes a “good” mother, yet being in absolute dissonance with the present role of women in western society, still influences the imaginary of many women that fight with a difficult dilemma of irreconcilable aspirations, causing distress and guilt.

Motherhood might be, in fact, experienced in several and quite different personal contexts and subjectivities. Moreover, it is always inscribed within the network of social dynamics that, at each historical moment, define the constraints imposed on women in their experience and subjective construction of this identity dimension (Sevón, 2005). Consequently, we should not talk about the “motherhood”, but rather of “motherhoods”, assuming the diversity of trajectories and the multiplicity of discourses and practices that delineate the phenomenon. In other words, in order to fully accomplish understanding motherhood and its several expressions, we need to start from a conceptualization of this phenomenon as a social and cultural process. Furthermore, in order to understand this process of construction and integration of a maternal identity by women today, we can not neglect the fact that it is immersed in an occidental and industrialized socio-cultural context that has been subject to deep practical and social changes. These have been transforming to a large extent the status and expectations of women’s roles in society. Presently, women often carry expectations of participating more actively in social life, valuing a professional career and the consequent public and social recognition, and assuming a more proactive role in politics and citizenship. Yet, the set of social discourses concerning the idea of intensive motherhood also constitute the cultural context in which the new mothers will give sense to their subjective experience and act as discursive orientations to the construction of this new maternal identity.

Hence, we share the notion that becoming a mother is among the major developmental transitions during young adulthood and emphasize, at the individual level, the process of identity transformation as one of the great challenges that motherhood entails (Raeff, 1996; Smith, 1991, 1999; Bailey, 1999; Nelson, 2003;

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Seibold, 2004). Motherhood can not be circumscribed to the concrete experience of giving birth and objectively becoming a mother. The adoption of this identity corresponds to a process that is drawn from several elements of the concrete experience but transcends the physical and biological domain. It is inscribed into the subjective realm of the imaginary during the entire gestation and this is a phenomenon that draws out beyond the birth as the experience is represented through new modalities, in a constant interplay between diverse identity positions and between these and the cultural prescriptions available in the dominant social discourses. Thus, adopting a discursive and dialogical approach, this article intends to examine the re-organizations and accommodations observed in dialogical processes through the transition to motherhood, as well as the meanings about this transition elaborated in women's effort to negotiate their new mother identity.

Conceptual Background

The Dialogical Self

The Dialogical Self Theory from Hermans and Kempen (1993) constitutes one core conceptual line guiding this study. Understanding the self as a “dynamic multiplicity of I-positions in the landscape of the mind, intertwined as this mind is with the minds of other people” (Hermans, 2002, p. 147), the authors highlight its decentred, relational and social dimension. In fact, according to this dialogical conceptualization of the self, the construction of meaning becomes a process fundamentally relational in nature, since it emerges from the ongoing dialogical exchanges happening between two or more voiced positions that, at each moment in time, compose the person's repertoire. These positions become understood as interlocutors in a process of meaning making that is always influenced and challenged by the anticipation of another's reaction. Simultaneously, the dialogical self is also a deeply social self, since the internalized voices of social others are also part of these dialogues and take place in the occurring process of meaning (Hermans, Kempen & Van Loon, 1992; Hermans & Dimaggio 2004). In line with recent contributions on the developmental origin of the dialogical self, it appears that, since very soon in infancy, early interpersonal relationships become integrated in a developing sense of self as memory patterns that will function as important voices or positions in the child's inner dialogues and influence future relationships (Hermans & Dimaggio 2004). Thus, others actually become part of one's self¹.

¹ We should note that this current focus on the embodied nature of all these processes, both in the field of developmental psychology and of neuropsychology, has been giving rise to promising contributions to the understanding of the origins and functioning of the dialogical self, namely by looking for a neural model to support the theory (Lewis, 2002; Lewis & Todd, 2004). Focusing on the autonomous functioning of two important attentional systems in the

It is this relational and multiple feature that the dialogical approach can add to an analysis of the meaning-making as a vital process in human beings and that constituted the basis for the elaboration of our methodological task – the Dialogical Articulation Task (see also Duarte, Rosa & Gonçalves, 2006). The method calls for an explicit effort at describing these ongoing dialogues among the various I-positions and their respective social interlocutors. From a dialogical standpoint, as the person assumes different positions he/she is endowing each one of them with a voice able to be part of the dialogue. New meanings are made possible by transforming the positions involved or by the emergence of new I-positions that somehow solve temporarily the dialogical tension. Thus, the meaning-making as a dialogical construction implies an “I” that is continuously moving back and forth between different positions (Hermans & Kempen, 1993; Valsiner, 2004). We hope to present in this paper an useful example of the meaning-making that results from an active “positioning” from several different I-positions, underlying the notion that the meaning-making emerges as a process that occurs not from one position, but *between* two or more positions in dialogue (Hermans & Kempen, 1993).

Meaning-Making and Semiotic Mediation

From our point of view the perspective of the dialogical self is important, but not sufficient for an understanding of the way meaning gets transformed. As Valsiner (2006) states: “the picture charted out for the DS remains static—it is the process of transforming the dominance structure of the given state of DS into a new one that provides us with a glimpse of how the self system works” (p. 3-4). Looking at the semiotic processes in the dialogical self is one pathway to understand the transformations in self-system.

The meaning-making processes can be viewed, from a developmental perspective, as a pre-adaptation mechanism, since it endows the self with useful semiotic tools that reduce the uncertainty and unpredictability of the immediate future and mediate the relation with the outside world (Josephs & Valsiner, 1998; Valsiner, 2002a). These semiotic devices, or signs, become organized into a hierarchical structure of meaning, in that each higher level of signs regulates the functioning of the lower level (Valsiner, 2002b).

From a dialectic understanding, Valsiner and collaborators (Josephs & Valsiner, 1998; Josephs, Valsiner & Surgan, 1999; Valsiner, 2006) conceptualize the meaning-

prefrontal cortex, closely connected with emotional areas such as the limbic system, Lewis proposes a model of a dialogical brain that partly explains the alternation between semi-autonomous I-positions.

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making process in terms of dualities and assert that meanings arise as dual fields of unified opposites – or *bipolar meaning complexes*. The authors define meaning complexes as “signs (meanings per se) that present some aspects of the world, their implied opposites, and qualifiers that are linked with either signs or their opposites” (Josephs & Valsiner, 1998, p. 70) and present this dialectic quality as an essential condition for the existence of any process of transformation or novelty. In other words, each constructed sign immediately co-constructs its opposite, that is, a counter-sign (Josephs & Valsiner, 1998). It is this oppositional relation between the two meaning fields that sometimes can reach a state of tension and lead to a further elaboration of meanings that change the previous relation.

Therefore, tension is the crucial element in opening the meaning complex to further transformation by participating in the dialogue with other emergent meaning complexes (Josephs & Valsiner, 1998). Therefore, dialogical relations between meaning complexes may be harmonious and then change to a state of tension that results from the rivalry between meaning complexes, eventually leading to an escalation and the taking over of one meaning complex by the other. Tension is also a very common element within the dialogues described by participants in our study, often leading to further elaborations and growth of the meaning complexes constructed by the various I-positions in dialogical exchanges. These dialogical exchanges are usually modulated by the use of several kinds of *circumvention strategies*, which designate some semiotic instruments used in the meaning-making as regulators of dialogical relations. These strategies are also semiotic constructions that are continuously made as the meaning-making unfolds, in order to negotiate and maintain the goals that these women establish in each here-and-now context while maintaining their effort in making sense of the social world (see Josephs & Valsiner, 1998 for a full elaboration on this issue). In other words, participants usually turn to the elaboration of some new semiotic tool that enables them to strategically circumvent the existing conflicts so that they can keep their several and sometimes ambivalent motivations and values.

Method

Sample and Procedure

The sample consists of a group of 10 women expecting their first child, in order to explore the meanings constructed around this developmental experience and increase our understanding of the ways women negotiate their new maternal identity. One of the central research questions is related to the analysis of the process of integration in the self-system of a new I-position – the maternal one. More precisely, we intend to dissect the tensions and conflicting demands that this new I-position may cause within the previous existing repertoire and analyse the way each woman negotiates and deals with this developmental challenge, considering possible changes and accommodations observed in the I-positions repertoire. However, because this study is still in a phase of

data collection and analysis, in this paper we will explore only some preliminary results based on a first analysis of four cases – Maria, a 30-year-old psychologist; Adriana, a 29-year-old manager; Ana, a 28-year-old teacher; and Madalena, a 34-year-old professional translator². All these four participants are married women and of a middle socio-economic level.

Data collection was achieved in two distinct moments: the first evaluation happened during the 3rd trimester of the woman's pregnancy and the second evaluation took place after the 3rd month post-partum. At each of these moments, we applied a semi-structured interview developed in a previous study - Dialogical Articulation Task (DAT, Duarte, Rosa & Gonçalves, 2006).

In this interview, we invite participants to deal with the dualities of the dialogical self, exploring the way people think and construct meaning, both about possible dialogues among their different discursive I-positions (Hermans & Kempen, 1993), and about the dialogues between those and the “voices” of significant interlocutors (see Duarte, Rosa & Gonçalves, 2006, for a more detailed exposition). In order to accomplish that, we ask participants to identify their most descriptive and relevant self-dimensions, which usually correspond to social roles, personal interests and idiosyncratic characteristics (e.g. Me as a professional; Me as a mother; The emotional me). These defined self-dimensions are presented to participants as different voices or identity positions they can deploy when thinking about several daily decisions or events and they are asked to explain and describe the most usual interaction between them, while imagining that each of these I-positions is a character in a story or in a movie, which suddenly gets a voice. This procedure leads to an autonomous voicing of each I-position, and because of that, participants present their different I-positions as independent Me's.

The interview consists mostly in exploring the dialogues between each discursive I-position and all the others, in order to clarify a set of questions concerning each dialogue: (1) the usual agreement or disagreement between the I-positions; (2) their ability to negotiate and synthesise shared meanings; (3) the possible dominance and the kind of power exerted by some of the I-positions; and (4) the affective impact of the interaction solution.

Finally, in the last interview, we also present some questions concerning the experience of mothering for the first time, pregnancy and the decision to have a child.

All the interviews were conducted by the first author of this paper, two of them in the office at the University, and the other two in interviewees' homes. They lasted between 45 and 100 minutes and were audio taped and later fully transcribed.

2 All names have been changed in order to protect participant's privacy.

The Analysis

Data analysis may be organized into two levels that are closely related, through representing two different approaches to the phenomenon of integration of the new maternal position within the repertoire of previous positions defined by each woman. Therefore, we started by proceeding to a first wide approach to the participant's discourse, looking for the existence of conflicts and ambivalences, and framing them within a more macrogenetic perspective. In order to do that, we used discourse analysis (Potter & Wetherell, 1995; Edley, 2001) as a method to identify the fundamental interpretative repertoires used by these women as discursive resources in their effort to give sense to their motherhood experience and to construct a new maternal identity. This methodology seems quite adequate to assess the processes that people use when resorting to images and notions available in social discourses to construct their personal identities, in interplay between socially disseminated discourses and their personal experience and agency. These images and ideas, usually identified in the discourse as clusters of terms, descriptions and figures of speech, are then labelled by Potter and Wetherell (1995) as "interpretative repertoires".

The relevance of this analysis draws from the notion that motherhood as a socio-cultural construct holds various images and directives that constitute strong constraints in women's behaviour. As stated by Valsiner (2000, p. 157), the "regulation of women's conduct during their pregnancies entails, in parallel, new ways of constraining their actions, thinking and feeling" that guide them towards their new powerfully symbolic role as mothers.

Second, we chose to complement this first analysis with a more microgenetic and detailed scrutiny of the existing tension and conflicts through a semiotic analysis of the meaning-making process exemplified in the discourse of each participant. This process of microgenetic analysis is applied to the dialogues narrated among the several I-positions and focuses on the process of meaning-making triggered by the first question concerning each dyad of I-positions – Is there any dialogue between these two?. Considering the presented dialectic notion of meaning-making (Josephs & Valsiner, 1998), we understand that this question presents the first bipolar meaning complex the person can use to elaborate on any of the meaning fields – DIALOGUE \diamond NON-DIALOGUE. Once this first opposition is suggested by the interviewer, the person's meaning-making may follow in one of two different ways: by acceptance and increasing differentiation of field A – DIALOGUE (called *growth*); or by acceptance and increasing differentiation of field NON-A – NON-DIALOGUE (called *constructive elaboration*). This last possibility of meaning construction is the most likely to lead to further elaboration and novelty, since it allows the insertion of new competing meaning complexes – e.g. B \diamond NON-B. The analysis follows, then, the process of meaning-making looking for the identification of: a) new bipolar meaning-complexes elaborated by the person; b) consequent growth or constructive elaboration of any of the meaning

fields; c) whether harmonious coexistence or rivalry between the elaborated meaning complexes emerges; d) circumvention strategies elaborated in order to deal with the tension.

Results

Analysis 1 – Interpretative Repertoires

The significance and influence assumed in the process of individual signification by some collectively shared meanings has been pointed also in the realm of a dialogical conceptualization of the self (Hermans & Kempen, 1993). Regarding this, we should not only consider the role of socio-cultural traditions as discursive resources that influence and constrain each individual process of meaning-making, but also the way people transform these social prescriptions, creating a personal culture in their ongoing development (see Valsiner, 2000).

Aware of the importance of these social and cultural elements, we will begin by highlighting the presence of two fundamental interpretative repertoires in the discourse of these women that to some extent, define the discursive boundaries within which their negotiation of a new maternal identity proceeds.

Repertoire 1 – The ideal of traditional motherhood and the myth of the “good” mother

The word “motherhood,” understood as a discursive construct with deep socio-cultural roots, involves a set of widely spread stereotypes around the notion of “good” mother as opposed to “bad” mother (Solé & Parella, 2004). These stereotypes, or set of social discourses concerning motherhood, constitute the cultural context where new mothers will experience their transition to motherhood. Thus, the imaginary of the “good” mother or of the “intensive” motherhood clearly emerges in their discourses, either as a position of resistance or of conformity towards these guidelines.

In the discourse of these participants, we can explicitly see their worries about being a “good” mother or about learning “well” how to be a mother, which is reinforced by a preoccupation and a very significant anticipatory anxiety with a search for information in order to “be prepared”. This concept of a “good” mother and of a certain ideal of motherhood also becomes clear from the doubts and the intensive questioning about the personal abilities for the exercise of motherhood, which suggests a situation of a strong need to correspond to the social and personal expectations. This effort of compliance with the social prescriptions of what constitutes a “good mother” is also translated in the subtle use of the pronoun “we” (highlighted in bold) by Adriana and Madalena, that states their identification with the “generalized woman”. Underlined are the discursive markers that allow identifying the presence of the interpretative repertoires.

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*“But... I’m very very afraid... I am! I don’t know... (silence)... I can’t wait... but I’m afraid that I’m not going to be a good mother... (silence)... I’m afraid! And I don’t know, within a few weeks, how it is going to be... will he cry a lot? Because **we**... everyone says that “well, you learn how to be a mother!”. You do. I believe you do, but **will we** learn well how to be mothers?” (Adriana, pre-partum 1)*

*“In what concerns being a mother, I never know if I’m a good mother. I never know... I think so, but **we are** never sure whether we are good mothers or not, but **we do** the best we can to be one.” (Madalena, post-partum 1)*

“Sometimes I read because I feel that I need to be prepared!... (laughing)... must know how to change diapers... or must know how to feed the baby... I think... now it is almost like... a countdown... and then I must be prepared...” (Maria, pre-partum 1)

“... this was something... it was planned, so it wasn’t something that frightened me exactly, but... at the same time, there were always doubts.” (Ana, post-partum 1)

In addition to the obvious inexperience and insecurity of these new mothers, there is usually an “assault” of suggestions, guidelines and criticisms from close relatives and friends, medical experts and sometimes even strangers, which are often regarded as intrusive and disorganizing due to their frequent contradictions. While this is a very visible situation in the first days or weeks after the birth, there seems to be a certain resistance against this intrusion through an effort in searching “their” own way of being mothers. Note that this attempt in resisting the prescriptions of social others becomes a task of the couple, whose space they try to preserve in the face of existing pressure. Here we also find the use of the pronoun “we”, but now referring to the couple and constructed in opposition to the former “we” (woman’s generalized role). In this sense, the ideal motherhood becomes in certain moments used as a discourse that helps these women in their identity definition through opposition and resistance.

*“And at some point I thought “No, from now on I will do what **my husband and I** think is good for him (the baby) and what is correct... what makes us feel good also!” Because I think that it is also important that **we are** doing the things which we can identify **ourselves** with and not only “I’m doing this because that person told me to...”” (Maria, post-partum 2)*

*“... therefore the **two of us** have to act on our own as if there was nobody else. And I try to think a lot about it... I leave some space for my brothers and for the family, but I try to make this our thing, of the **two of us**.” (Ana, pre-partum 2)*

This belief in the existence of an adequate and perfect motherhood leads us, then, to the question: what defines a “good” mother? Through which dimensions is this notion of an ideal motherhood decomposed?

1.1 – Motherhood as a “natural” and tacitly expected step

One of the dimensions that describe the traditional vision of motherhood is the belief that all women aspire to be mothers, excluding the choice of non-motherhood as an acceptable one (Meyers, 2001, Oakley, 1984). In the following excerpts we can effectively notice how the notion of motherhood as a natural desire for women is present, in a more or less explicit way, in the discourse of these three participants. Motherhood is presented as an old time expectation and a natural choice, to some extent, it is implicitly expected. Note, once again, the use of “we” as an expression of a clear identification with all women, as if this desire was obviously shared and intrinsic to some kind of womanhood.

*“It’s like this, the moment... I think that for **us, women**, being a mother is something that some day... some day **we** just feel like it! I think that’s the way it is.” (Adriana, post-partum 2)*

“... I’ve always had the wish of having a child, since... a very young age! Not since I was a child, but for a long time now... I always wanted to have at least one child... so I won’t let time pass me by and then... regret never having had a child.” (Maria, post-partum 3)

“I’ve always had the idea that I would love to be, but... I had no idea... I just wanted! Wanted!... it was an idea that was... I’d like to get married and be a mother.” (Ana, post-partum 3)

The fourth woman - Madalena - reveals a totally different position in assuming that she never even considered becoming a mother as one major life goal. Still, this position is also drawn against a social reality identified with this spread expectation that women invariably wish to become mothers. That is, whether adopting a position of compliance or resistance, all these women define themselves in relation to this myth of motherhood as an unavoidable destination of women. This seems to be the very reason for the need of this participant to justify her non compliance, advancing other motives than the simple absence of the wish of becoming a mother.

“I never even... what!?... when I hear people saying like... kids! – “My dream is get married and have children” - ... I never had the dream of getting married and having children. I don’t know... or if I had, it was sound asleep, I don’t know. I’ve never thought about it.” (Madalena, post-partum 2)

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“No... perhaps I didn’t feel capable... I didn’t feel capable of being a mother! Until she was born... even in the last days... I used to think many times – “What am I getting myself into! How will I be able to raise a defenceless baby?” (Madalena, pos-partum 3)

Whereas in the first example we see an obvious ambivalence between wanting and not wanting to be a mother, in the second excerpt the reason given for the absence of this desire is again elaborated through the implicit use of the notion of a “good” mother, as Madalena highlights her inadequacy to meet the necessary requirements.

1.2 – Notion of maternal love and instinct

A second element that seems to compose this ideal motherhood and that is very obvious in these women’s discourse is the notion of maternal love as an instantaneous reality, parallel to a statement of the maternal instinct that “naturally” speeds the adaptation to the baby and to the care giving tasks (Oakley, 1984; Matlin, 1987). Once again, we can find in the second excerpt a movement from an “I statement” to a “we statement” that reinforces this notion of the generalized and unavoidable nature of such an innate instinct.

“... Even, well, in terms of... even taking care of her... And I think that if other little babies used to disturb me, with her I think I did everything naturally! Well, changing a diaper, even the umbilical cord that used to disturb me so much, does not disturb me at all! Because it is ours or because... It doesn’t disturb me at all!” (Ana, post-partum 4)

“Seriously, I’ve completely changed! It’s a radical change, totally. It’s a crazy thing, totally. From that moment on we change – not by need – it is instinctive. Really! It is really instantaneous and instinctive.” (Madalena, post-partum 4)

1.3 – Mother as the prime caregiver

Finally, the ideal of traditional motherhood also portrays expectations of a full-time dedication of the mothers to their children, to the extent that every child needs his/her mother and her presence in order to grow up healthy (Oakley, 1984; Solé & Parella, 2004; Johnston & Swanson, 2006). This idea of the mother as the privileged caregiver of her child has, thus, a correspondence in the fact that the familiar realm had been traditionally presented to women as a central context of personal achievement.

In the following examples, this notion of the mother’s presence as an important requisite is somehow reflected in the difficulty in leaving the baby and in delegating the care giving function, even with the father or other family members, as in the case of the grandmother.

“... it is a separation, even with him staying with my husband or with my mother. I completely trust them, but it is no longer with me, right, so if you are used to being with him all day that’s a bit...” (Maria, post-partum 4)

“... because my husband has a job that doesn’t allow him to get home early and I see that he doesn’t spend any time with the baby and I don’t want her spending little time with both of us. I know that I’ll probably be getting in troubles, but I think that she needs it. She shouldn’t just be raised by her grandmother!” (Madalena, post-partum 5)

Differently from the previous women, Ana reflects about the importance of preserving some space for herself as a woman, outside the monopolizing realm of motherhood, but still highlighting that she considers delegating the care of her child only for brief periods of time and exclusively to her own mother, someone absolutely trustworthy. Similarly to the previous examples, Ana also uses the pronoun “we” in a way that somehow reinforces her statements in the sense that present them as shared and accepted by a group of other women. However, in this particular case, the “we” refers to a different kind of women, the emancipated modern mothers that, yet still loving their babies, value some time for taking care of themselves. Nevertheless, this situation seems to cause some ambivalence or at least some fear of being judged, since Ana feels compelled to justify her behaviour, highlighting the fact that she only allows herself these breaks because she spends plenty of time with her child.

“And these hours that we leave them with someone we trust and go, this is also good for us! It’s our little hour to calm down and relax a bit... it would be very difficult... without the help of the family. (...) But I spend a lot of time with her and I think that... well, I only go to the gym because I know she is with my mother, because if it was with someone else I wouldn’t... right, I go relaxed, I don’t worry.” (Ana, post-partum 5)

Accordingly with this feeling that their presence and care are absolutely needed, these women generally reveal an extremely positive image concerning motherhood, which emerges at this moment as top priority in their lives. Apparently, for them, motherhood has coloured all the other experiences and contexts, leading to a devaluation of some more negative aspects implicated in this transition. Therefore, the familiar realm is regarded as the main context of affective and time investment, achieving a much more manifest centrality in this gestation period, although to all of them family was a value priority even before. This familiar centrality, as expected, is stressed in the post-partum period, when motherhood is understood as reinforcement of the family concept, which is reflected in the image that a “new family” has in fact been formed and in the use of the pronoun “we” to describe the experience, as if the couple and the new child were now an unique whole. This fact also leads to a greater feeling of

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achievement and completeness concerning other identity positions within the family sphere.

“At this moment... I as a mother involves everything around me, you know... the whole me!” (Adriana, pre-partum 3)

“That’s a new phase. It is like we had gotten married again with another goal in life. It isn’t anymore... I don’t know... it’s impossible to explain. Everything loses... importance in life. The goal is another one. You live for that! It’s impressive!” (Madalena, post-partum 6)

“... feelings even more of a family... now it is really our family! I think there was reinforcement here, that the two of us and our daughter are a new family, apart from the other two!!”; “Yes, that’s it! I think it makes you more of a wife, because that’s the role, isn’t it? Mother, wife!!” (Ana, post-partum 6)

Repertoire 2 – The autonomous and professionally successful woman

Similarly to the presented stereotypes that legitimize a certain identification of the feminine with motherhood and family, we see nowadays, at least in the occidental countries, other images of womanhood that demand the right to assume different roles in society. The great changes verified in terms of the possibility of planning childbirth, the access of women to higher levels of formal education and their massive entrance in the labour market, as well as the value transformation that is associated with it, legitimated an emancipation of the feminine and the maintenance of new expectations and aspirations concerning the social role of women. Professional success arises increasingly among new generations of women as a target to accomplish (Solé & Parella, 2004; Alberdi et al, 2000).

In our data, we can also identify a second interpretative repertoire in these women’s discourse - one that is related to the significance of a professional career and to the necessity of progression and recognition, and that reflects the values of individuality and autonomy, so imperative in contemporaneous industrialized societies.

2.1 – Profession and career as personal achievement

Today, many women see labour as a crucial element of self- fulfilment, leading them to strongly invest in their academic education and in the search for a professional career that becomes a source of satisfaction and a central vector in their personal trajectories (Alberdi et al., 2000). In fact, it becomes obvious from the following examples the great importance attributed to the professional/vocational dimension, especially because of the self-fulfilment character that it holds for these women. This importance becomes particularly manifest when it contrasts with the anticipation of motherhood demands. Apparently, these women feel that somehow the fact of being working mothers may value even more their practice of motherhood, in the sense that it

enriches and completes them as a whole person. Once again, these women seem to be constructing a new identity as “good” mothers by resisting to the prescriptions of an intensive motherhood.

“... the most important to me... as a professional, is to be a good professional in whatever I do, to dignify the institution I work in, above all... because I’m proud...” (Adriana, pre-partum 4)

“Concerning the professional part, I always wanted and have somehow fulfilled my dream. I always wanted to be a teacher and have graduated in teaching... (...)... so, it is something that I really love and still... I can’t give it up!” (Ana, pre-partum 7)

“I’m kind of a perfectionist maniac, but that’s something that everyone is... When I get involved in a project, for fun, I go through with it till the end! I like it very much, like a lot... perhaps because I’m loving the work I’m doing.” (Madalena, pre-partum 7)

2.2 – The need of improvement and recognition

Another frequent element in these women’s discourse is the perspective of career improvement and the will to continue evolving professionally. However, it is here that the first ambivalences appear between a professional enhancement goal and the realization that the decision to have a child might become an increased difficulty in the eye of the employers. At this point several elements come into dialogue – the wish of progressing and being rewarded; the expectation of increased difficulties due to the demands of their new family life; and the priority of having some pleasure with what they do.

“... I like to be good at what I do... and above all, I like what I do. I consider myself a good manager. I don’t know if someday I’ll be a good director, right? I won’t be thinking about administration... (laughing)... unfortunately that is more... well, that is reserved for men, isn’t it?... (laughing)... No, but I think that... I won’t say that it wouldn’t be an interesting challenge, obviously!” (Adriana, pre-partum 5)

“Ah, at this moment it is still a bit complicated because there is a lot of pressure and I don’t know if our department will be maintained, but... I want to keep growing. Actually that’s something that... I don’t want to just stay there?, that’s why I started studying again!” (Madalena, pre-partum 8)

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Ideological Dilemma - Ambivalence and contradictions within the working mother perspective

Between these two repertoires there is an important focus of tension within the discourse of these women and this tension has clearly increased after the birth of the baby.

Initially, in the pre-partum, there is a general maintenance of the value of professional career, but paralleled with the acceptance that it is temporarily a second priority. This acceptance happens without conflict or distress, especially because it is understood as a temporary situation and, to some extent, an “excusable” fact due to the greater physical difficulties caused by pregnancy. At the same time, there is already visible some anticipation of the conflict that an effective return to work will cause.

“... an example, if I'm not able to finish something, I won't be too worried about it, not as much as I would have been some time back, because I think that physically I can't do much more... some time ago I would take work to do home, even if it wasn't necessary, but I would do it in order to be a good professional and have things on time. Now it's more like... that's it for today!” (Maria, pre-partum 5)

“But the Me as a professional knows that this is something temporary! Even because I as professional has given up a lot and all that was post-laboral schedule has been given up, is finished, but I'm very interested in coming back... in having all these activities again! It's only at this moment that... it's a provisional experience!” (Maria, pre-partum 6)

In the second moment, post-partum, the anticipation of returning to work causes a much higher anxiety and worry and becomes approached in a radically different way. It is in this stage of preparing for the return to the labour market, after a period of exclusive devotion to their new position as mothers that a confrontation emerges involving the dilemma of attending to an ideal of “intensive” motherhood or keeping the image of professionally successful and competent women.

In this sense, we are interested in understanding how do women circumvent some social guides about what is a good mother, when their life style is not totally in agreement with those prescriptions. A microgenetic approach is used here as a methodological tool to deepen our understanding of these dynamics, since it permits a detailed scrutiny of the meaning-making process “on-line”.

Analysis 2 – Meaning-making and microgenesis

Considering the four participants studied in this first analysis, two of them included right in the first pre-partum interview, a somehow preparatory maternal position

Table 1.

Synthesis of I-positions defined by each participant in both DAT interviews

Participant	DAT – Pre-partum	DAT - Post-partum
Maria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Me as a future mother - Me as a professional - The child in me - Me as a family member 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Me as a mother - Me as a professional - The child in me
Adriana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Me as a future mother - Me as a professional - Me as dreamer - Affection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Me as a mother - Me as a professional - Me as dreamer - Affection
Ana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Me as a professional - Me as family member - The emotional me 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Me as a mother - Me as family member - The emotional me
Madalena	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The childish me - Me as a professional - The emotional me - Friends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Me as mother - Me as a professional - The emotional me - Friends

while the other two did not. In common is the fact that all of them have defined defined a maternal position in the second moment, that is, during the fourth month post-partum.

Since the maternal position is precisely the one that assumes a greater relevance to the present study, we focus our semiotic analysis on the dialogical dynamics between this I-position and the remaining positions defined by each participant. In this paper, we will explore, though, only the dialogues described between the maternal and the professional positions, since they have important specificities and can in fact be taken as the representation of each of these conflicting interpretative repertoires. In other words, the first presented repertoire - *the ideal of traditional motherhood and the myth of the “good” mother* – is mostly sustained by the maternal position, while the second repertoire - *the autonomous and professionally successful woman* - is presented by the professional position, leading to a clear ideological dilemma and creating a field of dialogical tension.

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In this sense, a microgenetic semiotic analysis of the meaning-making process concerning the dialogical dynamics between these two positions seems very useful in order to identify which are the strategies used by each participant to circumvent and/or solve the existing tensions and conflicts.

Following, we present some excerpts of each of these women's discourse concerning the nature of the dialogue between maternal and professional positions at the post-partum moment, as well as the previously described microgenetic analysis of this meaning-making process, focusing on the tensions and the semiotic tools elaborated in order to circumvent it.

A. Maria, post-partum

“Me as a professional knows that she should go back to work... (laughing)... which I'm already doing, after all, it's just that I work from home now. And Me as a mother probably would rather continue with this working at home situation in order to pay attention to the baby as well. Yes, maybe that's it... (laughing)...”

ANALYSIS: After proposal of the opposition DIALOGUE \diamond NON-DIALOGUE, by the interviewer, two meanings arise, each one associated with a position and related to the imminent situation of returning to work - TO GO BACK \diamond NON-TO GO BACK and TO CONTINUE AT HOME \diamond NON-TO CONTINUE AT HOME. These two meanings enter into a relation, from which emerges a contrast of meaning complexes that reaches a state of rivalry. Associated with each voice there arise different circumvention strategies (see table 2 below for a summary of all the circumvention strategies used by participants), on one hand the voice of *Me as a professional* uses a circumvention strategy focused on a moralist macro-organizer - “knows that she should go back”; and on the other hand, the *I as a mother* uses a circumvention strategy focused on a personal preference - “would rather continue at home”.

(10 seconds later)

“Me as a professional knows that I must go back to work and that this must happen and... to get more experience, to enrich her curriculum and so on... (And there is also some will, thinking as a professional, of going back?) Yes, of having that day-to-day with colleagues and so on, yes, that as well. You spend a lot of time locked up at home and that's not very healthy either, isn't it? (What about the other?) Then Me as a mother... (laughing)... sees things more like this, since I've already been working from home for a long time now, she thinks more like “ok, I can conciliate both things and that would be ideal!”

ANALYSIS: Once the contrast of meaning complexes is established, contents of each one of the two voices in dialogue are elaborated. The state of rivalry is maintained without development, but the same circumvention strategies are used again by each of the voices and there is a synthesis of a new meaning that qualifies the relation (by the voice of *Me as a mother*) and opens the place to negotiation – TO CONCILIATE. This search for negotiating is also underlined by the tag question – *isn't it?* – which can be read as an appeal to the listener for confirmation and reinforces the personal need to maintain the goals and meanings carried by both positions.

In this excerpt we can also find a new resource advanced by the professional position that underlies, although with some ambiguity, the “not *very healthy either*” nature of an all-consuming motherhood. By using these semantic qualifiers in such an evaluative way, there is a circumvention of the meaning TO CONTINUE AT HOME, and a strengthening of the professional position’s view.

(Immediately following the last excerpt)

“(How do you negotiate these two..._this divergence? Does this reach the point of being a conflict for you? Does this cause you any distress?) Some, but I don’t know if it reaches the point of being a conflict. Maybe it is more simply two opinions that are like a bit different.”

ANALYSIS: Two oppositions emerge: NEGOTIATION <> NON-NEGOTIATION and CONFLICT <> NON-CONFLICT and the accepted opposition is CONFLICT <> NON-CONFLICT, but in an ambiguous way.

The ambiguity of this location is underlined by the new semantic qualifiers “some” and “to the point of”. The tension that this disagreement may trigger is clearly reduced by the synthesis of a new meaning, more conciliatory – DIFFERENT OPINIONS – and that is still limited by semantic qualifiers that reduce the tension (“simply”; “a bit”). Although assuming the obvious disagreement between the two voices, the circumvention effort of the meaning CONFLICT in order to maintain an acceptable level of tension is clear.

(21 seconds later)

“(And how do you think that this will be solved?) I don’t know, it all depends... (silence)... depends, but... (long silence)... no... these are things that surpass me also! (And if you are given the conditions, what do you think you would choose?)... if I could choose it would be like fifty-fifty... It would be like working some days at my working place and the others at home.”

ANALYSIS: Finally, the opposition SOLUTION is accepted, but without clear positioning – “I don’t know, it all depends” – what seems to be a clear avoidance of

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elaboration about this question. This ambiguity is clarified by the estimation of “these are things that surpass me also” which reinforces a personal distance. When located in the present dialogue, its characterization is focused on a notion of rivalry that is impossible to solve at the moment. When somehow forced to assume a position, there’s a clear desire for NEGOTIATION.

B. Adriana, post-partum

“This is a total interest’s disagreement!! But I think that... (But has Me as a mother in some way silenced or muffled a little the professional voice? Or that just doesn’t happen?) It happens! Of course it happens, but I know what I have to do, right, I know I must go to work... I wish I could be with him all the time! That’s why I do agree that women stay at home and take care of their children, I think that’s right!”

ANALYSIS: Once the implicit estimation of DIALOGUE is established (after proposal of the opposition DIALOGUE \diamond NON-DIALOGUE), there is an immediate move to the field DISAGREEMENT, underlined by the qualifier “total”. Two meanings arise then, related to the imminent situation of returning to work, and each of them associated to one of the positions – TO WORK \diamond NON-TO WORK and TO BE AT HOME \diamond NON-TO BE AT HOME – which enter in relation leading to a contrast of meaning complexes that reaches a state of rivalry. Associated with each voice there arise different circumvention strategies: the professional position uses a circumvention strategy focused in a macro-organizer - “*I know I must go to work*”; and on the other hand, the *Me as a mother* uses a circumvention strategy focused in a personal preference – “*I wish I could be with him all the time*”.

(Immediately following the last excerpt)

“Not forever but... I think that at least during a year the mother should stay at home! Or at least while the baby needed breastfeeding. But I know that’s not possible and because of that I must go to work! There’s no other way, is there?!”

ANALYSIS: Reinforcement of the rivalry state through the elaboration of the maternal position with growth of the field TO BE AT HOME, and the use of a strong moralist macro-organizer – “*should stay at home*”. Yet another macro-organizer, of a more prescriptive nature, is attributed to the professional position – “*I must go to work*”. The rivalry is somehow restrained by a circumvention strategy focused in a symbolic helper – “*there’s no other way*” – which, however, doesn’t seem very satisfactory in circumventing the tension since it is followed by the use of a tag question – *is there?* - that apparently functions again as an appeal to the listener for confirmation and support.

(15 seconds later)

“(But does your professional voice tell you that it must be that way?) It must be that way! No, it must be and I must continue with my life and... I have my career! It’s not because he’s born that... when I decided to have him (baby) I didn’t think “now I’ll give up everything because of him!” No, because it wouldn’t be a good thing for him either.”

ANALYSIS: New reinforcement of the rivalry state, now through the elaboration of the professional voice, with growth of the field TO WORK and repetition of a new prescriptive macro-organizer – “*it must be*”. Following, there is a focus on the goals of the professional voice and the synthesis of a new and different macro-organizer (“*I must continue with my life*”), as well as of an evaluative account emphasized by the use of semantic qualifiers – “*it wouldn’t be a good thing for him either*”.

The elaboration of these dialogical exchanges proceeds then through a reinforcement of the state of rivalry between the meanings sustained by each of the positions in dialogue. On one hand, the maternal position is associated with a personal preference, but on the other, the professional position extracts some negotiation power from a strong macro-organizer. Again, as in the former case, the participant uses an evaluative account (“*it wouldn’t be a good thing for him either*”) to express the personal value also ascribed to the professional position.

C. Madalena, post-partum

“... they (the two positions) will quarrel! They will quarrel a lot... Because I know that it’s going to be very hard for me! Either I change my conduct now and I start leaving her (baby) with my parents a bit, or else I see that my childish I will be crying all the time! Because it’s going to be very hard for me... I believe I’m becoming too chicken. They will quarrel a lot, a lot... they are already quarrelling.”

ANALYSIS: Proposal of the opposition DIALOGUE \diamond NON-DIALOGUE, with implicit acceptance of the field DIALOGUE, which is followed by the immediate synthesis of the new opposition TO QUARREL \diamond NON-TO QUARREL, relating to the future. There is then an acceptance and growth of the field TO QUARREL, which is reinforced by the repetition of the qualifier “a lot”. There is also a new elaboration of the maternal position and attribution of the new meaning “TO BE HARD”, also reinforced by the qualifier “very”. Recovery of the field QUARREL and reinforcement of this meaning through the repetition of the qualifier “a lot”, this time followed by a move into the present and estimation of “*they are already quarrelling*”.

(Immediately following the last excerpt)

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“(Are you already feeling that conflict?) Yes, yes! And time passes on increasingly fast... They will quarrel a lot. It is only two months away! Perhaps I’ll react well! But I think I’ll take it badly. And then it will be a shock they (employers) wanting me to stay longer and me not wanting to stay... but in the first year it is a right and I will want the right to my hours to be with my child.”

ANALYSIS: Proposal of maintenance in the present and of a new opposition CONFLICT <> NON- CONFLICT, with acceptance of the field CONFLICT. Immediate move to the future and recovery of the field QUARREL, again reinforced by a qualifier - “a lot” – and subject of growth. Adoption of the maternal position and synthesis of new meanings that sustain the maintenance of the field QUARREL: TO HAVE THE RIGHT.

(3 minutes and 40 seconds later – after an episodic narrative)

*“They will pressure me because they need me! It’s not because they’re mean... but because it’s necessary! And it’s going to be very complicated for me because I don’t want to go! That’s the problem!... I don’t want to go... (*whispering*)... I don’t. Oh my **God!** Let’s see!”*

ANALYSIS: Proposal of the opposition TO PRESSURE <> NON-TO PRESSURE, with acceptance and growth of the field TO PRESSURE, that is elaborated within the professional voice and leads to a circumvention strategy focused on a competing goal – “because they need me”; “but because it’s necessary”. The underlying tension leads to an elaboration of the maternal position and estimation of “it’s going to be very complicated for me”, sustained by a circumvention strategy focused on a personal preference “I don’t want to go”.

There is a first estimation of conflict between the positions in dialogue, referring to the future, followed by a move into the present and new assessment of the dialogue as difficult and conflicting, which is highlighted by the profusion of qualifiers. The elaboration of the maternal position presents the value dissonance and the reasons for the conflict, once again due to the personal preference in delaying the return to work and the impending necessity/prescription to go back.

D. Ana, post-partum

Finally, in the case of Ana, this relation is not as much conflicting, to the extent that her objective conditions are quite different from the rest of the participants. In this case, she was only working part-time because of some difficulties in entering the labour market. For this reason the professional position loses significance in the second moment of interview and thus she did not include it again in her repertoire, but nevertheless we can still find some references to this same situation.

Table 2. Circumvention strategies elaborated by the two conflicting positions at the post-partum moment

Participant	Circumvention strategies
Maria	<p>Me as a mother:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - circumvention strategy focused on a personal preference (“would rather continue at home”) <p>Me as a professional:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - circumvention strategy focused on a moralist macro-organizer (“<i>should go back</i>”); - circumvention strategy focused on semantic qualifiers (“<i>not very healthy either</i>”)
Adriana	<p>Me as a mother:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - circumvention strategy focused on a personal preference (“<i>I wish I could be with him all the time</i>”); - circumvention strategy focused on a moralist macro-organizer (“<i>should stay at home</i>”) <p>Me as a professional:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - circumvention strategy focused on an evaluative macro-organizer (“<i>I know I must go to work</i>”); - circumvention strategy focused on semantic qualifiers (“<i>it wouldn’t be a good thing for him either</i>”)
Madalena	<p>Me as a mother:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - circumvention strategy focused on a personal preference (“<i>I don’t want to go</i>”) <p>Me as a professional:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - circumvention strategy focused on a competing goal (“<i>because they need me</i>”; “<i>but because it’s necessary</i>”)

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“I mean, the Me as a professional probably would stay at a lower level. I’m working kind of in a part-time situation... I’ve started in some private schools... a part-time... but at this moment we are going on vacations and thus it won’t be a Me with a great interest... That’s it; it’s a very passive role, because it doesn’t interfere with anything.”

“... family is important, but our focus, at least at this moment, is our child. I think that’s it. And the others are... for example the Me as a professional now is not so relevant, it is more passive. It is important also in terms of subsistence, isn’t it? But... but the maternal one is... well, it is the most important! It is the most central one.”

Discussion

Starting with the presented analysis we can observe the effort of these women in negotiating between two distinct identity positions, each of which may be identified with very different and equally valued meanings. The difficulty in harmonizing the values and interests held by each position is even greater since both the maternal and professional positions are strongly connected with two interpretative repertoires inevitably rooted in rival discourses that become particularly problematic at this specific moment in these women’s lives. In other words, each woman is at a pivotal moment of their personal trajectories, when a set of more or less shared social meanings come into play and work as a cultural guide to their subjective processing of the experience. This is not a linear and unambiguous process and women often move between resistance and compliance with the mainstream social discourses, entering different coalitions in an effort to strengthen their statements. At different points of their discourse, these women seem to identify themselves with and adopt discursive resources made available by distinct groups or images of womanhood, as reflected in the use the pronoun “we” with several correspondents: *we* women and good mothers as expected by the (general) others; *we*, me and my husband or our new family; *we* emancipated working mothers that still love our babies. These movements or positioning between distinct Me’s and We’s seems to be well in line with a feeling of having a “widened I”, a sense of multiplicity that is in fact at the core of the notion of a dialogical self. Apparently, due to the novelty and transformation that transition to motherhood implies, parallel with the high social attention and prescription that it triggers, this moment in a woman’s life becomes a particularly demanding task of self-definition and identity transformation, highlighting the nature of a multiple and diverse “I”, one that is negotiated in the interplay between ambivalent personal values and motivations, as well as between these and the social discourses that frame their experience.

Moving between the boundaries established by these cultural guidelines and their own individual subjective experience, each of these women proceeds into a processing of the events related to motherhood, returning to the construction of semiotic

devices that enable, at a microgenetic level, some stability to the experience. In fact, we can see from our interviews that these women are somehow using the meanings and semiotic tools available in social discourses to guide their own behaviour and thought, trying to act as “good mothers” since the moment they knew about the pregnancy.

Later, the decision about whether to return to the workplace, the definition of the leave duration and the anticipation of some satisfactory future articulation of the maternal and professional worlds, figure as choices that suppose a negotiation of values and meanings that are difficult to reconcile.

In a first global look at these negotiations between the maternal and professional positions in each of these cases, we could conclude that the subjective experience of motherhood is lived in such a positive way that it leads to a complete congregation of priorities within the family realm. In fact, the conflict and tension manifest in these dialogues comes up most of all from the imposition of returning to work and from the maintenance of a personal preference in not doing it yet. Nevertheless, a more detailed analysis reveals the ambivalences that characterize these women’s discourse to the extent that they still attribute some authority and negotiating power to their professional position. This authority of the professional position comes not only from an economic dimension (sometimes referred to), but also from the value of personal fulfilment, as becomes equally clear in other moments of the interviews.

Therefore, on one hand, the maternal position is often fortified by the use of a strategy focused on a personal preference, which reflects the priority systems of these women at this early post-partum. On the other hand, the frequent use of strong circumvention strategies focused on more or less evaluative macro-organizers (with a prescriptive nature) or in a competing goal, highlights a certain institutional need in returning to work, thereby strengthening the professional position. Similarly, we can also observe the use of strategies focused on semantic qualifiers and evaluations of personal preferences that also emphasize the value of personal fulfilment attributed by these women to their careers. Thus, the manifest need in conciliating and negotiating both worlds reveals that they are not willing to renounce either of these positions.

The role of circumvention strategies as a way of increasing the flexibility of people’s reasoning (for example about the mundane world and the existence of miracles) has already been beautifully demonstrated (see Josephs & Valsiner, 1998). In this sense, the authors argue that these strategies can be regarded as devices of “semiotic liberation” from the constraints of logic, since they enable the simultaneous adoption of different and even competing positions and/or meanings. Nonetheless, this expansion of flexibility is not limitless and must be constrained by reverse circumventions. Thus, for a healthy construction of life and functioning, we must consider this constant interplay between semiotic liberation and semiotic constraint (Josephs & Valsiner, 1998).

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We believe that this interplay was clearly evidenced in these women's process of meaning making. They usually resort to several strategies of meaning circumvention in order to keep their personal values and goals, but at the same time without escaping the boundaries defined by social guidelines that they share to a more or less extent, and that constitute the constraining limits of their meaning-making.

Further Ideas

In the second moment of interview, and still in a very early stage of this new motherhood, the maternal position invariably appears as the centrifugal element of the whole repertoire, congregating the greater part of affective and time investment and standing as the absolute priority in the life of these women. Looking at this phenomenon from the perspective of a dialogical understanding of the self, we can say that there is a new voice or identity position that looms into consciousness and is legitimized by a very significant authority. But how does this position arise? How does it become progressively defined and influential to the point of being so very consistently present in the discourse?

We are interested in understanding how and when these women start identifying themselves as mothers. How is this position built and how does it emerge within the realm of the previous I-positions repertoire, becoming then materialized in behavioural, emotional and social transformations. This is a future line of research that the authors would like to explore.

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**WE RESEARCHERS: UNQUIET PEOPLE DISQUIETING OTHERS.
A COMMENTARY ON DUARTE & GONÇALVES' "NEGOTIATING
MOTHERHOOD: A DIALOGICAL APPROACH"**

Livia Mathias Simão
University of São Paulo, Brazil

ABSTRACT. This comment aims to highlight some aspects of Duarte & Gonçalves' contribution concerning the researcher's cultural symbolic action. Some aspects of researcher-participant dialogue are discussed under the perspective of the process of the transformative life of myths.

Departing from the relevance assumed by the myth of 'intensive motherhood' in western societies, Duarte and Gonçalves' research (2007, this issue) allows us to critically broaden the scope of psychological understanding of the event of "being a mother".

Amongst the several aspects of their rich and fruitful contribution that captured my attention, I have chosen to focus on our cultural symbolic action as researchers. To this extent, and in few words, my comment can be situated at the meta-theoretical level of discussion concerning the constructive research process through which a myth can be transformatively observed and studied.

Keeping Myths Alive

Myths are constantly both recreated and maintained by social actors for some purposes, at some periods, in some place, giving them an opportunity to fulfill prescribed social roles, allowing them feelings of self-accomplishment, self-enhancement and self-realization, as well as preventing them from other actions and feelings. To this extent, myths are alive and usually have a long life.

Nonetheless, the life of a myth is vulnerable, as it depends on the person's pervasive symbolic negotiations in the cultural field of social actions. As the whole

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mythical tissue of a society is itself in continuous transformation, the life of a myth is maintained thanks to its continuous recreation by the social fabric, in order to answer demands of people in their expectation and actualization of new social roles, organizing their experiences in the belongingness of their groups. This means that myths are not structures above individuals, nor below them, but that they are born and grow up in an intimate bi-directional process: myths are channeled by individuals as well as they channel individual symbolic actions. In this sense, they are co-created by individuals, but at the same time they shape individual symbolic actions and meanings, as discussed, for instance, by Boesch, 1991, 1992; Crossley, 1996; Simão, 2004, 2007; Valsiner, 1999, 2001.

As I have already explained more extensively elsewhere (Simão, 2007), this kind of process is referred to as the *knowledge cycle of culture – individual – culture* by Boesch (1992). It embraces the interplay among selective perception, transformation and integration of cultural messages by individuals. Because of their inherent ambivalence (Abbey and Valsiner, 2005) as symbolic messages, cultural suggestions can simultaneously *both fit and not fit* to the present individual cognitive-affective and actional structures. Myths are always slowly changing over time in order to account for those tensional aspects of personal experiences in culture. On the other hand, and simultaneously, personal experience is constrained by cultural myths in such ways that some aspects are more or less noted, emphasized, explained, felt and assumed in the sight of each particular myth.

According to the perspective I am taking into account, human subjectivity is constructed on the basis of personal cognitive-affective elaborations of cultural suggestions. In such a way, meaningful aspects of human life, like motherhood, are actualized in the collective culture, for instance by the myth of "intensive motherhood"¹. Therefore, the myth of "intensive motherhood" can be understood as an effective semiotic organizer in the tensional process of facing the unknown future of being a mother. On the other hand, as the socio-cultural field also changes in irreversible time (Bergson, 1938/2003; Valsiner, 1994), presenting new appeals and demands for life, it gives emergence to transformed and new myths.

At these moments in the dynamics of the cultural field, the present forms of the organizing myth (for instance, that of "intensive motherhood") can otherwise become a symbolic (dis-) organizer for the experience of being a mother. A new tensional process

¹ The intertwined notions of collective and personal culture are understood here in the sense elaborated by Valsiner (1989), viewing "culture as simultaneously present both in social units (groups, ethnic communities, and countries) and within individual persons. First, at the social group level, we can observe communally shared meanings and norms (collective culture). Second, each individual person carries within him or her the internalized version of the collective culture, which idiosyncratically differs from it." (pp. 47-48).

is then installed, where negotiations (circumventions here included) facing ambivalence are required in the self-dialogical process of transition to motherhood, as described and discussed by Duarte and Gonçalves (2007, this issue). From this bi-directional and tensional process, new forms of the former myth (the one of "intensive motherhood") or even new myths (for instance, "the polyvalent woman") can begin to develop, thanks to reconfigurations within the semantic fields of participants and researchers concerning the phenomenon-theme of their dialogue. The new and/or transformed myths can, in turn, reorganize the tensional experiences now taken into account.

Provoking Myths Through Research

Part of the above mentioned dynamics of maintenance and transformation of myths is held by us, researchers, as symbolic social actors in relationship with the participants of our research, our partners in this knowledge construction. It is worth noting that I am not taking into account that our role as social actors, in the above mentioned dynamics, is necessarily part of our consciously planned goals as researchers. Most of the time, understanding the 'if, how and why' of this role is not part of our concern and should not necessarily be. However, I believe that this role does not cease to be played because, as researchers, we are part of the social-cultural field where the participant-researcher relationships take place. The main consequence of this perspective is that the question of how to keep our 'social neutrality as researchers' shifts to other questions like 'how to develop our research in that tensional symbolic field' and 'how to understand the meaning of our results emerging from that field'.

In this scenario, researchers' cultural symbolic actions happen during the research-participant dyadic relationship, which is part and parcel of the process of psychological knowledge construction:

(...) as comprehension of information implies the contribution from who is receiving the information, each interlocutor continuously transforms the meaning of information communicated to him by the other (...) part of the information given by the subject to the researcher are verbal reports about the target phenomenon. These reports are products of interpretations about experienced situations. Therefore, what is reported involves the subject's conceptualizations according to his / her own logical system of comprehension. (...) However, reports change under contextual factors, among which researcher's actuations themselves are included. (...) To the extent that reports concern, in a great amount, the target phenomenon which is the theme of the dialogues, the information about it is also transformed, as a result of trying to understand it (Simão, 1989, p. 1201).

In this dynamic of researcher-participant relationship, researchers' and participants' symbolic actions are informed by beliefs, knowledge, opinions and values,

which sometimes are felt by them as sharable, sometimes not, leading them to experience *sameness and strangeness* in respect to the other's symbolic actions. In such a way, research is constituted by a symbolic action field where various I-positions of at least two persons (researcher and participant) are in conversation, tension and negotiation about a phenomenon, the theme of their dialogue.

This dynamics belongs to the broadest kind of Ego-Alter-Object ontological relationship, as epistemologically and theoretically proposed by Marková (2003, 2006). According to her, this triadic relation refers to joint or social construction of knowledge and, as far as it concerns meaningful communication about something, it also applies to subjective dialogicality (see Marková, 2006, p. 137).

Moreover, the dialogical character of Ego-Alter-Object relationship has two important features:

First, dialogicality and dialogical subjectivity are not concerned with the Ego and Alter as abstract or schematic notions but with their concrete manifestations, for example, with the self versus another self, the self versus group, the group versus another group, the self versus culture and so on. In each case, one component of the dyad is interdependent with the other one. And second, dialogical subjectivity is not reducible to the Ego versus Alter in the sense of the Ego's 'taking the role of the other' or the Ego being solely an actor in that interdependent relation. Instead, it is conceived in terms of multiple symbolic social representations that the Ego takes in relation to the Alter and vice versa (Moscovici, 2005) (Marková, 2006, p. 125).

The researcher-participant relationship here in discussion can be understood as belonging to this kind of relationship of mutual interdependence, in which joint constructions of knowledge about the event of being a mother can emerge as concrete manifestations of women's and researchers' selves, sometimes one versus another, sometimes versus the group, either represented by the researcher's questions, or by voices of the internal Alter of those women.

To this extent, the research-participant relationship here at issue, is a field dwelling ambivalence, giving place to the expression of conflicting meanings about motherhood, as Duarte and Gonçalves clearly show us in their article. This aspect concerns the fact that, during the interviews, researchers can provoke disquieting experiences (Simão, 2003) and ruptures (Zittoun, 2005) in the already established semantic field of participants (here included are myths that organize experiences, like the myth of "intensive motherhood"). Researchers can also provoke opportunities for quieter voices, already present, related to some divergent I-positions, trying to speak louder, challenging the more established I-positions, calling them to negotiations.

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As for Duarte and Gonçalves' research here in focus, the above briefly discussed aspects of provoking myths appears from the beginning when, for instance, they explain their aim:

More precisely, we intend to dissect the tensions and conflicting demands that this new I-position may cause within the previous existing repertoire and analyse the way each woman negotiates and deals with this developmental challenge, considering possible changes and accommodations observed in the I-positions repertoire (Duarte & Gonçalves, 2007, this issue, p. 253).

In this formulation, the objectives of dissection and analysis can be related to the researchers' compromise of highlighting aspects that cannot be done unless throughout the theoretical-methodological procedures developed in our scientific-cultural collective field. However, their concern is not to highlight every aspect, but only specific ones, concerning tensions, conflicting demands, negotiations, changes and newness. These specific aspects can be viewed as emerging from the dialogue between the researcher's personal and collective culture (Valsiner, 1989), here included are their scientific options. In this way, from the beginning, Duarte and Gonçalves configure the symbolic action field (Boesch, 1991) where their research will take place. This is a field of quest that is dialogically settled, where theoretical-methodological procedures should fit to values and curiosity.

At the level of procedural strategies, this articulation was done through the previously developed Dialogical Articulation Task (DAT, Duarte, Rosa & Gonçalves, 2006), inviting the participants:

(...) to deal with the dualities of the dialogical self, exploring the way people think and construct meaning, both about possible dialogues among their different discursive I-positions (Hermans & Kempen, 1993), and about the dialogues between those and the "voices" of significant interlocutors (see Duarte, Rosa & Gonçalves, 2006, for a more detailed exposition). In order to accomplish that, we ask participants to identify their most descriptive and relevant self-dimensions, which usually correspond to social roles, personal interests and idiosyncratic characteristics (e.g., Me as a professional; Me as a mother; The emotional me) (Duarte & Gonçalves, 2007, this issue, p. 254).

Another important aspect of this symbolic articulation embraces negotiation and selectivity. Researchers and participants form a duality, featured by an asymmetric and complementary relationship (Valsiner, 1997). Myths are narrated in a polyphonic dialogue (Bakhtin, 1986; Holquist, 1990), by the voices of otherness. These voices are actualized in the different participant's and researcher's I-positions, facing a myth and its counter-myth, negotiating and designing possibilities and limits about his / her I-world

relationships. This process of negotiation can be a potent reorganizer of "concrete and real" life experiences, like the experience of motherhood.

This is one of the transformative dimensions of the research here in focus, which happens when elaborations on life experiences open themselves to us, through the reconstructive movement of the participant's symbolic actions, channeled by the provocations of the research procedures. At this level of research, symbolic endeavor changes in participants and researcher's beliefs, feelings and rational knowledge about the target issue (women's I-positions facing motherhood) can be experienced. The same applies to our beliefs, feelings and rational knowledge concerning our I-positions in research-participant relationships.

To this extent, researchers play the role of the third party from inside of the dialogue, in the sense proposed by Marková (2006). Here the relevance

of what speakers convey to one another cannot be reduced to knowledge, thoughts and words they acquire as individuals. Instead, it is traditions, institutions, friends and colleagues, political parts and so on, who speak through dialogical participants (Marková , 2006, p. 133)².

In the dynamic socio-cultural whole of research, participants are the actors who have privileged information about the phenomenon which is the theme of the dialogue. The researchers are the actors who have the privileged strategy of psychological interpretation concerning that information (Simão, 1992). They act by 'ventriloquating' others, configuring strategically a tensional field demanding that the participant tries to reconstruct meanings related to the target phenomenon.

As Vygotsky's theoretical-methodological perspective taught us, it is expected that these transformations can be caught under the form of data interpretations, reflecting the process under study. In the present discussion, this concerns a process of negotiations among I-positions, at the sight of the organizing, (dis-)organizing and reorganizing myths, as shown by Duarte and Gonçalves.

Under this perspective, the collected data represent what could be constructed and made explicit by the participants, concerning their I-positions in dialoguing about the phenomenon theme (motherhood) under the constraints established by the research set (Valsiner, 1998). Results, in turn, represent how the researchers understood the participants' reconfiguration or reconstructions of meanings about the target issue under the dialoguing circumstances of the research. In this frame, discussion represents how the researchers could re-embed their personal comprehension about the phenomenon-

² For the role played by the third party from outside of the dialogue, see Marková, 2006, p. 132.

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theme in the collective culture of the area. It also represents a proposal to reconfigure the collective culture in the area, in order to make sense of both the new understandings and the socio-ethical issues they imply.

The results and discussion presented by Duarte and Gonçalves show us that the reconfigurations of meaning the participants could make were clearly related to transformations in their approach to the social prescriptions about motherhood. These kinds of results and discussion allow us to go beyond the strictness of a careful description tied to particular circumstances of that dialogue only. It challenges us to deepen some issues from our own insight, like for instance, the role taken by I-positions that deal with the alterity of the 'born to be' child and, later, to the alterity of the 'newborn' child. I think that this kind of possible unfolding from Duarte and Gonçalves research is due, at least in part, to the sensitivity of their options, understood as symbolic actions in researching: working to understand a very challenging and appealing event of human existence (motherhood), they have selected the "in tune" dimensions of ambivalence and strangeness in facing newness as their meta-theoretical axle.

In sum, in this commentary I have focused on some aspects of the complex whole of research-participant relationship aiming mainly to highlight the fact that, by researching, we transformatively keep a theme alive, by allowing it to take the stage of ours and others' concerns. This does not mean only to develop efficient instrumental methodologies for empirical data collection, but also to take our methodological strategies as options implying symbolic cultural actions concerning theoretical-methodological and socio-ethical selections.

From this perspective, as important as the increase in our knowledge about the target psychological process is, the researchers' contribution is to reveal the (trans)formation of the participants' personal culture (Boesch, 1991; Valsiner, 1998). Taking this view, epistemological and ethical issues are forcefully added to our reflections. The issue shifts to the "if and how" we, as researchers, are able to accomplish a research-participant relationship through which we can keep both sides of the coin: negotiations generating new reconstructive perspectives in the participants about their personal experience, which is, at the same time, privileged information in respect of the target issue of our research.

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SIMÃO

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CONSTRUCTING ORGANIZATION THROUGH MULTIPLICITY: A MICROGENETIC ANALYSIS OF SELF-ORGANIZATION IN THE DIALOGICAL SELF

Carla Cunha
University of Minho & ISMAI, Portugal

ABSTRACT. The self is in a constant process of becoming that demands the construction of “sameness” and identity throughout the irreversibility of time and changing experience (Valsiner, 2002b). Thus, self-organization is the constant and necessary task of a changing self. Occasionally, this dynamic organization may lead to recursive and inflexible patterns implicated in a perpetuating personal problem. The “Identity Positions Interview” (Gonçalves & Cunha, 2006) was designed to elicit dialogical processes while discussing a personal problem. This allows different dialogues to occur: 1) the actual dialogues from the interaction participant-researcher; 2) the imagined dialogues of the participant and others about the problem (e.g. “What would your mother say about the problem?”); 3) the imagined dialogues between Present and Future possible-selves (e.g. “What would the Future say to you?”). These different phases were inspired in therapeutic techniques that call upon the perspectives of social others or temporal movements as semiotic devices used to generate diversity and novelty in the present. Following a dialogical framework, two case-studies are presented to illustrate the emergence of novelty and difference and its regulation into recursive self-dynamics at a microgenetic-level. This idiographic study has two aims: a) to highlight the dynamism of I-positions within the Dialogical Self, and b) to depict the emergence of novelty, self-innovation and re-organization.

Keywords: dialogical self, development, microgenesis, self-regulation

Dialogical Self Theory (Hermans & Kempen, 1993; Hermans, Kempen & Van Loon, 1992) has brought the important features of self-multiplicity and dialogicality to the foreground of psychological enquiry. However, even in the midst of self-multiplicity and dialogicality, the self is constantly changing and constructing “sameness” and identity throughout the irreversibility of time and experience (Valsiner, 2002b). In this paper, we depart from of the assumption of human existence as a process of endless becoming that extends the issue of development to the entire life-span (as

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ontological development). Furthermore, portraying the self as developing in time and as an ongoing, self-organizing process (Whelton & Greenberg, 2004), we need to explain how the self achieves *order through fluctuation* (Prigogine, 1976 quoted by Caple, 1985, p. 174;) or, put simply, how the ‘self’ self-organizes (Lewis & Granic, 1999). This construction of stability within ongoing change – self-organization – allows for the construction of identity, continuity and self-recognition throughout the passing of time. Therefore, being and becoming are not opposed to one another but are two related functions (Caple, 1985). Thus, self-organization appears as a necessary task, with great adaptive value to the self, since: 1) a system that self-organizes becomes more complex and more able to coordinate interacting processes, 2) self-ordering allows for the regulation of novelty and difference as it emerges, and 3) this dynamic stability maintains a flexibility that allows for new levels of complexity to appear when threshold points are surpassed (Lewis & Granic, 1999).

This brings the question of the balance between emergence, innovation and stability to the core of theoretical and empirical enquiry in the Dialogical Self Theory (see also Hermans, 1999a, 1999b; and Lyra, 1999). The present paper will reflect and elaborate on these issues (stability, self-organization, innovation and change) and attempt to achieve a developmental account of self-organization of multivoicedness as a moment-by-moment process in the Dialogical Self with the illustration of two case-studies.

Searching For Development As It Unfolds In The Dialogical Self

According to Lerner, Jacobs and Wertlied (2003) and to Valsiner (2006), the last decades have been characterized by a renewed interest in the psychological science focused on the analysis of phenomena and interventions from an applied developmental stance. This renewed interest has marked the emergence of what these authors call a Developmental Science and this new approach to development has been influencing the work we intend to present here. This movement attempts to merge different theoretical approaches that conjugate in the same direction towards the study of human processes of development (Valsiner, 2006). The Developmental Science aims to achieve a holistic and explanatory understanding of human-developmental-phenomena-in-context, integrating different levels of contextual, ecological and individual organization, in an irreversible temporal and relational perspective (Lerner, Jacobs & Wertlied, 2003). According to this conceptual understanding, human beings are taken as dynamic organisms in their adaptation to the environment, always in the midst of self-innovation and self-regulation (Valsiner, 2000, 2002a). In this sense, developmental research on selfhood has to answer two interdependent and simultaneous questions like faces of the same coin: 1) how do we change? And 2) how do we remain the same?

These are not new questions in psychological enquiry. The dilemma of “how can I be the same as I was in my past?” has been present in numerous philosophical and

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psychological debates at least since the 17th century (Salgado & Hermans, 2005). Opposing both traditional ideas of an essentialist and Cartesian self and the post-modern relativistic stance upon selfhood, in the last years, Dialogical Self Theory (DST) has been presenting an interesting alternative for the theoretical description of the self and identity, addressing our inner-multiplicity while acknowledging its dialogical, relational and socio-cultural features. The Dialogical Self, theoretically described as a dynamic multiplicity of several I-positions in the landscape of the mind (each position uttering and voicing a particular and subjective view of self-existence and the world), creates the opportunity to account for our potentially diverse self-narratives according to a different positioning in time, space and specific audiences (Hermans, 1996, 2001). This alternative view on the self can also be framed within a dialogical epistemological stance that conceives human existence as an existence of addressing others, establishing intersubjectivity and relationships as the ground for selfhood development (cf. Fogel, Garvey, Hsu & West-Stroming, 2006; Trevarthen & Aitken, 2001). In an attempt to characterise the main assumptions of a dialogical existence, Salgado and Gonçalves (2007) assume the relational primacy for human existence referring to the inseparable communicational and existential unity between I and Other, since every process of subjectivity is always grounded in intersubjectivity. Furthermore, following Bakhtin (“to be is to communicate”, 1984, p. 287), if relationships are constituted in communication practices, then the (inter)subjective process is revealed through “dialogue – a simultaneous unity of differences in the interpenetration of utterances” (Baxter, 2004, p. 4).

Dialogical Self Theory: Where Do We (Empirically) Go From Here?

The main area of research produced within the scope of DST has been interested in portraying the several problems and objects of study as a product of a multiplicity of I-positions assumed as implicated in some conflict, negotiation, tension, and dominance relations (e.g. Hermans & Hermans-Jansen, 2004). However, the majority of studies do not usually establish a developmental description of how these processes are handled within the Dialogical Self. The field of the DST needs also to address the present challenge of explaining how agency and responsibility is achieved in the middle of “an assemblage of essentially unrelated fragments” (Richardson, Rogers & MacCarrol, 1998, p. 513), like the different I-positions that constitute our self-multiplicity. As some critical voices within the DST have alerted (Valsiner, 2004), the crucial question of this approach is not reiteration of the multivoicedness of the self, but attempting to describe how the self achieves its dynamic structure, stability and consequent individual agency within this multiplicity brought to the foreground by the ever-changing flow of lived experience. In sum, we need to describe how, even in the midst of our inner-multiplicity, do we recognise ourselves as the same as we were in the past and as individuals. Other researchers have developed interesting approaches to this question (e.g. Dimaggio, Fiore, Lysaker, Petrilli, Salvatore, Semerari & Nicolo, 2006; Lysaker &

Lysaker, 2004; Neimeyer, 2000) but are concerned mostly with the analysis of (self) narratives. However, most of these analytic methodologies do not focus on a moment-by-moment account of how voices emerge and organize. Comparing to those inspiring works, we attempt to further explore the microgenetic development of voices.

Thus, our main question is: How does the Dialogical Self deal with difference and self-innovation facing a personal problem? This focus on development as revealed in the flow of dialogue, led us to create a specific form of research methodology particularly suitable for studying processes of self-innovation and self-regulation in the organization of subjective experience as they occur moment-by-moment and in self-other dialogues.

The Identity Positions Interview: A Semiotic Tool to Facilitate Self-Innovation

The “Identity Positions Interview” (Gonçalves & Cunha, 2006) is a semi-structured interview created in order to more faithfully capture the moment-by-moment process of self-innovation and self-organization in facing a personal problem. In this procedure, investigator and participant are interlocutors in a dialogical process and become involved in a joint-activity process of co-constructing meaning (Hermans, 1999; Valsiner, 2001). Throughout the interview (see Table 1) the participant is confronted with certain semiotic devices used to facilitate change processes in meaning-making and self-innovation (as-if movements) in the usual perspective of conceiving that specific personal problem.

As we can see in Table 1, the interview begins with the choice and brief description of a participant’s personal problem which will be the topic of reflection and dialogue. Afterwards, researcher and participant collaborate together to arrive at a formulation of the problem in a brief sentence that contains the theme and the emotional dimension associated to it (adopting requesting r-p dialogues to arrive at a clarification of the self-perspective towards the problem). This sentence is then referred to as the Initial Position throughout the rest of the interview (Phase I). In this procedure, both researcher and participant are active participants in the exploration of deeper meaning-making processes about the problem being discussed (adopting eliciting and requesting dialogues). The interviewee is then confronted with a first evaluation procedure (Phase II) that consists in rating the degree of importance and discomfort raised by the personal problem at the present moment, on a scale from 0 to 10, and the degree of uncertainty that was felt in those ratings (through the enactment of requesting dialogues). The intention with the use of different evaluations throughout the procedure is not only quantitative, but also qualitative. As a quantitative assessment, the evaluations work as markers of difference in meaning-making, punctuating several moments in the procedure; and as a qualitative methodological procedure, they work as an artificial opportunity that the interviewer has to further explore possible differences in meaning-making as the procedure develops. In this sense, these ratings are viewed as semiotic

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Table 1

A general presentation of “The Identity Positions Interview”

Phases of the Interview	Types of dialogues occurring in the interview and examples of eliciting questions or requests
I) Establishing an Initial Position towards the problem	<p>Enactment of opening dialogues between the researcher and the participant about the problem (referred to as r-p dialogues): e. g. <i>“We would like for you to talk about a personal problem that concerns you in the present.”</i></p> <p>Enactment of requesting r-p dialogues: e. g. <i>“We would like you to formulate that in a specific personal sentence that has an emotional dimension and that we will refer to as your Initial Position.”</i></p>
II) First evaluation procedure	<p>Enactment of requesting r-p dialogues: e. g. <i>“Please rate the degree of importance that this situation presents to you in the present, on a scale from 0 to 10.”</i>; <i>“Please rate the degree of discomfort that this situation brings to you in the present, on a scale from 0 to 10.”</i>; <i>“Please rate the degree of uncertainty that you felt while elaborating the previous ratings, on a scale from 0 to 10.”</i></p>
III) Social Positioning Phase	<p>Enactment of r-p dialogues and imagined dialogues between self (participant) and social (absent) other (referred to as p-o dialogues): e. g. <i>“What would your mother say to you about the problem?”</i>; e. g. <i>“What would you reply to your mother, from the perspective of your initial position?”</i></p>
IV) Second evaluation procedure	<p>Enactment of requesting r-p dialogues: <i>Identical questions to the First evaluation procedure with emphasis on the evaluation of the present moment</i></p>
V) First Future Projection	<p>Enactment of imagined dialogues between self and future self (referred to as s-f dialogues): e. g. <i>“Imagine that you can dialogue with a positive future, ten years from now... What would the present ask the future?”</i>; <i>“What would the future say to the present?”</i></p>

Table 1 (continued)

VI) Formulating a Final Position towards the problem	Enactment of eliciting r-p dialogues: e. g. “After this reflection, would you change anything in your Initial Position?” Enactment of requesting r-p dialogues, in case the participant chooses to reformulate IP into a new Final Position (FP): e. g. “ <i>We would like you to formulate that as your Final Position in a specific personal sentence with an emotional dimension.</i> ”
VII) Third evaluation procedure	Enactment of requesting r-p dialogues: <i>Identical questions to the First evaluation procedure with emphasis on the evaluation of the present moment</i>
VIII) Second Future Projection	Enactment of requesting r-p dialogues: e. g. “ <i>Please imagine other alternatives in the present to this situation...</i> ” Enactment of s-f dialogues from alternative perspectives in the present: e. g. “ <i>Imagine that you are in this alternative now. What would you ask a positive future, ten years from now?</i> ”; “ <i>What would the future say to you, if you were in this alternative in the present?</i> ”
IX) Fourth evaluation procedure	Enactment of requesting r-p dialogues: <i>Identical questions to the First evaluation procedure with emphasis on the evaluation of the present moment</i>

devices that facilitate elaboration and expand meaning making processes and generalization of thought (this was inspired in the work on rating scales by Wagoner & Valsiner, 2005).

The next part of the interview is what we call the Social Positioning Phase (III): the participant is asked to imagine several dialogues with significant others about the personal problem. These dialogues with these social others are invoked in the form of as-if movements, asking the participant to imagine the reactions and questions of significant others about the problem being discussed. These (absent) social others are, thus, invoked as audiences or as imagined interlocutors in the present interaction between interviewer-participant and in the (inter)subjective communicational space. Hence, this part of the interview entails the actual r-p dialogues occurring but also elicits (preferably) imagined dialogues between self and others about the problem (although some participants adopt reflective dialogues about the interaction self-other).

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In this sense, while performing the social positioning phase of the task, we consider that the participant can assume different authoring positions in the elicited dialogues. For example, the participant can talk about the perspectives of significant social others about the personal problem (never leaving her/his position as an author of what is being said, adopting a reflective dialogue) or act as-if he was assuming the voice and the perspective of a significant other (transferring the authoring position to an Other, adopting an imagined self-other dialogue). In the first case, the participant might say: “My mother would say that I’m not worried” (note the use of self-reflective speech), talking about an Other (the mother) but never abandoning her/his place as an author of that specific utterance. In the second case, the participant might act towards the researcher as-if she/he was the mother, assuming and uttering her voice and saying “You’re not worried about this!” (note the use of direct speech).

This part of the interview, where the emergence of novelty is enacted while generating different possible perspectives to address and refer to the problem, was inspired in actual psychotherapeutic techniques that call upon the different perspectives of social others as a medium to introduce difference and therapeutic change on the dominance of a given maladaptive perspective (like the “experience of experience questions” in narrative therapy – White, 1992). A second evaluation procedure is introduced here (Phase IV).

The next phase is what we call future projection (Phase V) and (preferably) involves the enactment of imagined dialogues between an imagined future self or future moment (where the personal problem has disappeared) and the present moment (referred to as self-future dialogues). Thus, the participant is asked to imagine himself in a moment of his life when he no longer looked at the personal situation as a problem or when he had already accomplished a positive resolution for it (in this sense, through *as-if* movements an imagined self-future dialogue is elicited by the interviewer, although some participants may engage in a reflective self-future dialogue). This phase of the interview was also inspired upon some therapeutic techniques that facilitate a future projection as a motivational tool to induce therapeutic change (like the “miracle” question in Solution Focused Therapy – de Shazer, 1991). After the future projection, the participant is asked to think if s/he would like to change her/his initial formulation of the problem at this point of the interview (Phase VI). A third evaluation procedure then follows (Phase VII).

Afterwards, the participant is confronted with a Second Future Projection (Phase VIII) that this time involves imagined dialogues between a positive future and alternative formulations of the problem in the present – these are more opportunities to introduce self-innovation and change in the meaning construction concerning the personal problem (also with the engagement in imagined self-future dialogues or reflective self-future dialogues). A fourth and final evaluation (Phase IX) ends the

procedure, addressing the ratings in the present moment. As a closing synthesis, the interviewer always elicits a final reflection of the research experience.

Specifying a microgenetic methodology of analysis

We wanted to maintain this study within the scope of a developmental focus on self-innovation and self-organization processes. Thus, this clearly placed our research at the level of *microgenesis* (Diriwächter & Valsiner, 2006, also known as *Aktualgenese*) since our intention was observing how the participants dealt with the moment-by-moment dialogical engagement with the interviewer, creating meaning and semiotic organization throughout the different moments of the interview. This meant the following research goals:

- 1) To describe the pattern of self-organization implicated in the personal problem stated;
- 2) To depict emergence of novelty and self-innovation that might appear throughout the procedure; and,
- 3) To characterize how the Dialogical Self regulates and re-organizes its difference and innovation.

Hence, we developed a specific methodology of analysis as link between our theoretical lenses and research goals. The temporal sequencing of observations needs to take into account the intra-psychological processes of self-organization that occur in a dialogical encounter with an Other and this placed us within the scope of microgenetic methods (Lawrence & Valsiner, 2003). Microgenetic methods allow us to systematically observe the phenomena in detail throughout its developmental movement over time, with the goal of inferring the processes that underlie quantitative and qualitative aspects of development and change (Siegler & Crowley, 1991).

First stage of the analytic process: Identifying the utterance as unit for (further) analysis

The first stage of the microgenetic methodology we developed, involves the systematic observation of the video-taped interviews and its transcription, later divided into units of analysis. We selected the utterance as our unit of analysis because we view it as theoretically consistent with the Bakhtinian notion of *positioning* and the traditional notion of I-position in the DST. An I-position, at a microgenetic level, is conceptualized in this investigation as an “event of the self” (Holquist, 1990) linked to a “present-moment of lived experience” (Stern, 2004). It refers to a specific ego-centeredness of experience in the Here-and-Now-I-System (Valsiner, 2000) and to a particular temporal and spatial framing of subjective experience from which something is communicated and uttered to an Other. Given this unrepeatable positioning of the self in the flow of experience, selfhood processes can be conceived as a product of a

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polyphony of voices of different I-positions contrasting with one another and regulating one another in time.

According to the purposes of this research, and for the microgenetic analysis we have only selected some of the participant's utterances that were considered pertinent to achieve our research goals, namely:

1. Utterances related to the personal problem being discussed throughout the interview;
2. Utterances related to a self-referencing about the problem;
3. Utterances related to an other-referencing about the problem;
4. Utterances made understandable to the researcher given what was said before, after, or during the interview (This can happen when the researcher questions something trying to seek clarification of the perceived perspective and the participant agrees – e.g. Researcher: “*So, it would be something like: Professionally, I’m turning from an adolescent into an adult?*” Participant Antonio, case-study 1: “*Yes*” – utterance 7)
5. Other utterances, related to mere clarifications regarding questions of the interview or unrelated to the former criteria, were excluded from the following stages of the analysis.

Second stage of the analytic process: Microgenetic analysis of identified utterances

Afterwards, each utterance was analysed according to five dialogical parameters, inspired in previous works of dialogical thinkers such as Linell (in preparation) and Wortham (2001) to characterize that specific communicational act lived in that particular interaction, namely: 1) the communicational agent (*Who* is uttering); 2) the addressee that is being spoken to (*Whom* is being addressed in that communicational event; such as, present, absent or imaginary interlocutors or audiences); 3) the specific images of the self that are being communicated as the content of speech (*What* is said); 4) the form of communication, referring to the manner used to present specific images of the self towards the Other (*How* it is being said); and 5) the intentionality of the participant's communication (*Why* it is said), considered in terms of bringing to the foreground an image of identification or of contrast with the participant's presentation towards the interviewer. In the intentionality of communication we try to reflect upon the use of the content of speech: something can be uttered to clarify identification or a contrast to the personal position (as so happens through the use of irony). Throughout the development of this methodology, we specified a more explicit categorization of these dialogical parameters, arriving at the analytic categories presented in Table 2.

Table 2. A schematic presentation of the analytic categories for the microgenetic analysis

Parameters	Analytic categories
Who?	I as I I as an Other (specifying this Other)
Whom?	Myself The interviewer Other audiences/interlocutors evoked
What?	Communicated images of the self (through emotional content, self-descriptions)
How?	Self-description act Other-description act Future projection act
Why?	Identification process Unidentification process

Thus, the microgenetic analysis of each utterance corresponds to classifying each selected unit according to the following questions: Who? Whom? What? How? Why? Following a bakhtinian approach to communication, these parameters are considered relevant, since they enable us to specify discourse as an intentional and situated dialogical activity between interlocutors and audiences, relating through signs and socio-cultural practices.

Third stage of the analytic process: Identification of self-states and focus on repetition

This microgenetic analysis under these dialogical parameters allows detecting repeated positionings of the self towards others (the interviewer and the absent or imaginary interlocutors or audiences evoked during the interview), in an other-referencing and a self-referencing dialogical movement. We assume these positionings as self-states that are presented towards the actual interlocutor in that specific moment of experience and communicational event, in the course of dialogue and interaction (this is inspired both in the notion of presentation in the “*storytelling-event*” by Stanton Wortham, 2001, and in the notion of “*self states*”, as clinically significant self-

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organizing patterns, by Mikael Leiman, 2004). These self-states emerge from the microgenetic analysis into a *mesogenetic* (higher order) level of analysis and tend to organize the multiplicity of experiencing I-positions, operating under the influence of hierarchical signs that function as semiotic organizers of experience (Valsiner, 2001, 2002a, 2002b) – creating repetition and recurrence in the self, something that can be paralleled to the concept of *attractor* (in Dynamic Systems Theory; Fogel, Garvey, Hsu & West-Stroming, 2006). According to our conceptualization, the repetition of similar self-states constitutes the pattern of self-organization involved in that specific personal problem¹. This pattern usually starts appearing in the initial definition of the problem being discussed since this evokes the most familiar self-states associated with the problematic experiences and keeps being presented by the participant throughout the interview.

Fourth stage of the analytic process: Focus on process, difference and novelty

A new dialogical encounter with an Other and the confrontation with the several tasks of the interview may facilitate self-innovation in the usual perspectives taken towards the problem. We consider this stage of the analysis important to us since it focuses on difference and novelty, the active ingredients of change, the way we see it (see also Fogel et. al., 2006). If these novel I-positions become more differentiated and more elaborated, in time, they might lead to new semiotic processes and new patterns of self-organization. We would not expect this kind of differentiation in the course of a one time interview like this; however, these change processes can be much more common in successful psychotherapy cases.

Thus, in the final stage of the analysis we depart from the repetitive self-states towards the problem and start focusing on difference and novelty appearing throughout the interview, attempting to arrive at a developmental description of how these new positionings are handled within the Dialogical Self. This implies the systematic procedure of 1) detecting different self-states; 2) categorizing the dynamic processes involved in the emergence and regulation of difference and novelty; and, 3) modelling different developmental pathways to each of the participants. Then, we try to depict if difference triggers either occasional re-formulations of established patterns (as an accommodation of novelty through re-organization of the self) or forms of self-regulation in the Dialogical Self (resulting in the construction of “sameness” and stability through time).

We rely on the theoretical description of several forms of dialogical relations within the self, as described by Valsiner (2002a), to categorize how the Dialogical Self

¹ The criterion of repetition of elements for the inference of relatively stable patterns has been widely used in studies under the self-organization paradigm (e.g. Barton, 1994).

may actively obstruct its transformation and change in a moment-by-moment basis (impeding the synthesis and differentiation of novel I-positions), either by increasing multivoicedness or decreasing it through monologization of voices.

Two Illustrative Trajectories of Self-Innovation and Self-Regulation in The Dialogical Self

Case Study 1 - Antonio: “I am at the place where everybody arrives someday”

The participant² Antonio (a fictional name) is a 24 year old male student, currently graduating from university with a degree in Sports and Physical Education. His interview lasted forty minutes. He chooses to talk about the transition to his professional life, stating that “*The beginning of my professional life is something that makes me feel anxious*” (Initial Position – utterance 8). We have to clarify that, in the Portuguese language, the word anxious can refer to different or even opposing ideas: it can be associated with the negative experience of anxiety (as worry and apprehension) and/or refer to the positive experience of yearning and desiring something yet to come. In the beginning of the interview, this anxiety is simultaneously associated to ambiguous meanings, like the sadness of leaving behind an enjoyed, comfortable and successful academic life (“*But it is making me feel a bit sad because I’m leaving a kind of life that always felt good*” – utterance 12), the enthusiasm of embracing the anticipated and imagined professional challenges to come and some apprehension towards what the unknown future might bring. Antonio addresses this ambiguity in his dialogue: “*I feel...// It is that mix between being anxious and missing something...// But the anxiety (as yearning) is bigger...*” (utterances 20 – 22). In this initial part of the interview, Antonio and interviewer agree with the choice of this personal problem as the focus of discussion.

While performing the first rating procedure, Antonio presents himself as very focused on this transition; almost attributing most of his attention to it (he rates this situation in terms of importance with a 9, on a scale from 0 to 10). He also presents himself as very comfortable while anticipating these changes in his life, rating minimal degree of discomfort (a 2 from a maximum of 10) caused by this problem. He also presents himself as very certain in his position (rating the degree of uncertainty with 1), only reserving some uncertainties to what the future might bring.

² All the participants volunteered freely to this research project announced in the university campus. None of them was receiving any kind of professional mental health support or medication nor considered it as necessary.

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Antonio's Social Positioning Phase of the Interview: Looking at myself through the eyes of the Other

When asked to imagine the perspectives of social others about the Initial Position, the participant chooses to engage in dialogue between him and his father, and several of his friends: B. (an older friend), L. (a male friend from his high-school years) and V. (a female friend from his high-school years).

While imagining the reaction and the dialogue with his father, Antonio presents himself as satisfied for arriving at this stage in his life and as a source of satisfaction for this member of the family (which he considers an important role model). He stresses that this achievement would be the cause of great approval from his father, stating the relationship between these imagined voices in dialogue (his father and him assuming the point of view of his Initial Position) as a supportive relationship.

While imagining the reaction and dialogue with his friend B., Antonio presents himself also as a source of enjoyment for B., and imagines that this friend would encourage him if they engaged in dialogue about this subject. He also presents himself as privileged towards this friend, since he anticipates a more successful transition and career in the professional world than B. had – a professional that did not have the opportunity to graduate from college.

He also presents a very positive imagined perspective about the reaction and dialogue with his friend L., a former colleague from high-school that graduated the year before and is already working. He refers that L. also went through the same transition a few months ago, and would understand what he is feeling in the present. He assumes the voice of this friend, saying “*Welcome! // I've recently arrived but I'm just getting used to this new world. // You'll see that this is a different thing, a different thing from what I recently had.*” (utterances 148 – 150) We can see that Antonio indirectly and very briefly mentions, in the imagined dialogue with this friend, that this transition to the professional world also carries some negative things, like the loss of the former academic life that is going to end. However, he does not further elaborate this loss, immediately moving his dialogue to a more positive view about this change, stating that his friend would have a supportive reaction towards him and would be very pleased by the fact that they will both be professionals and will carry their friendship into this new stage of life.

Referring to his female friend V., Antonio states that he imagines that her reaction, although from a feminine perspective, would be very similar to the reaction of his friend L. He imagines that V., also presently graduating, would be proud of him and that she would support him in this transition. He assumes the voice of V., stating “*We will both get through this, because I'm also going through this now, and we'll see...*” (utterance 200). The imagined voice of V. also indirectly addresses some possible problems in the future. However, following this, when Antonio was asked how he

would reply to this reaction of V., he does not acknowledge any anticipated problems or negative experiences, referring that *“It is obviously also gratifying for me to see my friends arriving at this place”* (utterance 205). We will discuss this systematic avoidance on elaborating the negative aspects of this transition further ahead.

In the second evaluation procedure, Antonio presently assumes this situation as the most important thing in his life (rating with 10 the degree of importance), still presenting himself as very focused on this transition. While referring to the degree of discomfort associated to this situation, Antonio presents himself as very comfortable with this (attributing a degree of 1, on a scale from 0 to 10) and very confident in his position (attributing a 0 as an inexistent degree of uncertainty).

Antonio’s Future Projections in the Interview

When asked to imagine himself travelling ahead to a point in the future where he successfully solved all of his concerns related to his transition into the professional world and adulthood, Antonio leads us to a 10 year future projection, where he pictures himself as married and a father. He reflects that the questions he wants to have answered by his Future-Self are, after all, if his present enthusiasm has lead him to find professional and emotional stability or, in a word, happiness. Being positive about his Future-Self, Antonio imagines a confirmation of his positive expectations. In sum, the good times he will go through, along with some less fortunate periods which would only lead to better appreciating his positive evolution, would make him feel very proud of his achievement throughout these ten years. In this sense, Antonio presents himself as an optimist towards the future, as a happy and satisfied professional achiever, thus confirming his previous expectations throughout the interview.

By this time, Antonio was asked to think if he wanted to change anything in his Initial Position about the problem, and he declines this suggestion made by the interviewer, stating that he maintains the same concerns about his professional future, with the same emotional dimension associated to it, presenting himself as anxious towards this transition to professional adulthood (in this stage of the interview, the meaning of anxious becomes more restrict, referring to yearning this transition).

From the third evaluation procedure until the end of the interview, we witness a stabilization of the ratings and an end to the deepening of the meaning-making activity brought by the ratings. Thus, in the third evaluation procedure Antonio presents himself again as very focused on this situation, attributing the maximum degree of importance to it (a 10) with inexistent feelings of discomfort (a 0) or uncertainty (also a 0).

When asked to think about alternative perspectives towards the problem of his transition to adulthood, Antonio presents two contrasting and opposing options of the present. The first alternative he presents is referred to as “an accommodation” to student life. This image relates to being one of those students that postpone the responsibility of

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finishing their studies on time, due to over-enjoying their academic lives and all the parties and freedom associated to this period. He describes this alternative with a strong negative view stating that, if he was in this position in the present, he would not be confronting his responsibilities and would be living a way of life that was not adequate to his age and enjoying it through means that were not earned through his honest work and autonomy. The second alternative view of the present that he presents, also with a negative connotation, is what Antonio refers to as “a precarious entrance into the professional world” without the academic qualifications and specific preparation that he now has and that he considers a needed requirement for a successful career in his occupational field.

When asked to imagine a dialogue between these alternatives in the present and a positive and successful point in his future, ten years from now, Antonio questions if in the meantime he would have realized that he needed to graduate to develop a successful career. He states that, since what is intended in the interview is to imagine a positive future, he imagines that, in ten years time, he would have corrected these vocational “mistakes” and found his right path through graduation. Nevertheless, he spontaneously engages in what he considers a more “realistic” future projection, describing a negative evolution in ten years from now if he would occupy any of those rejected alternatives. In this sense, by spontaneously contrasting his present to these undesired alternatives and their different evolutions, he finishes the interview maintaining his presentation of someone who is certain and positive about his future professional success and who is satisfied and proud of the present transition taking place in his life.

In the last evaluation procedure until the end of the interview Antonio, as in the third rating, presents himself as very focused on this situation, attributing the maximum degree of importance to it (a 10) with inexistent feelings of discomfort (a 0) or uncertainty (also a 0).

A microgenetic look at some key moments of self-organization in Antonio's case

Antonio generally utters from a self-reflective experiential position as a communicational agent, talking about his present life and the transitions and transformations that are occurring in it and his reactions to it. He rarely talks as if he was an Other (as a significant or as a future other), seldom using direct speech even when the interview explicitly invites the participant to do so. In this sense, while not speaking as if he was an Other, he does not give an independent voice to these evoked interlocutors, and he does not abandon an omniscient self-reflective position.

In the beginning of the interview we see him uttering some ambiguity about these transitions in this life, since they leave him facing different emotions: sad for abandoning the former enjoyed lifestyle, satisfied and proud for achieving a major goal in his life (his graduation), anxious (both as apprehensive and as yearning) to his professional future, and somewhat uncertain about his future opportunities. In spite of

our expectations that the developments of the interview would lead to the introduction and the emergence of different perspectives towards the problem and the facilitation of self-innovation, the opposite pattern occurs. The social positioning part introduces others as reinforcing specific perspectives towards the problem, always positive: *I as anxious, as yearning my professional future* and *I as proud and confident about this transition...* The Future Projection Phase again introduces a very positive perspective of his view of the present and the alternative possibilities that are imagined, they do not lead to more novelty but to the reinforcement of his optimism about the present. In this sense, these Others (psychologically present as audiences or interlocutors) that are invoked do not validate certain perspectives that he expressed in the beginning about the problem. The focus on the problem becomes less frequent and less elaborated throughout the entire interview. Instead of introducing self-innovation, these Others are used as tools to reinforce a specific positive point of view, since they usually express agreement with the dominant perspective about the problem and seldom lead to the emergence of difference.

We thus witness a monologization of voices throughout the interview. This might resemble what Bakhtin referred to as the action of a monological narrator as opposed to a narrator that allows others to speak through him manifesting divergent voices (as in the polyphonic novel). This case-study presents an illustration of how the Dialogical Self can sometimes be so “monological” and distant from the polyphonic metaphor in the expression of self-narratives.

We are even faced with the question of who is really speaking throughout the interview. As this description of the interview tries to picture, after an initial and somewhat ambiguous phase, Antonio consistently presents himself (or others toward him) as very proud and pleased with this changing point in his life, satisfied with his academic achievements and very confident and sure about his professional adaptation and development. We hypothesize that this perspective is strongly related to a socially expected discourse that constrains Antonio’s presentations towards a psychologist as the interlocutor in this interaction (possibly perceived as an evaluator of his psychological adaptation). This discourse of glorifying adulthood, autonomy and individual agency leads to a general depreciation of negative feelings and an unacknowledged degree of loss about the past and uncertainty about the unknown future possibly also involved in this transition to a new stage of life. In this sense, we sometimes have the impression that the agent is uttering a social dominant positive discourse (as an *authoritative discourse*; Bakhtin, 1981, p. 342) that may not acknowledge or express the rich and ambiguous subjective felt experience.

Nevertheless, we find some interesting moments of emergence of difference in Antonio’s positive discourse and general trajectory throughout the interview, that we would like to discuss further. Our interest in them is related to the fact that these moments of emergence put into evidence some interesting specific forms of self-

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regulation of difference and multiplicity into sameness and stability of the presentation of the self. As we will try to clarify, these are usually associated to Antonio's brief, implicit or indirect verbalization of some opposing or divergent voices about his transition to the professional world that do not fit well with his more dominant positive view and socially expected discourse about these changes in his life.

As we noticed earlier, in the beginning of the interview while clarifying the personal problem that he wanted to discuss in this interaction, Antonio acknowledged that he would miss his academic life that is now ending and this sometimes created sadness. However, he minimized the importance of these negative feelings, since his desire to proceed was much more intense. While stating this, Antonio presents two different intersubjective positionings that seldom appear after: *I as sad for abandoning my academic life* versus *I as missing my academic life*. These self-states are immediately silenced in the dialogue, since he stops elaborating on them and finishes the clarification of these perspectives on the personal problem abruptly, stating: "*And that is it!*" (utterance 13). Afterwards, the interviewer tries to elicit further meaning construction around this problem, trying to access the emotional dimension evoked by the situation. Antonio then replies: "*I feel...// It is that mix between being anxious and missing something...// But the anxiety (as yearning) is bigger...*" (Utterances 20 – 22). As we can see, he presents himself as *I as missing my academic life* versus *I as anxious (as yearning) about my professional life*, with the latest self-state (a more positive voice) dominating and constraining the expression of the former (a more negative voice). According to the several forms of self-regulation of dialogicality within the self presented by Valsiner (2002a), this illustrates a relationship of *monologization* between voices, as a form of expropriating a voice from expressing and communicating difference within the self (this monologization has also been referred by Gonçalves, Matos & Santos, in press, as a kind of *hidden dialogism* within the self).

Another interesting example of monologization and silencing of another voice occurs several times during the interview. In the first evaluation, while reflecting about the degree of uncertainty about the previous evaluations of importance and discomfort associated to the problem of transition to an adult professional life, Antonio selects the meaning of *uncertainty* and applies it to his future professional life, stating that "*The degree of uncertainty is also one (meaning almost inexistent), because I only have some uncertainties related to what the future might bring, nothing else. // Anyway, the will to go forward is much bigger than the uncertainties...*" (utterances 57 and 58). Again, we see the emergence of two opposing presentations towards the interlocutor or self-states about the problem: *I as uncertain about my professional future* (a more negative voice) versus *I as confident about my professional life* (a more positive voice), with the later dominating the former. Antonio's presentation of *I as uncertain about my professional future* appears again during the second evaluation while rating the degree of discomfort that is associated to the situation of transition to a professional life. He states that "*This*

doesn't bring me any kind of discomfort, it is just the uncertainty of having all this willingness to enter the professional world and the possibility of not having opportunities... // Although I know I have some, so the degree of discomfort is minimal. // It is 0 or 1." (utterances 222 – 224). Again, Antonio briefly acknowledges the possibility of negative experiences in the future, but immediately shifts to another positive voice, explicitly minimizing the expression of the negative voice about his future.

As we can see, this personal problem implies a hidden dialogism between several different voices within the self, that create a self-organizing pattern through the process of monologization as the dominating positive voice regulates the expression of the other negative ones, expropriating them through silence in the Dialogical Self (see the illustration in Figure 1).

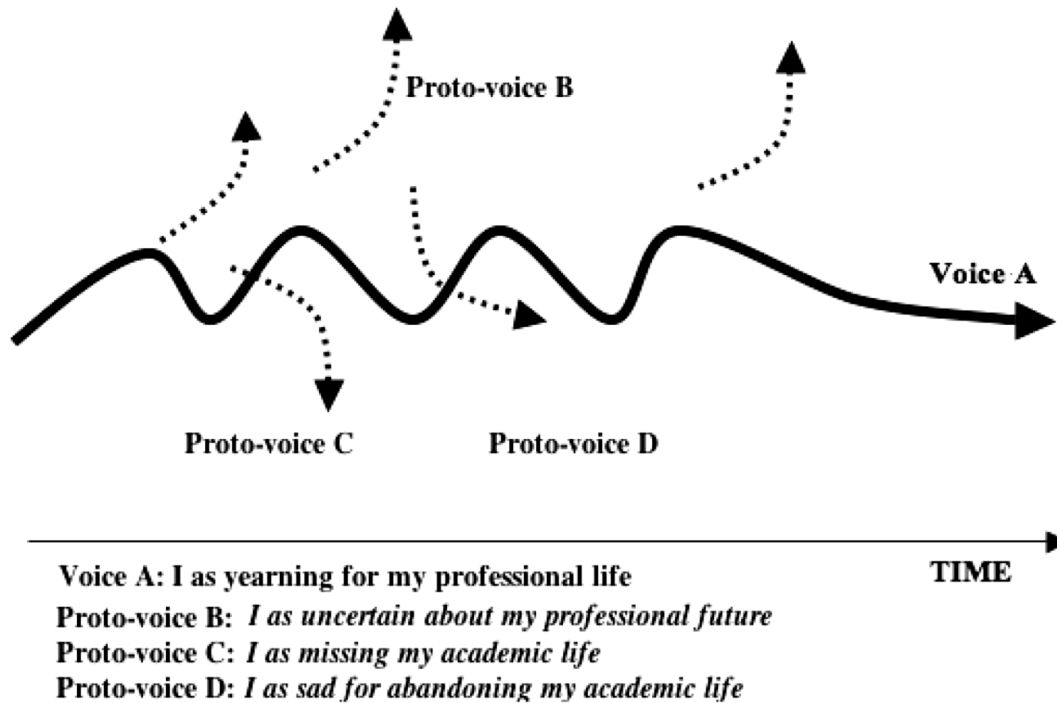


Figure 1. A tentative illustration of the general trajectory of Antonio's interview, representing the pattern of the multiplicity of voices (as self-presentations towards the interlocutor) about the personal problem occurring across time.

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In Figure 1, the bold line attempts to represent the dominating voice (Voice A: I as yearning my professional life) that becomes more elaborate and recurrent throughout the interview, as a repeated presentation of the self through time. This voice appears associated to a recurring pattern of self-presentation, pre-organizing and constraining the expression of other voices (proto-voices). The relation of dominance of this voice towards other proto-voices leads to the construction of “sameness” across time. Other voices (proto-voices B, C and D) expressing multiplicity and divergent perspectives about the personal problem and related to different self-presentations towards the interlocutor (represented in a discontinuous line and with a blocked arrow), do not become so frequent or elaborate and are silenced throughout the interview whenever they start to appear. We label them as proto-voices, precisely by the lack of differentiation and expression. In this sense, in the midst of microgenetic multiplicity across time, the Dialogical Self creates its stability and unity.

Case Study 2 - Maria: “Nobody accepts the imminence of dying”

The participant Maria (a fictional name) is a 24 year old woman, with a degree in Psychology, who chooses to talk about how the illness of her father is presently affecting her life, stating that “*I feel powerless and alarmed about my father’s health condition*” (Initial Position – utterance 16). Her interview lasted one hour and twenty minutes. Her father had a series of previous sudden strokes that affected his general motor ability and autonomy without impairing his cognitive skills. Even though his health has been stable in the last two years (after the latest episode), Maria describes this situation as a daily concern, something she cannot escape in her present life.

In the first evaluation procedure, she rates this situation as the most important thing in her life (attributing a 10 to it) since she is constantly focused on a new possible stroke and trying to induce behavioural changes in her father to prevent it. She addresses her reaction referring that “*It is a constant need to control his life so that I can control my life*” (utterance 25). She attributes a high level of discomfort associated to this situation (rating it with an 8), although admitting a reduction of distress as time distances the latest crisis. She indicates a minimal degree of uncertainty towards her evaluations of discomfort and importance (although attributing a rate of 3 or 4 on a scale from 0 and 10).

Maria’s Social Positioning Phase of the Interview: Looking at myself through the eyes of the Other

When asked to imagine the perspectives of social others about the Initial Position, Maria chooses to engage in dialogue with five people: her father, her mother, the “red-haired girl from the house on the Prairie” (referring to the character Laura Ingalls from the TV series “The Little House on the Prairie” – a strongly admired character in her childhood), her first boyfriend (from her adolescent years) and her first love (of her childhood).

While imagining the reaction of her father to her powerlessness and alarm about his health condition (her Initial Position), she assumes his voice (using direct speech) trying to calm her down and stating that there is no reason for worries or distress. In this sense, she presents herself as being excessively worried from the point of view of her father. However, in her reply to her father, perceiving that her reaction is not being taken seriously by him, Maria presents herself as even more alarmed and powerless. She reflects further on this imagined interaction saying that, after all, she cannot command his life by trying to decrease the activities of a dynamic person like him.

While imagining the reaction of the “red-haired girl from the house on the prairie”, Maria says that this character would not feel so powerless like she feels in this situation, because due to the fact that she lives in a world of fantasy, she would find a way to solve the problem. This way, Maria presents herself as dominated by powerlessness in this situation, contrasting with a “red-haired girl” determined to find some kind of resolution. In her reaction to this, Maria states that “*It is a situation... with no possible solution, in spite of our determination and tranquillity.!*” (utterance 74).

When imagining the reaction of her first boyfriend, Maria presents herself as being supported by him while he recognizes legitimate reasons for her powerlessness and alarm towards her father’s health condition. However, the perception of complete attunement and understanding arrives solely from her mother’s imagined reaction, as Maria explains that only both of them as being involved and implicated in the problem, can share the same feelings. She further elaborates, saying that this support is related not only to the confrontation with the illness of their loved one but also in the anticipation of future change in their lives, in the imminence of his death or severe impairment. Referring to this, Maria presents herself as someone who is forced against her will in her confrontation with change and refuses to adjust or prepare for the possibility of this negative event in her future.

In the last imagined dialogue with her first love as a child, Maria assumes his voice (using direct speech) that says to her “*Calm down, because it is a stupid thing trying to predict something that might not happen in the near future... (...) And you cannot lead your life so guided with that imminence, thinking it’s today, tomorrow or the day after...*” (utterances 108 and 110). And thus, in this moment of the interview, she draws a distinction from the kind of support she perceives from her mother and from her friends. In her response to this reaction, she expresses understanding of their good intentions but also a clear divergence with these interlocutors, stating that “*Everything they say, I already now... // But I can’t do it, neither they...*” (utterances 114-115) // Following this, and explicitly addressing these others, she says “*Everything you say... is impossible to achieve because nobody accepts the imminence of dying or illness*”. (utterance 118)

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In the second evaluation procedure, Maria maintains this situation as the most important thing in her present life (rating it with a 10); on the other hand, she attributes little difference in terms of the degree of discomfort (rating it with a 7 instead of an 8). When the interviewer tried to elicit further meaning-making about this, the participant justified this difference with a certain relief she was feeling as she kept on talking about the situation. In terms of the degree of uncertainty, Maria presents herself as increasingly more sure about her position (attributing a 1 to the degree of uncertainty).

Maria's Future Projections in the Interview

When asked to imagine that she could travel ahead to a point in the future where the Initial Position evolved in a positive way, Maria leads us to two future moments projected ten years into the future. In the first projection, that Maria refers to as “the more positive future”, she imagines herself as a mother, with a son who has a grandfather, and as a fulfilled professional woman. The second future projection, referred by Maria as “the less positive future”, is imagined as a moment when she is a mother that had dealt positively with her father’s death. Following this, interviewer and participant agreed on doing the future projection task twice, each one with different temporal “destinations”.

Maria starts addressing “the more positive future”, asking if she would be less powerless and alarmed by her father’s health condition; in turn, this future replies that she would have lost her powerlessness, as a consequence of no longer needing to control her father’s life. Afterwards, addressing “the less positive future”, she says she would like to know what would be her reaction following her father’s death or the kind of person that she would become after facing that experience. She does not actually reply to this from the future; however, she admits, from the future, that these feelings of powerlessness and alarm are useless since they cannot change the future or prevent the loss of her father. Although she hopes that this future, including this sad experience, would have helped her develop a more peaceful way of accepting the helplessness that comes with our human lives. She concludes her reflection stating: “*So, there's nothing we can do, and there is no need for constantly trying to control...* (utterance 165)”

By this time, Maria was asked to think if she wanted to change anything in her Initial Position about the problem (in a request for a formulation of her Final Position). The participant starts elaborating her new perspective, explaining that she has been trying to be less controlling and has been somewhat successful in her attempt to diminish her alarm and powerlessness arisen by her father’s health condition in her present life. She additionally clarifies this, presenting herself as someone who tries to be less controlling and less afraid of the future, saying that, as time goes by, “*... there has been a growing conscience that control does not lead to anything, and that powerlessness is part of our human condition. //* (utterance 175)”. As a corollary of this reflection, Maria reformulates her perspective towards the problem, saying that “*I feel*

more relaxed, or at least I try... // and I've been more relaxed and less obsessive about the future. //" (Final Position – utterances 179-180)

In the third evaluation procedure, Maria again assumes this situation as the most important thing in her life (rating it with a 10) and with a high degree of discomfort caused by it (a 9 in a scale from 0 to 10). Explaining the meaning of this rating, she states "*The discomfort caused by this... maybe a 9 since on one hand I am aware that I need to be less obsessive and more relaxed... // But, on the other hand, there is the feeling that it is impossible to achieve.//*" (utterances 187-188). The degree of uncertainty in this evaluation procedure kept being minimal (rated with a 0).

When asked to think about alternative perspectives towards the problem, Maria presents several alternative reactions that she could have in the present towards her father's health condition. The following alternatives are announced: "*being more relaxed, and less worried about the situation.//*" (Alternative Position 1 – utterance 193); "*I'm not afraid of change.//*" (Alternative Position 2 – utterance 196); and, "*I've become a less obsessive person or excessively worried about everything...//*" (Alternative Position 3 – utterance 199).

When asked to imagine a dialogue between these alternatives in the present and a positive moment in the future (the second future projection task of the interview), Maria asks the future if she has actually lost her fear of change (consequent to her father's death). Addressing herself in the present from her Future-Self, Maria starts linking the alternatives and explains a developmental path in these ten years: in order to become less afraid of change (Alternative Position 2), she would have become less obsessive and worried about everything (Alternative Position 3) and then more relaxed about her father's health condition (Alternative Position 1), arriving finally at a stage where she is not afraid of change or, in other words, she would have been adjusted to it. However, she continues her dialogue with the future and departing from the less obsessive and worried attitude in the present (Alternative Position 3), she asks the future whether this will be possible. The imagined response from her Future-Self leads her again to a more conservative position, as she says: "*I think the Future is going to say no, that's it... // (...) I think the future will say that life, with all that it brings, will make me a more relaxed and unworried person.//* (utterances 208 and 210)". Thus, she is implying that only the confrontation with her father's death will conclude the process that will lead her to a more stable change.

In the final evaluation procedure, the participant maintains again that this problem is the most important thing in her life (rating: 10), but associates it with a more reduced level of discomfort (a 6 in a maximum of 10) and a minimal degree of uncertainty in her position (a 0). When asked to elaborate about the interview experience, Maria adds that talking about this situation in her present life helps her

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dealing with it in a more positive way, especially after anticipating positive future projections.

A microgenetic look at some key moments of self-organization in Maria's case

Maria starts the interview expressing that her position towards the problem, her father's health condition, elicits strong feelings of powerlessness and alarm in her daily life. The future possibility of another stroke episode or her father's death leaves Maria confronted with a negative experience that she does not want to accept and that she tries to prevent by controlling her father's behavioural changes. In this sense, the problem appears as a dynamic relationship between two self-states: *I as trying to control my father's illness* versus *I as powerless and alarmed by the situation*. The relationship between these two self-states is maintained through a mutual in-feeding balance between voices (Valsiner, 2002a) that creates a dynamics of monologization within the Dialogical Self, since these are the only expressed and accepted voices (and actions) towards the problem and create a dominating coalition of power (Hermans & Hermans-Jansen, 2004) in the relation with the other voices, that are rejected and silenced.

Looking at the Social Positioning Phase, we may say that, the initial formulation of the problem is maintained through the suppression and rejection of divergent alternatives that become illustrated during that moment of the interview, as we witness the expression of contrasting perspectives expressed by the social others. In this sense, we witness a kind of clarification of the hidden dialogism involved in the Initial Position and also an exploration of its negative field (or a counter-position in the A versus Non-A relation; Josephs, Valsiner, & Surgan, 1999), since the majority of these social others are expressed as independent authorial voices (using direct speech) uttering and elaborating this divergence and difference. Moreover, they are addressed as psychologically present interlocutors in the dialogue (since the participant uses direct speech in her replies) even if with an explicit rejection of their points of view: "*Everything you say... is impossible to achieve because nobody accepts the imminence of dying or illness.* (utterance 118)".

Thus, we consider that in these dialogues there are signs of dominance of the initial perspective upon those opposite voices expressed by others specifically appealing to a non-controlling attitude towards the future. Even though these voices are rejected by Maria, while assuming these voices speaking through her mouth, she is facilitating the emergence of novelty while, at the same time, exploring a different understanding of how her powerlessness is being fed by her controlling attitude. More specifically, she expresses the recognition of the mutual in-feeding between *I as trying to control my father's illness* and *I as powerless and alarmed towards the situation*.

In the future projection tasks, we witness a temporary process of dominance reversal (Hermans & Kempen, 1993) since Maria assumes that a positive future is associated with a less controlling attitude and that an adjustment to change implies an

acceptance of the inevitability of loss. Therefore, she is addressing herself from the opposite perspective, positioned in the counter-position: if the initial position is A, this counter-position is Non-A. She decides to reformulate her perspective (in a Final Position) integrating some elements of this counter-position. Namely, by saying that “*I feel more relaxed, or at least I try... // And I’ve been more relaxed and less obsessive about the future. //*” (Final Position – utterances 179-180), Maria integrates this less controlling attitude into her new perspective towards the problem, confronting her fear of the future and her powerlessness in her Final Position. Moreover, she seems to dwell through different alternative positions in a somewhat fragmented way for a small period of the Second Future Projection task until she stabilizes again in a return to the Final Position. However, this does not mean that change has occurred, at least in the sense of a stable and lasting dominance reversal of her beginning perspective. Maria herself addresses this issue, positioning herself as someone who will change her attitude towards the inevitable powerlessness of human life only after confronting her father’s death in the future – something that she is not ready to assume yet. Thus, she retracts herself in her changing perspective, returning to a more conservative (and somewhat familiar) stance.

We present a tentative illustration of Maria’s trajectory in the interview in Figure 2 (see next page).

In Figure 2, with the continuous black and grey lines (voice A and B), we intend to represent the dominating perspective towards the problem presented by Maria in the beginning of the interview. These mutually in-feeding voices expressing an initial balance between *I as trying to control my father’s health* versus *I as powerless and alarmed by the situation*, reject other perspectives that start arising through social others (note the dotted line expressing proto-voice C that is not further elaborated or the emergence of proto-voice D). However, with the future projection tasks and the development of the interview, some voices become more elaborate and integrated into an emergent new final position towards the problem, creating a new (yet unstable) synthesis that breaks with the initial dominating voices (represented as the transformation of proto-voice D into a more highly structured voice E). In this sense, in Maria’s case, we notice some re-organization of the Dialogical Self.

Some contrasting remarks

In Antonio’s case, we view the effort of one I-position to achieve the monologization of contrasting voices. As a consequence of this effort, stability within the Dialogical Self is attained and is reinforced throughout the interview. On the other hand, in Maria’s case, we witness an unstable balance between two contrasting I-positions that create unity through a coalition of power (Hermans & Hermans-Jansen, 2004), rejecting other voices. At some moments of the interview, Maria seems to dwell

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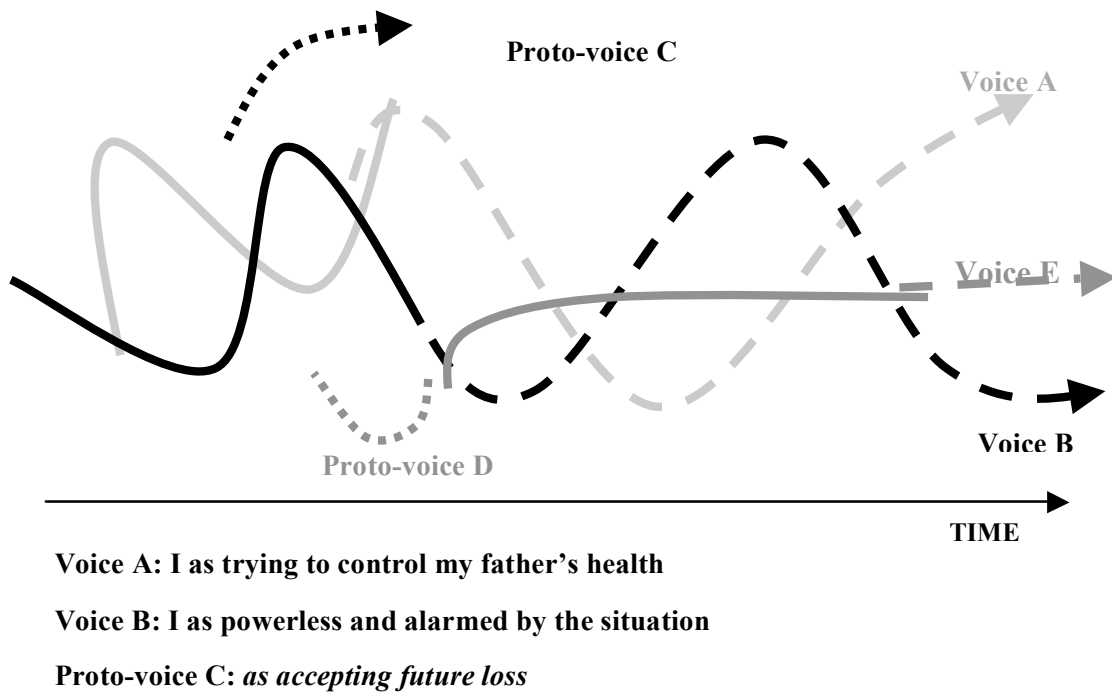


Figure 2. A tentative illustration of Maria's interview, representing the pattern of the multiplicity of voices (as self-presentations towards the interlocutor) about the personal problem across time.

and hesitate between different possible positions, resembling a decomposing polyphony of several voices in another type of self-organization dynamics. Nevertheless, at some moment, in both cases, we witness the monologizing effort of the dominant self-states towards divergent others, involving a rejection of some difficult or painful kind of experiences.

As these two case-studies show, unity and self-organization is a product of a monologizing effect that occurs in a polyphony of voices. Although it can be achieved in several forms, with one voice dominating others (as in Antonio's case) or with a dominating coalition between voices (as in Maria's case), these monologizing dynamics are always embedded in a power relation between voices. Hence, the dominating voice(s) regulate other divergent voices causing suppression and rejection of difference or silencing of the *other*. However, we do not see this domination in a negative way, we consider that this a necessary task with a great adaptive value, since it facilitates our decision-making abilities, presenting rapid forms of dealing with most of our usual daily challenges and rejecting difficult or unfamiliar experiences.

On the other hand, change is required when our common forms of self-organization do not help us deal adaptively with difference. In these moments, we need to explore difference, as creative and divergent resources to address challenges that are regularly found within us. In our view, re-organization starts appearing when our inner-alterity is no longer silenced and is given a differentiating and differentiated communicational existence. Hence, through this contrast between old and new, familiar and *alter*, a third voice comes into being and is synthesized, integrating resources or characteristics from the previous voices. This is what happens in Maria's case, as she starts differentiating an emergent voice through an appropriation of others' perspectives initially rejected but later integrated into her own position. This new voice (voice E: *I as more relaxed about the future*), nevertheless still unstable, appears as a potential new resource towards the problem since it is associated with a different emotional experience and a different behavioural attitude.

Final Remarks

In this paper, we have tried to highlight and elaborate on some of the challenges that the Dialogical Self Theory faces at its present state of theoretical and empirical development. The problem associated with the continuity of the self and identity construction through meaning-making processes in the midst of permanent experiential change is of special interest to us. As change at an experiential level is brought by the passing of time constantly presenting us with new moments of self-experience, the construction of "similarity" is a necessary task with adaptive value, allowing us to recognize ourselves moment-by-moment as one and the same person.

It is not our main intention to discuss the relative advantages of high-differentiation versus low-differentiation of self-identity. Instead, we are stressing that self-organization is a central feature of human psychological functioning and we are focusing on its processual dynamics, as we think is needed in the Dialogical Self Theory. The cases presented illustrate how we can depict self-organizing patterns on a moment-by-moment basis and why it is justified to claim that, to the Dialogical Self Theory, unity implies diversity (Salgado & Hermans, 2005). How we attain this unity within the multiplicity varies as an idiosyncratic feature as is empirically described.

Thus, this analysis seems to support the idea that self-organizing dynamics are many times fed 1) by monological processes that can constrain our multivoicedness; or 2) at other times are fed precisely by an extreme polyphony that blocks our decision-making abilities, given the paralysing multiplicity we may be facing (Valsiner, 2002a). Self-organization preserves equilibrium between openness and similitude in order to maintain its adaptive and developmental quality. If this is not the case, self-organization can become a rigid temporal stability that can no longer be sensible to the richness of our lived experience or be so loose that prevents the development of our relational and

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communicational life (as in dissociative states or schizophrenia; e.g. Lysaker & Lysaker, 2004).

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**WHAT CAN THE ASSIMILATION MODEL LEARN FROM THE IDENTITY
POSITIONS INTERVIEW AND WHAT CAN IT TEACH?
A COMMENTARY ON CUNHA'S "CONSTRUCTING ORGANIZATION
THROUGH MULTIPLICITY"**

William B. Stiles
Miami University, Oxford (OH), USA

ABSTRACT. In this dialogue between the assimilation model and the Identity Positions Interview (IPI), the two theories make suggestions for how the other might be improved and how the two might become more compatible. The assimilation model points out that the IPI might gain a more differentiated view by incorporating a developmental sequence into its structure. The IPI responds by pointing out how the assimilation model could be studied systematically using IPI procedures. The IPI also presents case examples that pose theoretical puzzles for the assimilation model, such as the active and systematic avoidance of seemingly mild problems.

Theories and methods of studying the dialogical self must encompass continuity and transformation, and they must do so in a way that is developmental and relational. They must accommodate people's sense of consistent agency and yet contend with systematic growth and sudden shifts. They should be understandable in narrative terms, developing systematically over time, if perhaps not predictable, and in dialogical terms, emerging through spoken and unspoken interactions between and within people. These specifications set a formidable challenge, to which Cunha (2007, this issue) has risen admirably. She has sketched answers the questions of what keeps us consistent and how we change. And, most importantly, she has outlined a program of research that addresses these problems empirically.

The *Identity Positions Interview* (IPI, Gonçalves & Cunha, 2006) is designed to elicit dialogical processes surrounding a particular personal problem. It seeks to reveal the current state of and relations among key internal voices. And it probes their capacity for dialogue and change using a variant of the revealed differences technique, in which potential internal discrepancies are foregrounded by staging dialogues with the imaginal perspectives of other people and future selves.

AUTHOR NOTE. Please address correspondence about this article to William B. Stiles, Department of Psychology, Miami University, Oxford, Ohio 45056; USA. Email: stileswb@muohio.edu

Cunha's (2007, this issue) microgenetic analysis of IPI text focused on development and organization as revealed in the flow of dialogue. Within the interview's structure, different, potentially conflicting internal voices could be seen to succeed, trigger, or suppress each other or build meaning bridges with each other through dialogue. In her words, the IPI seeks to describe "how the self achieves its dynamic structure, stability and consequent individual agency within this multiplicity brought to the foreground by the ever-changing flow of lived experience" (Cunha, 2007, p. 289).

The Assimilation Model

In these brief comments, I focus on what the *assimilation model* can learn from Cunha's (2007, this issue) paper as well some things that the assimilation model might contribute to understanding the sorts of results that the IPI yields.

The assimilation model (Stiles, 2002; Stiles et al., 1990) is a member of the family of Dialogical Self theories. Using the metaphor of *voice*, it describes internal multiplicity and a process of change in psychotherapy through dialogue (e.g., Brinegar et al., 2006; Stiles et al., 2004, 2006). Based mainly on a series of intensive case studies, assimilation researchers have constructed and refined a developmental account of psychological change, summarized in the Assimilation of Problematic Experiences Sequence (APES; Stiles, 2002; Stiles et al., 1991). The eight APES stages, numbered 0 to 7, describe a range of potential relations of a problematic experience, or *problematic voice*, to the person's dominant *community of voices*, which represents the person's accumulated experiences that can be smoothly employed as resources. The stage names characterize this relation as (0) warded off/dissociated, (1) unwanted thoughts/avoidance, (2) vague, painful awareness/emergence, (3) problem statement/clarification, (4) understanding/insight, (5) application/working through, (6) problem solution/resource, or (7) mastery/integration. The theory, supported by the case studies, suggests that in successful therapy, problems tend to advance through these stages, which are understood as points along a continuum. Clients may enter therapy with problems at any stage, and any movement along the continuum could be considered as progress.

There are many family resemblances and potential points of contact between assimilation model's case conceptualizations and Cunha's (2007, this issue). Both, of course, focus on manifestations of internal multiplicity; Cunha used the term *self-state* to do work similar to that done by *voice* in the assimilation model. These concepts articulate, in slightly different ways, the central, common observation of psychological continuity and agency within a polyphonic self. As in recent descriptions of the assimilation model (Stiles et al., 2006), Cunha described *positions* or *positioning* as the observable manifestations from which the internal sources of continuity were inferred.

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That is, *voice* and *self state* describe the hypothetical internal agents of continuity, while *position-taking* describes what the person observably does.

In attempting to integrate different conceptual approaches, even such similar ones as these, I am mindful that there are risks. Technical terms get their meaning from their theoretical context and cannot be assumed equivalent simply because the words are the same or synonymous in natural language (Leiman & Stiles, 2002). I return to the issue of relations between theories in this commentary's concluding section.

What Can The Assimilation Model Teach?

I think that the analysis of the IPI could usefully incorporate a longer-term developmental sequence like the APES. This could (a) offer a more differentiated view of problems and, depending on the problem's degree of assimilation, (b) suggest different probes and expectations for change within the interview as a function of the problem's developmental stage.

The conventional meaning of the word *problem* in the IPI opening ("*a personal problem that concerns you in the present*"; Cunha, 2007, p. 291), probably pulls for problematic voices in the range of APES 1 (unwanted thoughts/avoidance) to APES 3 (problem statement/clarification). Theoretically, problematic voices at an earlier APES stage are likely to be inaccessible or too painful to confront. Voices at later stages are less likely to be described as problems. Even within the APES 1-3 range, however, problems have different relations with the rest of the person, according to the theory. At APES 1, problems are poorly specified or over-simplified and quickly avoided; probes are likely to be evaded or dismissed. At APES 2, problems are still vague, but they are painfully faced rather than avoided; probes may elicit strong negative emotions (sadness, anger, recriminations, despair). At APES 3, problems can be explicitly named and stated, and probes may stimulate emotional or practical problem-solving and work towards new understanding.

The assimilation model suggests that incremental progress on a problem (i.e., increasing assimilation) looks different depending on the problem's stage. For problems at APES 1, progress, paradoxically, involves increasing emotional pain, as the problem is acknowledged, faced, and more fully experienced (i.e., moving toward APES 2). For problems at APES 2, progress should involve naming and stating the problem. Only for problems at APES 3 would progress conform to the conventional notion of moving towards understanding, resolution, or insight.

Cunha's (2007, this issue) two case studies appeared to illustrate something of this range of APES stages. Antonio's problem (initially, "*The beginning of my professional life is something that makes me feel anxious [perhaps in the sense of yearning]*") appeared to be at APES stage 1. Cunha did a convincing job of highlighting Antonio's systematic avoidance of any contemplation of negative outcomes. Even

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though Antonio suggested the problem initially, he subsequently avoided it and became more rigid and dismissive as the issue was pressed in the IPI. His descriptions became so monological as to be somewhat unbelievable for psychotherapists like me who are used to exploring problems.

Understanding Antonio's problem as being at APES 1 suggests that he would not be eager to work on his problem. Assimilation progress for Antonio would involve greater contact with the avoided problem and hence greater pain (Stiles et al., 2004).

Whereas Antonio's problem seemed to emerge casually, triggered by the opening dialogue, Maria's problem (initially, "*I feel powerless and alarmed about my father's health condition*") was unavoidable and highly salient. She was clearly distressed about it, and yet she did not attempt to avoid it. In APES terms, the problem appeared to be past the emergence stage (APES 2), which is the point of greatest pain in confronting the problematic experience. Early in the interview, she was able to give a very clear statement of the problem (APES 3), and she maintained contact with it, turning it over and viewing it from multiple internal perspectives. Maria's focused work in the IPI resembled psychotherapy clients' focused work searching for an acceptable solution to a stated problem, as observed in the interval between APES 3 (problem statement) and APES 4 (understanding; Brinegar et al., 2006).

During the IPI, Maria seemed to move toward accepting her situation. In effect, she made progress in the terms suggested by the serenity prayer:

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; the courage to change the things I can; and the wisdom to know the difference. (Attributed to Reinhold Niebuhr)

In the Future Projections section of the IPI, Maria said, "... there has been a growing [awareness] that control does not lead to anything and that powerlessness is part of our human condition." Such a resolution could be considered as approaching APES 4, a mutual understanding between the voices of her caring, affection, and sense of connection as a daughter on one hand and of the uncontrollability and inevitability of her father's illness and eventual death on the other. A germ of this resolution was already contained in her initial statement (feeling *powerless*). That is, at the start of the interview, the problem was already being stated in terms that allowed it to be solved, in the sense of accepting what she could not change.

Importantly, Maria's emerging resolution was not a matter of making the voice of powerlessness dominant while suppressing her caring and concern for her father. Rather, the work of assimilation required meaning bridges between Maria's continuing caring and optimism for her family and her father's inevitable mortality. The future projections section of the IPI showed how Maria was doing this; imagining positive futures both with and without her father.

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Theoretically, from APES 2 onward, assimilation progress is accompanied by diminishing distress (Stiles et al., 2004). Maria's new formulations and images seemed to allow her to feel more relaxed in the present. She reported a reduced level of discomfort in the final evaluation procedure, which she attributed to talking about the situation and its future projections (theoretically, building meaning bridges; Brinegar et al., 2006).

What Can the Assimilation Model Learn?

Cunha's (2007, this issue) methods and findings offer useful lessons for the assimilation model. First and most powerfully, the IPI offers a systematic method for distinguishing internal voices that speak for and respond to a selected problem and for assessing the degree to which these voices have been assimilated to each other. The innovative technique of eliciting imaginal conversations with others and with possible future selves reveals present relations among internal voices and probes the participant's capacity for assimilation. In effect, it assesses the therapeutic zone of proximal development--the range of APES levels over which the participant can progress with the interviewer's help (Leiman & Stiles, 2001).

The substantive results of the reported cases also usefully set puzzles for the assimilation model. Although Antonio seemed to avoid confronting his problem (characteristic of APES 1), he showed little evidence that the problem caused him much emotional pain. In principle, the lack of pain could reflect successful avoidance of a potentially painful problem (Stiles et al., 2004), but in this case, it seems equally plausible that the problem (loss of his familiar, comfortable university style of life) was not so serious.

Except for his eagerness to avoid, there was little indication that Antonio was suffering. Should we consider his behavior as successful adaptation? His optimism might be considered as a strength (despite the protests of depth-oriented psychologists and existentialists). I suspected that Antonio would have been capable of assimilating his sadness; to me, it seemed much less serious than Maria's problem. However, circumstances and culture encouraged Antonio to avoid, whereas circumstances and culture confronted Maria with her father's illness in a way she could not avoid.

Antonio's avoidance of a relatively modest problem sets a puzzle for the assimilation model, in which avoidance has previously been explained as an automatic response to powerful negative affect (Stiles et al., 2004). The assimilation model has previously focused on the relatively serious problems presented in psychotherapy. Antonio's case raises the questions of when, why, and how mildly problematic voices are avoided.

Maria's IPI results look more familiar to a psychotherapist. Her productive work, even within this research interview, suggests that she could gain psychological strength

through her suffering. The IPI highlighted her ability to entertain multiple internal perspectives drawn from memory and fantasy and bring these to bear on the resolution of her problem. The microgenetic analysis, with its interconnecting timelines, nicely illustrated and explored of the benefits of internal polyphony in problem-solving.

The IPI can thus teach the assimilation model a potentially efficient and feasible approach to investigating and elaborating the details of the assimilation process. Cunha's results showed that using the IPI on non-distressed individuals can usefully challenge the assimilation model, suggesting new directions for theory and research. It also opens the possibility of further methodological elaborations--designing variants of the IPI for different assimilation stages. For example, if a problem is at an avoidance stage, like Antonio's voice of regret, the model suggests that the next step could involve unfocused negative affect. An IPI designed to assess assimilation might involve further probes that explore this possibility.

Can Theories Assimilate Each Other?

I understand scientific theories as the accumulation of observations. Each new observation is formulated into statements and logically integrated into the observer's theory, a process I describe as observations *permeating* the theory (Stiles, 2005). The theory changes to accommodate the new observations along with the old ones (e.g., some tenets of the theory are rephrased, strengthened, or qualified), and the new observations become part of the theory.

Another theory can be an efficient source of new observations. To draw on this source, it must be assumed that researchers working within it have made useful and unique observations and that these have permeated the theory and are represented in its formulations. One infers what observations might have led to those formulations and then represents the observations in one's own model's terms. In the case of assimilating Cunha's (2007, this issue) work to the assimilation model, the inference is not so great, as she reported relatively concrete observations, albeit inevitably cast in IPI-theoretical terms.

This theory-building project differs from the scholarly project of trying to understand precisely what particular authors meant or unpacking the subtle distinctions in different authors' uses of terms and concepts. For example, it would be possible to compare and contrast Cunha's (2007, this issue) notions of multivocality and developmental dynamisms with those described previously within the assimilation model, noting the subtle differences rather than seeking to resolve them. But this would primarily serve enriching purposes, not theory building (Stiles, 2006).

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**READING, WRITING, AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF SELF:
THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF LITERACY
THROUGH THE LENS OF DIALOGISM**

Judith Lysaker
Butler University

ABSTRACT. Learning to read and write is often cast as a process whereby children master a particular set of cognitive and linguistic tasks. Yet when children emerge into literacy we see there is much more to it. In this paper, I use the lens of dialogism to account for the transformative experience of learning to read and write. Illustrated with a case example of an adolescent boy learning to read for the first time I offer an analysis of how both the dialogical construction of the intertextual self and dialogical action of the intertextual self may lead to self transformation. In particular I suggest that differences between oral and written language and the act of self representation in literacy events set up new dialogic relationships within the self that may explain how and why transformation occurs. Implications for theory and practice are discussed.

“There is an intimate connection between the project of language and the project of selfhood: they both exist in order to mean” (Holquist, 1990)

Learning to read and write is often cast as a process whereby children master a particular set of preordained, sequentially organized cognitive and linguistic tasks. Yet when we watch children as they emerge into literacy we sense there is something more to it than the accumulation of skills. Our teaching conversations are steeped in personal accounts of the transformative experience of learning to read and write that lead us beyond the mastering of skills. These accounts are filled with emotion, energy and a sense of joy, and are not limited to our observations of the often delightful developmental changes typical of young children. Indeed, the accomplishment of literacy seems to transform the human person regardless of whether the reader is four years old, a first grader, or a 12 year child who has never been to school.

Our ideas about the transformative nature of learning to read and write are not based solely on our teaching stories. Language and curriculum theorists have considered the ways in which literacy affects the human person in different ways over time. Most importantly, perhaps is Rosenblatt’s (1978) notion of the reader text transaction in which she emphasizes the active involvement of the reader in the meaning construction

AUTHOR NOTE. Please address all correspondence regarding this article to Prof. Judith Lysaker, Butler University, 4600 Sunset Avenue, Indianapolis, IN 46208, USA. Email: jllysaker@butler.edu

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process. In her work, *The Reader, the Text, and the Poem*, she makes the assertion that reading is an intense personal experience in which the reader is transformed during the reading event as a consequence of some merger of self and text that constitutes the transaction or 'the poem'. In a slightly different way, Grumet (1988), in her essay *Bodyreading*, also notices the transformative nature of the reading experience when she argues that reading is "fraught with danger" because one must give up one's self in the process of entering new worlds offered by the reading event.

Yet, despite our stories and these conceptual insights we have not found a way to account for *how and why* literacy is experienced as transformative. Understanding how and why reading and writing are transformative experiences of the human person seems important and may help us in several ways. Such an understanding may enable us to situate literacy learning in models of human development with more precision and greater import, refine and deepen our own models of literacy, shape theoretical models of reading and further enlighten our views on the capacities implicated in literacy difficulties.

My purpose in this paper is to account for the transforming experience of learning to read and write using the notion of the dialogic self. In order to do this, I first will make the assertion that reading and writing are foremost human activities and events of self. I will then use a model of the dialogic self to describe and analyze particularly transforming literacy events in the life of a young adolescent boy struggling to learn to read and write.

Why use dialogic models to understand literacy learning?

Historically it has been difficult in literacy research to take into account the complexity of the human subject given its biological, psychological and social facets. In fact, Alexander and Fox (2004) comment on our predilection to create reading models that come from single disciplinary perspectives, that is, from physiological, psychological or sociocultural views which fragment human experience. The notion of the dialogic self suggests that self is a dynamic dialogue of many voices and that it performatively represents the whole person. Such a model of self allows us to reclaim the complexity of human experience by embracing the integration of the person in the first place, replacing a focus on the reader with a focus on the *being who reads*. Such a broadening affords the examination of reading as complex human activity of self, rather than cognitive activity, physiologic response or the instantiation of a cultural identity.

A second group of reasons for considering the use of a dialogic model of self to better understand the transformative nature of reading is that it defines self as conversation, and is therefore inherently tied to language, providing us with a conceptual link between what it means to be human and what it means to read and write.

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In this paper I have constructed a notion of dialogism that draws on literary, philosophic and psychological traditions in order to better understand what it means to read and write. In particular I draw on three interrelated assumptions. The first assumption of this view of dialogism is that human beings are meaning makers. This assumption comes out of the hermeneutic tradition and in particular Heidegger's (1953) conception of thrownness. Heidegger considered knowing the world to be an interpretive *condition* of being in the world. According to Heidegger we are "thrown" into a preexisting web of meaning, in which to be *is* to make sense of, to interpret, to understand the world. And so to exist is to be in a meaning making relation to the world and others.

The second assumption of my construction of dialogism is that to be human is to be in relation. While feminist approaches to epistemology (e.g. Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule, 1986) are known for this perspective, relational perspectives on human development can also be found in child psychology and psychoanalytic traditions. For example, feminists from the psychoanalytic tradition like Chodorow (1989) remind us that primary relationship in our lives and the desires and other human emotions that accompany them are integral to the relationships we form. Winnicott (1971) suggests that relationships between children and mothers that are "good enough" create a potential space for cultural and aesthetic experience. That is to say that being in relation with a caring other makes it possible to experience the meaningful encounters with others and with the world. Thinking about self as relational thus affords greater attention to that which surrounds the being which is interpreting. The notion of potential space gives us a metaphorical location for the place in which self and other interpret each other's worlds and human yearnings. The image of 'entering the world of the other' is essential for my construction of dialogism because it describes the *relationship between the utterances* (Bakhtin, 1981) as 'worlds' that we inhabit, and in which we make sense of one another.

The third assumption that I use in this model of dialogism is that the activity of self which is located in this potential space or 'world' emerges through ongoing conversation primarily in the form of language. This language is not only produced for the purpose of expression but is constitutive of self. This is to say that consciousness itself is made up of an ensemble of dialogues within and between individuals (Lysaker & Lysaker, 2005). This notion of the multivocal quality of self grows out of the Russian literary tradition of Bakhtin (1981). It has been developed further by constructivist psychologists (Hermans, 1996) who assert that it is this dialogic or conversational quality that explains the fluidity of self, the changes that occur moment by moment as well as overtime within a self experienced as whole. Specifically, the view here is that the dynamic quality of self is made possible because the self is not a single thing. That is to say, we are not merely constructed through conversations we have with others, but are by nature constituted by conversations and that these conversations constitute

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consciousness. In this view, consistent with the works of Ricoeur (1991) and Kerby (1991) we are not only shaped by the influence of language upon us, we our selves are languaged events.

Thus taken together I propose a dialogical model of self which asserts that people are fundamentally interpretative beings, that our relationships and the emotions that surround them are essential for creating a space for aesthetic experience and that that metaphorical space is characterized by dialogue between and within the people from which we construct who we are.

Applications of dialogism to reading and writing: A case analysis

The self does not know itself immediately but only indirectly through the detour of cultural signs of all sorts. (Ricoeur, 1991, p. 80)

Let's turn to how we might use this model to better understand the transformative nature of reading and writing. Can we begin with the thought that through reading and writing new voices enter into the conversations of the self? Is it useful to view reading and writing as voices which are a vital part of the ensembles of dialogues which comprise our consciousness? I would suggest that this is at least plausible. At this point we have arrived at a definition of the dialogic self which casts it as an interpretive event, constituted by meaning making systems in particular language and a performance of our embodied human state. Yet, the question remains, how exactly do learning to read and write enter as voices and how does that result in the transformation?

To address this question I will now draw on some examples of a larger study of a young adolescent boy learning to read. In particular, I will first present the background of the study, a description of the participant and then analyses of two examples of literacy learning, the first in writing and the second in reading. In these analyses I will seek to examine how the participant uses self representation to enter into a transformative dialogue with texts. It is not my goal in this analysis to explicitly explore self in terms of its contents pre and post literacy experience, nor to provide data on the personhood of the participant was prior to and following learning to read and write. Instead, I will focus on the transformative processes as they occurred, evaluating the usefulness of dialogism as a theoretical lens.

Background and Context

Cody was a fourteen year old Caucasian boy from a rural Midwest background who entered school for the first time just after his fourteenth birthday. His late entrance into school was an artifact of his family's rural life style in which the children were home-schooled and helped to care for a small farm. I was called on to tutor Cody in reading and writing by the head administrator at this K-12 alternative school, who

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along with Cody's teachers felt that intensive tutoring in literacy was necessary for Cody to be successful.

Cody and I spent three hours every school day in a tutoring setting where I helped him learn to read and write. Informal assessments showed his literacy development to be similar to that of someone beginning first grade. He could write his name, read predictable books and read twenty-five sight words from a common list designed for kindergarten children (Clay, 1991). When asked to write Cody was extremely hesitant, writing only with significant prompting and using phonetic spelling. He drew a self portrait as part of our early assessments with reluctance and commented, "I don't know myself by sight very well." Teachers and administrators at the school remarked on his lack of maturity and of social skills, presumably related to his delayed entrance to formal schooling.

The discrepancy between Cody's chronologic age and his literacy development made his learning to read and write unique and interesting in many ways. Practically speaking for all of his childhood Cody did not employ literacy as a means of getting to know himself or his world. I hoped that this juxtaposition of literacy development and general development would make the use of literacy as a resource for self more pointed and more visible. As his tutor I felt that I was unusually poised to participate in and observe how his literacy emerged in relation to his development.

My approach to instruction was grounded in holistic practices for emergent and early literacy. I read aloud to Cody frequently, we wrote shared texts and participated in shared reading. Early in my work with Cody I used a modified interactive writing approach to help him to get his thoughts on paper. It is that writing that I wish to take up now to demonstrate the use of dialogism as a conceptual frame for understanding the transformative aspects of learning to read and write.

Dialogic analysis of the role of writing as transformative

Our own existence cannot be separated from the account we give of ourselves. It is in telling our own stories that we give ourselves an identity (Ricoeur, 1985, p.214)

After a few weeks of building trust, Cody was no longer silent during our tutoring sessions and began to offer stories of his life at home. I responded to this by suggesting that Cody and I write together and used a "biopoem" structure to facilitate his writing. I explained the form of the biopoem and we spread a larger sheet of poster sized paper along the floor and got out markers. I coached Cody through the writing because he needed help finding the letters that matched the sounds of the words he wanted to write. At the beginning of each line I reminded him of the poem's structure and what was needed for that particular line.

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The following is Cody's biopoem:

Cody

Strange, nice, helpful, complicated
Sibling of Seth, Haley, Jacob Annie Brett
Lover of complicated puzzles, Scamper, computer games
Who feels bored
Who needs freedom, to be left alone, food
Who fears being too high to jump off, oncoming traffic, snakes
Who would like to see his mom get rid of the goats and the inside of a Porsche

Is this poem which is a written accounting of who Cody is, a resource for self construction and, therefore, a context for transformative? If so, in what ways is this piece of writing implicated in this process?

I would suggest that Cody indeed, following the descriptions of Ricoeur (1985, 1991) uses this biopoem in three ways which transform him by creating new dialogues which constitute his consciousness. First, within the biopoem is the act of producing the writing itself. This is interpretive action requiring dialogic activity. Cody must apprehend, recognize and make sense of some aspect of his being, some part of the conversation that constitutes his 'self' and represent that aspect of self in language. This activity allows Cody to know himself in a new ways. As Ricoeur (1991) explains, "The self does not know itself immediately but only indirectly through the detour of cultural signs of all sorts." (p.80). Thus through writing, Cody captures a moment of the ongoing conversation of voices that constitute who he is and places it visibly in the social world through writing, thereby setting up a new relation between the representation of self and the present lived experience of self.

Second, the poem which was posted in our classroom became a visible part of Cody's social world. He had daily opportunities to remember the process of its construction, reread it, recognize the names of his siblings, or wonder why he chose a particular word. These responsive actions, from attending to the meaning of the experience, to noticing a spelling pattern or recognizing a name, all constitute interpretations that become part of the continuing process of self-authorship.

Third, the presence of this self-representational text and the interpretations that it evoked provided contrasts for Cody. For example, Cody could read the first line of his bio-poem a week later and ask, "Why did I write 'strange,' I don't really think I'm strange." This reflection produces a difference between the representation of self in the writing, and the present. In accordance with Ricoeur's (1991) views Cody may be recognizing himself through the use of cultural signs more keenly because they represent him, pointing to who he is which is different than experiencing who he is. This is consistent with Bakhtin's (1991) notion that the presence of contrasting voices, the

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simultaneity of sameness and difference is a condition which provides opportunities for new interpretations of self. In other words Cody may be coming to better know himself by developing ever evolving interpretations of who he is in the new dialogue set up between lived experience and text. The quality of permanence that exists in the written text more readily allows for this kind of ongoing negotiation of self.

In sum, through these three ways the texts Cody and I produced, such as the biopoem, become the “other” that can be encountered through dialogue. In essence, extrapolating from this case study, when we learn to write perhaps we set up a new kind of dialogic relation with aspects of our selves. When we encounter the text we have produced we see ourselves not simply in the text, *but also in our present interpretation* of that text. Possibly, in self-representational texts like Cody’s biopoem, we reconfigure who we are through contrasts created between the self we are presently experiencing and the self we encounter in the text we have produced. Thus learning to write may be far more than a matter of learning skills. Beyond any issue of skills the act of writing by representing our selves in the world, may allow us to transform ourselves by setting in motion a new set of dialogues between the voices that constitute our consciousness.

A dialogical analysis of reading as transformative

While writing may be a more obvious form of self representation and, therefore, a more visible example of self transformation, reading also involves dialogic encounters with self that lead to transformation. To explain this I will return to an example from my work with Cody.

When reading aloud with Cody I experienced him as being in another world, of being absorbed, of having what Gallas (1996) has called “the look” that occurs when readers are engaged in a story. The following description comes from my field notes and describes my experience of reading aloud to Cody during one of our tutoring sessions:

The book *Dealing with Dragons* (Wrede, 1992) is one I find easy and pleasant to read aloud, and I enjoy fantasy about a princess who really does not want to be a princess. Cody sits and listens, with the look of drifting off into some unknown place. I am hopeful that he is becoming “lost “ in the story.

I stop at one point and ask some questions to see if he really is with me in the sharing of this book. He is. But the reading experience does not seem to be primarily about the story. This reading aloud is an experience of sharing some world that is not readily identifiable by either of us, one we share in silence, one we retain in some private way. We have become part of a shared fictive reality, a reality of the imagination as it were. I read aloud for nearly an hour. We do not

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talk at all. Cody has pulled his sweatshirt over his head us looking now as if he has drawn himself into a completely private world.

How does a dialogic model of self help us to understand this reading event and the potential of self transformation that exists? To address this I wish to return to the idea of self-representation. While the act of self-representation is most obvious in writing, it occurs during the act of reading as well and makes more explicit the dialogic nature and, therefore, the transformative nature of the reading event. To understand reading as a self representational act I return to the notion that interpretation is a dialogic activity of self. As we saw in Cody's writing, an act of self-representation sets up a dialogic encounter between self and the representational object of self, or a dialogue with oneself.

In the reading of texts authored by others, however, a second dialogue is set in motion. A relation between the person reading and the perceived text also occurs during the interpretive act. Because as hermeneutic beings we cannot know without interpreting we never know text immediately but only through interpretation. The "I," the person who reads, apprehends the text of the author. In this moment, the person reading may bring to bear the dialogues of self with which to encounter the text. The reading event then could be conceptualized as the "simultaneous relation," the dialogic commingling of the voices of the self and the *reader's interpretations of the author's voices as represented in the text*. As Rosenblatt (1994) reminds us, "Recall that the text is more than paper and ink. The transaction is basically between the reader and *what he senses the words are pointing to*" (p. 21, emphasis added).

James' (1890/1902) distinction between 'I' and 'Me' in his classic work on the psychology of self may be useful here to think about different aspects of self which are in dialogue with one another yet remain distinct from one another. James considered the self to be made up of two central components the "I", self-as-knower, and the "Me", self-as-known. The writer or the self as knower is the 'I,' and the text produced, could function as the self that is known or "Me".

Using this language I would suggest that in reading possibly something similar may occur. In reading, the self as knower or the person reading may relate to text in a slightly more complicated way. The person reading, in apprehending the text, sets up a relation between self that reads and the interpretation that is "me & text." The notion that we exist as interpreting beings in constant dialogue with one another may help explain this. We cannot simply take up the text as an entity that is not first interpreted. Simply by being in dialogue with text we interpret. In this ways Dialogism may help us to explain the relation between the reading subject ("I") and the reading subject's interpretation of the text or 'I' in relation or dialogue with ("Me" + "text"). The interpretation is part "me" or what Rosenblatt calls the "compenetration" of a *reader* and a text. In this way the reader or some aspect of the person reading *becomes* the text.

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In practical terms this transformative event could be brought about through dialogue with the text is what occurs when a person reading identifies with a character. The person reading may “recognize” him or herself (the “Me”) in the interpretation of text. In addition when the person reading visualizes the setting or some aspect of the text, he or she may recognize some part of his or her dialogic world and re-image it in his or her interpretation of the author’s text. The person reading may thus possibly re-present him or herself in the text through the commingling of voices of reader and text creating a new transformed self system.

Applied to Cody, as he learned to read he may have appeared so internally focused because as he was attending to the details of the story and noticing those places that were familiar and where he could take up the dialogue, where the voices that constructed him could easily enter the conversation. In particular, Cody seemed to find places of connection occurring where the protagonist of the story struggled for independence. Perhaps this was pleasurable and absorbing not only because Cody was mastering a new skill but because immersion in these books were enhancing and deepening the conversations of his own consciousness. Moreover, emotion may have played a part in his absorption. His own yearnings for becoming independent may have lead to him being more open to the transformative experience itself. After all he was a 14 year old who had just left the family farm to come to school.

The fictive reality then, which Cody seemed to be experiencing, could be conceptualized as constructed by him through dialogic encounters between particular voices of the text world and particular voices of himself. The intricate commingling of the ensemble of dialogues that are Cody with a second, different set of voices that are the text, perhaps constituted a transformed Cody. As he read a fictive reality was created with which he entered into an interpretive and emotional dialogue. Within this reality the voices of the text became resources for evolving self construction.

Being able to enter a fictive reality is an act of immense trust. It involves a decision by the reader to let go of the here and now and join a new time and place, forge new relationships and make new connections. To merge one’s own sense of reality with textual reality is part of what Rosenblatt (1994) calls the transaction between the reader and the text, an event in which the self is reordered in light of the text. This journey into a fictive reality brings to mind the words of Grumet’s (1988), “It is a giving up of the world”—one’s own reality “in order to have the world”—the fictive reality. To become a part of fictive reality one must in some way represent oneself in that reality, to create an image of oneself that lives in the image of the book. As Jeffery Wilhelm’s (1996) student tells us in his book by the same title, to be a reader “You gotta be the book!”

In sum, using dialogism as a theoretic lens makes it possible to assert that learning to read intimately involves the act of self-representation in the text world,

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leading to the transformation of the person who reads. By placing the person who reads in the text world through interpretation, he or she may be able to encounter the 'otherness' of the text. These texts, unlike self-representational texts or the experiences of writing, are composed by another, the author, and are less closely aligned with the voices that constitute the reader. They accordingly may set up a contrast between 'self' and 'other'. That is, the relation between self and other (other being in this case the text) provides a struggle of contrasting voices which is necessary for self experience (Bakhtin, 1981). This encounter with the otherness of text engages the reader in dialogue with worlds that are simultaneously both the person who reads and not the person who reads. Such action opens the reader to the possibilities of renewal and revision of self through these interpretive encounters. Such opportunities are undoubtedly the reason some of us read to encounter the possibility for renewal or change. The notion of dialogism implies an "openness to transformation of the self system to a new state, resulting in developmental processes of emergence" (Hermans, 2001, p.11). Through dialogic relationships with the otherness of text we can appropriate many voices and meanings that were not at first our own and in this way experience self transformation.

Conclusions

Learning to read and write has been widely observed to profoundly transform people in a manner that seems to move far beyond what might be the impact of learning new skills. This transformation though is not well understood. In this paper I have examined whether dialogical self theory can help us to better understand the ways in which literacy could transform the person who is learning to read and write. Through a dialogic analysis of autobiographical writing and of reading aloud in a single case I have explored the activity of self during literacy events focusing on the transformative actions of self representation. In these analyses I have suggested the possibility that the dialogues that constitute our consciousness are reshaped through the interpretative acts of self representation required by reading and writing. In this way I have attempted to refine and deepen how we might think about the nature of the reading transaction and what it means in terms of the development of the person to learn to read and write.

This may have important implications for broadening our awareness of how and why some children experience literacy learning difficulties, and for literacy theory in general. For one, it may be that there are barriers to literacy beyond cognitive, linguistic and socio-cultural challenges. Understanding reading and writing as activities of the self may suggest that relational capacities are important as well. If this is so then it seems appropriate that we rethink some instructional approaches to children experiencing literacy difficulty. It may be that it is important for some that we give more weight to the facilitation of caring relationships in the classroom, creating space for self development as a requisite for their literacy development rather than focusing primarily

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on skills. Possibly, if we nurture a relationship in which children develop a richer ensemble of dialogues we may co-construct with them the texts of self that are the resources necessary for meaningful interactions with the texts of their lives.

Finally there are limitations. The work presented here is a first step in exploring the significance of models of self in furthering our understanding of reading and writing. The discussion of the case example presented here merely hints at the potential for the use of dialogism as a set of ideas for illuminating the meaning of learning to read and write. Much more work is needed including future research and theory building that explores the roles that emotion plays in a dialogic view of literacy learning.

Lastly there is the danger of a verbocentric view of the significance of language in development across cultures. While in some parts of the world it seems clear that the accomplishment of literacy can be life changing, this doesn't in any way suggest that other transformative meaning making events help people to develop in less 'language'd yet profoundly meaningful ways.

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**THE DISCOURSE OF EMPOWERMENT:
A DIALOGICAL SELF THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE
INTERFACE OF PERSON AND INSTITUTION IN SOCIAL SERVICE
SETTINGS**

Carolus van Nijnatten
University of Utrecht & Radboud University Nijmegen

ABSTRACT. The use of 'I' and 'we' was analysed in a single case study of a conversation between a child welfare professional and a client. Such conversations are ambiguous situations because although child care workers assume a caring attitude, at the same time they have to operate within a coercive frame. This study shows that child-care workers play a sophisticated game, alternately adopting dialogical positions that are either contiguous or different from that of the client. The argument proposed is that both in external and in internal dialogues, common ground must be reached before change resulting from conflicting I-positions can occur. For that reason, beside I-positions, we-positions play a crucial role in achieving the desired changes that in child welfare interventions. Both professional and client use these presentations to strengthen their communicative position. The same presentations may come about in the interactions between community psychologist and communities, when communities may change their positions in response to professional interventions, making explicit the tension between commonalities and differences. The challenge for agents of change is to look for common ground with clients in order to restore disturbed relations between groups or individuals and society.

Ever since the end of the 19th century, institutions in the field of education, health and welfare have assumed a growing role in the tuning of societal norms concerning citizenship and the individual practices of citizens. Child welfare is a social institution that aims to adjust troubled behaviour to societal norms.

According to Jacques Donzelot (1979), so called 'psy-professionals' (Ingleby, 1985) played a crucial role in the rise of a social domain ('le social') between the private and the public. Until the 20th century, public interference in the private life of citizens was the prerogative of churches and civil foundations of the wealthy bourgeoisie. Governmental initiatives to support and preserve social and cultural order were limited to penal legislation. In West European countries, as increasingly more private initiatives were undertaken and new social laws on (child) labour and social security came into effect, a complex of interventions based on private and state enterprise developed.

AUTHOR NOTE. Carolus van Nijnatten is professor of social work at the Radboud University Nijmegen and professor of social studies of child welfare at the University of Utrecht (The Netherlands). Please address all correspondence regarding this article to Prof. Carolus van Nijnatten, P.O. Box 80140, 3508 TC Utrecht, The Netherlands. Email: C.H.C.J.vanNijnatten@uu.nl

Most welfare is state-subsidized and based on the rule of law, and citizens can insure themselves against the cost of certain forms of assistance. Professional interventions range from introducing new ways of relating to others to coercive programmes aimed at combating certain types of behaviour. The field of these interventions is created by conflicts between individual moralities and societal norms regarding hygiene, sexuality, childrearing, etc. With its special link to juvenile and family courts, child welfare is part of a psycho-juridical complex of legal measures and supportive practices, a complex comprising a range of measures, subtle mixes of repression and voluntary adaptation directed at the family. Parents are not always opposed to the involvement of child welfare, and may sometimes themselves ask to be relieved of their responsibilities.

Toward the end of the 20th century, moralistic family interventions were replaced by more subtle psychological techniques (Van Nijnatten, 1988). Child welfare policy today aims at leaving plenty of room for cultural specificity, for people's own choices, and for negotiating new behavioural patterns and compromises that are acceptable both to citizens and society; but, it is also an effort to re-establish a sense of belonging to the community of adults that takes responsibility for future generations. The psycho-juridical complex embraces a range of settings to support the integration of diverse groups and communities, to stimulate their participation. At a general level, the intention is also to see that citizens are at work and that men and women, groups with different ethnic backgrounds, age, sexual preference, etc. are distributed equally throughout the workforce (Bond, 1999). More specifically, particular social groups are identified as being at risk and therefore in need of preventive action: single teenager mothers, young unemployed couples of minority groups, and drug-addicted parents are offered special child-rearing courses. The question of whether these educational programmes should be merely urged or enforced is an issue of permanent debate (Junger-Tas, 1997). In the last resort, when preventive community programmes are unsuccessful, child welfare provides an individually based curative approach to families in trouble.

The psychological and juridical origin of child welfare intervention is evident in family supervision orders. In this study, the conversation between a child welfare agent and a divorced mother is analysed in the context of such an order. Coercive interventions in single parent families with problematic access arrangements are far from exceptional. Family supervisors are appointed by the family court to control the conditions of upbringing of a minor and to take further (legal) measures to guarantee minimal conditions for the child to develop. At the same time, the supervision order, being temporary, is meant to support changes and persuade clients voluntarily to reconstruct their perspectives in line with generally accepted social norms of how to raise children. This ambiguous relation between care and control may lead to

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misunderstandings (Van Nijnatten, 2005). The aim of child welfare interventions is to change, by negotiation rather than by coercion, familial positions that are problematic from the point of view of public order. A child care worker might say: 'you, as a parent, don't function according to how *we* think that parents should behave in *our* society. The conduct in *your* family is not just a *private* affair, but *we* expect *you* to behave as *all* (normal) parents do'. The idea of child welfare workers is that confrontation between professional and client only serves to delay the helping and adaptive process (Van Nijnatten, 2005). Parents and children are therefore invited to cooperate rather than being forced to change conditions in the family. In spite of the relation to the family court, the family supervisor order resembles the therapeutic situation as 'a linguistic event in which people are engaged in a collaborative relationship and conversation – a mutual endeavour toward possibility' (Anderson, 1997, 2). The relation between child welfare and family is transactional rather than unilateral: that is, cultural norms regarding parenthood and child development are negotiated rather than imposed on families and their lives, and cultural norms about how to raise children also change as a result of transformations in family life. The underlying idea is that changes in family life will be more reliable if clients themselves have contributed to the solutions. This is consistent with Rappaport's (1987) view on empowerment in which community psychologists together with community members look for local solutions rather than standard procedures that take their origin from dominant values about race, class and gender. Child welfare workers empowering individual clients radiate a view on communities as groups of active and social responsible citizens achieving individual autonomy through cooperation. Treating citizens as collaborating agents is considered to be the key to successful community programs. Yet in the end child welfare will intervene coercively if the family does not live up to society's norms of child rearing.

The core of an ecological approach to communities and individual citizens is negotiation over cultural norms. Because these norms are diverse and are close to the lives lived in different socio-cultural communities, empowerment is only possible when professionals manage to develop collaborative relationships with members of the different communities and learn about their specific local resources (Trickett, 2002). There is an underlying optimistic assumption that (groups of) people can change their positions in response to the changed context of an intervention and that social exclusion therefore may be prevented. The theory of the Dialogical Self may help us to understand how change in relationships and in persons may come about, especially the positions of child welfare clients in families at risk.

Dialogical self theory contributions

Dialogue is conceptualized as both an interpersonal and intrapersonal process. A dynamic organization of shifting I-positions makes a flexibly operating subject possible (Valsiner, 2002). This auto-regulatory capacity facilitates openness to new experiences whilst at the same time (temporarily) maintaining stability in other parts of the self system. The dialogical self develops through links between I-positions, but the meta-regulatory framework limits the field of possible I-positions (Valsiner, 2002, p. 263).

Following Bakhtin, Hermans (1999a) says that the independent position of the uniquely located other creates room for the subject to make innovations in the self. At the same time, relations with other people create a context in which the person gives up his or her individual position and assumes a position as a member of a group. There is an ongoing process of contradiction, tuning and integration of I-positions and we-positions (or 'they' or 'them') (cf. Sarangi & Slembrouck, 1996). There is both continuity, in the experience of familiar people as belonging to our own realm (we-positions), and discontinuity, as these people speak differently.

According to Hermans (1999b), change is most likely to occur in situations where there is conflict at the intrapersonal or interpersonal level. These experienced conflicts may lead to suffering and the search for professional help, but not necessarily lead to change (Dimaggio, Fiore, Lysaker et al., 2006). If people do not experience distress or conflict between I-positions while other people consider some of them problematic, interpersonal disagreement may help lead to change. Child welfare interventions become intelligible from this point of view. The coercive character of these interventions may inhibit clients to express mixed feelings about the upbringing of their children, all the more being aware that there will be conflicting views on how to raise children. Realising that if parts of the self-system are at odds, agreement with another person is an important condition for change, child welfare workers will start to look for agreements with the client in order to advance change. As the differences will be concentrated on parenting qualities, I expect the professionals to emphasize commonalities between the client's and the professional's intentions, in particular with respect to the child's best interests.

The empirical study

The case presented here is a family supervision order. The aim of this order is to repair the parent-child relation and to secure the child's mental and physical interests. The family supervision order is temporary and the explicit goal is that the parents should retake full responsibility for the upbringing of their children as soon as possible. That is why the family supervisors' approach is focused both on mutuality and a jointly endorsed view of the family problems (Hofstede; Van Nijnatten & Suurmond, 2001). In the case presented here, I expect to find conflict and discrepancy between the

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institutional norms concerning child-rearing articulated by child-care workers and the individual norms expressed by parents. Confronting troubled families with community norms about parenting takes place in dialogues about concrete practices. Within the frame of enforced assimilation, I expect family supervisors to seek common ground and inter-agreement to optimize the chances of intra-disagreements leading to changes in the best interests of the children involved. It is therefore relevant to see how, in the conversation of our case, processes of change are achieved. I am especially interested in the way professionals and clients refer to general norms and particular positions, in order to construct or deconstruct classifications of problematic parenthood and community deviance (Hall, Slembrouck & Sarangi, 2006). I will look for evidence that parents are aware of the impact of the intervention, reacting defensively by asserting the position that no change is needed, and how family supervisors react to that.

Method

This is a single case study. Such an analysis is legitimate because the contextual and qualitative approach to the data preserves the qualitative, systemic and dynamic character through the analytical process (Crawford & Valsiner, 1999). The analytic procedures are based on the methods of qualitative conversation and discourse analysis of professional-client interactions (McLeod & Balamoutsou, 2000).

Integrating constructionist approaches and conversation analysis is a good way to study changes resulting from dialogical child welfare interventions (Abell & Stokoe, 2001). Constructionists emphasize the development of self-identity through representations of self and others. Narrative psychologists stress that by telling, people create and enact their identity. Yet 'the constructionist approach fails a fine-grained empirical analysis of discourse', which is needed to understand how people build their identities by adopting positions in conversations and beginning to act according to these positions (Davies & Harré, 1990). Conversation analysis does provide such a precise empirical instrument to study the actual interactions through which I-positions and we-positions are taken. However, this approach is also problematic as it often only takes into account what is said and done in the conversation and ignores cultural and contextual resources. The process of identity-formation is not limited to the immediate context of everyday interactions; people not only present themselves before their interlocutors but also call on and demonstrate cultural values according to the particular community, gender or race they belong to. In such interactions - negotiating, questioning and confronting - they refer to cultural norms and positions that people take beyond the actual dialogue (Abell & Stokoe, 2001). In the conversation with the family supervisor, several identities are available to the parent: former wife, coloured single mother, lower class client, etc. These identities are no mere empty categories, but rather cultural ideas about what a wife, a mother or a client is and should be, and how these ideas are related to identities of gender, race and class.

The interaction occurring in two encounters between a family supervisor and a white lower class mother are analyzed below. The meetings were video-recorded in the living room of mother's house. The conversations lasted 1:20:17 and 59.50 respectively. The case was selected from a corpus of 40 video-taped interactions between family supervisors and parents and belonged to the subcategory of 'complete' cases in which all conversations were successful video-recorded until the moment that the family supervisor had formulated a written care plan. The case under study is exceptional as it was the only one in which a dialogical reorganization was observable so soon, the client showing a clear change of position at the end of the second conversation. Yet this does not exclude that in other cases, similar changes of position may have occurred. These changes took longer to achieve, and so were not observable in this study within the time that the care plan had been written.

Mother is 31 years old; she has a seven years-old son and a six years-old daughter. Mother and father divorced three years ago. Both children IN this family have fallen behind at school, due to the effects of parental discord. Mother and father are in conflict over father's visiting arrangements. As a consequence, the children have been examined by a mental health agency (Riagg). During the first encounter, the family supervisor discusses a recent report from this agency, and their advice to place the children in specialised day care. Roughly 75% of the talk is spent discussing the implications of such an outplacement and mother's difficulty in accepting the social worker's view that her children need a neutral location to develop their relationship with their father. The access arrangement is the second topic of this first conversation, but it is central in the second encounter. In the family supervisor's view, the problems have to do with mother's limited ability to separate her own negative feelings for father from the interests of her children, their need to build a relationship with their father.

The analysis of the material began with a reading of the course of the conversations in their entirety. Parts of the transcripts in which participants refer to I-positions and/or we-positions were then selected. These extracts were then analyzed in detail, focusing on recurrent patterns and mechanisms common to some or all interactions, followed by analysis of which persons the we-positions refer to. The conversational context in which these positions occurred was also analyzed. Transcripts were then re-examined to see if I-positions and we-positions changed with the development of communication between professional and client.

Results

The start: Professional and client as 'we'?

During the two conversations, mother and family supervisor frequently use 'we' and by this 'we' they refer to different combinations of persons. Consider the following fragment:

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FS Yes... first, we'll talk a bit about that advice from the Riagg [mental welfare agency], right, because we went there together. Well, in fact the Riagg says: 'no, we don't think individual therapy would be appropriate for the children; what we do think, because we're really concerned about the children, after everything we've seen and heard about them, we think the best thing would be a place in a day care centre', where they can just be, you know - in a neutral place, right? And that's my view about what would be best for the children right now.

The family supervisor refers to two different positions. On its first two appearances, 'we' is used to indicate the mother and the family supervisor. The family supervisor justifies his assertion that supervisor and client must talk together by referring to their joint visit to the mental health agency. The emphasis on this joint visit may also be seen as a prospective justification of the advice of the Riagg that is to be discussed. This may also be considered a meta-remark, the family supervisor stressing the common enterprise he undertakes with mother, trying to convince her that they should work as a team. After all, they went to the Riagg together, so they should decide together what to do with the Riagg advice.

Following this, 'we' is used another five times, now referring to the professionals of the Riagg and stressing their coherence as a team of professionals. The supervisor operates as their reporter. It is relevant here that the supervisor does not say that 'they' came to a certain conclusion but presents a 'we'; this may be interpreted as approval of their assessment or at least a narrowing the difference between their professional views and his own.

It is significant that in the ambiguous last sentence of the fragment, the family supervisor seems to indicate that he agrees with the advice of the Riagg professionals and regards it as being in the best interests of the children. Now, the professional community is presented as a separate collective that takes a different position in the debate over what should happen with the children.

FS : Let's just talk for a minute about another matter, eh.... I really want to have a good look at this because I, um, we asked the Riagg for this [advice]. Well now, we got something back that we weren't entirely expecting, but in any case a..... a..... something else, which indeed I don't just want to put aside, because it's surely important advice, right? And we've said all along, haven't we: let's keep looking to see if there are things we could do to.... to stimulate that whole process or – perhaps in particular more so by Ineke – perhaps precisely on that emotional level. So that's what has registered with me.

In this fragment, the family supervisor makes a slip of the tongue and corrects the use of 'I' by 'we'. It is quite obvious that the family supervisor consciously wants to use the term 'we' as a demonstration of the joint nature of the enterprise with mother, stressing agreement (possibly in order to have more power to change a fixed I-position, later on); he repeats this communality several times, and then alternates the use of 'I' and 'we'. He says their advice should be taken seriously and justifies this by putting it again in the context of togetherness ('let's keep looking to see if there are things we could do to'). Realizing that mother has difficulty in accepting the advice (there is disagreement here), the family supervisor stresses their commonality as a means of encouraging her to give up her resistance.

The use of the past and future tense ('And we've said all along, haven't we: let's keep looking to see if there are things we could do to') stresses the continuity between asking together for an assessment, taking that advice seriously and using it in relation to measures in the future interest of the children. It is worth noting that the supervisor first formulates the goal of the family supervision order in such impersonal terms (to look for the best conditions for the children to develop prosperously), but then subsequently presents it as a common project of looking for changes rather leaving everything as it was. The supervisor's effort is enhanced by the topic change he suggests at the end of the turn.

1. FS But, well, in that advice, once again, Mr H describes, because his opinion was quite, in that sense quite clear and unambiguous.
2. M mhm.
3. FS But of course, I am curious what you have been thinking about it over the last weeks.
4. M well if I think about that advice then I still think by myself, I, I think that in this situation that advice is not the solution (eh) at all.
5. FS No.
6. M I don't think so.
7. FS No
8. M I absolutely wouldn't consider it, I'd really hoped that in some way a little bit of light would be shed on the real situation of the children, right?
9. FS Yes yes.
10. M Well, so then we'll have a look at what their condition really is.
11. FS Yes.
12. M So we can get a better idea of what we should do

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13. FS Yes
14. M But, well, this idea that they live under too great a stress at home, I don't agree with that, I don't believe it.
15. FS No no
16. M To plunge them into something just for that
17. FS No
18. M To do and to send, then all the time, I think that we talk about children we don't know very well, yet
19. FS Anyway, they don't know well [FS smiles and then mother also smiles].

In her reaction, mother also combines 'I' and 'we'. When the family supervisor stresses the position of the Riagg and asks mother's view (1/3), mother reacts by emphasizing her personal position as opposed to the expert's position and says she hopes for a more realistic proposal (4/6/8/). She continues in positive terms and formulates an alternative for the future in terms of 'we', emphasizing the strength of her option as the one that may be shared by the family supervisor. Now, mother uses the same technique to present herself together with the family supervisor a single team that will operate in the future as a unit. She then again takes up a personal opposition criticising the fact that the Riagg only has ideas unrelated to the specific situation (14); She then suggests a common understanding that children should be seen before they can be assessed (18). This seems to be an excellent strategic move by mother, not emphasizing her individual critical position towards the assessment, but referring by the use of 'we' to a community of rational and well-thinking people. In turn 19, with a confidential look, the family supervisor lines up with mother, and differentiates between the expertise of the Riagg ('they') and mother and supervisor.

Mother frequently shows her concerns about the supervisor's plans to take the children into day care. The supervisor tries to reassure mother that this will not put her out of the action but will even strengthen her position as an important person for her children. He emphasizes that he, as a clinical expert, knows that the placement will not split mother and children.

1. FS: So, I think that that, on the contrary, they would make you very important
2. M: Yes, but if you read well what in most cases is the reason to send children there, then I am very curious if they really would qualify for that. I don't recognise the situation.
3. FS: No.

4. M: Well, like the situation is here.
5. FS: No.
6. M: But, yes, if in the end, it would happen, then it might be a new experience and an adventure [laughs] to see how it works out.
7. FS: Yes
8. M: I myself say: 'Essentially, the situation is not like that'.
9. FS: No, why not?
10. M: Yes, because if they are just here at home and we get along together, then there is just no problem.

Mother, on the contrary, says that her case is not typical of the category of children that are placed there. In the last turns of this extract, mother extends the special non-child welfare situation of her children by positioning them as part of the family who, as she knows from the way they operate together, demonstrate no problems. It is relevant that the mother states this as an observation, which makes it harder for the supervisor to invalidate her argument. In turn eight, mother really emphasizes her personal view as different from the Riagg advice. In addition, she stresses that the three of them (presented as 'we') have no problem.

Family supervisor and mother alternately use the word 'we' to express their common intentions. Yet, after a while the family supervisor moves on to a more formal attitude by explaining the legal aspects of the advice of the Riagg, which may be considered by mother as an argument for placing the child in extra-familial care. Having said that even if the children are taken into day care mother will remain the most important figure, he reassures her that he would never place the children against mother's will.

1. FS: At the same time, neither the placement nor the registration at the Riagg and the day care centre of course, would ever really take place if you categorically refuse. Of course, that is also the way we try do it, simply to talk seriously about things, right?
2. M: Mhm
3. FS: Of course, I try to put forward arguments, let's say the pros and cons, and in that sense, let's say, to support you as a mother
4. M: ehum
5. FS: In the best interest of the children? Of course, after all, that's my job; that is why I don't ignore the advice of the Riagg. I don't ignore that because, well, you say: 'Well, I don't much feel for that'. But to talk, talk that out properly.

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6. M: Mmm
7. FS: Because if it's not possible now, it may be so in a little while. Or, or, in any case, I think, we really have to know what we're doing if we don't go along with it.

The supervisor explains the formal rules, and anticipates mother's possible fear of a mandate, but immediately casts the procedure in the context of a mutual effort to reach a rational agreement ('I try to put forward arguments') in a dialogical way ('simply to talk seriously about the things'). This is seen as the best way to lend support to her position as a mother. By separately mentioning her position as a mother, the supervisor seems to refer to possible other positions. He follows this with a remark about his task being to defend the best interests of children (expressed in general terms), implying the existence of possible differences between the interests of children (the advice of the Riagg) and mother (mother's rejection of that advice). The supervisor again mentions his dialogical strategy. Individual and common positions alternate continually. The main message of the family supervisors seems to be that the interests of mother and child may differ but that dialogue is the way to find solutions. In the last turn, the supervisor stresses this common course of action. It is interesting in this last sentence that the family supervisor projects (in my view) a we-position that is, in his eyes, still to be achieved ('we really have to know what we're doing if we don't go along with it').

1. FS: How do you regard the lag in the development of Jaap and Ineke. Did you observe this?
2. M: yes Jaap he really needed an extra year, that is very clear and now you just see maturity coming. Yes, actually, he is nearing group three and he already // starts to look // forward
3. FS: // yes yes yes //
4. M: and I wouldn't be at all surprised if he suddenly shot forward

The supervisor does not justify the Riagg assessment merely by referring to the fact that he shares their decision, but also by confirming the separate views of mother. The supervisor adds to his question mother's former observation that her children showed signs of retarded development. Mother's answer is sophisticated; she agrees that her son had clearly fallen behind but continues by asserting that he is quickly catching up.

Both mother and family supervisor frequently use personal pronouns to add force to their conversational position. The family supervisor stresses the common enterprise of mother and professional to negotiate and find the best solution for the child. This effort to create an atmosphere of shared intention is crucial for the

intervention process to continue. It is a strongly interactional strategy, explaining to the client that she belongs to the same team as the professional that (in the phase to come) and ought also to share their beliefs about what to do in the best interest of the children. The supervisor uses the common visit to the Riagg to get mother's permission to follow their advice to let her children go into day care.

Mother stresses her individual stand of resisting the Riagg intervention and stresses that the children could only be reliably assessed after having seen them. Moreover, mother uses 'we' to enforce her familial autonomy by presenting the situation as an 'attack' on her and her children.

Midway: Working on intrapersonal and interpersonal differences

Once a certain relational basis appears to have been established in their negotiations, mother and family supervisor position themselves more separately. In the next fragment, the family supervisor criticises mother for representing matters in black and white. Responding to this rather confrontational remark, mother demonstrates a level of self-reflection by stating that she is not the ideal mother and wants to be open to guidance. She thus shows that she is aware of her failures and wants to co-operate. By adding that an average mother is still good enough in normal circumstances, she seems to imply that she belongs to the group of average, good-enough mothers, and dismisses the notion of having to be perfect. She continues:

1. M: But you do have to be open to advice and support and correc/
correc/ correction
2. FS: Yes yes
3. M: (?)
4. FS: Can you actually do that? [smiles]
5. M: Yyyeah
6. FS: (to ask)
7. M: I think I'm gradually beginning to learn that
8. FS: Yes
9. M: first, first I want to know well if e it is reliable
10. FS: Yes
11. M: I do
12. FS: Yes I wanted to say for me you are not the prototype of someone
who brings all kinds of advice onto themselves or, or straight away eh
13. M: Well that // is because //

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14. FS: // (..?..) //
15. M: Because, because I used to look for the fault, and if people take advantage of that
16. FS: Yes
17. M: That makes you more careful
18. FS: Yes
19. M: With that
20. FS: Yes yes
21. M: Now yeah in contacts with other people who on the other hand confirm me I am
22. FS: Yes
23. M: And they show that the things you // you say and think are normal//
24. FS: //Yes yes yes yes //
25. M: So, gradually I am going through a process
26. FS: Yes
27. M: Now you have confidence in your self
28. FS: Yes yes yes yes
29. M: But that also mean that you take a vulnerable position well that you also you
30. FS: Yes // yes yes //
31. M: Show your weak sides // and then you grow.

The supervisor doubts mother's capacity to listen to advice whilst at the same time mitigating this derogatory judgement by smiling (4). Mother responds that she is learning but that much depends on how much trust she can put in other people. The family supervisor seems to acknowledge this by saying that, in his view, mother doesn't take the position many other parents take when they receive advice from others (12) Mother's position is clearly differentiated from a category of 'typical' child welfare parents. After characterizing mother's pertness, the family supervisor now seems to exclude her from a category of troublesome clients. Mother explains how her position towards the family supervisor is changing because her position as a reliable negotiator has been confirmed in other relations. Other people have encouraged her to trust herself and this has enabled her to show her vulnerable sides to these people; this in turn has

contributed to a change of her position in the context with the supervisor. It is described as a process that goes beyond the relations with those people and has been internalised. This has changed her I-position and enables her to adopt a vulnerable stance towards the family supervisor. It is significant that mother talks here in the second person singular about herself as though she is seeing herself from a distance.

1. FS: Yes, no sure, that is a healthy good process that you are going through right now. And then you indeed need confirmation. I think that without confirmation you get nowhere.
2. M: Yes but, but in fact, what you do; well, you always put my conviction my my opinion about that in in [question]. I can't accept that and there it goes again [more intonation and gesturing]. You act the opposite, as I say, you are too black white. It can't be the way I see it and in that I don't think the way you've operated has been optimal
3. FS: Mmm
4. M: Then you get a double eh
5. FS: Yes
6. M: Whereas the situation has been very heavy and you could consider it to be something special that we wrestled though this
7. FS: Yes
8. M: And that we came through like this.

The family supervisor acknowledges the relevance of the changes in mother's I-position. Mother cleverly does not pursue the matter of her alleged preconceptions of her former husband but, on a meta-level, draws attention to the supervisor's undermining response, which sets her back into old patterns of uncertainty. By stressing that they, meaning her children and herself, have overcome the hard times, she constructs the reaction as an attack against the three of them. She openly confronts the supervisor with the lack of confidence that she has experienced from him. At first, the family supervisor tried to present their relation as a common project, but now mother accuses him of undermining her individual position. She translates the disagreement between the family supervisor and herself as a relational lack of confidence, which may be the outcome of the uncertain nature of the relation between care and control. However, the family supervisor keeps a level head and in the next turn sticks to his point (emphasizing his I-position) that father is not the only cause of the problem (transcript is not printed here).

The family supervisor, on the other hand, also tries to differentiate different I-positions. In the next fragment, the family supervisor uses mother's clear individual

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position to lend force to his argument that mother plays a role in her children's problems.

1. FS: And that is exactly what I mean by this. As you said, it doesn't matter what it is about, but if it has to do with father then it will work out differently than with an adult woman, that's what you mean to say, // right?//.
2. M: //Yes//
3. FS: In fact, that is what I want to say, well, how the children understand it and what it then means for them, how they look at their father and how they look at you, that is really a very complicated matter
4. M: Yes
5. FS: Process
6. M: Yes the most important thing is that they themselves are able to say a lot and that you respond to it
7. FS: Indeed
8. M: // But that //
9. FS: // But that // that is the very problem. You are the mother, right? You have a certain view and experience of father, right? In that view, you give the children a lot of care, but you also provide them with an image of their father, of your former husband, of their father, which is of course not objective? The question is also how they, themselves, can develop an image of their father. I ask myself how much freedom, how much freedom do they really have?

The family supervisor draws a distinction between mother's two positions: her role towards her children and her role as an adult woman. He quotes her, when she said earlier that her remarks concerning father are interpreted differently by her children than her other remarks. Mother's position is also set apart from the position of her children. The supervisor explains that mother adopts two positions towards her children, a caring position that helped the children to go through difficult times, and another position in which she acts as the former spouse of the children's father, giving them biased information about him. This difference is amplified in the next fragment:

FS: ... that I think you, as a mother, you just have to be mother for your children right? And you should just be that, eh? But your very negative experiences with father make what you give the children quite emotionally charged and complicated, eh? I don't say that you don't do it well, I only say

that it will be very complicated for the children to receive that in a more or less clear fashion and then to manage that a little in the relationship with father.

Cautiously, the family supervisor tries to convince mother that it would be a good idea to distinguish her position as mother in relation to her children from her position as an adult woman. Repeatedly, he tells mother that she is a very caring and good mother to her children, but that she can't help giving her children a biased image of their father. This is another way of telling her that she cannot separate her negative feeling for her former husband from her maternal task of letting her children have contact with persons who are important to them.

In this middle phase of the encounter, both professional and client take clear individual positions, mother by showing how well she is developing in relationships with other people than the family supervisor, the supervisor by confronting mother with the negative consequences for her children of her biased position towards the children's father. Both participants also use 'we' to give emphasis to their individual positions,

The end phase: Confirming changed positions

In the first encounter, mother defends herself on a few occasions against the supervisor's suggestion that beside father she may also be a cause of the children's developmental problems.

1. FS: Last week, we talked about that, and yet I doubt if father is the only cause of the [clinical] picture of Jaap and Ineke.
2. M: In fact, the three of us have been the victim, and only if you step out can you recover.
3. FS: Yes
4. M: And I stepped out
5. FS: Yes//
6. M: // But of course, they did not fully step out.

The supervisor tries to broaden mother's outlook on the consequences of the divorce on her children. In response, mother withdraws to a defensive we-position and claims that all of them (she together with her children) were victims of father. But this we-position is then weakened by her remarks about the different dependencies on that relationship on the part of herself and her children.

At the end of the first conversation, the family supervisor justifies the family intervention by the need for a neutral person between the two quarrelling parents. He adds that in future he hopes the parents will learn to arrange the visits themselves and that this third party will no longer be needed. He then says:

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FS: In similar cases I am involved in, these problems do indeed play a role. That is indeed what it is about: children live with their father, mother has to return the children at eight and father gets very angry when it is a quarter past eight. Well, you can see that's absurd, right? In such cases, it is all about: eight o'clock is eight o'clock, the judge decided like that so the children have to be back home at eight o'clock.

The family supervisor pointedly refers to this case as a child welfare case in which he is acting as an expert ('we, as child welfare experts, who frequently deal with this kind of problem...'). This is quite a strong presentation of his institutional position. In this fragment, the professional quite obviously shows himself to be a representative of a moral collective and of community values. Every human society has to look after the interests of its more vulnerable citizens and here he presents himself as the one who controls the way the communal task of rearing children is carried out by parents.

The first encounter was dominated by the efforts of the family supervisor to convince mother that placing the children in specialised day care would be in the best interest of her children, and to persuade her to change her negative position regarding her former husband's access to the children. In the second encounter, the positions of both mother and family supervisor have shifted. The context changed because the children were taken into day care and the children had already paid their first visits to their father. Attention is still paid to the (general) condition of the children, but most of the talk is now about the access arrangement. At several points in the conversation the family supervisor tries to stress the common position and shared responsibility of mother and her former husband as parents of their children: in the next fragment, for instance:

FS: So something is working out, eh? That's great. At the same time, the whole problem between you and father, I feel that the way of dealing with the access arrangement is still important. That's why I asked you several times how you would continue with that, maybe achieve a kind of significant agreement. Because, of course, that has to do with the family supervision order, which may or may not be continued later. As I say, what have you, as parents, been able to manage on this.

In different words, the supervisor is repeating his justification of the family supervision order that he gave in the first encounter. Now he formulates it as a process that should be continued: a future decision about continuation of the order, and possible changes in parental positions. It is significant that the supervisor, instead of approaching mother in her individual position as the divorced spouse having trouble with her former husband (the whole problem between you and father), now adopts an approach to her in a we-position, as part of a couple who may have problems ('you, as parents'). In the

next fragment, this we-position is raised again, and is now described as a process ('achieved... grows... things arise'), a change from a problematic relationship to a stage of seeking solutions together.

1. FS: Well, look, of course, I would very much like to achieve that in the first place that should be done by sticking to agreements // eh? //
2. M: // Yes //
3. FS: From both sides. And if that, let's say, if that basis has developed and is more sound, then I hope that if things arise you will be able to solve them together [M nods] that no Solomon // and //
4. M: hmhm [nods/smiles]

The supervisor argues that the change he is trying to implement has to be supported by strict rules until mutual trust has developed and the clients ('you') can rule themselves. In the first encounter and the beginning of the second encounter, mother positioned herself still very much in opposition to father. In the last fragment, mother already – by nodding and smiling - seems to recognize the process of change that the supervisor wants to achieve. A few minutes later, mother says:

1. M: Hmhm, well, the first thing that comes into my mind: 'Well, if he likes to have them during autumn holiday, leave me the Christmas holiday, in any case, the week uninterrupted, the 22nd from the 22nd till, and then we might divide the rest of the days.
2. FS: Yes, and Christmas holiday is two weeks // and //
3. M: Yes, and we might divide the rest of the days.

It is worth noting that mother now speaks in terms of 'we', referring to her former husband and herself. It seems that the family supervisor has succeeded in regaining a little common ground for both parents, and a new we-position has been constructed, or an old one reconstructed. He has accomplished a sense of co-operation and a supportive attitude of mother to father so that they can take parental responsibility for their children.

Conclusions

I-positions and we-positions play a crucial role in tuning societal norms and expectations, and individual beliefs and practices. Professionals and clients try to defend their positions and to change the position of the conversational partner. This is certainly the case in child welfare conversations, as we have shown in a discourse analysis of a family supervision order. The results of this single case study can not just be extrapolated to other cases in child welfare. Further study is needed to analyze the relation between dialogical reorganization and the nature of the child welfare

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intervention with regard to intensity and structure. Next to that the coercive nature of the child welfare intervention has to be object of additional analysis, as the pace of change may very well be related to both the seriousness of the family problems and the supervisory character of the intervention.

In this case the personal pronouns 'I' (you) and 'we' (they) are used in several strategic ways. The use of 'we' contributes to an understanding of the relationship between professional and client as a common enterprise, and to the resolve to achieve agreement on crucial questions. It expresses the conviction that client and professional belong to the same community, aiming at similar social perspectives. In the light of the need for change in the family, it is relevant that the child welfare worker looks for common ground or inter-agreement, for this is more likely to lead to change at the intrapersonal level (Hermans, 1999b). A psychological space is then opened for the client and professional to differ in opinion. The use of 'I' in this context may be considered as a conversational manoeuvre to establish individuality, or even opposition. At the beginning of the conversation, the professional often uses 'we' to state his intention of teaming up with the client. In the middle section of the conversation, the professional stresses contrasts of opinion with the client. At first, the family supervisor carefully tries to persuade the parent to follow the advice of the Riagg, viz. to place the children in day care, but later, he openly confronts mother with the negative consequences of her prejudiced approach to the father. The family supervisor may assume that there is sufficient commonality to confront her with this critique without running the risk of losing contact with the mother. At several points the family supervisor softens the impact of his confrontations by saying that mother does not belong to the category of typical child welfare parents; this is again a reinforcement of mother's individual position but at the same time a good exception. It is worth noting that mother suggests to the family supervisor that he ought to be less critical and should support her in the way that her friends do.

Another strategic use of 'we' was mother defending her family (mother and children) against attempts (by the family supervisor) to divide them. When the family supervisor makes a distinction between mother's interests in obstructing a visit arrangement, and the interests of her children in having free access to their father, the mother defends her position by referring to their common experience as a family that has been through hard times. This is a common defensive strategy of clients employed to head off interventions.

A third strategy was to construct new groups that are considered to have a positive influence on the child's development. In this case, the problems between the parents are seen as a negative developmental context; in the second encounter, the family supervisor repeats his view that mother should try to distinguish her negative feelings towards her former husband from her maternal tasks. Now, he adds the

observation that the goal of the supervision order is to achieve a situation where the parents can together arrange visits without the interference of third parties. The family supervisor now addresses mother as part of a couple ('you'). This strategy appears to be successful as, for the first time, mother speaks of father and herself as 'we'.

Child care is an important social institution that helps to safeguard children and in doing so to maintain common standards about how to raise children. It is a vital link in the construction of a community with shared understanding and belief of how the best interests of children may best be served. Child welfare workers are significant moral agents of society confronting risky and improper child rearing practices and assisting parents who want to change their risky habits. I have analyzed the transformation processes as a complicated interaction between internal and external dialogues. What is the relevance of this for community psychology?

The strategic uses of pronouns ('we', 'I', 'you') in achieving social change in dialogues between professionals and clients have counterparts in the dialogues between institutions and groups. At a first level, the goal of community psychology will be to establish a relationship of mutual trust by stressing shared aims and interests. Institutional agents of change, like the child welfare worker in this case, do their utmost to start a dialogue with communities and to keep the communication open. Emphasizing commonality rather than introducing pre-packaged and unfamiliar social programmes is the way to success. When change agents and communities co-operate to gain common ground, the moment of social change comes closer ('It is important that *we* hear and understand *each other*, so that *we* can work out things *together* and find *common* solutions'). Fostering team spirit is the basis for achieving further transformations.

As soon as a minimal relationship between institutional agents and community has been established, some disagreements between them may then become acceptable. Positional differences will become more obvious, and may be supported by referring to group values, and by referring to we-positions. This study shows that institutional professionals create an interpersonal space that enables clients to modify their positions. They do so by emphasizing common intentions - in the case presented here, by seeking the child's best interests. That seems to be an ideal dialogical climate for clients to appropriate, in the words of Bakhtin, an 'internally persuasive discourse' that enables them to talk about their new perspectives in their own words. Once professionals and communities have found a team spirit, there is space for disagreement without the risk of losing trust in each other. A rational exchange of arguments may offer solutions and social change (in the community as well as in the institution) may then ensue. This may very well be a slow and laborious process: groups resist change because they feel change would be at odds with the norms and values of their community ('*you* may think that *we* should change *our* norms, but *we* feel that *you* do not understand what is going on in *our* community'). There is always a risk that the participants say what they think the others want to hear, in which case the change in the community may only be

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superficial, merely the outcome of an authoritarian institutional discourse (cf. Tappan, 2005). Especially at this time, when repressive institutional practices are gaining the upper hand again, it is important to keep looking for ways to enter into dialogue with communities in need. In order for the change to last, the interventions should connect to self-understandings and to such feelings as pride, belonging, and security, rather than distress, self-rejection, and disruption (Verkuijten, 2005). It should also support critical political awareness (Watts, 1999). For empowerment to be achieved, the community not only has to agree with the institutional agents about the desired changes but also to consider the social change as something that comes to belong to their community; so that their members may say: 'we, as members of this community see this ...'. The goal is to assist communities to talk about their new perspectives in their own words using a shared language.

Although child welfare interventions are often coercive, at the same time they are one of the last efforts to repair the disturbed contact between families at risk and society. It is widely accepted that the first choice is to keep children with their parents rather than to place them in an alternative setting; so, in the first place child welfare is directed at restoring the communication with these families. Although (rhetorical) manipulation can never be excluded and although power differences are at the heart of professional client relations, these professionals try to approach clients as dialogical beings in a non-imposing way (Guilfoyle, 2005). The major performance in these dialogues is to open up the dialogue and as a result make the necessary shifts in I-positions and we-positions more probable. The challenge is to look for that common ground, even in ambiguous institutional contexts like child welfare. It is surely the best instrument available to empower communities and allow citizens to regain a grip of their situation, both by stressing their individual positions as responsible persons and by emphasizing their common social responsibilities. The final aim is to build a strong community that can manage without institutional interference.

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Book Review

FLASHES OF INSIGHT

A review of *I am I: Sudden Flashes of Self-awareness in Childhood*
by Dolph Kohnstamm
Twickenham, UK: Athena Press, 2007, 204 pp., paperback, £6.99
ISBN-10: 1844019373

Pernille Hviid
University of Copenhagen, Denmark

In this work, Dolph Kohnstamm sets out to investigate what is from his own point of view one of the most amazing things that can happen to a child, a sudden experience of herself as a person. Kohnstamm's inspiration for doing so seems partly to stem from philosophical sources (Spiegelberg, Sartre, Russell and Jung) and autobiographic literature (Nabokov, Jean Paul), as well as from his own fascination with the fact that human beings *can* and *do* reflect upon their own existence and their individualities, that they are persons "who occasionally stop and think about who they really are and want to be".

Although I do not consider reflection on oneself as a singular person to be more prominent or even separable from reflections of what one is *part of*, I share the author's basic fascination as a point of departure for a closer study of *I am I*. Since Kohnstamm's focus is on childhood experiences, his book promises a quite rare opportunity for developmental psychologists to relate to processes of development from a first person perspective. Taken as a whole, the theme of the book is quite unique and is therefore of immediate interest to the present reviewer.

Content

The data analysed here consists of autobiographic memories of important self-awareness episodes in childhood, sent as letters or emails to the author by request, via radio broadcasts or German and Dutch psychology magazines. The group of informants of the investigation is not very clearly presented; they appear to be adults of different ages, from different countries, mostly Germany and Holland. The number of informants

AUTHOR NOTE. Please address any correspondence about this review to Pernille Hviid, Department of Psychology, University of Copenhagen, Øster Farimagsgade 5, DK 1353 K, Denmark. Email: Pernille.Hviid@psy.ku.dk

is unknown to the reader, the majority being women. Kohnstamm does some kind of initial sorting of the data, due to (subjective) criteria of relevance, clarity and credibility.

Unfortunately, the procedures used in creating the field of data delimit their utility. Questions regarding the frequency of these flashes of self-awareness in childhood are of course impossible to answer; I thus consider this to be a minor disadvantage in this case. However, the criteria used for sorting this data is a ‘black box’ for the reader, and that is a shame since *relevance, clarity and credibility* do indeed seem to be scientifically obvious and necessary criteria when dealing with autobiographical data..

The data are grouped and organised in chapters dealing with different aspects inherent in the narrative of being or becoming an “I”. To mention a few examples, for one group of informants the experiences of being an I were mediated by looking at themselves in the *mirror*, for another by looking at themselves in new *light* (understood literally, i.e. as light or darkness), whilst the *body* mediated the experienced flash of self-awareness for a third group. Other chapters are organised according to some specific reflective characteristics associated with having these self-experiences, such as relating oneself to the past or the future, or becoming immediately aware of the relativity of one’s perceptions. This organisation of self-narratives into themes or mediators is nonetheless of no help in understanding the dynamics of development of the self, and that is of course unsurprising. Neither a two-factor analysis, nor even a three- or a four-, can introduce order into the complexity of the development of the self. Therefore, the chapters cannot provide theoretical background for each other; thus there is no progression of theoretical understanding from one chapter to the next.

In the last chapters of the book, theories of the self and its development are presented. The author demonstrates an excellent theoretical overview of the field, yet in placing these theoretical considerations at the end of the book, with very few connections to the empirical data, he leaves it mostly to the reader to make use of the theories in understanding the empirical data presented here.

Gains from reading *I am I*

Each chapter of this book is literally packed with excerpts from data; and should one ever have had doubts about the existence of these sudden flashes of self-awareness in childhood years, would be effectively shown to be groundless. The demonstration of the mere *existence* of these sudden discoveries of oneself seems to be the primary aim and advantage of the book.

The lack of a progressive establishment of order is provoking, yet in some strange way, this is also the case with respect to the beauty of the theme. The data ‘resists’ the ordering that the author proposes. Although some of the experiences related can be clustered into situations such as experiencing reflections in a mirror or

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discovering oneself in a change of light, many other can not. For example, one German woman writes:

*One summer morning I was playing in my parent's garden. I must have been four or five years old because my three older siblings were at school. Before me, there was a shoebox padded with fresh lettuce leaves where I had placed several small snails. As I observed the snails and observed what they would do next, it became clear to me that I would never be able to know what it's like to be a snail. At the same time I had an amazing sense of my own self, my own body, of being alive, all the sensory impressions, my light dress on my body, the wind, the sand on my hands, the sun on my back. An astonishing feeling of happiness flowed through me: **I am me, I feel, I make my own decisions, I am inside and outside, I am one.** (p.80)*

Why in the garden and not the house? Why that morning and not the morning of the day before? Why snails and not bees? Why when alone? Why? To the informants themselves, these sudden experiences seemed to rise out of nowhere or everywhere. Perhaps the mirror or the sunlight on their arms triggered such experiences? And yet, these people must have looked at themselves in the mirror hundreds of times, and seen the sun thousands of times. So why there, why at that particular time or in that particular situation? I consider such complexity to be utterly beautiful.

Although this was perhaps not intended, Kohnstamm's selection of empirical data awakens the idea of a multilayered, open-ended, interdependent conception of development. In this theoretical horizon, the rise of novelties – in this case, self-discovery – has endless, although not unlimited (Valsiner, 2006) variations and possibilities. Systemic dynamics can give rise to smooth subtle movements or heavy redundant waves, either as 'small microscopic changes of the child's personality', or as 'stormy revolutionary courses', as Vygotsky poetically (1930-31/1998) formulated it: The more dramatic version is surely the case in these strong sudden flashes. From reading the text, one does not know what configuration led to that result. We only know it was there.

I am I: A flash and unfortunately no more than that

The memories of these specific incidences of self-awareness seems to be both very clear and strong in existential terms, yet, due to their biographical age, quite disparate in terms of concrete details leading up to, surrounding or immediately following the episode. The incidences stand out as flashes. For a demanding developmental psychologist, obvious questions arise: what meanings did these flashes have for the person experiencing them, how did they change the person's life and self-conceptions, and in what directions? Some of the informants give sparse answers, as in the case of a Dutch woman remembering her experiences as a twelve-year old:

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(...) This experience also had consequences for me. At school I was often bullied by other children. At this moment I decided that this should stop. And it did. (p. 54)

Notwithstanding, these interpretations on what followed their flashes are scarce and rather simple in comparison with the richness of details in the specific flash situation. What might not have been unravelled as elements and traits *leading* to the episode could have been specified as *following* the episode, even if that meant interpreting the importance of the situation for adult life and understanding and knowing oneself *today*. Perhaps these interpretations have been omitted by Dolph Kohnstamm as irrelevant material. But for a scholar working on developmental processes, getting a view of the ‘Tsunami’, whilst being truly fascinating, is also almost annoying without the knowledge of what lead to it or without having at least a glimpse of some of its after-waves.

Recommendations

For potential readers who might dispute the existence of these condensed incidences of self-insight in childhood, or have doubts — as many of the informants did themselves — concerning the reality of these past experiences, the book is highly recommendable. If, however, the potential reader looks for dynamics, potentialities, developmental paths and self trajectories, I would suggest that she alternatively listened to her children, grandchildren, parents, neighbours, husband, lover(s) or colleagues.

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