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Dissertation

Titel der Dissertation:

Self, Cultural Multiplicity, and Dialogical Self Theory:

Unravelling the Co-constructions of Self and Culture

Verfasserin

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Angestrebter akademischer Grad

Doktorin der Philosophie (Dr. phil.)

Wien, Oktober 2011

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Unravelling the Co-construction of Self and Culture

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Dedication

To S.

Abstract

Until this day the self presents a domain of numerous unanswered questions, which have been of ongoing interest for social scientists since the beginning of philosophical thought. New social forms (such as the increase of persons moving from country to country) have shed interesting light on unexplored areas, and have brought forth novel understandings of the phenomenon. The dialogical self theory presents an exemplary approach with the aim of transcending traditional dichotomies of internal and external aspects of self and society, and thus offers a welcoming ground for theorizing on the self in relation to culture. The relation between the self and culture, as well as dialogical self theory, are the predominant focus or common ground of the here presented publications. More precisely, this dissertation deals, by means of single contributions, in particular with the question of how one can make sense of the self in the fast moving cultural multiplicity of present societies, and how dialogical self theory can contribute to current conceptions of a "cultural inclusive" self. Furthermore, how exactly is the relation between culture and self explicated within dialogical self theory, and how may the theory be advanced with cultural psychological and philosophical understandings. The aim is to unravel the interactive dynamically constituting structural forms of person and culture in relation to dialogical self theory. Thereby, a more fundamental scientific understanding of the interrelatedness of the two phenomena—person and culture—can be gained.

*Keywords***:** person-culture relations**,** dialogical self theory, dynamic constitution, cultural mediation, spheres

Zusammenfassung

Seit Beginn des philosophischen Denkens stellt das Selbst ein Gebiet dar, indem zahlreiche unbeantwortete Fragen aufkommen, die von anhaltendem Interesse für die Sozialwissenschaften sind. Neue soziale Strukturen (wie etwa die erhöhte Mobilität der Menschen zwischen verschiedenen Ländern) haben bislang unbeachtete Bereiche hervorgebracht und neue Betrachtungsweisen initiiert. Als beispielhafter Theorieansatz verfolgt die Theorie des *dialogical self* das Ziel, die üblichen Dichotomien internaler sowie externaler Aspekte des Selbst und der Gesellschaft zu transzendieren, und sie präsentiert so einen willkommenen Ansatzpunkt für weitere theoretische Überlegungen über das Selbst in Bezug auf Kultur. Die Beziehung von Selbst und Kultur, sowie die dialogical self-Theorie, stellen den gemeinsamen Interessensgegenstand der hier vorgelegten Publikationen dar. Konkret behandeln die einzelnen Beiträge folgende Fragen: Wie kann das Selbst, eingebettet in einer rasch wechselnden, kulturellen Vielfalt, konzeptualisiert werden? Was kann die Theorie des dialogical self zum heutigen Verständnis eines „Kultur inklusiven" Selbst beitragen? Wie wird die Beziehung zwischen Kultur und Selbst in der dialogical self-Theorie dargestellt? Wie kann diese Theorie, anhand von kulturpsychologischen und -philosophischen Auffassungen erweitert werden? Ziel ist es, entlang der dialogical self-Theorie die interaktiven, sich gegenseitig konstituierenden Strukturen von Person und Kultur zu entfalten, um so zu einem fundamentierteren Verständnis der Zusammenhänge der beiden Phänomene zu gelangen.

Schlagwörter: Person-Kultur Beziehungen, dialogical self-Theorie, Dynamische Konstitution, Kulturelle Mediation, Sphären

Contents

Acknowledgement

1. Introduction: A time for questions

Als das Kind Kind war,
war es die Zeit der folgenden Fragen:
Warum bin ich ich und warum nicht du?
Warum bin ich hier und warum nicht dort?
...
Wie kann es sein, daß ich, der ich bin,
bevor ich wurde, nicht war,
und daß einmal ich, der ich bin,
nicht mehr der ich bin, sein werde?
("Lied vom Kindsein" Peter Handke, 1987)

Es geschieht vielleicht nicht häufig, aber es kommt vor,daß Menschen mitten in der Landschaft der Dinge innehalten und auf ihr Ich aufmerksam werden. Plötzlich stoßen sie sich an dem unvergleichlichen Sachverhalt, daß sie „da" sind – ein Umstand der wohl das Gegenteil eines dinglichen Fundes ist und der doch auch wie ein jäh auftauchender Anlaß zum Finden im Selbstbewußtsein einschlägt.
(Peter Sloterdijk,1993, p.16)

In Peter Handke's poem "*Lied vom Kindsein*" a young child contemplates his situation of being in the world. The fact that it is a young child reflecting upon who he is in relation to the other, and how, over space and time, he came to be who he is, and how his self-concept continues to take on novel structures and new forms resulting in a different self-concept, gives these questions a somewhat naïve connotation. It is, however, precisely such common puzzling phenomena, which set the stage for any discipline to begin its construction and then to proceed beyond its manifest content to explain it. In the case of the self-concept, the attempt to answer the question "who am I and how have I become who I am," whilst accounting for all the complexity of a person's relations to culture, has resulted in numerous intellectual efforts to construct psychological accounts of human beings (Valsiner, 1998).

In a similar vein, moving from naïve assumptions of the self to more complex considerations, the present collection of publications sets off with the goal of finding answers

to the common quandary, alluded to by the child in Peter Handke's poem—how do persons become who they are and what role does culture, along with space, time and the *other*, play in developing a self-concept. My endeavour to finding answers to these questions quickly gave way to more complex theoretical inquiries into the dynamic relationship between cultural processes and self-construction.

1.1   Goal: Quandaries about the person-culture relationship in psychology

Proceeding from an empirical study which I conducted on self-construction in relation to cultural diversity to theoretical considerations of the person-culture relationship in general, the main goal of this dissertation has been, on the one hand, to investigate how the person-culture relationship can be understood from a cultural psychological perspective, and on the other hand, how this conception can help further advance current self-construction theories such as dialogical self theory (first proposed by Hermans, Kempen and Van Loon in 1992).

The emphasis on dialogical self theory resulted from the qualitative case study, as discussed in the first contribution of this dissertation (Joerchel, 2006, see Appendix A), in which this theory has proven to be helpful in describing self-construction within a cultural multiplicity on an inter- and intra-individual level. However, in the same study it also became apparent that the theoretical framework exhibited inconsistencies with respect to explicit and implicit assumptions of culture. The resulting question of whether dialogical self theory— claiming to be a "culture-inclusive" self-construction theory (e.g. Hermans, 2001a)—could, in fact, account for cultural and societal processes dynamically constituting psychological ones (Slunecko, 2008), spurred the analyses and theoretical considerations of the consequential contributions (Joerchel, 2007, 2008, 2011, in press, see Appendices B to E).

Dialogical self theory can thus be viewed as an example for how psychological theories in general tend to implicitly reiterate, despite explicit rejection, general individualistic assumptions, which have in the course of occidental history guided and constrained

psychological constructs of person and culture (Valsiner, 2007). Thus, the overriding goal of this dissertation is to conceptualize a self-concept from a cultural psychological perspective, highlighting the dynamic and process-oriented relation of person and culture, in order to transcend the traditional Cartesian paradigm. This is done with a special focus on dialogical self theory.

1.2 Structure of the dissertation

The following publications constitute this cumulative dissertation (for the full publications see Appendices A to E):

A) Joerchel, A. C. (2006, February). A qualitative study of multicultural identities: Three cases of London's inner-city children. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung /Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, *7*(2). Retrieved from http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs0602183

B) Joerchel, A. C. (2007). A dance between the general and the specific: Implications for the self concept. Commentary on: Homophobia: A cultural construction of a barrier (Ana Flavia Madureira). *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science*, *41*(3-4), 254-261. doi: 10.1007/s12124-007-9031-x

C) Joerchel, A. C. (2008). The dialogical self as (atmospherically) mediated within a socio-cultural sphere: A socio-cultural approach to the formation of the self. In S. Salvatore, J. Valsiner, S. Strout-Yagodzynski & J. Clegg (Eds.), *Yearbook of Ideographic Science: Vol. 1* (pp. 213-232). Rom: Firera & Liuzzo Publishing.

D) Joerchel, A. C. (2011). Locating the dialogical self within a socio-cultural sphere. In M. Märtens, B. Wagoner, E. Aveling, I. Kadianaki & L. Whittaker (Eds.), *Dialogicality in focus: Challenges to theory, method and application* (pp. 27-39). New York: Nova Science Publisher.

E) Joerchel, A. C. (submitted). Cultural processes within dialogical self theory: A socio-cultural perspective of collective voices and social language. *International Journal of Dialogical Science*, Submitted in August, 2011. Status: Accept with minor revisions.

These individual contributions are the sum total of my reflection on the relationship of culture and self-construction from a cultural psychological perspective with special emphasis

on dialogical self theory. The following pages contextualize (chapter two) and summarize (chapter three) the individual publications, while chapter four discusses how their specific foci relate to each other and, more importantly, contribute to the project of conceptualizing the person-culture relationship as dynamic constitution (Slunecko, 2008) in order to transcend hidden individualistic assumptions within self-construction theories such as dialogical self theory.

2 Self-construction and culture: Dynamic processes

The terms *self* and *culture* both refer to highly ambiguous notions with diverse connotations according to discipline, time and place. Within mainstream psychology both concepts have been traditionally understood from a dualistic perspective, which not only isolates the person from culture, but also perceives both concepts as reified entities with stable core essences. Nevertheless, over the past decades it has become evident that cultural processes co-constitute psychological processes and thus should be taken into account when discussing psychological phenomena, including the self (Trommsdorff & Kornardt, 2007). And yet, it is precisely this question of how to conceptualize the self with respect to culture, which remains an issue of debate.

Whilst various advances have been made within psychology to overcome traditional dualistic assumptions of both culture and person, scholars such as Boesch and Straub (2007), as well as Jahoda (2007), have pointed out that within cultural psychology dialogical self theory (Hermans et al., 1992; Hermans & Kempen, 1993) exemplifies a promising theoretical conception of the self in relation to culture. Dialogical self theory is well founded in terms of placing the self-conception within a historical frame of reference. The notion of culture within dialogical self theory, however, is less sound. Therefore, before turning to the notion of self and dialogical self theory, two main understandings of culture within psychology will be described in the following paragraphs.

2.1 The term culture: Differentiating two main directions

Valsiner (2000, 2007) points out that the term *culture* has commonly been understood within psychology in two main ways. Scholars usually perceive culture either as it is conceptualized within *cross-cultural psychology,* or within *cultural psychology*. In the following paragraphs I first describe the cross-cultural understanding before turning to the cultural psychological perspective.

2.1.1   The term culture within cross-cultural psychology

In cross-cultural psychology the term culture has mostly been used to designate any group of people who belong together by virtue of one or the other shared feature (Valsiner, 2000). Cross-cultural psychologists usually refer to "cultures" when they compare different ethnic, geographic, national, or religious groups. Austrians, for example, "belong together" because they share a set of distinctive features such as a language or geographical proximity. Likewise Muslims "belong together" because they share a set of religious practices and beliefs. In this sense, the term culture is reduced to serving as a label without any further explanatory value. A Muslim, for example, is a Muslim because he acts according to the Koran. At the same time, a Muslim acts according to the Koran precisely because he is Muslim. The description becomes tautological.

This use of labelling creates the illusion of a group of persons which is temporally stable ("the Muslim culture" stays the same over many centuries) and homogenous (*all* Muslims share *the same* set of features, and inter-individual differences are explained quantitatively—as opposed to qualitatively—as some share more of the same features than others). Valsiner (2000) emphasizes that while certain commonalities do exist across societies, ethnic groups and tribes, these groupings do not themselves constitute culture but rather "the social basis for culture to be constructed" (p.49; for further elaboration see also Valsiner, 2007, pp.20-26).

In accordance with this perspective, Slunecko (2008) critiques a further important aspect of the cross-cultural understanding of culture. In his *Rede an eine Wissenschaft, die als Kulturpsychologie wird auftreten wollen* (pp. 187-221) he critically discusses how the cross-cultural understanding of culture—as independent variable—follows a logic of scientific discoveries, which most scientific endeavours adhear to (mainly since Popper). According to this logic, the testing of hypothesis, and the discovery of the "truth" and of hard facts that can

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be replicated any time, is of highest priority. This rather restricted understanding of science neglects to capture essential aspects of certain phenomena under investigation—in this case culture. In order to clarify this point more clearly the following paragraphs now turn to the notion of culture within cultural psychology.

2.1.2   The term culture within cultural psychology

In contrast to the above understanding of culture, a cultural psychological perception conceptualizes culture as a "semiotic (sign) mediation that is part of the system of organized psychological functions" (Valsiner, 2000, p. 49). As part of the psychological organizing system, semiotic mediation takes place on both an *intra-personal level* and an *inter-personal level*. On the intra-individual level the person's intra-psychological processes are semiotically mediated, but they are also implicated in experiencing the world. Thus a person's feelings are semiotically regulated on the intra-psychological level when a person, for example, views a painting in a museum (experiencing the world) and thinks to him or herself "I like this picture" (Valsiner, 2007, p.29).

Semiotic mediation on the inter-individual level takes place when different persons interact with each other, for example, when chatting, fighting, persuading each other, or when they avoid someone or certain realms of experiencing the world. Here Valsiner (2007) points out that "this kind of discursive practise can entail much more than mere interaction or 'exchange of information.' It can include strategic interactions, setting up the 'semiotic traps' for interlocutors, and ideological declarations" (p.29).

Bidirectionality of open systems

As the cultural psychological perspective is fundamentally developmental, and as development of any kind and at any level (biological, psychological, or societal) is an open systemic phenomenon in which novelty is *"constantly in the process of being created"*

(Valsiner, 2007, p.35), a *bidirectional transfer model* (see Figure 2.1.) is the most appropriate here. The basic premise of this model is that all incoming information is actively and constantly transformed by persons. The novelty of specific cultural messages arises as persons simultaneously analyze and synthesize specific information during the process of internalization and externalization. It is important to remember in the discussion that the construction of novelty takes place both during encoding and decoding. Thus, in Figure 2.1., person A constructs novelty each time he or she conveys the same message as this message is always adapted to the specific circumstances (to whom it is being conveyed, where it is being conveyed, why and with what intentions, etc.). At the same time person B, the recipient of the suggested message (x'), is depicted as an active analyzer who internalizes the components of the message and synthesizes them with existing knowledge (now x''). During this process some existing information may be eliminated, other information added, and still other components can be structured in a new manner whereby novelty arises.
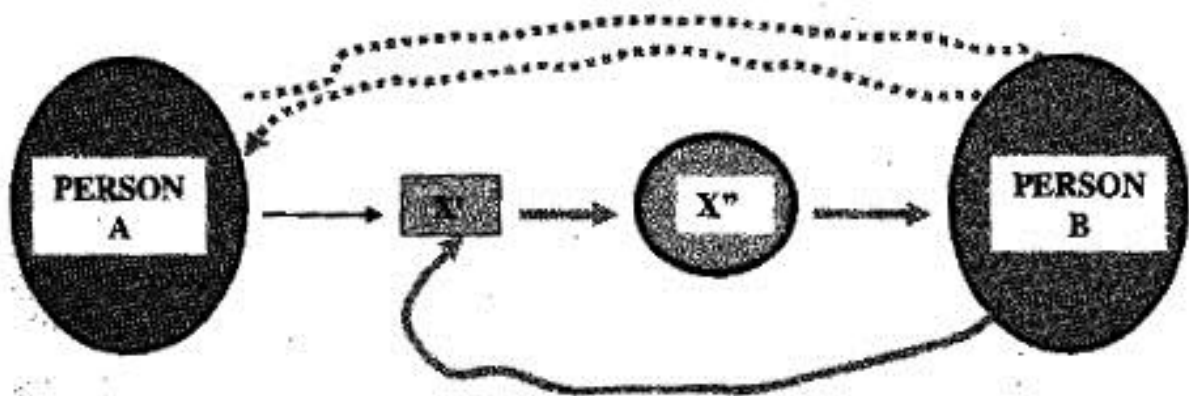
Figure 2.1 Bidirectional culture transfer model. A message x' is conveyed by person A to person B and changes during the communicative processes, becoming x''. Adapted from "Bidirectional (Mutually Constructive) Culture Transfer Model," by J. Valsiner, 2007, *Culutre in Minds and Societies,* p.35. Copyright 2007 by Jaan Valsiner.

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Given the complexity and the process-oriented dynamic characteristic of interaction, Valsiner (2007) suggests that "the 'message' as such never exists in any 'given' form, as it is reconstructed by the encoder ..., and in a similar manner by the decoder." Further down he adds:

> As the roles of the encoder and the decoder are constantly being interchanged, cultural transmission involves transformation of culture in real time by participants in the social discourse. This is well known in language theory (Bühler, 1990) as well as in the philosophical look at intersubjectivity (Rommetveit, 1992). (Valsiner, 2007, p.36)

Thus culture, from a cultural psychological perspective, is viewed as semiotic mediation, stressing the dynamic and bidirectional characteristics of human interactions.

Having now described the two main directions of how culture has commonly been understood within psychology, the following paragraphs will now turn to the self concept and how it is primarily understood within psychology.

2.2   The self: Origins and predecessors of a dialogical self

The self is a phenomenon—or should we rather say: a mirandum—well established within a range of research areas such as social psychology, cultural psychology, developmental psychology, and philosophy—to mention only disciplines of immediate relevance to this dissertation.[1] In view of the abundance of self-concept constructions, I do not suggest that a full historical account of existing conceptions—even only within cultural, social and developmental psychology—is given in the following paragraphs. Rather, the aim here is to trace some important historical developments that are relevant to this dissertation and

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1 The list of disciplines in which the self has profoundly been studied is probably in itself just as heterogeneous and vast as various perspectives of the self concept. Boesch (1991), for example, points out that these disciplines range from theology to mathematics (p.297; for an indepth historical account of the formation of the self and the identity concept see Taylor, 1989; and for a sociological perspective see also Abels, 2010).

directly lead up to the argument why dialogical self theory presents a promising theoretical endeavour in conceptualizing the self in relation to culture.

Despite the fact that the various disciplines and their conceptions of self-constructs are very heterogenous, many scholars have argued that the term self derives from an early distinction between physical and non-physical aspects in human beings, though it appears in philosophical writings only much later. As such Descartes discussed the "I" as thinking and knowing entity and his conceptions of ratio became widely recognized. Yet, whether the self-concept presents the *process of experiencing* or the *content of what is "known"* has long been an important debate in which philosophers could not reach concensus (Suls, Tesser & Felson, 2000).

In this sense David Hume for example, belonging to the English thought tradition, understood the self as a "bundle" of different perceptions. He is said to have been the first philosopher who coined the term self as referring to the autonomous nature of personality-in-itself (Valsiner, 1998). Here the emphasis lies on the content of what is known.

In contrast to the English tradition and opposed to perceiving the self as a collection of different perceptions—as what is known—Valsiner (1998) points out that "the French tradition of thought (from Descartes to Binet, Janet, and Piaget) emphasizes *dynamic coordination* of meanings, operations, and goals that constitute personality" (original emphasis, p.9). Here Descartes is mentioned (along with Binet, Janet, and Piaget) as a proponent of a dynamic coordination of the self (and thereby as predecessor of scholars theorizing about the self-concept as a dynamic meaning making process). Yet, Suls et al. (2000), as well as Hermans and Hermans-Konopka (2010), emphasize that during Enlightenment, particularly related to Descartes' quest for undisputed certainty and rational thought, the modern view of the world became more and more dualistic. In this sense, the modern self is depicted as "a self-defining entity, with a deep metaphysical abyss between the

realms of the *internal* self and the *external* world" (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, p.87, original emphasis). And further down the self is described as:

> a "container self" with the following characteristics: (a) there are strict and sharp boundaries between self and non-self; (b) the other does not belong to the realm of the self and is located as purely "outside", and (c) the main attitude towards the external environment is one of control. (pp.87-88)

Note that Hermans and Hermans-Konopka (2010) point to the dualistic assumption of philosophical predecessors such as Descartes, while Valsiner (1998) emphasises the dynamic traces within their works. Thus, while a rational separation between an internal and external world—and between self and other—may have governed most modern self theorizing, some talk of dynamic processes, which are an important point of departure for this project, is also present.

Nevertheless, the strict separation of self and other, and related self-characteristics such as rational control over the external world, have given cause to many post-modern scholars to take radically opposing standpoints. Moving away from the universalistic ambitions towards emphasising difference, otherness, and fragmentation, post-modern scholars such as Foucault (1980) question the notion of a universal truth. Within this so-called post-modern movement not only the adequacy of finding the truth about what is out there is questioned, the notion of a core self is contested, and the subject is decentralized. As opposed to the individualistic conception of a core self, a novel understanding of the self as saturated and distributed over a multiplicity of incoherent and disconnected relationships is suggested instead (e.g. Gergen, 1991). In this sense:

> The idea that there is a "real me" that is identifiable throughout life is abandoned. Identity is "created" by outside forces. One of the most potent

forces in the process of construction is language with its ability to define and control. (Hermans and Hermans-Konopka, 2010, p. 93)

2.3 The dialogical self theory: Origins, theoretical ambitions, promises and quandaries

Hermans, Kempen, and Van Loon (1993) tried to align themselves with post-modern ambitions of overcoming dualistic and individualistic assumptions typical for the modern conception of the self (as discussed above). However, they were also careful not to succumb to a completely fractured conception of the self, in which meaningful relations between various self components become secondary. Walking a kind of middle way, Hermans, Kempen, and Van Loon, in their groundbreaking article of 1993, decentralized the self-concept and introduced a polyphonous self-concept, which is tied together by meaningful relations. In order to formulate a concept, which is both relational and decentralized, the authors of dialogical self theory resorted mainly to the theories of James and Bakhtin. It is Bakhtin's conception of dialogism which is referred to in the dialogical self theory and which is of relevance in the present work.

2.3.1 Two theoretical predecessors: James and Bakhtin

The notion of dialogism was first coined by the Russian literary scholar Bakhtin who discussed Dostoyevsky as having created a new artistic form of thought—the polyphonic novel. The principle feature of the polyphonic novel is that it is "composed of a number of independent and mutually opposing viewpoints embedded in characters involved in dialogical relationships" (Hermans et al., 1993, p.40). The single characters not only have the possibility of entering into dialogical relationships with any real character, but also with any imaginary character. In this sense, dialogicality is not restricted to the interaction of two distinct

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interlocutors. The notion of the polyphonic novel with its dialogical features serves as one of the main premises upon which Hermans et al. (1993) have built their self-construction theory.

The second primary source for Hermans et al. (1993) is James' classical conception of the self. In his conception of the self, James makes a distinction between the "I" as the self-as-knower and the "ME" as the self-as-known (1890/1950). Accordingly, the I and the Me are characterized as follows. Continuity (a sense of personal identity and sameness over time), distinctness (an existence separate from others), and volition (a continuous appropriation and rejection of thought, an active processor of experience) are characteristics related to the I. The Me represents everything a person can call his or her own (including all extensions, such as clothing and material belongings), and consists of material characteristics (body and possessions), spiritual characteristics (thoughts and consciousness), and social characteristics (relations, roles, fame). With James's differentiation of the Me, and particularly with the inclusion of all that a person can call his or her own, Hermans and colleagues were able to extend the self-concept to the environment (Hermans et al., 1993).

Combining the two concepts of dialogism and the extended self, Hermans et al. (1993) developed a conception of self-construction in which the self is described as an open dynamic system—emphasizing not only the relations within the system, but also within other systems—in order to overcome both the Cartesian paradigm as well as the extreme opposite position of complete fracturedness with no meaningful relations between single parts. How exactly the self is conceptualized within dialogical self theory is described in the following paragraphs.

2.3.2   The self within dialogical self theory

Within dialogical self theory the self is conceptualized as a dynamic multiplicity of relatively autonomous *I-positions.* In Figure 2.2., the different I-positions are depicted by the dots within and outside the self-system. The bigger dots represent the temporarily more

dominant positions, which are engaged in dialogical relations. The I does not only have the ability to endow each position with a distinct voice—which then enables dialogical relationships between positions—it is also able to move in space and time, and from position to position according to context and situation. Thus, the constellation of various I-positions pictured in Figure 2.2. is to be understood as highly dynamic with their locations, dominance, and actual relations between themselves constantly changing from one context to another.

The dialogical self-system consists of an internal space (inside the inner circle), within which the internal I positions move—these are positions that are felt as part of myself, such as I as someone who enjoys life or I as a mother. It also comprises external positions, which are positions felt to belong to my environment such as my friends or my children. Those are represented by the moving dots inside the outer circle. Both internal and external positions are conceived as deriving their relevance from their relations with one another. Their significance emerges "from their mutual transactions over time" (Hermans, 2001a, p. 252).
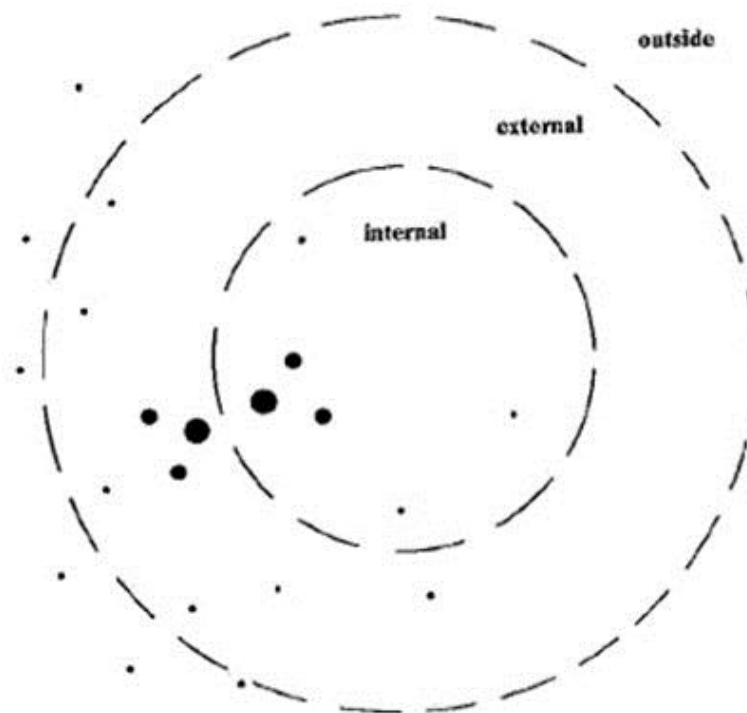
Figure 2.2. Positions in a multivoiced self. Each dot within the Figure represents a different I-position and is in a dialogical relationship with another I-position. The boundaries are permeable and fluid, allowing the I to move from position to position, according to time and context. Adapted from "The Dialogical Self: Toward a Theory of Personal and Cultural Positioning," by H. J. M. Hermans, 2001a, *Culture and Psychology*, 7(3), p. 253. Copyright 2001 by Sage Publications.

Note that the boundaries of the dialogical self-system are not depicted as closed circles but as open ones. These open boundaries are not only between internal and external domains of the self, but also between the self and the outside world. The openness of these boundaries suggests a high permeability within the self, and also between self and outside world—the self thus extends into the environment. Hermans and Hermans-Konopka (2010) argue that this special extension represents the basis for dialogical self theory as dialogue assumes "the emergence of the creation of 'dialogical space' in which existing positions are further developed and new and commonly constructed positions have a chance to emerge" (p.6). These positions may be, but do not necessarily need to be in contradiction or opposition to one another.

Bakhtin's (1984/2003) notion of *polyphony* states that each voice in a story functions like a character interacting with other voices. In this sense voices are involved, just as characters within a story, in processes of questioning and answering, agreeing and disagreeing, or quarreling and challenging the other. Bakhtin's polyphonic metaphor transcends James' notion of the self as it allows persons to live in multiple worlds, where in each world the self experiences a respective author telling the story of that world. Hermans et al. (1993) describe this in the following terms:

> In the polyphonic translation of the self there is not an overarching I organizing the constituents of the Me. Instead, the spatial character of the polyphonic novel leads to the supposition of a decentralized multiplicity of I-positions that function like relatively independent authors, telling their stories about their respective Me's as actors. (p.47)

2.3.3   Culture within the dialogical self theory

From the very beginning of dialogical self theorizing, the notion of culture has been of great interest to dialogical self scholars. In fact, within the very first sentence of their seminal 1992 publication *The Dialogical Self: Beyond Individualism and Rationalism*, Hermans, Kempen, and Van Loon point out that "[i]n recent years there has been a growing interest in the role of culture and history in shaping the content of basic psychological processes" (p.23). Interesting here is that Hermans et al. (1992) do not go on discussing the relations of psychological processes and culture as such. They rather argue that psychological theorizing about the self has been guided and constrained by ethnocentric Western discourses, which emphasize individualism and rationalism. It is in opposition to these discourses that the dialogical self is then constructed. Whilst Hermans and colleagues allude to the increasing interest of culture in relation to the concept of self, culture here is understood from a quite cross-cultural perspective. In this sense the authors refer to the Western culture in opposition to the non-Western cultures, using the term as a label and not for indicating mediational processes (e.g. Hermans et al., 1992, p.23). For that matter, the term culture is not further elaborated in this article either (as Hermans et al., 1992, go on to build their dialogical self concept).

This rather cross-cultural understanding of culture is perpetuated in various later dialogical self publications (e.g. Hermans & Kempen, 1998; Hermans, 2001a, 2001b, 2004; Hermans & Diamggio, 2007; Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010), where Hermans and

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colleagues continuously use the term culture when describing persons belonging together by some shared features (and then mixing these quantitative characteristics of "different cultures" to create hybridized forms, such as described by Hermans and Kempen in 1998 as "Mexican schoolgirls dressed in Greek togas dancing in the style of Isadora Duncan," p.1113). Furthermore, empirical research conducted on the grounds of dialogical self theory often encounters difficulties in actually capturing the dialogicality (i.e., the dynamic processes) and instead mostly resorts back to measuring and then describing the same commonly reified understandings of what dialogical approaches originally aspired to transcend (as discussed for example by Akkerman & Niessen, 2011). This fallacy, common in mainstream and cross-cultural psychology, is metaphorically described by Slunecko (2008) as "eating soup with chopsticks" (p.189).

This recidivism of a reified understanding of culture is interesting insofar as the dialogical self conception has on the one hand been explicitly constructed on the premise of overcoming precisely these individualistic and dichotomous assumptions of person and culture (see Hermans et al., 1992). On the other hand, Hermans and Kempen (1995) discuss mediated action as fundamentally dialogical. Furthermore, Hermans and colleagues resort to Bahktin's conception of collective voices and social speech genres to depict the interrelatedness of self-construction and societal processes. Building a conception of self-construction on Bakhtin's notion of heteroglossia paves the way for an understanding of the self-culture relation as semiotically mediated (this point is discussed in Joerchel, submitted; see Appendix E).

In this sense dialogical self theory presents promising grounds for novel understandings of the person-culture relationship, but displays enough inconsistency to warrent further theoretical research endeavour.

2.3.4   Theoretical developments

With a self conception which highlights the dialogicality of human conduct, dialogical self theory has spurred increasing interest in an international social scientific community. Besides numerous publications discussing and further developing the dialogical self theory, several special issues are dedicated to the dialogical approach (*Culture & Psychology, 7*(3), 2001, *Theory & Psychology, 12*(2), 2002; 20*(3)*, 2010, *Journal of Constructivist Psychology, 16*(2), 2003; *21*(3), 2008; 2012, in preparation, *Identity, 4*(4), 2004, *Counseling Psychology Quarterly, 19*(1), 2006, and *New Directions in Child and Adolescent Development,* in preparation). Furthermore, a separate journal dedicated solely to dialogical science was founded (*International Journal of Dialogical Science*, first launched in 2006),[2] and international biennial conferences have been held since 2000 (the first one in Nijmegen, Holland, the seventh conference is planned for October 2012 at the Georgia Center for Continuing Education, Georgia, USA).[3]

Since Hermans, Kempen, and van Loon presented their first paper on the theory of the dialogical self in 1992, several approaches to the dialogical self have been further developed (e.g. in cultural psychology Bhatia, 2007; Chaudhary, 2008; Josephs, 2002; Saldago & Goncalves, 2007; in developmental psychology Bertau, 2004, 2008; Fogel, Koyer, Bellagamba, & Bell, 2002; Lyra, 1999, 2007; Valsiner, 2002, 2005; in cultural anthropology Gieser, 2006; in constructivism, Neimeyer & Buchanan-Arvay, 2004; in psychology of globalization Hermans & Dimasio, 2007; these are just a few of relevance here). Despite the continuous advances in dialogical approaches Saldago and Gonçalves (2007) point out that "there is still large theoretical work to be done" in relation to implicit global dynamics of the dialogical self which are "hard to capture, but…play a major role on the regulation of the personal life" (p.619).

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[2] See: http://ijds.lemoyne.edu/index.html
[3] For more information see: www.dialogicalscience.com/index.htm

The publications making up this dissertation represent an attempt to contribute to the vast theoretical work in progress, and whilst the first contribution (Joerchel, 2006, see Appendix A) signifies the beginnings of investigating the interrelatedness of persons with their social environments on empirical grounds, the later publications (Joerchel, 2007, 2008, 2011, submitted, see Appendice B-E) take and discuss a slightly different angle of the person-culture relation.

Chapter three now gives a short summary of the different contributions, in order to facilitate the critical discussion in chapter four.

3   A set of articles

*Both the nature of what we take to be a self
and its expression are inherently cultural.
(Bhatia & Stam, 2005, p. 419)*

Whilst the fact that culture must somehow be interrelated with psychological processes has widely been recognized within social sciences (Trommsdorff & Kornadt, 2007), there is by no means any consensus within psychology on how this interrelatedness is best accounted for. Nevertheless, within the discipline of cultural psychology many promising advances have been made to explain the relationship between person and culture more clearly and thereby overcome related dualities such as subject-object (e.g. Slunecko, 2008), self-other (e.g. Gillespie, 2006; Simão & Valsiner, 2007), person-culture (e.g. Valsiner, 2007) and individual-society (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010).

Resorting largely to these scholars, the following contributions discuss the person-culture relation on various levels with a focus on dialogical self-construction (Hermans et al., 1992).

3.1   An empirical study on the relations of persons and their social environment

The first article—"A qualitative study of multicultural identities: Three cases of London's inner-city children," published 2006 in the online Journal *Forum: Qualitative Sozialforschung* (for the full article see Appendix A)—aims to grasp the relationship of self and culture. It presents three case studies in which the interrelatedness of children's self-construction with their social environment was analysed from a dialogical self perspective (Hermans et al., 1992) by means of social representations theory (Moscovici, 1988; Moscovici & Duveen, 2000). The aim of the study was to investigate why some persons with multicultural identities experience an identity "crisis" and never develop a sense of belonging (this crisis is often described as "on the border," or as "an outsider within", e.g., Timotijevic

et al. 2000; Marshall, Stenner & Lee, 1999; Mirza & Reay, 2000)—whilst others are able to create a positive identity in a novel space, as for example described as "the third chair" (Badawia, 2002).[4]

The approach was to analyze children's, their parents', and their teachers' social representations from a dialogical perspective in order to investigate motives, plots, and storylines available to the children during their self-construction. All children selected for participation attended the same class in the same London junior school, and all had multiple national, ethnical, and religious backgrounds with both parents originating from different countries, neither being British.

Results and interpretations

Three recurrent themes were generated[5] from all participants' interviews (children, parents, and teachers): pride, respect, and unity/balance. As *structuring structure* (Jovchelovich, 1996), it was notable how prominently all three themes figured within the children's *semiotic repertoire* (Duveen & Lloyd, 1986). The overall ethos of the school was to be proud of one's own diversity and extra efforts were made not only to embrace children from all over the world, but also to incorporate their talents into the curriculum. In internalizing and reconstructing the parents' as well as the teachers' social representations on cultural diversity, these children all felt proud of their cultural diversity, they showed respect towards others, and considered themselves to be from somewhere else (their parents' heritage), as well as British, and as belonging to the overall whole (unity/balance).

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[4] Note that within this study I still use to the term "culture" as a label with all its static and reified connotations to it. Thus, whereas I have tried to abandon the notion of "multicultural identities" in later publications—as this notion is non-sensible if culture is understood as symbolic mediation—within the present article the term multicultural identity or self is still retained, even though social representations are treated as cultural semiotic mediation. This point is also further discussed in chapter four.

[5] With the help of Wengraf's (2001) thematic field analysis.

Multiculturalism, permeability, and the dynamic nature of a dialogical self

In thearticle, the ability to feel continuity and distinctness, pride in diversity, and respect for the other, is discussed in relation to the dynamic and permeable concept of a dialogical self (Hermans et al., 1992). Dialogical self theory describes how various voices within the self-system may represent the world "out there" (general ideologies, social representations), the "imagined other" (the general other), or function as part of the extended self (social other). Certain social relationships present within the children's discourse could thus be highlighted in terms of specific I-positions being endowed with the parents' and teachers' voices. Such a permeable self-conception allows the intra-individual mechanisms of self-formation to be extended to an inter-individual level. Extending the self-construct to the inter-individual level does not only enable persons to endow multiple I-positions with voices from their immediate social environment (e.g. the mother's or the teacher's voice), it further implies that the hierarchy of cultural I-positions is able to change according to the social situation (Valsiner, 2002, 2003). Nadine[6], for example, explained how she felt Austrian when visiting her grandparents for the summer in Austria (her Austrian I-position moving into the foreground) and British when going to school in London (her British I-position becoming more prominent).

Heteroglossia & polyphony

Two further relevant aspects of dialogical self theory helped to describe multicultural selves in this first study, and will become relevant again in subsequent publications. These are the concepts of *heteroglossia* and *polyphony* (Bakhtin, 1981, 1986/2003). Whilst the concept of polyphony enables the person to endow each I-position with a distinct voice (leading to a multivoiced self), heteroglossia describes how each distinct voice is always saturated with social ideologies. Thus, the self-system is comprised of separate voices representing distinct

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[6] In order to ensure anonymity of participants, all names have been changed.

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social representations held in specific social environments. In this sense, dialogical self theory (Hermans et al., 1992) explains the ability to belong to a multiplicity of cultural spheres and to construct either a positive or a negative self-system depending partly on the specific social representations held within the social environment in which the person constructs a self-system. The various voices comprising the self-system are in constant dialogical negotiation with each other as well as with the outside world and can thus be stratified with predominantly positive social representations (e.g., proud to be diverse, as was found in the present study) or with predominantly negative ones (e.g. foreigners are generally viewed as not belonging here, as I am a foreigner, I don't belong here).[7] As social representations within the school and domestic environment were predominantly positive with regard to cultural diversity, the girls in this particular study were for the most part able to construct positive cultural self-concepts. The study therefore points to the importance of establishing accepting and positively reinforcing environments for children in order for them to construct a positive self-structure.

Returning to the relationship of culture and self-construction, in this article the I did not go beyond the realization that the hierarchical structure of cultural I-positions are constrained and guided by social representations, which can be found within a person's semiotic repertoire. Whilst the social environment is already emphasized in the present study in terms of who populates it and which social representations can be found within it, the dynamic process of both the social environment and the self-system co-constituting each other has not yet been grasped. Instead of conceiving culture and self-construction as dynamic processes simultaneously constituting one another, this article discusses a reified understanding of culture as something homogenous and rather static, internalized by the individual person who then creates a cultural I-position that can consequentially influence the

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[7] The simple division between positive and negative social representations can, of course, not account for all complexities of the social world or the construction of identities. This point presents a valid critique which I had not considered whilst conducting the study.

remaining self-system. It is important to note that the understanding of the conception of culture and self-construction has developed between this first publication and the following ones. The subsequent publications heavily contest the notion of culture and self as reified and separate entities. They largely resort to Slunecko's (2008) dynamic constitution and Sloterdijk's (1998, 1999, 2004) conception of spheres.

Transitional thoughts

> *„What is mind? No matter!*
> *What is matter? Never mind!"*
> *George Berkeley (1685-1783)*

> *„Die klassische epistemologische Grundstellung von Subjekt und Objekt, von Beobachter und Gegenstand zur Analysefigur zu machen, sie für die einzelnen Wissenschaften zu differenzieren und dabei auf die Besonderheiten jener Disziplinen hinzuweisen, bei denen sich Subjekt und Objekt der Erkenntnis überschneiden, heißt vor allem anderen: die Subjekt-Objekt-Stellung zu bestätigen. Und wenn es gerade diese Stellung wäre, die in toto in Frage zu stellen wäre?"*
> *(Slunecko, 2008, pp.21-22)*

The first publication (Joerchel, 2006, Appendix A) dealing with the self-culture relationship adhered more strongly to traditional Cartesian presuppositions of culture and self standing in opposition—where culture is understood as something "out there" influencing the person. For this reason the task simply consists of finding out how this "influencing" takes place (e.g. via internalization of social representations). By contrast, the following publications question precisely these presuppositions—the opposition and the resulting secession of self and culture, of subject and object. The link of the former and the later publications constitutes the initial puzzling inquiry: how are self-construction and culture related to one another?

The main differentiation of the first article (Joerchel, 2006, Appendix A) from the following publications (Joerchel, 2007, 2008, 2011, submitted, Appendices B to E) is the

incorporation of two novel theoretical examinations of the person culture relationship: Slunecko's (2008) concept of dynamic constitution and Sloterdijk's (1998, 1999, 2004) sphereology. As both of these approaches highlight the interrelatedness of the subject and the object, or of the human being and all of his or her co-inhabitants, they proved to be helpful concepts in attempting to overcome deeply rooted dualistic assumptions of person and culture. [8]

As the reader can find all publications in the appendices, and as chapter four comprises a broader discussion of a differentiated understanding of culture and self, the following paragraphs will not reiterate a detailed analysis of how the concept of dynamic constitution, or the notion of spheres may shed some light on the intricate person-culture relationship and thereby further develop theoretical understandings of this relationship within dialogical self theory. Instead, what will be summarized here is how these concepts—dialogical self theory, dynamic constitution, and sphereology—have been discussed in the individual contributions in relation to specific subject matters, as for example the phenomenon of homophobia in the following publication.

3.2 The interrelatedness of psychological and societal processes: Introducing the notion of spheres

The publication "A dance between the general and the specific: Implications for the self concept" (Joerchel, 2007, see Appendix B) is a commentary on Ana Flavia Madureira's article on homophobia as cultural construction of a social barrier, published in the *Journal for Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science* in 2007. In the commentary the social barrier concept of homophobia is related to Slunecko's (2008) concept of a dynamic

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[8] All of the scholars referred to throughout this dissertation vary in their terminology as each one is at home in a different scientific discipline. Thus while Slunecko e.g. talks of *subjects*, Sloterdijk discusses *human beings* and Hermans refers mostly to *individuals*. As Valsiner's work served as important reference point for all publications throughout this dissertation, his terminology—in this case *person*—was chosen for the general consistency of the present work.

constitution and then, together with the dialogical self theory (Hermans, et al. 1992; Hermans & Kempen, 1993), tied into the notion of persons inhabiting cultural spheres.

More precisely, with the concept of homophobia, Madureira points out that the clear-cut distinction between cultural and psychological processes is not feasible. This position is then further substantiated in the commentary by reference to the dynamic constitution (Slunecko, 2008), as the dynamic constitutive perspective stresses the interrelatedness of both culture and person. This perspective implies that it would not make much sense to discuss psychological mechanisms, such as social barriers, without also considering the cultural processes having guided and constrained the psychological formation of a social barrier.

After discussing the intricate interrelatedness of cultural and psychological processes the commentary proceeds to elaborate, with Boesch's (1998) conception of *Heimweh* versus *Fernweh,* on the tensions which occur during the construction of social barriers (such as homophobia), and proceeds to discuss dialogical self theory with self-concepts being developed by moving back and forth between the familiar and the foreign. According to Boesch (1998), persons need both the familiar and the unfamiliar, with the home environment providing the basis for self confidence and self actualization, whilst the strange and unknown represents a platform for hopes, dreams and desires, for potential actions and potential self concepts. The tensions emerge as the unfamiliar also represents a platform for fears and threats to the self-system.

In her article on homophobia as social barrier Madureira (2007) also refers to dialogical self theory. The commentary (Joerchel, 2007, Appendix B) briefly touches upon the respective theory, pointing out that dialogical self theory describes self-construction only on intra- and inter-psychological levels and that it does not incorporate cultural and societal processes on a macro level. The interrelatedness of cultural processes on a macro-level and

psychological processes on inter- and intra-psychological levels are then discussed in the latter part of this commentary in relation to the notion of a cultural sphere.

The idea of cultural spheres was inspired by Sloterdijk's seminal trilogy on *Sphären* (1998, 1999, 2004). The main argument relating to the notion of a cultural sphere presented in this commentary is the fact that it differs from more typical psychological theories such as Boesch's and Hermans' in that it begins to describe the person not as singular individual but rather as co-inhabitant of the human sphere (e.g. Sloterdijk, 2004, p.332). Connecting the person-culture relation with the notion of spheres leads to the question of where the person develops. Sloterdijk (1998) describes the person as always being located as a pole within an ellipse of the sphere, always in resonance with the complementary otherness of the self. From this perspective, persons must constantly find novel understandings of their position within a sphere. And as Boesch (1998) has described, such novel understandings also arise from oscillating between the familiar and the unknown.

The differentiation of Sloterdijk's conception of persons existing within a tension of a here and a there, (1998),[9] and Boesch's (1998) Heimweh/Fernweh notion, is that the *tension* within a sphere, either arising from resonating with the other (Sloterdijk, 1998), or emerging from moving back and forth between the far away and the near (Boesch, 1998), can be understood from a spherological perspective simultaneously on psychological as well as societal levels (whereas Boesch focusses on the psychological processes). Within the sphere, both the psychological as well as the cultural processes emerge simultaneously and co-constitute each other. The concept of the persons would not exist as we know it today without

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[9] Sloterdijk (1998) describes this phenomenon particularly in his chapter 6 *Seelenraumteiler: Engel-Zwillinge-Doppelgänger* (pp.419-485), in which he historically traces the relationships persons perceive themselves to have with an opposing other. Once the person has left the mothers womb, a space is opened and quickly filled again with various notions of the other. The mother is usually the first opponent for the child. But as the child matures, this other takes on novel forms and in history has been perceived as e.g. the archangel, a patron saint, an imagined twin, or also as a literary I-position as in Dostoevsky's work (*Ich-position*, p. 484, note that whilst Sloterdijk here refers to Dostoevsky's literary work as example, the I-position here is a very different concept from the dialogical self theoretical understanding of an I-positions). In this chapter Sloterdijk traces various tensions that arise from resonating with the other.

cultural processes, and cultural processes exist only amongst persons interacting within their cultural sphere. Thus, the concluding remarks of this commentary (Joerchel, 2007, see Appendix B) appeal to psychology to account for cultural processes on a macro level as the whole phenomenon of the person cannot be explained by limiting the theorizing about persons only to inter- and intra-individual levels. The following publication supports this plea by discussing several examples of studies conducted within cultural psychology.

3.3 Mediated self-construction situated within a socio-cultural sphere

"The dialogical self as (atmospherically) mediated within a socio-cultural sphere: A socio-cultural approach to the formation of the self" is the title of a chapter published in the *Yearbook of Ideographic Sciences* in 2008 (see Appendix C). It is a follow-up of the previous commentary. It first rephrases the main ideas of a socio-cultural sphere (as inspired by Sloterdijk, 1998, 1999, 2004) and some of Slunecko's (2008) work on the dynamic constitution and then analyse whether the self-concept presented within the previous three chapters published in the *Yearbook of Ideographic Science* is compatible with a dynamic constitutive and socio-cultural approach. Thus, whilst the previous commentary dealt more with how the approach of the dynamic constitution and the notion of spheres could be useful for the discussion of the co-constitution of cultural and psychological processes, the current chapter applies the notion of spheres and the dynamic constitution directly to the self-concept. It therefore presents an attempt to make practical use of the abstract theorizations of both Slunecko and Sloterdijk by analyzing concrete empirical studies in the light of the respective theories.

The aim of the analysis was to investigate from a dynamic constitutive perspective how and if cultural processes and societal structures were incorporated into the self-construction process. The first two analyses dealt with complementary views of self-construction as both chapters discussed different aspects of self-construction. Whilst Peshek, Krause and Diriwächter

(2008) focused on religious *practices* as a coping mechanism via symbolic mediation (Valsiner, 2000), Barcisnki (2008) emphasized the *discourse* in which self-construction takes place. Both of these approaches (social practices and discourse) are mediational approaches pointing to two major (and complementary) aspects of self-construction. They have been discussed from a socio-cultural perspective highlighting the dynamic constitutive nature of self-construction and cultural processes (in this respect religious practices and the discourses available to women during drug trafficking).

I indicated parallels and differences across these approaches (the symbolic mediational and discursive approach) and argued that in contrast to the dynamic constitution both approaches, whilst a general situatedness is certainly implied in cultural and societal structures, mainly focus on inter- and intra-individual psychological mechanisms and fail to discuss the general cultural and societal atmospheres co-constituting the person's self-construction on a macro-level.

The discussion then moves on to dialogical self theory, as the third analysis deals with the work of Rosa, Duarte and Gonçalves (2008), who further developed dialogical self theory. These authors argue that the self-system, and more precisely the position-repertoire, is necessarily symbolically mediated as dialogical interactions resort to sign- and symbol-systems, such as language. Thus, whilst in the commentary (Joerchel, 2007, Appendix B) I mention dialogical self theory only briefly, this publication (Joerchel, 2008, Appendix C) returns to dialogical self theory with an in-depth discussion on how it may help make sense of the self-culture relationship in terms of dialogical interactions always being symbolically mediated. This realization seems pertinent as the dialogical approach, and indeed also the symbolic mediational approach in Peshek's et al. (2008) work and the discourse analysis in Bardinski's (2008) study, understand dialogicality as fundamental form of human communication, hence as primary characteristic of all psychological processes.

What is interesting here is not so much the emphasis of dialogicality as the primary characteristic of self-construction, but the elaborations of Roas et al. (2008) on dialogical self

theory. They indicate that dialogical interactions are symbolically mediated. Thus, whilst the concept of spheres had first been introduced in the former publication (Joerchel, 2007, Appendix B) without direct reference to dialogical self theory, the conception of a socio-cultural sphere is in the present publication (Joerchel, 2008, Appendix C) further elaborated on in terms of its socio-cultural mediational characteristic. It is then also related back to dialogical self theory.

Here also I compare and contrast the phenomenon of an atmospheric mediation to the traditional understanding of symbolic mediation as first brough forth by Vygotsky (see Wertsch, 1991). It is argued that the socio-cultural atmospheric mediation incorporates cultural processes and societal structures on a macro level, whilst simultaneously stressing the bi-directionality of both cultural and psychological processes. This conception is then related back to dialogical self theory. It is attempted here to introduce the idea of a socio-cultural sphere already mediating the symbols which then mediate dialogical interactions. This idea is only introduced here in the last couple of paragraphs of this book chapter (Joerchel, 2008, Appendix C), but taken up again in the following two publications.

3.4   Locating the dialogical self within a socio-cultural sphere

"In Sphären werden geteilte Inspirationen zum Grund für das Zusammenseinkönnen von Menschen in Kommunen und Völkern."
(Sloterdijk, 1998, p. 31)

The chapter "Locating the dialogical self within a socio-cultural sphere," as published in the compilation *Dialogicality in Focus: Challenging Theory, Method and Application* in 2011 (see Appendix D), aims at further developing the notion of a socio-cultural sphere which was introduced already in the previous two publications (Joerchel, 2007, 2008, Appendix B, C). In this sense the preceding two contributions to this dissertation serve as a prelude to the following pages. Furthermore, whilst the previous two publications only briefly pointed to

some difficulties of dialogical self theory in describing the person-culture relationship, this present chapter (Joerchel, 2011, Appendix D) aimes specifically at investigating how dialogical self theory accounts for culture within self-construction. I also attempt to further develop the respective understanding by means of the conception of a socio-cultural sphere.

In order to transcend current understandings of the culture and self-construction relationship within dialogical self theory, the definition of culture as presented by Hermans and Kempen in 1998 is also analyzed here. More precisely, some problematic assumptions about culture are discussed, and it is argued that such a conception of culture neglects to capture important aspects of cultural processes such as cultural habits and common patterns. It is also pointed out that unfortunately the notion of a "geography of the self" still prevails within dialogical self literature, despite the explicit goal of transcending localized assumptions of culture.

After the depiction of problematic conceptions of cultural positions and social voices, I introduce the notion of spheres first with Boesch's (1991) account of cultural action fields and action spheres and then elaborated on it with Sloterdijk's (1998, 1999, 2004) more abstract and poetic depiction of human spheres. Boesch's (1991) conception of action spheres was chosen to be dealt with in an effort to make Sloterdijk's (1998) abstract and poetic notion better accessible to the scientific reader (as Boesch represents a major figure within cultural psychology, see Lonner & Hayes, 2007). This is insofar useful, as the philosopher Sloterdijk rejected scientific jargon out of fear of further distancing the phenomenon at hand, as it too quickly escapes us before it can be grasped. Rather than bringing forth a novel and groundbreaking theory on human beings, Sloterdijk attempted to gather what humans have already fabricated within the arts and literature, and based on that describes the essence of what it means to be a human being (Sloterdijk & Heinrichs, 2001). Thus, whilst Boesch (1991) sketched first contours of an idea within cultural psychology (enjoying still little

attention within the field), I resort to Sloterdijk (1998) in this publication in order to further unfold Boesch's (1991) rather concise description (encompassing only a total of three pages) with picturesque examples.

The two examples discussed within the present publication (Joerchel, 2011, Appendix D)—two lovers and a mother with her new-born baby—were chosen to illustrate the process of persons initially resonating within micro-spheres. Special attention was paid to the interrelatedness of two souls, of two spirits resonating with each other, whilst at the same time being embedded in a greater cultural sphere. It is argued that this resonating process gives rise to habitual actions co-constituted by material, social, and actional structures (Boesch, 1991). This creats a socio-cultural atmosphere, which in turn structures individual actions and perceptions according to the respective cultural sphere in which they are generated.

For dialogical self theory this means that all dialogical interactions are themselves already always culturally mediated and are not only cultural positions or social voices, as is sometimes implied in that theory. The need to overcome such reified implications of culture within dialogical self theory is further discussed selecting the example of language in the following publication.

3.5 A cultural mediation tool within the dialogical self: Of language and socio-cultural spheres

The last contribution of this cumulative dissertation is a manuscript titled "Cultural processes within dialogical self theory: A socio-cultural perspective of collective voices and social language," forthcoming in the *International Journal of Dialogical Science* (see Appendix E). Whilst the previous publication (Joerchel, 2011, Appendix D) emphasized the space between interlocutors and the mediating qualities of persons resonating with one another, the present manuscript (Joerchel, submitted, Appenix E) now discusses a specific mediating tool—language—with regard to the "culture inclusiveness" of dialogical self-

construction. By moving from a more general conception—resonating within a socio-cultural sphere—to the concrete example of a cultural tool—language—, I attempt to show that contemporary dialogical self theory cannot comprehensively account for the intricate and complex interrelatedness of culture and self-construction. In the present manuscript this point is further developed to a more differentiated level.

Thus, whilst in the former publication (Joerchel, 2011, Appendix D) I accepted at face value Hermans' and colleagues' assertion of culture, in the present manuscript (Joerchel, submitted, Appendix E) I resort back to Bakhtin for clarifying the exact meaning of *heteroglossia* and the resulting mediating qualities of language within a dialogical self. As this manuscript focuses on language, Slunecko and Hengl's (2007) and Slunecko' (2008) work on language and the concept of a dynamic constitution in relation to Sloterdijk's (1998, 1999, 2004) spherology has once again served as helpful indicator that could be used for describing the person as situated within a socio-cultural sphere.

The two publications dealing with the dialogical self as situated within a socio-cultural sphere (Joerchel, 2011, and Joerchel, submitted, see Appendices D and E) differ insofar as the former publication (Joerchel, 2011, Appendix D) covers the general abstract notion of persons resonating within socio-cultural spheres with the discussion of the person-culture relationship remaining on a more general and theoretical level. In contrast, in the more recent publication (Joerchel, submitted, Appendix E) I attempt to make the abstractness of the theoretical undertaking more tangible through the use of a specific cultural tool and describe some of the resulting implications on a more concrete level. The somewhat abstract and general conception of all socio-cultural spherological inhabitants dynamically co-constituting one another is simplifyed in the concrete example of a cultural tool. With language as cultural tool mediating psychological processes in a bi-directional manner, the philosophical and abstract debate on various traditional oppositions such as mind-matter, person-environment, or self-

culture, returns to a more psychological and practicable discussion of how the culture and self-construction relationship can be conceptualized. This also propagates new grounds for further scientific development. How the above theoretical considerations have contributed to the general quest for further advancing scientific understandings (as best described by the German term *Wissenschaft*), is discussed in detail in the following chapter.

4   Discussion and concluding remarks

"[T]he overriding sensation I had was of always being out of place. Thus it took me about fifteen years to become accustomed to, or more exactly, to feel less uncomfortable with, "Edward," a foolishly English name yoked forcibly to the unmistakably Arabic family name Said."
(Edward W. Said, 1999, p.3)

Edward W. Said's memoir is one of the most often cited to literary accounts of a person being raised amidst multiple ethnical, religious and national backgrounds. Having been born in Jerusalem, having gone to school in Cairo, having spent summers in Beirut, and then having attended boarding school and college in the United States, the author relates how he never felt quite comfortable with who he was, how he never was able to retain "this unsettled sense of many identities—mostly in conflict with each other—all of my life, together with an acute memory of the despairing feeling that I wish we could have been all-Arab, or all-European and American, or all-Orthodox Christian, or all-Muslim, or all-Egyptian, and so on" (p.5).

Accounts like Said's are legion (not only in literature) and studies of "multicultural identity" have become part of fashionable research in the social sciences. In most research projects dealing with multicultural identity the multiculturality of the person's identity refers to the diversity of ethnical, religious, or national backgrounds—as it does in the case of Edward Said. Yet, if we understand culture as a semiotic mediation (Valsiner, 2000, 2007), and not as a label designating some group of persons who share common characteristics (as from a cross-cultural perception), then every human being constructs a multicultural self, as all persons resort to multiple cultural tools during their self-construction process. This realization became most apparent in the empirical study on "multicultural" children in London (Joerchel, 2006, Appendix A). All later publications (Joerchel, 2007, 2008, 2011, submitted, Appendices B-E) describe the person as culturally mediated from a slightly

different angle and on various levels. Before discussing these later publications, some critical reflections on the first contribution (Joerchel, 2006, Appendix A) are dealt with in the following paragraph.

The usage of the term culture as a label was the most obvious criticism of the study conducted on "multicultural identities" (Joerchel, 2006, Appendix, A). There, the term "multicultural identitiy" is namely still applied in a cross-cultural manner, whilst the actual research was already conducted according to a cultural psychological understanding. For example, how children construct a self-concept in relation to culture is already described there as semiotic mediation. Yet, what remains to be clarified in this research project is whether the second major theoretical concept of social representations (Moscovici, 1988) can actually account for the bidirectionality of cultural transfers. The problem resides within the relationship of social representations and the person. According to Moscovici (1988), social representations are conceptualized as products of human beings, as being generated through the individual act of anchoring and objectifying (pp.41-54). Within social representations research Jovchelovitch (1996) mints the term *structuring structure*, where persons producing structures, whilst anchoring and objectifying social representations are simultaneously structured by these structures. It nevertheless remains questionable whether social representations can be conceived of as semiotic emergences which dynamically co-constitute at the same time societal structures as well as psychological mechanisms. It is assumed here that such dynamic processes require a more subtle understanding of semiotic mediation, one that is hardly noticed by persons but nevertheless structures their psychological mechanisms in a profound way.

The question of whether social representations can account for the subtle and dynamic co-constituting characteristic of cultural mediation is not further dealt with in the remaining publications included in this dissertation. Instead, the focus in the later publications (Joerchel,

2007, 2008, 2011, submitted, Appendices B to E) turns to a more fundamental question of how to conceptualize the person-culture relationship in general. More precisely: What is exactly meant by the statement "a person is culturally mediated" or "culture and person dynamically co-constitute each other," and what kinds of implications can be drawn from such conceptions? These questions comprise the subject matter of the later publications, the focus here being the following: In general, how are psychological mechanisms related to societal processes (Joerchel, 2007, Appendix, B)? And in particular, how can self-construction processes be understood as culturally mediated (Joerchel, 2008, Appendix C)? How can the dialogical self be understood as resonating within a cultural sphere (Joerchel, 2011, Appendix D)? And how can a cultural semiotic tool, such as language, help understand the relation between cultural processes and self construction within dialogical self theory (Joerchel, submitted, Appendix E)?

4.1   Discussing person-culture relations

This section is dedicated to discussing some of the shortcomings that might be found in the contributing publications. It is necessary here to point out, that these single contributions were written over a five year time span. During this relatively long period my thought processes concerning various issues have obviously evolved and progressed. The critical discussion on three weaknesses wotrth mentioning—the starting premises, the symbolic mediation vs. resonating processes, and the expansion of the notion of a socio-cultural sphere—must also be seen as a reflection on the development of my own thought processes. This critique also encompasses inspirations for future scientific endeavours.

4.1.1   Starting premises for research endeavours

Reflecting upon the publications of 2007, 2008, and 2011 (Appendices B, C, and D), it is important to discuss the notion of starting premises. In all of these publications I pointed

out that dialogical self authors (and also other related scholars) proceed their theoretical considerations by starting with the individual person as an isolated entity, which is then in hindsight made to relate to the social and cultural aspects of human conduct (see e.g. Appendix B). This assumption is again debated in the 2011 publication (see e.g. Appendix D).

Yet, such critique puts my work in competition with Hermans' and his colleagues' conceptualisations (as opposed to viewing their work as scientific enrichment) and marks an *aporia* (to use Shotter's terminology, 2011, p.99) in my own work. Having taken Hermans' and colleagues' work only at face value, I refrained from paying proper tribute to certain historical developments upon which dialogical self theory was based. Thus, referring directly to the original source upon which Hermans and colleagues built their self-conception in relation to culture was the necessary next step. This referece to the original work of Bakhtin is therefore taken up in the last publication (Joerchel, submitted, Appendix E), in which Bakhtin's notions of heteroglossia and ventriloquation are analysed more deeply.

A further benefit that can be drawn from returning directly to the original sources is that it would have pointed the ongoing investigations more into the realm of dialogism in general. This way, research endeavours could have moved more rapidly away from criticizing present day scholars to more innovative and novel conclusions. This point is further discussed in the following section.

4.1.2   Trancending dialogical self theory within dialogical science

Dialogical self theory is considered to be a theory developed within dialogical science. Markova (2011) has also pointed out that dialogical science encompasses a wide spectrum of research possibilities and is not restricted to dialogical self theory. Yet, the publications comprising this dissertation do not deal with dialogical science as a whole. The focus was here given directly to the dialogical self theory, as presented by Hermans and colleagues. Although the current publications might have profited somewhat from a closer look at the

dialogical sciences themselves, the inspirations gained here from dialogical self theory itself and some further investigation of dialogism in general (resorting to scholars such as Markova or also directly to Bakhtin) will already help better understand problematic research areas in psychology, such as self and culture. Obviously also analysing other dialogical approaches will further strengthen the current understanding of the person-culture relationship. This also presents room for future rsearch endeavours. Dialogism and dialogical science deserve a deeper analysis, as they have much more to offer to psychological quandaries (such as relational and process oriented understandings of seemingly oppositions), than what has sofar been perpetuated through dialogical self theory. This kind of future investigation can most probably not only advance understandings of self-construction in relation to culture, it will also shed new light on the interrelatedness of psychological mechanisms with societal processes.

4.1.3   Symbolic mediation versus resonating within a cultural sphere

A further critical issue which merits additional attention is the comparison of 'symbolic mediation' with 'resonating within a cultural sphere,' as discussed in 2008 (see Appendix, C). This seems to be a particularly opaque area, as the resonating concept as depicted by Sloterdijk (1998, 1999, 2004) leaves a lacuna between the abstract notion and the concrete theoretical (or empirical) implications. As discussed above (see 3.3), Sloterdijk refrains from using scientific jargon (Sloterdijk & Heinrichs, 2001), seeking to capture the essence of humans resonating with one another. The poetic depiction of human beings resonating within spheres has the advantage of bringing innovative perceptions to the scientific community which has always been accustomed to measuring various factors that are then presupposed to influence the individual person (e.g. culture).

Furthermore, the notion of resonating within a cultural sphere raises some fundamental questions within cultural psychology. For example, how does the process of resonating within

cultural spheres differ from existing concepts such as Vygotsky's symbolic mediation (Vygotsky, 1978; see also Wertsch, 1991) and Valsiner's semiotic mediation (Valsiner, 2007)? We can also adhere to Dewey's (1910, as cited in Shotter, 2011, p.100) suggestion of beginning our research endeavours with the curiosity of being stooped, and of wanting to find out how to make sense of the world and the person within it. In this case we must not ask how these various approaches differ from one another, but rather ask what can be learned from each theoretical conceptualization in order to then progress our own understanding of the person-culture relation. As a plea not to think that one theoretical conception may somehow be superior to another I now turn to turn to the last critical reflection of this dissertation and once again ask: How can we make sense of the person-culture relation and in what way can the conception of spheres be helpful here?

4.1.4   Spheres and semiotic mediation

From personal and collective cultures to semiotic spheres

As human personality—and particularly the self-construct—is an integrated system of semiotic mediators at various levels, Valsiner suggests in 2000 a distinction between the concepts "*personal* culture" and "*collective* culture."[10] *Personal culture* refers to both the internalized subjective phenomenon (intra-mental processes) as well as to the immediate externalizations of such processes. *Collective culture* comprises externalizations of *personal meaning systems* of multiple persons belonging to a specific group (Valsiner, 2000). Thus, whilst my personal culture consists of specific ways in which I internalize other personal cultural externalizations and in how I then externalize those again (via analysis and synthesis as described in section 2.1.2. with the bidirectional model), the collection of *all* of my experiences of *other persons externalizations* comprises my collective culture. Therefore, as I

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[10] Note that Valsiner (2000) cautions the reader by pointing out that this distinction is merely a heuristic one "to remind ourselves that the person, in their personal uniqueness, is always related with the cultural meaningful world through the process of constant internalization and externalization" (p.55).

externalize my personal cultural system I become part of someone else's collective cultural system.

The heuristic distinction between personal and collective cultures leads directly to the complex and multi-faceted relations of semiotic systems and personal processes which have been the main subject matters within the current publications (e.g. how to make sense of self-construction within a cultural sphere in Joerchel, 2011, Appendix D). It became clear that the notion of a collective culture as described by Valsiner in 2000 does not suffitiently capture the complex relatedness of cultural and psychological processes. For this reason it was useful to turn also to other concepts such as Sloterdijk's (1998, 1999, 2004) spherology.

In fact, even Valsiner himself disregards the notion of a collective culture and suggests in 2007 that society should be understood as *collectively shared* and as *created myth story* functioning as a sign. The interesting feature of such myth-stories is that once they are told and re-told, they create a social field which operates by means of constructed norms guiding and constraining human interactions. According to this definition the nature of society is a *field-like* sign—a hyper generalized sign that permeates our thinking and feeling in their totality. Valsiner further also refers to Lotmans's notion of a *semiosphere*. Accordingly, a semiosphere is described as comprising "the semiotic space necessary for the existence and functioning of language, it has a prior existence and is in constant interaction with language" (Lotman, 1990, as cited in Valsiner, 2007, p. 76).

As the notion of language as *vital linguistic coating* (Slunecko & Hengl, 2007), and as guiding and constraining our interactions in a bidirectional manner within a socio-cultural sphere, I discuss in the last contribution (Joerchel, submitted; Appendix E) the notion of a semiosphere (Lotman, 1922/1992) presents an interesting counterpart to Sloterdijk's (1998, 1999, 2004) more general conception of a human sphere. Thus, whilst Sloterdijk alone has already provided an abundance of inspiring perspectives on the interrelatedness of human

beings and on their surroundings, there is still room for further research on socio-cultural spheres and to learn more about the potential of the notion of spheres to contribute to the phenomenon.

4.2   Concluding remarks

Als das Kind Kind war,
Warf es einen Stock als Lanze gegen den Baum,
Und sie zittert da heute noch.
(Peter Handke, Lied vom Kindsein, 1987)

In the publications (Joerchel, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2011, and submitted; Appendices A to E) constituting this cumulative dissertation I looked at the person-culture relations from various perspectives in an attempt to gain a better understanding. Dialogical self theory (Hermans et al. 1992) thereby served as stepping stone from which further progression within dialogical science can be made. Similarly, the notion of spheres, as inspired by Sloterdijk (1998, 1999, 2004), has spurred novel understandings of human beings resonating with their co-inhabitants (including all of their media, hard and soft). This can now give way to more differentiated investigations concerning the notion of spheres in psychology (for example with Lotman's semiosphere, 1992). In this sense, whilst this dissertation provides answers concerning the person-culture relationship within dialogical self theory, this collection of publications can also be used as a base for further research into fundamental and complex questions of the person-culture relationship not covered by dialogical self theory. Hopefully this dissertation has also managed to show the vast scope of the subject matter, and more importantly its relevance for gaining a better understanding of the person-cultre relationship within psychology, whilst at the same time also hints at the great realm of further potential scientific investigations.

It is fair to say, that we can still see how the lance that was thrown at the beginning of this dissertation continues to quiver.

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Appendices

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Appendix A

A Qualitative Study of Multicultural Identities:

Three Cases of London's Inner-City Children

Amrei C. Joerchel

Citation:

Joerchel, A. C. (2006, February). A qualitative study of multicultural identities: Three cases of London's inner-city children. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung /Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, *7*(2), Retrieved from http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs0602183

Abstract

Metropolitan areas present opportunities for persons from all over the world to form multicultural relationships and raise their child in a third culture. How do these children make sense of who they are? Multicultural identities have often been described as being in "crisis"—the individual does not feel fully accepted in any culture and is depicted as "on the border" or "an outsider within." While the "identity crisis" should be taken seriously, the ability to create a space in between cultures, to form a novel self-concept is equally, if not more important. Children growing up in London with the immediate influence of more than two cultures—mother and father originating from diverse cultures and raising their child in the third (England)—and how they start to make sense of themselves is analyzed from a social representations perspective that emphasizes the marking of different cultural I-positions within the person's dialogical self-construction.

Keywords: identity construction, children, multicultural environments, dialogical self, social representations

1. Introduction

Children growing up in multicultural environments is an unprecedented research subject. The acceleration of globalization has increased the interconnectedness of multiple cultures acting and reacting with each other, intertwining and giving rise to novel cultural forms. Rapidly growing individual mobility (through the ability to travel faster and cheaper further across the globe), moving diasporas and the ability to keep in close contact with "the culture back home" (through new technologies) has enabled individuals to mix, match and move around the world (Hall, Held & McGrew, 1992). Hyphenated individuals—for example Asian-British, African- American, Turkish-German—have been of increasing interest in various disciplines of the social sciences (see for example the interview with Hülya, a Turkish-German woman, presented in a past FQS issue). Yet, the focus has remained on persons with two cultural backgrounds. Drawing on theories postulated by Hermans, Kempen and Van Loon (1992) and Moscovici (1988), the aim of the study discussed here is to show how children with multiple cultural backgrounds construct a self. How do children, with a mother from culture x, a father from culture y, and growing up in interconnected cultural metropolis z, make sense of who they are? This paper discusses from a social representational perspective (Moscovici, 1988) the marking of cultural *I-positions* (Hermans et al., 1992) of ten-year-old children in London with parents representing diverse cultural backgrounds.

1.1 The dynamics of culture and novel identities

Within the social sciences there has been a trend to discuss multicultural individuals and surrounding cultures as static and independent entities (Hermans & Kempen, 1998). Yet, as the mobility of individual persons increases due to globalization, such a static view becomes highly questionable. Hermans (2001a), for instance, argues

that the effects of globalization (on societies and individuals) require a new conception of the self: one that is dynamic and permeable. Examples of individuals creating an identity that is not yet defined by already existing social representations, but rather represent novel combinations, are slowly emerging (see e.g. Back 1996; Badawia, 2002). Valsiner (2002) asserts that in order to account for the formation of such new and novel selves it is necessary to conceptualize culture as an open dynamic system. Open dynamic systems allow for the emergence of novel structures out of the combination of already existing structures.

1.2 Bakhtinian and Jamesian influences

According to Hermans and Kempen (1993) dialogism is necessary for conceptualizing the self as dynamic and permeable. For this conception the authors draw on the Russian scholar Bakhtin. When Bakhtin read Dostoevsky, he came to the conclusion that Dostoevsky created a new form of artistic thought, the polyphonic novel. Bakhtin, according to Hermans et al. (1993), argues that the principle feature of the polyphonic novel is that it has been "composed of a number of independent and mutually opposing viewpoints embedded in characters involved in dialogical relationships" (Hermans et al., 1993, p.40). Furthermore, Dostoevsky himself represents just one such character. Each character in the story is perceived as the author of his or her own legitimate ideological position, narrating with his or her own voice a world that is distinct to that character. Yet, each character has the possibility of entering into a dialogical relationship with any other character or/and any imaginary character. Thus, dialogicality is not necessarily restricted to the interaction of two distinct persons. Rather, a person enters into dialogue as soon as thought occurs. A thought is never formed in isolation, it is

always addressed in anticipation and in reaction to some circumstance in time and space (Hermans et al., 1993).

In order to conceptualize and form a theoretical understanding of the self, Hermans et al. (1993) translate the notion of the polyphonic novel into James' distinction of the *I* and the *Me*. According to the authors James, in discussing the self, argued for two main components in the self: the I as the self-as-knower and the Me as self-as-known. Each of these two components has three constituting features: the three features characterizing the I are continuity (a sense of personal identity and sameness over time), distinctness (an existence separate from others), and volition (a continuous appropriation and rejection of thought, an active processor of experience). The Me, the empirical self representing all the person can call his or her own (including all extensions such as cloths and material belongings) is constituted of material characteristics (body and possessions), spiritual characteristics (thoughts and consciousness), and social characteristics (relations, roles, fame) (Hermans et al., 1993).

1.3 The dialogical self

Built on the intersection between the Jamesian distinction of Me and I, and the Bakhtinian polyphonic metaphor, Hermans et al. (1992) describe the dialogical self as a dynamic multiplicity of relatively autonomous I-positions. The I has the ability to move from one spatial position to another according to changes in context and time, moving from different positions which may even be opposing each other, yet need not be. It has the capacity imaginatively to endow each position with a voice which then enables dialogical relationships between positions. Drawing on Bakhtin's notion of "polyphony" these voices function like interacting characters in a story. The voices, as is typical for characters in stories, are involved in processes of question and answer, agreement and

disagreement. Such interactions may, but need not necessarily, result in challenging in-between areas or threats to identity amongst multicultural identities (e.g. Timotijevic & Breakwell, 2000).

The metaphor of the polyphonic notion transcends James' conception of the self by allowing an individual to live in a multiplicity of worlds with respective authors telling a particular story about that world. Hermans et al. (1993) express that

> [i]n the polyphonic translation of the self there is not an overarching I organizing the constituents of the Me. Instead, the spatial character of the polyphonic leads to the supposition of the decentralized multiplicity of I-positions that function like relatively autonomous authors, telling their stories about their respective Me's as actors (p.47).

Tying back this open and dynamic conception of the self to Valsiner's (2002) assertion of novel selves rising from already existing forms, it is important to note that transactional relationships between the different I-positions may lead to the emergence of meaning that is not yet given to one of the available positions.

1.4 Beginning stages of dialogues: children, self and society

The establishment of psychological autonomy entails the development of intentionality, i.e. goal-oriented flexible actions and self-motivation. The intentionality, the will, consists out of setting goal orientations, constructing short- and long-term goals, re-setting these goals as necessary, and deciding on specific actions in certain situations (Valsiner, 2000). And these tasks, Valsiner (2000) argues, are made possible through intra-psychological reconstruction of the social structure of the demand setting within the collective cultural field, through semiotic mediation. In order to capture the demand setting of each child, and to therefore grasp a deeper understanding of how children start

to make sense of who they are, the theory of social representations (Moscovici, 1988) will be helpful here. Social representations theory is a theory of every-day knowledge within a social and interactive framework (Moscovici, 2000). It considers social knowledge to be dynamically and symbolically mediating, while deeply rooted in the public sphere (Duveen & De Rosa, 1992). Moreover, social representations must be conceptualized as an environment in which individuals position themselves in relations to the group and are positioned by them, necessarily linking the theory to identity formation (Duveen, 1997). Jovchelovitch (1996) has termed this process "structuring structure."

1.5 Guiding, constraining and enabling

The "structure" presents the environment into which the child is born, the culture that preexists the individual, the beliefs, ideas, and "facts" that the individual will be exposed to while developing. This symbolic knowledge system functions not only as mediator between the social and the self, it serves as semiotic repertoire that individuals draw on when constructing both the world around them as well as their own position within it (Duveen & Lloyd, 1986). When individuals appropriate and interpret the world around them, they re-interpret beliefs and knowledge presented to them, thus "re-presenting" them in novel ways which are specific not only to their community, but also to individual needs (Howarth, 2005).

"Structuring" is the process by which the individual is guided and constrained by representations. The act of positioning oneself (within the "structure") and at the same time being positioned ("structuring") is what intertwines social representations with identity construction. As Hermans et al. (1993) have put it themselves: "[…] the potential range of I-positions [...], is organized not only by the person himself or herself, but also by the social environment" (p.62). Further down, in the same text, the authors assert that as

soon as children have reached "the stage at which they are able to talk and think about themselves, in James' terms, as I about Me, they have reached a period in which society begins, more than before, to influence and organize their world." (p.72).

The internalization of social representations, and therefore the constant dialogical negotiations of cultural I-positions, can take place on either a macro or micro level (Valsiner, 2000). The micro levels refer either to the acquisition of knowledge through reconstructing symmetrical social relations between peers or through a social transmission characterized by an asymmetry of power so that knowledge is reproduced because of the influence and prestige of the source (Duveen, 1997). The macro level refers to knowledge acquisition through collective symbolic systems which can be communicated to the child either though propaganda and other media related sources, or through implicit social constructs surrounding a particular situation.

In summary, this study aims to show how children (ten-year-olds) mark multiple cultural I-postitions through internalizations (at both the macro as well as the micro level) and reconstructions of social representations held by their parents (family environment) and their teachers (school environment).

2. Research question

People from all over the world with various cultural origins mix, match and raise their child in yet another country. Inner-cities, such as London, have a growing population of multicultural individuals. The study discussed here focuses on the process of identity construction in children who have parents originating from diverse cultures while growing up in a third. More precisely, how do ten-year-old children growing up in London, attending a multicultural junior school, with parents representing multiple cultural origins make sense of who they are? In what way do children in such a fusion of cultural diversity

make sense of their interconnected cultural environment and thus of themselves within it? How do they position themselves and mark multiple cultural I-positions within cross-cultural families?

3. Methodology

3.1 Qualitative case studies

As the theory of social representations (Moscovici, 1988) suggests, in order to understand children we need to understand their social world (Duveen & Lloyd, 1993) and thus we need to allow them to teach us about their world (Christensen, 2004). Skinner, Valsiner and Holland (2001, p.30) point out that "knowing the figured world means knowing the kinds of people (or generic actors) who populate it, their relationship to one another, recognized motives for action and the plots or storylines available for linking actors and events in these worlds." Such a close focus on the child's social setting, while analyzing the child within it is best accomplished with a qualitative case study (De Vaus, 2001).

The theory of social representation does not, as Farr (1993) points out, elucidate guidelines as to which method is most appropriate. Nevertheless, there are important aspects that should not be dismissed and need precise explications, such as the content of the social representations and the social milieu of what is in question (Bauer & Gaskell, 1999). Individual case studies highlight not only the child's perspective of his or her world, but also allow for multiple angles of the child's world to crystallize by incorporating views of significant social others (James, Jenks & Prout, 1998). Flick (1992) discusses the extra richness case studies have proven to reveal in relation to the multi-

variedness of the phenomenon in question[11]. As the conducted study aimed to capture the dynamics of a dialogical self—the dynamic permeability of the self within the society, using a large sample would only homogenize more than aid description. The theory of social representations promises to reveal more about the underlying mechanisms of psychological phenomenon (Valsiner, 2003). By closely examining three individuals and their social environment this study seeks to reveal such mechanisms, their multi-variedness, and gain extra richness (Flick, 1992) without homogenizing and broadly generalizing a phenomenon specific to each and every individual.

3.2 Three cases

In the research project discussed here I analyzed three cases—three children, a parent of each child, and three of their teachers. As I had been working part-time in the school previous to the study, I was able to observe some relations between pupils and their teachers, between peers in the playground and between parents picking up their child after school. This gave me an opportunity to grasp a rough understanding of the figured worlds of each pupil who then participated in my study. Here I use the term rough because the school surrounding is, of course, simply a fragment of what the whole social environment is composed of. Nevertheless, for the purpose of this study, the focus of the school environment will suffice for showing how multicultural children begin to mark cultural I-positions within social representations.

The junior school chosen for this study was situated in the heart of London. The three children participating were part of a class of 24 which had 27 diverse nationalities represented in it. Having so many diverse nationalities present in one classroom provided

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[11] Through comparing and contrasting single case studies, Flick (1993) was able to show systematic variations in "how the client and his situation, the counselor's own scope and action, the situations and the constraints for working with clients and so on are constructed in the subjective theories and how these factors were dealt with in counseling" (p64).

an excellent opportunity to conduct case studies on the construction of identity within a multicultural environment. As social representations may vary from one community to the next, it was important to conduct this study in one school, and for further precision, in only one classroom. Capturing the social representations and showing their "structuring work" within the self-construction process of children (and avoiding homogenization) is best done by focusing on one setting.

The wider range of research concerned with the construction of multicultural identity has mostly focused on youth of twelve and up into adulthood (see e.g. Hall, 1995, Candor, 2000; Chandler, 2000). However, individuals finishing junior school and slowly becoming a teenager are in a special place in society. They are still children, and yet, they are becoming increasingly aware of social representation of various cultural issues and thus present an interesting age that has received little attention so far. As Hermans et al. (1993) have put forth that socialization begins as soon as the child is able to talk and think about her- or himself (and therefore influencing and organizing their world), I was not uncertain about the ability of children in my study constructing and organizing a self-concept. Conducting a study with ten-year-old children would allow me to look at precisely how children *begin* to make sense of who they are within *their* social environment.

Due to time constraints and encountering difficulties with parental approval while recruiting subjects (many parents were reluctant and did not like the idea of a "stranger flying into the child's world and dropping a bomb in the middle and then taking of without taking care of the consequences," as one parent explained his disapproval) I was not free to choose the gender of the children and thus, coincidently, all of the three children taking part in this study were girls[12]. Amanda has a mother who is half Italian half Nigerian and a

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[12] To protect the anonymity and the confidentiality of the participants all the names and various characteristics have been changed.

father who is half South African half Nigerian. Nadine has a mother who is Austrian and a German father and Gabriela is half Italian and half Lebanese (the mother being Italian and the father Lebanese). Besides interviewing the three girls, their mothers, the school's Headmaster, a Year Four Teacher and Year Five Teacher were interviewed as well. While I had asked the parents if I could interview one parent (not specifying whether mother or father) the mothers of these three children were the ones who were available and thus took part in my study.

3.3 Procedure

In-depth interviews were conducted with teachers, parents and children to compare and contrast representations and discourses of all three groups (Flick, 1993). Interviews with the parents and the teachers were semi-structured, and a method triangulation was used for interviewing the child (Flick, 1992).

After explicating the procedure of the interview the child was informed of participant's rights and that the interview was confidential. The child then was asked to draw a picture of herself as an adult, serving mostly as icebreaker (Greig & Taylor, 1999). After briefly discussing the drawing, the child was asked a set of questions moving from being personal (describe yourself in the future, describe yourself and your family today, what makes you special compared to others in your class?) over more general family questions (questions about relatives and family holidays) to questions about their culture (what does culture mean to you, what is your culture, what do you like most about your culture?). Between the set of questions about their family and their culture, vignettes were introduced and discussed with the children (see Appendix A1).

Corresponding roughly with the child's interview guide, the interview topics of the parents' interview moved from personal information (where the particular parent is from,

how long they have been in England, etc.) to more general information about the family (what languages are spoken, what celebrations are most important, how often do they see relatives?) and then to specific questions about the child's identity, what the parent did to promote a certain cultural aspects (if at all) and how the parent viewed the child's development (see Appendix A2).

Topic guides designed for the teachers differed slightly between the Headmaster and Year Four and Year Five teachers. While both moved from a personal (How long have you been at this school, how aware of multiculturalism are you?) to a more general (what is unique about this school, how would you compare it to other schools?) and back to the specific (how do children in this school come to terms with the presents of various different cultures, do you have an incident of when a child expressed a positive/negative view of the various cultures being present in the school?), the interviews with the two classroom teachers were much more specific. The interview with the Headmaster focused more on the school and representations of multiculturalism in general and compared to other schools in London, whereas the interviews with the two teachers centred more on the children at this particular school and how the students make sense of themselves in this particular environment, specifically within year five (see Appendix A2).

All interviews were scheduled according to the subjects' convenience and thus took place at various locations and times. They were recorded on a mini disc recorder and transcribed as soon as possible. Transcriptions took place while interviews were still being conducted, enabling me to listen to the answers more attentively, analyzing them and revising topic guides where necessary.

Once permission was gained from the parents, children were approached mostly after school (in the playground) and asked whether they were interested in talking to me about themselves for a research project. interviews ranged between 30 min and 1 h.

While the mother's interviews followed shortly after the child's (usually the next day) and lasted between 30 min and 45 min, interviews with the teachers were scheduled according to their time tables and took place in their office/classrooms. These interviews ranged between 20 and 30 min (see Appendix A2 for mothers' and teachers' topic guide).

3.4 Coding and analyzing

Wengraf's (2001) model of text structure sequentialization was applied to organize the data according to the DARNE Typology: Structuring the interviews in terms of five basic categories (*d*escription, *a*rgumentation, *r*eport, *n*arrative, and *e*valuation); this typology was designed to detect the case structure of the narrative told by the interviewee. More specifically, a differentiation between the life narration as told (as constructed) and the life narration as lived (as actually experienced) is made. Organizing the data according to the five categories above allows the researcher not only to understand past experiences in a present horizon and in a horizon of future expectations; it further permits the researcher to analyze the connections between the lived through experiences and the told story.

In this study the focus fell on particular incidences related to cultural matters. The distinction between what had actually happened (report, narrative) and how the participants perceived these incidences (description, argumentation, evaluation) were helpful in analyzing the precise turning-point of simple facts (so and so was laughed at for speaking a funny language with his or her parents, the headmaster said it is not nice to make fun of someone) and representations and beliefs about these and similar facts (making fun of someone because they speak a different language is not nice [evaluation] because this person will feel bad [argumentation] and the world is much more interesting with people speaking different languages [description]). Thus distinction between what

had actually happened and how children organized representations, and ultimately their cultural I-positions in relation to not only what had happened, but, more importantly, in relation to social representations around these issues (e.g. it is interesting when others speak several languages, other people think it is special to have that ability, I speak several languages, thus I am interesting and proud of my diversity), was easily recognizable.

Based on the theories employed in this study (the dialogical self and social representations), the aim of this study was to closely analyze the social environment in which the child grows and the story told by the child about this world (especially about how they understand themselves) simultaneously. The text structure sequentialization was chosen for the analysis of the three cases in this study not necessarily to categorize the child's narrative into the above mentioned categories, but rather, as a means to highlight pertinent connections—the dialogue —between the social environment and the self-concept.

The text structure sequentializations were then used to generate main topics—fields—according to Wengraf's (2001) thematic field analysis. By staying close to the central research question (how do multi-cultural children make sense of who they are) and the specific research questions (how do children mark cultural I-positions within social representations) the themes become apparent from analyzing what each subject talks about in relation to multiculturalism and in which category (description, argumentation, report, narrative, evaluation). The five categories not only help determine the thematic fields, they also help to organize them into a complete overview of general pertinence. Generating specific thematic fields from all interview and viewing their prominence in each person's discourse (e.g. pride), the various categories helped determine whether this theme was only used as reference (e.g. a report about how the teacher or parent support the notion of pride in diversity) or whether the child has incorporated representations into her own

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world-view (e.g. creating their own argumentations and evaluations about why they should feel proud of where they are from). Once the thematic fields are detected and organized they can then be compared and contrasted within as well as between the three sets of data.

Once themes and topics had been compared and contrasted according to frequency as well context, Geertz's (1973) concept of "thick description" was employed to re-present multiple I-positions the child represented throughout her interview and to highlight how these positions were guided and guarded by representations held by the mother, the school, and the wider society. For example, in reviewing the teachers and parents interviews, the concept of pride reoccurred in various categories (reporting how teachers promoted the notion of pride in diversity, describing how the concept was integrated into the school curriculum, arguing for the importance of such efforts, narrating personal experiences, ...) and was then found within the child's discourse as each of them exhibited a great deal of pride in relation to where they were from. In this case the representations containing pride in diversity guided the children in constructing a positive cultural I-position, which each child readily expressed throughout their interview (e.g. it is cool to be from different countries, I can speak two languages, I feel at home there and here, other people admire where I am from because it is not just English).

4. Results and interpretations

Before discussing an analysis of the multiple I-positions the girls in my study have marked in relation to and in dialogue with social representations, I will discuss some of the main social representations of culture and multicultural issues identified in the teachers as well as the parents discourse. A brief description of the nature of some of the representations about multicultural individuals will set the stage for the internalization

processes. These descriptions are part of what Jovchelovitch (1996) term the "structuring structure." Once these representations are clarified I will trace them within the child's discourse and her conception of the world.

4.1 The teachers' discourse

In analyzing the teachers' interviews it quickly became apparent that as a means to an end the celebration of diversity occurs within a triangulation of unity, pride, and respect; the end goal representing the aim to learn. These three themes, representing the teachers' motives for their actions (note the importance of the motive behind actions as discussed by Skinner et al., 2001) govern each teacher's interview, complement values and morals mentioned by parents and are found again in dialogue with the child.

Within the junior school social representations of multicultural individuals emphasized the positive contribution these children were able to make (pride of diversity) to the school as a whole (unity). In order to maintain a sense of unity within the school, individuals are expected to treat each other with respect. Thus, children from all over the world are embraced, accepted and incorporated into the curriculum. Moreover, children are given a chance to express themselves freely, as this quote from the head teacher demonstrates:

> I just saw some parents this afternoon with their child and, ah, I noticed that she could speak Farsi, and I asked her, can you speak Farsi, yes I can, and I said, oh I am so jealous, and I give that whole ethos over […] And I think that that works its way around the school because they know that I feel like that and that other teachers who don't speak other languages feel like that and they feel very proud of their achievements. They are recognized and used in the classroom when teaching. For example, when I have been

teaching RE (Religious Education) and have been talking about the Koran, I have asked children to bring in their favourite versus of the Koran and to read them in Arabic and to share them with us and how to handle it and all the other uses around that, to show that they are a real positive contribution to make and that then causes those peer comments of respect and understanding and um, openness I think, which is important. (Emphasis added)

Representations of unity, pride, and respect were not distinctive characteristics of only the Headmaster's discourse. The three themes governed all three teacher interviews. Each teacher mentioned the world map (a map with photos from students on it, showing all the different 47 nationalities represented in the school) close to the beginning of the interview, proudly pointing out that this school had children from 47 different countries. All of the teachers talked about international poetry day as a chance for the children to read poems in their own language and, thereby, show their extra talents.

Teachers themselves were very proud of their students and the reflection of this pride was visible throughout the interviews. While discussing international poetry day with one teacher she reflected on all the various languages and on the opportunity it gave the children to be proud of their language while smiling radiantly the whole time. Another teacher was eager to tell me about the embracing manner with which children in his class welcomed other children and that this was a characteristic he had not encountered in any other school:

They embrace the cultures and they seem to enjoy being a part of it as well … they all seem to be very accepting of each other, which is great. In the schools I have worked in before children were not this open to other

cultures, they usually would stick to their own. This is what makes working here so special.

According to teachers the children are sensitive to other children's need (especially when they do not speak English), are very accepting of each other and "have their eyes wide open." They "enjoy being amongst a nice big crowd of different people" and "don't see the difference between us and them" (relating to cultural differences). In this junior school every one is the same while being different and is encouraged to be proud of it. As the first English troops were sent to Iraq the headmaster's message in assembly was: "Wouldn't the world be wonderful if it was like [our school]? Every one is different, everyone has different religions, different faiths, different beliefs, but we all are one community."

Such an all-encompassing and at the same time distinctive environment enables to mark multiple I-positions and express each one while still belonging to the overall whole. As one of the teachers reflected that: "They are very, very proud, and the thing that I think is really nice is that most, a lot of them see themselves as being English as well, being British as well."

4.2 The parents' discourse

The two themes pride and respect reoccurred in the mothers' discourse. All three mothers assured me that it was very important for them that their daughters knew where they were from, that their heritage is something to be proud of and that this was the reason why respecting others was so important. They wanted their child not only to know about where they are from, but to accept their heritage with pride, teaching them the benefits of having a diverse background as this mother's quote clearly demonstrates:

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I am not nationalistic but I think one should be able to be proud of wherever you come from. Every country, which ever, has to offer different things and different qualities, it is just like with human beings and I think first of all, you know, you should be able to be proud of that.

The same mother goes on to talk about nationalism, racism, and various other derogating comments that might arise on the bases of someone's culture, nationality or race. She asserts that pride should not incorporate hatred towards anyone else:

Not in the sense that you are so proud of it that you consider everything else shit, because that then is nationalism. No, I would make sure that that is corrected and I would also make sure that this person gets to know that it actually is hurting somebody when they make such a comment.

All three stressed that their child was taught about the consequences of racism and the wrongness of it. They use personal examples to clarify the absurdity of disrespecting someone for their culture, nationality, or race, as this mother's comment shows:

I mean my mom is white, so what do you want to say? Where do I stand, black or white? And your grandmother is white, where do you want to stand? It's not as if you are not, you have white blood in you, that is not to say, because you are classified as black, you look black anyway, you still are both, so where do you want to stand?

Discourses like these agree with the teachers' discourse of respect and pride. They send a message to the child that says they should be proud of where they are from, where

their family came from, proud about their cultural beliefs and practices and that this pride should be respected in every individual, regardless of their cultural beliefs and origins.

The theme of unity in the teachers' discourse was replaced in the mothers' discourse by a theme of balance. As all mothers stressed that they wanted their child to know where they are from without being nationalistic or racist, their solution was to find a balance. Amanda's mother in particular commented several times that to "take the best of both worlds really, that is what I want for her," "taking the best and throwing the rest," and "you always remember where you are from, you are here but there should always be something, so it's really trying to find a balance." All three mothers saw such benefits in growing up in multiple cultures and wanted their child to take the best of all and healthily balance them in their everyday life.

4.3 The girls' representations

In reconstructing the parents' as well as the teachers' discourse the children's culturally mixed I-positions are in dialogue with each other. Throughout their interviews representations of unity and difference quickly crystallized in a slightly modified version which fit into their own belief system. They have internalized representations about their specific culture held in society and re-present them in dialogue with me. They are proud of where they are from, feel one with the school, are happy to share extra talents, which make them distinct, and respect others cultural differences. The girls have constructed a social world in which all of their various cultures have a specific (and hierarchically structured) I-position and thus present themselves as simultaneously English and for example German-Austrian, part of a whole and their own individual person with a unique combination of cultures.

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All three girls assured me that while they were half this and half that, a quarter here and a quarter there they nevertheless considered themselves English. At the same time, all three went into great detail as to what their heritage is and which countries various family member were from, representing both diversity and unity simultaneously. In addition, they were proud to find their origins in various countries while at the same time being English, they were respectful towards other children and their cultural heritages and were happy to take the best from all of their cultural backgrounds to then form their unique combination.

I will discuss the four representations identified in the teachers' and parents' discourse (unity, pride, respect, balance) in relation to the children's various I-positions. I will point out at which level various bits of representations were internalized as well as which cultural I-positions are dominant over others. I will explain the dialogue between various I-positions as well as I-postitions and the social, showing how the three girls in my study used representations on both macro and micro levels and are in constant negotiation with the social as well as with other I-postitions, which may be either in agreement or in disagreement while making sense of who they are.

4.3.1 Unity and balance: agreeing cultural I-positions

The reconstruction of the teachers' representation of unity is most vividly expressed by Nadine. Nadine's heritage is German-Austrian. Upon asking her where she is from she explains: "Well I was born here, but my mum is from Austria and my dad is from Germany. So I'm mixed."

She describes herself as a whole (mixed), and yet, towards the end of the interview I ask her how she feels when she is in Austria and she replies: "I don't feel English. I feel more like I have kind of lived there more, like for a few years. And I know myself around and I know where to go and I know where everything is."

Even though Nadine thinks of herself as one, experiencing continuity, in this instance it becomes clear that her I moves from one spatial position to another, depending on context and time, each position is endowed with a respective voice experiencing a distinctness. Once she is in Austria the prominence of her English cultural I-positions is suppressed and her Austrian I-position becomes the dominating voice accompanied with a sense of volition ("I know where to go and I know where everything is").

Nevertheless, the various I-positions are in agreement with each other due to the unity of diverse cultures represented by both her mother and the teachers. As her mother asserted that: "I think one should be able to be proud of wherever you come from; every country, all the different ones, they all have to offer different things and different qualities. One should see the many enrichments different cultures can offer."

Nadine explains to me how she defines her culture:

> Nadine: Cool!
>
> Amrei: How do you mean cool? Can you explain what you mean?
>
> Nadine: It's just kind of nice that you can, it's nice … it's hard to explain.
>
> Amrei: Ok, um, what do you like most about your culture?
>
> Nadine: That it is not only one culture, like just England, or just Austria, or just Germany, that it is mixed and that I can go all over the place and that I've got lots of family everywhere and it's fun because lots of people, like, um, they admire it, kind of.

Even though it is rather difficult for Nadine to explain what exactly it is about "her culture" that is "cool," she recognizes that there is a unity in herself constructed by a multiplicity. Further, she considers her culture as being cool (showing pride in it) because

"lots of people […] admire it." This quote shows not only that Nadine is unifying her cultural mix, she is internalizing what her mother as well as her teachers think about a person with multiple cultural backgrounds. Finding a balance is what the mothers wanted their children to do and finding a balance is what Nadine is doing by stating that her culture is cool since it is not just one. Note also the reference of "other people" admiring her position. The dialogical thought process of reflecting not only on what Nadine thinks about a culturally mixed background but, more importantly, on what Nadine thinks others think about it becomes apparent in the above quote. It also shows Nadine having internalized on a micro level (via an asymmetry) what her teachers are promoting throughout school: "Children who speak more than one language should be celebrated because they are an extra richness above and beyond." (Headmaster) "To show the children that it is indeed an extra talent and that it is something that they can be proud of. That is the ethos in this school and I think that the children really feel it. They definitely feel it from the top." (Year Four Teacher)

The above quotes are an example of how Nadine has acknowledged representations of having various cultural backgrounds and the enrichment these bring. She draws on representations in school as well as at home to mark multiple cultural I-positions within one repertoire. She has an Austrian I-position, a German I-position and an English I-position in negotiation with each other as well as with the social. The hierarchy of these I-positions is modified to context and time. Yet, they are in agreement with each other and can all be represented at the same time with the help of the internalized representation of unity.

4.3.2 Conflicts and pride: disagreeing I-positions

While Nadine's culturally diverse I-positions seem to be complimenting each other, not all multicultural children experience such harmony. As the theory of the dialogical self (Hermans et al., 1992) predicts, various cultural I-positions may be in disagreement with each other. Gabriela presents such an example. When I asked her whether she was Muslim she replied:

Gabriela: I can't really say. Well, not that I don't know, but I can't, to be honest, my dad wants me to be Muslim, um, yea, if I say no to him, he's got a bit of a mentality, that if I say no to him, to be a Muslim, he says that, I don't know, that he won't look at me.

> Amrei: Is your mum Muslim?
>
> Gabriela: No, she is Christian, to be honest I prefer to be Christian.
>
> Amrei: Ok.
>
> Gabriela: But at the end of the day, it is my choice what I want to do at the
>
>   end of the day.

The prominence of Gabriela's Christian I-position is clearly visible. While she does not want to let go of her Muslim I ("I can't really say"), her Christian I is who speaks out louder ("I prefer to be Christian").

Further, while the two religions might stand in opposition, it is interesting to see how Gabriela internalized and reconstructed the representations held by the parents and incorporates them in herself. Gabriela lives with her mother, who is Christian and who tries to teach her honesty and independence: "Well, it can be tough with different religions, I try to tell her the truth and be honest and teach her to be independent and make her own decisions. But it can be very difficult."

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Thus Gabriela has reconstructed her mother's teaching of independence and internalized them on a micro level as "at the end of the day" being able to choose which religion she will affiliate with. Gabriela's quote above demonstrated the dialogical interaction between her Muslim I-position, her Christian I-position and her social environment. She cannot say whether she is one or the other and while trying to clarify this struggle (a disagreeing dialogue between her two religious positions) she refers back to her parent (demonstrating the dialogical interaction of both positions with her environment).

Despite Gabriela's difficulty of incorporating both a Muslim *and* a Christian I-position she is rather proud of her diverse background and her ability to speak an extra language. While talking to her mother on the playground she makes comments exclusively in Italian, loud enough for other children to hear them. Her mother tries to speak to her in English since I do not understand Italian and Gabriela insists on Italian. Upon asking her where she was from she was eager to tell me (with a very proud voice) that while she did consider herself English she actually is from somewhere else: "Well, um, I am English but my dad's Lebanese and my mom is Italian, so I am half Lebanese half Italian."

Besides exemplifying disagreeing religious I-positions Gabriela shows through her actions and attitude that she nevertheless is proud of where she is from. Even though her parents are divorced, she hardly spends time in Lebanon and does not speak Lebanese she is in no aspect inclined to simply dismiss her Lebanese I-position. Gabriela was just as proud of her Lebanese heritage as she was of her Italian while simultaneously being English.

So far I have described Nadine's internalized representations of unity and balance, providing her with a belief system in which her various cultural I-positions can be in agreement. Gabriela exemplifies a case in which religious I-positions do not necessarily

agree with each other. She nevertheless has internalized the teachers' and her mother's representation of pride in diversity. As the teachers treat multicultural children as extra enrichment and a source of pride, Gabriela's mother asserted a similar view: "I just want her to be proud of where she is from, it is important to know where you are from."

4.3.3 Dominance: hierarchies and Internalizations on two levels

Gabriela's Christian I-position dominated her Muslim I-position. Amanda exhibited even more vividly the hierarchy of her various cultural I-positions. When I asked her where she was from she replied: "Nigeria, I am half Nigerian, quarter Italian and quarter South African. Sometimes I say I am mostly Nigerian."

This domination by the Nigerian I-position is explicable through the family's representations of what "back home" means. Discussing various topics such as celebrations, promotion of cultural identity, and languages with the mother, she exclusively talks about Nigeria. Without me asking she states in the very beginning of the interview that:

> […] we are quite in touch with what is happening back home, and there is a Nigerian TV station here so I tend to switch onto it sometimes so they see, you know, the music, all of that, and like, I get films as well, you know, for them at least to have an idea of what it is, make outfits for them, so, they are quite in touch with what is happening, food wise, all of that ….

Amanda reconstructs representations of Nigeria and its people not only through a dyadic relationship (on a micro level), but also on a large scale (on a macro level), as this quote shows her making sense of what is written on a website:

[…] um well, on the Internet there is this thing, and they said that we are a bunch of happy going, merry making people. Yea, and I think that is quite true, cause we party basically every day there is a party and everybody knows about it. Like on the street, you know there is everybody, oh hi, and yea."

Amanda recognizes the source of information as something "out there" ("on the Internet there is this thing"), makes the abstract concrete by projecting the information onto imagined social others ("they say") and finds a comfortable position within that representation ("I think that is quite true, cause we party basically every day"). Amanda is thus re-presenting (Howarth, 2005) representations of Nigerian culture and herself through these constructions (Duveen, 1997).

4.3.4 Respect and admiration: I-positions in dialogue with the social

Having shown how Amanda internalized cultural values on both the macro and micro level, how various I-positions may be in disagreement without conflicting with Gabriela's pride, and how Nadine balances her cultural I-positions, I would like to turn to a theme identified in both the teachers' and parents' discourse—respect.

Respect was a characteristic found again in discussions of the vignettes I asked the children to complete. One short story dealt with Anthony and his Spanish speaking mother (see Appendix A1). When he is picked up from school Anthony speaks Spanish with his mother. I asked Amanda what other children might think about this and her first reaction was: "they might say, that's a silly language." And Anthony would then feel "disappointed." I asked her why she thought Anthony would feel this way and her reply was: "Yea, cause he thought like, people would, you know, cause I am sure most of them have their own language they speak at home. So, they should take it a bit more serious."

Here Amanda asserts that the other children ought to show respect to their peers when speaking a different language since they most probably have their own language as well. If they would not respect that, Amanda further expresses, they would be racist:

> Amrei: Do you think it is Ok to make such comments about Anthony's language?
>
> Amanda: No. Cause it's being racist really. Cause everybody is being different. If we were all the same, would all speak the same language it would be a bit boring. It's nice to hear a change sometimes.

Nadine had similar reactions. Yet, what is interesting about Nadine's answer is that she derives her assertion of how children in her school act directly from the teachers. Nadine makes a distinction between "nice" people and "horrible" people, letting the stories end in two ways (one how nice people might react and one how horrible people might react). When discussing Anthony's story Nadine's thoughts were:

> Nadine: Nice people would be impressed and think it is quite cool, like they might say wow, how did you do that, can you teach me and stuff. Horrible people probably would make fun of him because they are jealous or maybe they think it just sounds like gibberish.
>
> Amrei: Ok, how would you describe this school, are there many nice people, are there many horrible people?
>
> Nadine: Most of the people here are nice.
>
> Amrei: Do you think it is different from other areas?

Nadine: Yea.

Amrei: Yea, do you know why?

Nadine: um, no, um, I think it is just because maybe the teachers are better,

I don't know.

The interesting aspect about this little excerpt of Nadine's interview is that it shows her assumption of her interaction with the social. She makes a distinction between horrible and nice people, by which she categorizes desirable vs. undesirable behavior. In this case, she is of the opinion that the desirable behavior is to admire Anthony's ability to speak another language. She further asserts that within her school most children behave in a similar manner because "maybe the teachers are better." Nadine shows not only her awareness of the teachers representations (how one ought to behave towards others), but also her awareness of the importance of a "structuring structure" (Jovchelovitch, 1996), her awareness of them affecting how she and other members of her school thinks.

5. Discussion

In an attempt to explicate how children with various cultural backgrounds come to an understanding of who they are, I have analyzed three cases in the light of social representations (Moscovici, 2000) while focusing on the dialogues of I-positions (Hermans et al., 1994). Looking at multicultural individuals it has become apparent that while the theory of the dialogical self has great potential and explicates various important features in need of clarification when discussing the construction of multicultural selves, it is equally necessary to justly describe the figured world in which I-positions have been marked. In this study, the theory of social representations was employed for such descriptions. Closely analyzing social representations will help understand how various I-positions are marked and in which hierarchical order. Describing these positions with the

help of social representations may clarify why some children experience difficulties when developing within a multicultural background and others do not. Before discussing exactly how the children in my study have used various social representations to mediate their sense of who they are, I will discuss some important features of the theory of the dialogical self which have proven to be especially helpful in analyzing the construction of the self of multicultural persons.

5.1 Multiculturalism and the dialogical self

The permeability and dynamic nature of the dialogical self enable the child to act and react according to the situation and time. The openness and fluidity of a person (as discussed by Valsiner, 2002, 2003) is of great importance when discussing multicultural children, as they are often confronted with shifts of cultural I-position dominating over others. Hall (1995) has brought forth an exemplary paper discussing Sikh girls in London. Here a shift between "when to act English" and "when to act Sikh" (switching from English cultural I-position to Sikh cultural I-position) occurs each time the child leaves and returns to her home environment.

Remembering Nadine's explanation of not feeling English when she is in Austria, the dynamic and fluid nature becomes prominent within this study as well. Nadine is able to make a clear distinction according to context, as to which situation calls for which I-positions. When Nadine is in Austria, she "feels as though she knows everything and has always been there." Her Austrian I temporarily takes on a more prominent position. Important here is the ability of the dialogical self to move from one spatial position to another.

The permeability and dynamic nature make it possible for these girls to all feel English as well as originating from various other cultures, creating a novel "in-between"

area. The dialogical openness allows the child to mark an English position. Yet, they are all exposed to "their culture back home" as well and therefore internalize values and beliefs originating from other cultures, re-presenting themselves as part of that culture too.

This is where the multiplicity and polyphony, drawn from Bakhtin, deserves mentioning. The ability to endow each I-position with a voice that tells its own story allows Nadine to feel English and German at the same time. They are separate voices occupying diverse positions. Hermans et al. (1992) theory nicely explicates the ability to belong to more than one culture without necessarily feeling fractured and negatively in-between, belonging neither here nor there. Yet, it is also this feature, heteroglossia in incessant dialogue, in processes of questioning and answers with other I-positions as well as the figured world, which may lead to conflicting self-concepts (e.g. Timotijevic et al., 2000). The two examples from the passages discussed above would be Nadine's ease of feeling different in Austria (enable through agreeing I-position) and Gabriela's disquiet of which religion to belong to (presenting two conflicting I-positions).

While the above example highlights two of the three components discussed in relation of the characteristics of voices (continuity and distinctness), it also illustrates the novel construction which has developed from already existing structures. The concept of being English is well established, as is the notion of being Austrian[13]. Nadine has understood this and yet comes to the conclusion that while she is part of both ("I was born here, but my mother is from Austria"), she is not really either. Instead, she is something else ("mixed"), something that in the later part of our interview she characterizes as "cool" because it is novel ("other people kind of admire it because it is not just one"). Again, I would like to stress the importance of the ability to construct novel structures out of already exciting structures when forming a self-concept. It is what enables persons to be of

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13 As the aim of the paper is to show the construction process of the self and not to discuss what a concept of being from a certain culture might be, I will provide no further discussion as to what the established concept of "being English" might be.

mixed heritage without experiencing a sense of fracturedness or being an outsider. Such a novel construction is only possible if a person and culture is conceptualized as an open dynamic system (Valsiner, 2002).

Having discussed two of the three components' characteristic for each voice (continuity and distinctness), I would like to turn to the third: volition. While Gabriela is telling me about her religious preference, two I-positions are struggling to maintain their importance within her I-postitioning repertoire. It is the volition of her Muslim I that, at this moment, does not allow her Christian I to completely reject the Muslim position. No matter what her preference at this moment is, her Muslim I maintains to occupy an important stance in her figured world (as she expresses her father will not look at her if she decides not to be Muslim). Simply by maintaining a position in Gabriela's life this position is exerting volition, it refuses to be rejected. Likewise, the Christian I-position clearly shows its volition by dominating over the Muslim I.

The possibility of the dichotomy of continuity and discontinuity Hermans (2001b) discusses is of relevance as well. All three girls expressed that since their parents were from somewhere other than England, they too were not fully English. The example Hermans discussed concerned the differentiation between my mother and my mother. This little sentence represents continuity with the former (my) and a discontinuity in the acceptance of whatever is mine is not me, but rather someone else: mother. The girls are aware that they were born in England and distinct from their mother (Nadine: "Well, I was born here"). And yet, they realize the importance of the heritage of their parents (Nadine: "but my mum is from Austria"). And thus the dichotomy flourishes (Nadine: "So I'm mixed").

Making this differentiation between being English and being something else relates back to the Jamesian distinction of I and Me. As this research project focused on social

interaction and influence on the child's development of a self, I will only point out one of the three features constituting the Me as known by the I: social relationships. The spiritual and the material possessions will not be elaborated here, even though they are important features of constructing a self-concept. The social relationships of the children are crucial in conceptualizing a self as shown above. The parents are part of the child's identity in all three cases (remember all three discussing their heritage in terms of their parents heritage). Each child emphasized various I-positions endowed with their parents' voices, their I's were telling stories about respective Me's.

Variations of voices have been pointed out so far in relation to specific I-positions (e.g. religious). The theory of the dialogical self exerts that each distinct voice may have several possibilities of what that voice is part of. Voices may be part of the world "out there," as the Internet represents for Amanda. A voice can be classified as the "imagined other" (Mead, 1934), as Nadine explains that people (the imagined other) envy her for her background. They may be part of the extended self, as in all three cases with the parental heritage. Or they may be classified as the "inside" world of imagination (discussing the drawing of the children as an adult, an image of herself in the future, would be classified as part of the imagined world "inside").

Before turning to the theory of social representations and how it may aid to clarify some aspects of multicultural identity construction, I would like to mention that the above points discussed in relation to multicultural identities do not, by themselves, do justice to the whole theory of the dialogical self. Many features of the dialogical self would deserve more elaboration. Yet, for the purpose of this article the above mentioned point are sufficient, or rather, when discussing multicultural selves the above discussed features are necessary. Nevertheless, the figured world (Skinner et al., 2001), needs precise analysis as

well and thus I will now turn to the benefits of employing the theory of social representations.

5.2 Structuring I-positions

Cultural I-positions children mark, are by no means random. The hierarchical structure can be traced by analyzing social representations which are part of the semiotic repertoire available to the children and through which they mediate their sense of who they are. Describing what the figured world of the child looks like helps to determine whether cultural I-positions are in agreement or disagreement with each other and it helps to define the structure of marked I-postitions, as children mark them within and according to this repertoire of symbolic resources (Duveen et al., 1986).

In this particular study I focused on the discourse of the teachers and mothers specifically related to multicultural issues. For precision I further focused on the school setting. The aim was to capture some of the social representations about culture that children in this particular school utilized while making sense of their world and of themselves. The aim of the teachers was learning and that of the mothers successful child-raring and in both discourses four themes reoccurred: pride, respect, unity, and balance. The aim as motive for action is directly related to the storylines available to the children (as discussed by Skinner et al., 2001)

The teachers repetitively stressed the importance of showing the child that the feature that made them different (being a different color, speaking a different language, having different customs) was something special, enriching, and to be proud of. They incorporated this ethos into their school curriculum and thus combined sensitive cultural issues in a positive manner with the achievements children were able to make.

All three children demonstrated pride in diversity in a slightly modified way; (remember Nadine's expression of her culture being "cool"). Likewise respect was found again in the discourse of all the girls participating in this study; they had not only understood the concept and the importance of it, but internalized and reinterpreted it according to their own belief system (e.g. Amanda, while discussing the vignettes, explained that since most probably everyone had their own language at home, other children should take issues like these more seriously and not make fun of someone for speaking a different language). While not making a distinction between cultures or any other related issues when asked who they preferred to play with, talk to, or work with in class, all three children were aware that each and every pupil belonged to the overall whole—their school (as Nadine even pointed out that people in this school were nicer than in others). The children all gave off a sense of unity. The theme of balance is best discussed with Gabriela's case. While the other two girls seemed to be rather content with their cultural backgrounds and the combination of them, Gabriela struggled with finding a balance between her Muslim I-position and her Christian I-position. She has not yet found a balance between them and therefore the issue became more prominent in her discourse than in the others' conversations.

Finding all the main themes represented within the child's discourse shows how each child has interpreted what is going on around her while at the same time adjusting her understanding according to her own world and needs. She has made sense of certain issues and used this sense to understand where she stands according to what is said by, in this case, the teachers and the parents. Both the parents' and the teachers' discourse about cultural issues was highly motivated to assure the children that not being "fully English" was something positive and to be proud of (enabling the child to develop a healthy self-esteem), something that is an enrichment to the child as she can choose the best from all

"and throw the rest" (encouraging them to find a balance), and something that did not distinguish them in any negative way form the rest of the school. Rather, "being different" was the norm in this particular junior school and this difference was what unified all the various nationalities to one community (giving the children a sense of belonging, rather than a fractured understanding of the self).

Social representations about multicultural individuals and problems such individuals may encounter are usually not as positive as they were within this school. In fact, most multicultural literature discusses fractured selves (e.g. Timotijevic et al. 2000), not belonging here or there (Marshall, Stenner & Lee, 1999), low self-esteem (Mirza & Reay, 2000), poor achievements and higher criminality related to hyphenated individuals migrants (Hall, 1996), to mention just a few. It is because the school in which I conducted my research is open and welcoming to diverse nationalities and cultures that the children are allowed and able to mark cultural I-positions that are in agreement with each other rather than in oppositions. Of course the school is no isolated environment and not the only environment the child grows in. Thus, some social representations cannot be overridden with the open ethos that would like to also allow conflicting cultural positions to be in agreement (e.g. Gabriela's struggle between Christianity and Islam). Nevertheless, this study does show that social representations do guide and constrain the construction of a self as Howarth (2002) has discussed. It is the reconstruction of the social structure which either enables children to feel proud of where they are from or guides them to experience a fractured sense of self and neither belonging here nor there, depending on the representations within the figured world (Valsiner, 2000).

Analyzing social representations present within the figured world of the child helps understand why some children experience difficulties when growing up "between" multiple cultures and why others do not, it leads the researcher to understand which

cultural I-positions are marked and to grasp which of these marked positions is of prominence and why. A generalization of the findings to a wider population would yield no results. Each person needs to be carefully analyzed according to the social representations governing their personal figured world (Skinner et al., 2001). Instead of homogenizing individuals and thereby neglecting depth and accuracy, the theory of social representations was employed to highlight the dialogical relationship between the individual and the social and for contextualizing the individual (Valsiner, 2003).

5.3 Future research

The three cases in focus here were of three girls in their beginning stages of making sense of their cultural I-positions. A follow-up study would be of great interest as it would demonstrate further developmental stages of each child making sense of who she is. To see how the child positions herself when she is 14, 16 and 18 would yield important data on how beginning stages of cultural I-positions are further negotiated until adulthood.

This research project has focused on verbal interaction (due to time constraints), yet, Duveen (1997) has pointed out that social representations are not necessarily communicated to the child in a dyadic relationship, they may simply be written into the code of the collective symbol system. In addition, the theory of the dialogical self also asserts that "dialogue" is not to be understood as purely verbal interaction. Rather, the dialogical interaction begins with eye contact between the infant and the mother (Fogel, 1993). To form a more detailed understanding of how children construct a sense of who they are, it is important for future research to conduct field-studies over a longer period of time with in-depth observations focusing on non-verbal interaction. By conducting an ethnographic study subtle interactions can be considered and incorporated into the analysis and the negotiation processes over a longer period of time can be observed (e.g. it would

be interesting to see how Gabriela will negotiate her religious positions in future) (Duveen et al., 1993). As not all aspects of the theory of the dialogical self (due to spatial and time constraints) were discussed here (e.g. the two remaining features of the Me; spiritual and material possessions), conducting an ethnographic study would provide the opportunity to discuss more features of the dialogical self in greater detail.

It is important to conduct this type of study with more participants and especially also with male participants. Unfortunately the time limitations and difficulties with parental agreement did not allow for an analysis of boys within this school. Nevertheless, in order to rule out gender differences within the identity construction process such a research project should definitely be conducted with boys as well.

Research projects that incorporate more social environments of the child's world will be of interest as well. In this particular study I focused on social representations within the school environment and how these affected the child's marking of cultural I-positions. Yet, observing the child at home, on the playground, in the company of relatives, or even "back home" would be highly beneficial for analyzing the constant negotiation of the dominance of certain I-postitions over others. Further, observing the interactions of the child in novel situations (e.g. encountering difficulties because of the heritage) and noting their coping strategies would clarify some of their dialogical relationships between their I-positions.

6. Conclusion

According to Moscovici "[t]he biological equipment of human beings, which is its reference point, does not vary from culture to culture. But representations are envisaged on a scale where cultural differences do matter in shaping the human family and its world" (1988, p.234).

And so representations matter for individuals making sense of themselves. In conceptualizing a person and how he or she makes sense of him- or herself, he or she must be analyzed in relation to social representations present in *his* or *her* world while the multiplicity of various I-positions should not to be neglected.

I showed how social representations held by teachers and parents can be found again within the child's discourse, presenting a part of who they are and how children with a fusion of a diverse cultural background and growing up in a multicultural environment mark multiple cultural I-positions. The theory of the dialogical self is a useful tool in showing how children are able to create a novel space "in-between" which is not necessarily a negative one (as so often discussed by multicultural social researchers). It is important to realize the ability of children to form a healthy and positive self-concept regardless of the number of cultural influences. It is also necessary to understand the highly influential feature (the structuring structure) of social representations that play such an immense role within the open and dynamic dialogical process, the never-ending negotiations, of the construction of a self-concept.

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Appendix A1: Topic Guide and Vignettes for Interviewing the Child

Topic Guide

Please draw a picture of yourself when you are an adult, you have about 10 min.
Can you tell me why you drew this picture?
Where are you in this picture (in what country)?
What are you doing?
Are you married/do you have a family?

I*) General questions about yourself:*
How would you describe yourself?
And in relation to other children in your class?
What is unique about you (do you have something that other children don't, what makes you special)?
If I ask you, "where are you from," what would you say?
If someone from a different country asked you, would you say the same thing?
Where were you born?
Is there a difference for you between where you are from and where you were born?

II*) General questions about your family:*
Can you describe your family to me (where are your parent's from/how many siblings do you have/who do you live with)?
What language do you speak at home?
What language do you speak with your brothers or sisters?
How would you describe your sisters or brothers?
How are they different from you?
Where do most of your relatives live?
How do your relatives (aunt/uncle/cousin) differ from you?

III*) General questions about your friends:*
How are you friends?
Do you often go to their house?
What sort of games do you play with them?
Who do you like the most and why?

I*V) Vignettes*

V) General questions about your culture:
Can you describe to me what "culture" means/is? (background, tradition, customs, ethnicity)
What does "culture" mean to you?
How would you describe your culture?
Is your culture the same as that of your relatives?
Can you describe something (anything) that is typical for your culture?
Can you describe a typical holiday/celebration that you and your family celebrate?
Does that belong to your culture? Why or why not?
What do you like most about your culture? Why?
What is unique about your culture?

Vignettes

1) Laura is new in the school. She is 9 years old and is starting year 5. Laura moved to England, Liverpool, 5 years ago with her two brothers and her parents. Laura's mum is from
Russia and her dad is from America. After living in Liverpool for 5 years her family decided to move to London. On her first day of school Laura feels …

2) Anthony has lived in London all his life. But his parents have moved to London from different countries. His mum moved to London from Columbia, South America, when she was 18 to go to college. In college she met Anthony's dad. His dad had also moved to London when he was 18, but he had moved from Spain. Anthony does not have an accent when he speaks English, but both his parents do. When they are at home they speak Spanish. When Anthony is being picked up from school other children sometimes say something about the language that he speaks with his parents.

3) Rachel and her friends are having lunch. They are talking about a program all of them have seen last night. When the girls start unpacking their lunch Rachel takes out the pancakes her mother makes at home and uses them to scoop up some spicy sauce. Even though the food might be hot and Rachel uses her fingers to eat it (as they do in Ethiopia, Africa). When the other girls see Rachel eating with her fingers they …

4) Thom is playing football with his friends after school. Because it is Ramadan he has to go Home to pray soon. Thom is not fully Muslim, only his father is Muslim, but he still has to participate in all of the religious practices, just like his older brother. There are many Muslims in Thom's school, but none of his friends are Muslim. Thom would like to stay outside with his friends and play some more football, but he knows he will get into trouble if he does.

Appendix A2: Topic Guide for Mothers and Teachers

Topic Guide for Mothers

I) *General questions about you:*
Where are you from?
Where is (the child's) father/mother from?
How long have you been in England?

II) *Questions about your family:*
What languages do you speak at home?
What language do you prefer to speak to the child?
Where do you go on vacation?
How often do you take the child to your homeland? How often to the other parent's homeland?

Can you describe a typical family vacation?
Approximately, how much time do you spend with other relatives? Where and when?
What kind of holidays do you spend at home?
Can you describe a typical family holiday that you celebrate with your family every year?
Who is present, what foods do you eat, what kind of cultural practices do your holidays involve?
What kind of meals do you eat at home on regular days?

III*) Questions about promoting the child's Identity:*
What kind of issues were you concerned with when thinking about having a child?
Is it important to you that the child knows "where he or she is from"?
Do you consciously contribute to it, in what way?

IV*) Questions about dea*li*ng with the child's Identity:*
Why did you send your child to [this school]?
Can you tell me something about [this school] that you particularly like that is unique about the school?
Have you looked at other schools? What would you say is unique about [this school]l?
How do you respond to racial name calling in school?
Would you respond differently if the child had been teased about something else?
How would you respond when you hear about the child teasing someone else about their culture/race?
Can you describe an incident of when your child made a comment about when he or she was proud of where he/she was from?
Can you describe how you think the child benefits from growing up in a multicultural environment?
What are some of the characteristics that you think the child will acquire in such an environment?
Do you think it is difficult for your child to grow up in a mixed cultural environment? Why or why not?

Topic Guide for Teachers

I*) Questions about you and the school*
How long have you been at [this school]?
Where were you before?
How would you compare the schools in terms of multiculturalism?
Is [this school] unique? In what way?
I have talked to the Headmaster about what this particular junior school does to promote multiculturalism, can you briefly describe what you think the school does for it?

II*) Questions about multiculturalism*
How aware of multiculturalism were you before coming to [this school]?
Afterwards?
Have you further educated yourself? In what way?

III*) Questions about the students and Incidences at school*
How do you think that children perceive the many different cultures present at [this school]?

Can you recall a particular positive incident with children either commenting or acting on multiculturalism being present at [this school]?

Overall, how would you describe the experience that children have at [this school] in relation to multiculturalism?

Do you think it is an issue for children to be exposed to so many different cultures when growing up? In what way?

Do you have a particular negative incident of children and multiculturalism?

Are there differences in terms of nationality? Do some children have a harder time than others? Which ones and in what way?

Is there a difference between pure race and mixed race children in terms of how they perceive multicultural aspects?

Are there more problems in general with mixed children? Would you differentiate?

Appendix B

A Dance Between the General and the Specific:

Implications for the Self-Concept

Commentary on Homophobia:

A Cultural Construction of a Barrier Ana Flavia Madureira

Amrei C. Joerchel

Abstract

After discussing the cultural and the psychological basis of the phenomenon of homophobia, Madureira comes to the conclusion that a dance between the general and the specific is necessary for overcoming homophobia. What is the relation of such a dance and the self-concept? How the self concept may be explicated from a more dynamically constituted perspective is discussed. The relation of homophobia as a boundary phenomenon and Boesch's conception of the familiar and unfamiliar then leads to the conclusion of the person situated in a sphere, as co-inhabitants of other persons as well as the media they employ.

Keywords: Cultural structures, psychological processes, self concept, dynamic constitution, spheres

Madureira takes it upon herself to make a step towards overcoming homophobia. Her approach in the second half of the article is to seek more understanding of the cultural and psychological basis and the affective roots of homophobia, concluding that a dance between the general and the specific is necessary for overcoming such complex phenomenon. I would like to take the opportunity of this commentary to show how pertinent research projects are, that incorporate a more dynamic approach of the interwoven social and psychological basis of phenomenon. Specifically I will argue for the importance of mutual influences in respect to the self concept. The person as a dynamic constitution, as discussed by Slunecko (2002) will serve as the starting premise. The dynamic constitution will then be related to the boundary phenomenon of homophobia (Madureira, 2007) and back to the self concept, briefly discussing the theory of the dialogical self (Hermans, Kempen and van Loon, 1992). While discussing the self concept the tension of the familiar and the unknown (Boesch, 1998) will further be elaborated to come to a conclusion of viewing the person as inhabiting a sphere (Sloterdijk, 1998, 1999, 2004). From this perspective persons are described not as singular individuals pre existing the relation to one another, but rather as co-inhabitants to a general otherness and media, hard (materialistic) as well as soft (linguistic, symbolic). Starting out with a general societal structure and a relational premise may be helpful not only for deciphering the self concept, but for overcoming individualistic thought structures in psychology in general and thus eventually contribute to a better understanding of complex phenomenon such as homophobia.

A dance between cultural and psychological basis of homophobia

Discussing the phenomenon of homophobia Madureira shows very vividly that the distinction and absolute separation of what is cultural and what is psychological is not

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profitable in terms of understanding complex phenomenon. In the first half of Madureira's article we read about homophobia being a system of social control. The key issue is the process of becoming a "man" or a "woman". The interdependent nature of the general and the specific make it rather difficult to discuss either "becoming a man/woman" or how the concepts of culture and gender relate to such processes without incorporating various levels of analysis (the intra-psychological level (subjectivity), inter-psychological level (social interaction) and macro-level (collective culture)). In fact, the author herself stresses that "culture *constitutes* the person, and forms […] his/her own development" (p.5) (emphasis added). It is precisely the term "constitutes" that Slunecko (2002) has used in his conception of a person as a dynamic constitution and which should be taken seriously when discussing complex phenomenon in psychological disciplines.

A dynamic constitution

Slunecko (2002) begins discussing the mutual influence of cultural and psychological basis in developmental processes of persons by describing various levels of an autopoietic system. An autopoietic system stresses the necessarily mutual emergence of the self system and the societal system. Thus, the person is never to be understood as existing singular and separate from its media and social system. While Slunecko (2002) depicts the person and media as co-evolving and thereby upholding the complexities of an autopoietic system, he focuses heavily on language and communication. The social system is comprised out of communication. Yet, communication is not considered as carrier of information. Communication, in terms of media and symbolic forms, is not simply the connecting part between functioning processes of psychological and social systems. Rather, they constantly blow up the functioning-circle – of the psychological and the societal system – while simultaneously constituting it in a dynamic form. The person

constructs him/herself with all of his/her cultural practices through medial and symbolic applications and thus simultaneously is produced by his/her media. Tying this aspect back to the co-evolutionary development of the various systems, language, Slunecko (2002) argues, is a key component in which both systems, the psychological and the social, become accessible. Further, language is viewed as providing us with a home, a protective and imaginative atmosphere, maintaining and expanding our life spaces (Slunecko and Hengl, 2007).

Dynamically constituting homophobia

Viewing the person as situated within a protective atmosphere which constantly is dynamically renewed, the concept of homophobia as boundary phenomenon becomes crystallized. In her article Madureira states that homophobia functions as a "boundary phenomenon built by affective meaning making, a collective historical-cultural construction […] with deep collective historical-cultural and deep affective roots" (p.17). According to Slunecko and Hengl (2007) human collectives necessarily produce their own vital semantic-linguistic coating which serves as protective imaginative atmosphere. An atmosphere in which persons are positioned and structured in and simultaneously, in a feedback loop of constant mutual re-definition of both the atmosphere and the person, the person positions and structures his/her worldview according to the specific linguistic coating it inhabits. Thus, through the language that speaks through us historical and cultural structures have always already formatted and structured our psychological levels. The cultural and historical roots become evident as they are always already present within the language that speaks through us and formats our psychological processes[14].

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[14] For more elaboration on cultural and historical structures necessarily formatting psychological processes see Slunecko and Hengl (1006) and Slunecko and Hengl (2007).

Yet, a mutual influence of both cultural and psychological levels when constructing cultural and personal concepts (e.g. homophobia or the self) does not, as such, explicate the tensions occurring during the encounter of novel situations. For further explanation of the mutual interdependence of the intra- and inter-psychological levels, and the tensions thereby occurring, Madureira refers to Boesch's conception of *Heimweh* vs. *Fernweh*.

Tensions and the self concept

Boesch (1998) emphasizes that cultural practices and cultural impressions joined with personal experiences function together, both on inter-psychological as well as intra-psychological and macro-levels, to constitute the self (in terms of belonging to ones self – "das Eigene") and the other (in terms of the strange and unknown – "das Fremde") (Boesch, 1998, p.77). For the phenomenon of homophobia the importance of this tension – between the familiar, the secure and the known and the unfamiliar, unknown, alluring and/or threatening – lies within the construction of social barriers. When something is perceived as threatening, the tendency for the *HEIMWEH* process becomes stronger.; "[a] barrier is erected" (Madureira, this issues, p.19). Madureira realizes that the mentioning of such tensions within the daily life of persons does not explicate the precise reason for the construction of a social barrier. For this a closer analysis of the self concept is helpful.

According to Boesch (1998) the relation between "home, secure" and the "strange, unfamiliar" is a key element in developing a self system. As the mother bares security and safety for the child, the home environment, too, functions as a secure platform from which the person can gain self confidence and strength to then go and venture into the outside world. The home environment ("Heimat") is a place and a social conglomeration, it is an action based *I-environment* relationship which develops throughout childhood and is

individually structured. As the child structures his/her home environment, he/she necessarily and simultaneously structures the self concept. Similar to the child venturing back and forth between the security provided by the mother and the strange and novel situations "out there" (as for example on a play ground), the person necessarily fluctuates between a secure home environment and the unfamiliar and unknown. The two processes – the structuring of the home environment and of the self concept – together combine an inseparable whole. And so the strange and unfamiliar, which at times can be threatening or alluring, necessarily resides simultaneously within the home environment. Thus, the self concept is comprised both of the familiar, the home environment, as well as of the strange and the unknown. It is within this tension that humans develop a self concept: the secure home environment provides the base for self confidence and self actualization, the strange and the unknown provides a platform for hopes, dreams, and desires, for potential actions and potential self concept as well as a platform for fears and threats to the self system. Of course the future and the foreign never entail what was hoped for, and so humiliations and failures of self actualization are bound to happen. Yet, these too, comprise an important developmental aspect. Failure always entails a novel understanding and pre-emptive action planning; and, in turn, a strengthening of the self system. And so the never ending process of self construction is marked by the tension between the familiar and the unknown. In this respect the construction of a social barrier can be seen as defense mechanisms in reaction to a perceived threat to the self concept.

Before elaborating on Boesch's conceptions and how these can be translated into a more dynamically constituted view of a person I would like to return to Madureira's application of the self concept in her discussion of homophobia. The self system here is partly modeled with the Theory of the Dialogical Self.

The theory of the dialogical self

The theory of the dialogical self was first coined in 1992 (Hermans, Kempen, and van Loon, 1992) and elaborated in 1993 (Hermans and Kempen, 1993). This theory postulates that the self is comprised out of multiple *I*-positions, each endowed with a voice and in dialogical relationships with each other. These positions can be internal as well as external. Yet, they are not to be viewed as all being equal. Valsiner (2002) has discussed the hierarchical order and diverse dynamic forms of the dialogical process within the dialogical self system.

The theory of the dialogical self has received great attention since 1992 and this little paragraph does not do justice to the lengthy elaboration and discussions the theory has encountered over the last decade. The scope of this commentary does not allow for further elaboration. For now the focus is on the interdependence of various levels, the macro, the inter-psychological and the intra-psychological. Depicting the self concept as dialogical positions, within the person as well as "out there" neglects to capture structural macro level processes that necessarily interact and format all other levels of the self system; the person has not been explicated other than on intra- and inter-psychological levels. As the theory of the dialogical self has postulated how the maintenance of the self system can be managed with e.g. dominating and expropriating, the description of the home environment and their linguistic coatings, the structure of such a developmental field and the interpenetrated functions of societal systems and self systems has largely been neglected (some exceptions are Adams and Markus, 2001; Ruck and Slunecko, 2006).

For the remaining of this article I would like to focus on the incorporation of societal structures and the self concept. I find Boesch's (1998) elaborations on various concepts of longing especially inspiring when thinking about how a person is to be

conceptualized and, more importantly, how persons perceive to conceptualize themselves. The maintenance of a self system within cultural and historical spheres necessarily calls for dynamic processes within and between persons (as the theory of the dialogical self has already postulated), as well as dynamic cultural and societal processes. While Boesch (1998) and Hermans and Kempen (1998) have both correctly stated the necessity of depicting the person with cultural and societal influences and not as isolated and static entities, they nevertheless begin by describing the individual and processes within the single person, which in turn implies a pre-existence of individual processes to societal and cultural ones. What happens when the person is conceptualized from a co-inhabiting perspective? How can the dynamic structural processes of for example media and the tension between the unknown and the familiar within a developmental field be incorporated into a dynamically constituted self concept? A brief glance in a philosophical direction may be of help here.

Spheres: dancing in tune of the otherness

Important for analyzing the self concept is the realization that "persons, together with other persons, never appear naked and alone, rather, they are always carrying an escort of things and signs, not to mention their constitutive parasites, the biological (microbes) and psycho-semantic (conviction)."[15] (Sloterdij, 2004, p.332). The co-existence always comes prior to the individual existence. It explicates the person in first line as being part of an 'inspired municipality' of strong social ties and relationships. Further, the experience of the environment never occurs on a direct basis, it is always mediated and determined by certain atmospheres and social opinion ("Stimmungen")

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[15] Own translation: […] das Zusammensein von Menschen mit ihresgleichen immer in einem dinglichen Lokal statthat und das die Menschen nie nackt und alleine kommen, sondern immer eine Eskorte von Sachen und Zeichen bei sich haben, um von ihren konstitutiven Parasiten, den biologischen (Mikroben) und den psychosemantischen (Überzeugungen), für den Augenblick nicht zu reden. (Sloterdijk, 2004 P.332)

specific to each cultural system, to each home environment. Thus, the subtle structuring processes of discourse (on the inter- and the intra-psychological as well as the macro level) is included into the description of what it means to be a person. In this sense the person is depicted as a "floating being" ("Schwebewesen"), one that tunes into the atmosphere of "being-together" with others. All perception is necessarily tainted, if not directed and guided, by the general atmosphere of specific societal systems. Such spheres, within which persons act and react, are self-emergent. With and through humans being-together an interdependent field emerges and within this field – the most inner part of the sphere – the general perception and understanding of what is happening out there is determined. Thus, the home environment Boesch (1998) discusses as necessity for the self concept is here extended and filled with all of humans belonging and extensions: with medias, hard and soft.

Further, a sphere does not posses a membrane surrounding it and thereby completely isolating it from anything else, bearing only immunology and security for all humans inhabiting it. And yet, humans do not exist in a general fearful state, lacking total security. Thus, Sloterdijk (1998, 1999, 2004) poses the question of '*where* is the person'. This question inevitably leads us to a co-inhabiting of spheres, thus, proposing to disregard the term individual as it suggests false isolation and psychological processes somehow existing prior to communal experiences. Further, the question of *where* the person is positioned also leads to the tension necessary for the development of a self concept.

While the most inner part of the sphere determines the perception of "the world out there", the person is positioned at the periphery of such a sphere, in constant search for the complementary otherness of the self. According to Sloterdijk (1998), the person can never be the center of the sphere. From the beginning of when we were born, and even before (in

the placenta of the mother), we have inhabited a dual-relationship with the other. Yet, just as we all leave the placenta behind, we all leave the security of the relationship with the other behind and must constantly find novel understandings of our position within a sphere. The tension of the far away and the near is to be understood here both on psychological and societal levels simultaneously. As the familiar and secure necessarily refers to the home environment which serves as psychological and cultural platform from which the self system simultaneously develops with the cultural system. Since the sphere itself does not provide the immunology a person so desperately desires from birth on, humans build their secure escapes to which they can retreat whenever they feel uneasy or threatened. Immunology here refers to both material and psychological resources. It can mean building a house as shelter against strong winds and heavy rain, but it can also mean constructing a social barrier to protect and maintain the self system (which ironically always already includes the dangerous and unfamiliar).

The question of *where* becomes important for the self concept "because the essence of being has always been an already inhabiting dead, the spatial necessarily belongs to the existence[16]" (Sloterdijk, 1998, p.337), because the home environment co-evolves with the self system. The notion of being has always been equated with inhabiting. Persons are not simply present, they always "live" somewhere, "inhabit" something, have a home environment. And within this home environment persons are never alone. An opposite pole of reference, a dance between what is out there and what is familiar and here, is what it means to be a person. Viewing the person as a pole within a sphere, constantly in search for new medial resources to complement the otherness, it becomes evident that the description of the self concept must not begin with the singular person, with the individual, but with a co-inhabitance and a relational existence.

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[16] Own translation: "Weil Dasein eine immer schon vollzogene Wohn-Tat ist – Ergebnis eines Ur-sprungs ins Einwohnen –, gehört Räumlichkeit der Existenz wesenhaft zu." (Sloterdijk, 1998, P. 337)

The whereabouts of persons within cultural psychology

Cultural psychology has been discussing the nature of persons and culture for some time now. Nevertheless, the focus has largely been on the person within culture, and not on cultural processes simultaneously emerging with psychological ones (Slunecko and Hengl, 2006). The societal system must not only be incorporated (as in the aftermath), but the precise interdependent characteristics and the processes of mutual influences (of both cultural and psychological processes) should be deciphered. Various kinds of dynamic societal changes and their specific characteristics, such as speed of social change, smoothness or abruptness, etc., necessarily enter into the personal cultures of people living their daily lives within these changing societies (Valsiner, 2001). Aiming to understand more of the cultural situation in relation to how it affect psychological phenomenon Slunecko and Hengle (2006) discuss the general cultural psychological scientific endeavor. Their writings show the fundamental embeddedness of the person within cultural and societal processes and the subtle changes of the later influencing the cognition of individuals.

The same should be done when describing the self concept. The person should not, as has been the custom in psychological undertakings, be analyzed without the dance of the specific and the general, without viewing the person as in tune with the general atmosphere it inhabits. Hereby the whereabouts of the person and their relational structures of these action fields must be clarified. The societal processes construct the person and the self concept simultaneously and in combination with psychological processes and thus the question of where the person resides and what the structures of such home environments look like, need more attention. How a person constructs a self concept heavily relies on the spherical atmosphere of his/her home environment.

Where can we dance from here?

In discussing homophobia and possibilities for overcoming it, Madureira traced the effects and affects on cultural and psychological levels. She gave us a clear picture of the mutually influencing characteristics of concepts such as sexism, gender, and also culture and identity. Yet, I would have liked to see more description of how home environment structures simultaneously emerge with individual psychological processes. The question here is what happens to a male member of the German gay community after a politician declares, and all news papers and TV shows spread the statement: "I am gay and that's good!"? The atmosphere of the home environment changes ever so subtly and as the person dances between the familiar and the unknown in tune with the inner structure of the sphere, so must the self concept change. Slunecko and Hengl (2006) have pointed out that most changes go unnoticed. But if we look at the more devastating changes in our society, e.g. September 11th, I am sure many can say and see how their self concept (on political, national, religious, and many more levels) has changed dramatically after this event. Today the term "911" stands for political terror, for a religious war, for prejudices and unjust treatment (and so forth). A number that has prior to 2001 represented an emergency phone call after an accident in the US has suddenly taken on meaning throughout the world. The meaning of these three simple numbers has rapidly changed how persons think and act towards the government, towards other people, and in turn towards one self. Thus, describing and understanding phenomenon from purely intra- and inter-psychological processes does not suffice anymore. It is important for cultural psychologists to recognize and discuss these mutually influencing aspects of both psychological and cultural levels together. As phenomena like homophobia are constructed publicly, a perspective that

emphasizes the co-evolution of societal structures and psychological processes may be of

further help.

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Appendix C

The Dialogical Self as (atmospherically) Mediated Within a Socio-Cultural Sphere:

A Socio-Cultural Approach to the Formation of the Self

Amrei C. Joerchel

Citation:

Joerchel, A. C. (2008). The dialogical self as (atmospherically) mediated within a socio-cultural sphere: A socio-cultural approach to the formation of the self. In S. Salvatore, J. Valsiner, S. Strout-Yagodzynski & J. Clegg (Eds.), *Yearbook of Ideographic Science* (Vol. 1, pp. 213-232). Rom: Firera & Liuzzo Publishing.

Abstract

A socio-cultural approach to mind has the ability to bring new perspectives to the understanding of the formation of a self-concept. In particular the aim is to contribute to this understanding by outlining a mediational form which differs slightly from the more commonly discussed symbolic mediation: the socio-cultural atmospheric mediation. Humans are always enveloped by a specific socio-cultural atmosphere that automatically shapes and forms the particular positions available for each individual. These mediational processes differ from symbolic mediation as the symbols and signs themselves underlie the structural processes which advance in a subtle manner, unnoticeable in most cases. Three examples of slightly different perspectives on the self-formation will be discussed in relation to the socio-cultural atmospheric mediation.

Introduction

The main concern here is the question of how to make sense of the person-in-the-world. I would like to take a closer look at the socio-cultural approach to mind and how this approach can be helpful in making sense of who we are as human beings today. The three leading chapters of section II will be discussed as examples and further elaborated upon in relation to the atmospheric structure—a mediational process within the human sphere allowing for humans to form as we find them today: dialogical and acting through symbolic mediation.

As Wertsch (1991) has stated, "[t]he basic goal to a socio-cultural approach to mind is to create an account of human mental processes that recognizes the essential relationship between these processes and their cultural, historical, and institutional setting." (Wertsch, 1991, p. 6)

Self-reflection theories built upon such a socio-cultural assumption can roughly be categorized into four types of different theories: rupture theories, mirror theories, conflict theories and internalization theories (Gillespie, 2007, p. 678). Agreeing with the overall scope of the last category—internalization theories—I will discuss some relevant characteristics of the self-formation process often address within these types of theories. Especially the dialogicality and symbolic mediation are of great interest as such processes are often taken at face value. I question whether a socio-cultural perspective should be satisfied with the intra- and inter-individual processes without taking the general situatedness also of these processes—dialogicality and symbolic mediation—into consideration. Each sign and each symbol itself is embedded in a greater societal structure which, in turn, structures the meanings attached to each sign and symbol as well as the action around this meaning. My interest here is how the actual structure of the whole symbolic atmosphere allows for a human being to form. The meaning of an applied single

sign is always already enmeshed within a greater social-culture sphere in which general drifts structure the understanding of what is happening within a specific situation. Should we ask how the individual applies a sign without describing the general drift in which this sign has emerged in the first place? Some may argue that within the discipline of Psychology, generally associated with the functions of the mind, it is sufficient to explicate intra- and inter-individual processes that form the human being. Yet, especially from a socio-cultural perspective such an approach needs rethinking. The human, as well as the human mind or any human action can only be found within a human sphere that ultimately has already inspired the human collective and hence each singular person within the collective as well as any actions or interaction.

Sloterdijk (2004) has argued for a perspective of the human being that does not exclude any of his or her constituents, such as signs and objects as well as biological microbes and abstract symbol systems (Sloterdijk, 2004, p. 332), all of which have at one time or another emerged within the human sphere. The main characteristic of such a human sphere is that it is self-generating. Neither the humans nor the mediational means developed within the sphere could have come into being without the intricate interplay of all counterparts together.

On the following pages I will first argue for the necessity of viewing the human as developing within the socio-cultural atmosphere which, in turn, functions as mediational means within the human sphere. I will further discuss relevant issues relating to the person developing within a socio-cultural atmosphere as presented within the respective chapters brought forth by Barcinski, (this volume); Peschek, Kraus & Diriwächter, (this volume); and Rosa, Duarte & Gonçalves, (this volume). The focus within this analysis will be the presentation, application and underlying assumptions of the self-concept and what kind of general societal structures can be found within their description of the self-formation.

The socio-cultural sphere

Within the socio-cultural realm of psychology the general aim has been to describe "psychological phenomenon that happen because of the socio-cultural aspects of human life in varied social context." (Valsiner & Rosa, 2007, p. 1). Such an approach presupposes that "[o]ur human world […] is a culturally *constituted* world of the relationship of the human species with their constantly re-constructed environments." (Valsiner & Rosa, 2007, p.1, added emphasis)

The word 'constituted' will be of importance throughout this text as it characterizes the interplay of humans and their surrounding, their media (hard and soft) as well as their fellow inhabitants. All counterparts, which have often been mistaken for isolated 'atomic parts', have their share in constructing and being constructed by the other. Each one can only emerge because of the interaction of all parts together. It is neither the human who does all the action and thus the construction, nor is it the cultural fabrications that in isolation format the human species. Rather, both represent a non-reducible and fundamental element within the greater interplay of a socio-cultural sphere. Thus, the term 'constituted' should be taken seriously and not quickly be read over to then linger on the more familiar term '(re-)constructed'.

All of what has come along with the human simultaneously co-constitutes the human being as well as the sphere in which he or she acts and lives. A main characteristic of the socio-cultural sphere is that all that emerges with the human in Sloterdijk's sense is not to be conceived of as purely being constructed by the human (and only by the human). A more appropriate way of defining the existence of the human being with its entire escort of things would be with the dynamic constitution proposed by Slunecko (2008).

The dynamic constitution

The theory of the dynamic constitution (Slunecko, 2008; Slunecko & Hengl, 2006) asserts that human beings and all of their media have simultaneously come to being together, the human along with all of his or her media, along with all of his or her material tools, with all of his or her social interactions, as well as symbolic mediations and abstract sign systems. It would be a never ending task to list all the co-emergences of humans and certainly is not the scope of this chapter. The point to be made clear is that a human cannot be conceived of as either developing in isolation or of actively constructing (and only actively constructing without any other subtle co-constituting forces) his or her environment. The human and his or her environment simultaneously constitute each other, both are constructed while at the same time constructing in a dynamic and bi-directional mode. Having often been referred to as 'atomic parts' (Markova, 1990, p. 14), this necessarily co-constituting interplay of counterparts, or even their mutual emergence as linked elements of a whole, has only too often been neglected.

The simultaneous emergence of each so-called 'atomic part' is a process which advances unknowingly, or at least, un-reflected and especially not determined or directed by the human being as Slunecko asserts:

> the symbolic and social constitution of human collectives constantly renew
> and fabricate themselves in a novel manner, without ever becoming aware
> of the dynamics of the collective, let alone such dynamics ever being
> determinable. (Slunecko, 2008, p. 25)[17]

Here it is important to note that by describing the human and his or her escort of belongings as 'emerging' I do not mean to assert that each single individual emerges

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[17] Own translation: „[…] die symbolische und gesellschaftliche Konstitution menschlicher Kollektive [sich] ständig neu herstellen, ohne daß diese Dynamic vom Kollektiv je bewußtseinsmäßig einzuholen ist […] geschweige denn steuerbar wäre." (Slunecko, 2008, p. 25).

simultaneously to each sign and symbol he or she learns to use. Quite the contrary, the individual human being is always born into a phenomenal amount of already existing signs and sign-systems as well as material objects etc. Rather, what is meant is that the atmosphere in which humans have developed and develop, in general has generated both the humans who apply specific signs and symbols as well as the signs and the symbols applied. The whole sphere can be compared to a self-generating greenhouse (Sloterdijk, 1998[18]) in which all that comes to being does so within a specific climate. In a sense the climate then allows for certain developments while others will fail. And yet the climate itself is being regulated by what grows within the greenhouse.

Therefore the single sign itself does not emerge *ad novo* with each newborn baby. Rather, the human is born into a collective that already operates according to a set of specific rules, various symbolic systems and diverse social structures which all have emerged parallel and only because of their particular interplay with each other. The emerging process refers to the dynamic and novel situation that occurs each and every time a person is in social action and interaction and thereby dynamically constitutes the atmosphere in which the action is taking place. When a child begins to use the appropriate sign, a novel meaning is created at various levels, altering on the one hand the individual's structure and on the other hand that of the collective. A somewhat simple example can be made by looking at the terminology used for family members. When a new family member is born and when that family member learns to name a sibling, changes occur on various levels. While the whole family system has experienced a rupture (the newborn is now able to name a family member), the new family member has also experienced a change (he or she is now able to call for at least one family member).

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[18] „Somit sind die Menschen von Grund auf und ausschließlich die Geschöpfe ihres Interieurs und die Produkte ihrer Arbeiten an der Imanenzform, die ihnen unabtrennbar zugehört. Sie gedeihen nur im Treibhaus ihrer autogenen Atmosphäre." (Sloterdijk, 1998, p. 46).

Slunecko and Hengl (2007) have already asked the question; what possesses what, does the person 'have' the word or does the word 'have' the person? Along with Slunecko and Hengl (2007) I reiterate that "[l]anguage and culture – that is, the symbolic arrangements and practices transmitted onto us by the preceding generation always acquires us first." (Slunecko & Hengl, 2007, p. 46).

The sibling as well as the name for that family member are already there and present a format for the child's cognition before he or she actually applies and uses the name. The child is inspired by previously established family dynamics as the climate in a greenhouse will inspire certain plants to grow before these plants then generate a slight climate change, allowing for a new atmosphere to emerge.

Thus, to return to Valsiner's and Rosa's assumption of the world being "culturally constituted … of the relationship of the human species with their constantly re-constructed environments" (Valsiner & Rosa, 2007, p. 1), it is important to understand this process as a two-way loop, as a simultaneous emergence which cannot be steered in one direction rather than another. It is not the human who in isolation re-constructs his or her environment, but rather, the human and all of his or her co-emergences (symbolic sign systems, hard and soft media, material belongings, social others, etc.) are always "started" and inspired (Slunecko & Hengl, 2007, p. 46) by the socio-cultural atmosphere, which, in turn, is constantly re-constructed by all of the belonging counterparts—all dynamically constituting each other (Slunecko, 2008).

The person within three chapters

How can this self-generating atmosphere, referred to as socio-cultural atmosphere above, be helpful in understanding self-formation processes of the human being as we find him or her today? Looking at concrete examples I will discuss whether or not the

respective authors have taken the challenge of a socio-cultural perspective of the person seriously. In other words, is the socio-cultural situatedness addressed and how? Which elements and possibly underlying assumptions should be elaborated on in order to establish a rich and fruitful account of humans and the socio-cultural atmosphere generating one another?

Prayer practices within transitional life periods

Darren Peshek, Michelle Kraus and Rainer Diriwächter (this volume) have brought forth an account of how prayer and surrounding religious practices serve as coping mechanisms in terms of symbolic mediation during transitional periods. All of the incidences described in the text (entering college, leaving college and getting married) mean rupture within a live span of an individual and thus also a possible threat to the stability of the self. What underlying assumptions do Peshek and collegues (this volume) apply to their understanding of the person within their study and, more importantly, does their view of the "self" coincide with the approach of an individual human being emerging *with* all of his or her cultural mediational forms and tools in a dynamic constitution? In other words, do the authors recognize on the one hand that the individual is embedded within a cultural setting, structured by religious beliefs and on the other hand, that these very religious beliefs themselves are further enmeshed in a more general socio-cultural atmosphere?

As the use of prayer is described as a coping mechanism in terms of mediational means, individual human beings are depicted as making sense of their environment and relating to this novel sense of the world through symbolic mediation (Peshek, Kraus & Diriwächter, this volume). The authors go on to state that "[t]he internal dialogue that

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develops with understanding of language allows for complex relations between the self and the environment." (p. 140).

Referring to Valsiner (2000), this complex relation between the self and his or her environment is described as bi-directional. The bi-directionality asserts that the environment as well as the individual human being change during interaction. This change may be ever so subtle and go unnoticed for many. An example of praying to do well on the next examination can clarify this point. Here the environmental atmosphere perceived while entering the examination room may have changed. A change which may have occurred without the individual realizing what has actually changed or that anything at all has changed. And yet, something has changed as the security and comfort gained through the prayer practice has led to a less tormenting threat of the possibility of failing the exam. Thus, the authors conclude that

> [t]hrough bi-directional interaction with the environment and social others within the environment, a religious individual uses prayer to direct and reflect upon personal actions as governed by dialogical construction and semiotic mediation. (Peshek, Kraus & Diriwächter, p. 141)

What can we learn about the individual human being from this study on prayer practices? From the perspective of Peshek and collegues (this volume) the individual is conceived of as a) being in bi-directional interaction with the environment which is b) governed by dialogical construction as well as symbolic mediation. In other words, the self is seen as in constant dialogical and symbolic mediational interaction with the environment. Both elements (the self and the environment) therefore constitute one another. Further, the individual is not in direct contact with the environment, rather, actions and meaning construction occur via mediational means.

How does this perspective relate to the dynamic constitution described above? One important parallel is that the person in contact with his or her environment is seen as simultaneously changing during interaction as the environment changes. Both standpoints assume a specific dynamic taking place within as well as between each element, which ultimately constitute the whole. The crucial difference though is that the dynamic constitution as proposed by Slunecko (2008) stresses more the co-emergence rather than the singular action or reaction of human being and environment. Rather than speaking of a "relationship" between two possibly seeming separated parts, the *dynamic constitution* of an autopoietic system is underlined. I.e. the counterparts do not simply relate to one another, they constitute each other within an intricate interplay which carefully unfolds because of the socio-cultural atmosphere enveloping both parts.

A further difference can be found in that Peshek and collegues (this volume) rely on a more tangible idea of symbolic mediation based on Vygotsky's ideas while Sloterdijk speaks of a more subtle mediational process ('inspiring') which at large cannot directly be captured. Slunecko and Hengl (2007) have proposed the "vital linguistic coating" effect humans encounter as their boundaries of being are directly linked to the boundaries of language (Slunecko & Hengl, 2007, p. 41), which may serve as another more tangible example of mediational means. A less substantial mediational process can be characterized as e.g. the general feeling of belonging and of being together, of municipality; a feeling, which is paramount for the psyche or spirit[19]. Especially through the inspirational image of deities, stories and the arts, Sloterdijk (1998, p. 60) argues, have collectives been enabled to emerge and enable the sphere which they inhabit to emerge and flourish[20]. The

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[19] „[…] das, was einst der Geist hieß, von vorn herein beflügelte Raumgemeinschaften meinte." (Sloterdijk, 1998, p. 19).
[20] „In sphärologischer Sicht erscheinen Völker vor allem als Kult-, Erregungs-, Anstrengungs- und Inspirationsgemeinschaft. Als autogene Gefäße leben und überleben sie nur unter ihrer eigenen atmosphärischen, semiosphärischen Glocke. Mittels ihrer Götter, ihrer Geschichten und ihrer Künste führen sie sich selbst den Hauch – und damit die Erregung – zu, die sie benötigen." (Sloterdijk, 1998, p. 60).

history of religion and mythology is probably as old as human kind, it is rather paramount to at least mention the fact that religious rituals have emerged side by side with humans and thus from a very early stage on have codetermined human conduct. From such a semiospheric perspective the use of prayer as coping mechanism could have been situated into the human sphere.

Peshek and collegues (this volume) have stipulated a solid account of how the individual human being makes use of symbolic recourses when needed from a microgenetic perspective. While they have not set out to accomplish any other aspiration I nevertheless would have appreciated (considering the socio-cultural perspective they are taking) a paragraph or two on how religion, especially Christian religion in the West and humans have drifted together to what they are today. Special care has been taken to constantly bring the general interplay of individual human beings and social surroundings into focus. The reason for my suggestion lies, on the one hand, in the general socio-cultural atmospheric mediation which still needs to be addressed (as internalization processes themselves are also surrounded and thus inspired by this atmosphere) and, on the other hand, in the fact that Christian religion has had such a profound meaning within the developmental course of human beings until this day. The authors have already hinted at the fact that the socio-cultural atmosphere in general also plays a role in personal conduct (e.g. pointing out that the University is Lutheran and thus praying in the cafeteria is not uncommon, giving short histories of the participants' religious beliefs). Yet, I would have appreciated a more explicit recognition of the fact that the participants' religious practices, the internalized beliefs as well as the internalization mechanisms themselves, are already enmeshed into a larger socio-cultural atmosphere.

The next example I will discuss—women's identity construction within the drugtrafficking environment by Barcinski (this volume)—has put more emphasis on the

socio-cultural atmosphere and its structuring processes by incorporating the general discourse of women in power and women in the drug trafficking business.

The identity construction process of a woman involved in drug trafficking

With the very first sentence Marina Barcinski (this volume) argues for a conception of the individual human being necessarily emerging with the "broader societal frame within which their experiences take place and within which such experiences acquire their meaning." (Barcinski, this volume, p. 107).

The individual is clearly portrayed as developing within a municipality, within a community of social others as well as their signs and symbolic sign systems. Citing Foucault the author asserts that "[s]uch a perspective involves both the investigation of the material conditions that structure and constrain social relations and the discursive arrangements that sustain and legitimize these relations." (Barcinski, this volume, p. 107)

Thus, neither the symbolic mediation and material belongings nor the human stripped of such cultural artifacts can suffice as unit of analysis for a comprehensive understanding of what it means to be a human individual.

Precisely for this reason the goal of the study is to understand the identity construction with an emphasis on how material realities and cultural discourses shape the actual process. From a feminist perspective Barcinski (this volume) further points out that

> gender, as much as class and race, is a social organizer, an element that influences women's lives beyond their ordinary everyday interactions. Rather than a mere discursive construction, sexual differences and inequalities are based on and sustained by material realities." (Barcinski, this volume, p. 108)

At this point I would like to add that these symbolic constructions of gender, race and class, always surpass the individual. The individual being is hardly ever free to decide which of these heavily constructed categories he or she will belong to. Further, these categorical representations structure our cognition as much as a vital linguistic coating (Slunecko & Hengl, 2007) would. They are core constituents of what it means to be in the world and depicting the discourse of what it means to be female relates the individual back to the socio-cultural atmosphere.

Yet, a pure focus on the discourse without analyzing the individual's positions within the general socio-cultural atmosphere would neglect an important complementary level of analysis: that of "the individual's active participation in the constitution of her subjectivity" (Barcinski, this volume, p. 110). The individual's participation enables the individual in a particular ways to make "sense of their societal and material contexts in their everyday lives" (Barcinski, this volume, p. 110). Again it becomes apparent that each element which constitutes the individual human being-and-surrounding-atmosphere contributes to the formation of the self-concept. Therefore, Barcinski (this volume) concludes that "[i]t is through the dialectic among societal-level, local, and "personal" constituents that identities are produced." (Barcinski, this volume, p. 110). While Peshek and colleagues (this volume) have focused more on the mediational means of various cultural and social practices; the point emphasized here is the constitutive nature of the individual human being and his or her environment. Or as Sloterdijk (1998, 2004) would word it, the human being only is a human within its sphere, incorporating personal world views as well as social interactions and general societal structures. Thus,

> an adequate account of identity formation has necessarily to include an
> examination of both structure and meaning. It should consider the ways in
> which people are the products of material realities and social pre-existent

> discourse and the producers of new, original local forms of discourses.
>
> (Barcinski, this volume, p. 111)

Two points are worth mentioning here. One is the solid emphasis on discourse and the other is that the discourse itself has already been mediated by the socio-cultural atmosphere which envelopes and inspires the content as well as the structure of the discourse. Of course the discourse and more general the language we use, does format our being in a profound manner (compare with Slunecko & Hengl, 2007). Yet, the general atmosphere and with it the societal structures do not solely reside in discourse. Rather, they blow through the discourse as through any other media and human residing within the human sphere. Barcisnki (this volume) is surely not asserting that *only* discourse formats our self concept (as she repeatedly stresses material realities), nevertheless, a more comprehensive account of the human being would have to include for example mediational means to make sense of the world and thus of the self. Note how the two chapters discussed above complement each other. Each study points to a slightly different facet of what it means to be human in our world. On the one hand we have the meadiational means and sense making of the environment (prayer practices as coping mechanism) and on the other hand we have the societal and overall reference frame which individuals constantly refer to when forming their identity (drug trafficking and female identity).

The human being so far

We have seen with Peshek and collegues (this volume) that the person should be conceived of as dynamically and constantly being in a bi-directional interaction with his or her environment. Moreover, this interaction is governed by dialogicality as well as symbolic mediation. What can be added from the drug-trafficking study is the dimension

of discourse. Thus we have an individual human being who is in dialogical interaction with his or her environment (including social others) not only via symbolic mediation, but also from a specific standpoint. The symbolic mediation will take a different turn according to various discourses which are used as frame of reference from each individual.

Furthermore, not only language in general, but more importantly the socio-cultural atmosphere will alter in a structural manner the self-concept. How exactly are these perspectives to be related? A fuzzy lacuna remains between the relation of symbolic mediation, discourse, language, dialogicality and the socio-cultural atmosphere. The last chapter I want to discuss as example—*Self and dialogical articulation of multivocality: proposal of an analysis model*, brought forth by Catarina Rosa, Filipa Duarte and Miguel Gonçalves (this volume)—will shed some light on the rather opaque understanding of these interlinked terms.

Self and dialogical articulation of multivocality

Catarina Rosa, Filipa Duarte and Miguel Gonçalves (this volume) make an important contribution to the theory of the dialogical self as proposed by Hermans, Kempen and van Loon in 1992. While agreeing with the main tenants of the theory, their aim is to contribute to the understanding of the "general process through which the self organizes itself" (Rosa, Duarte & Gonçalves, this volume). A brief description of their understanding of what it means to be an individual is sketched.

From Rosa, Duarte and Gonçalves's perspective the individual human being derives an understanding of the world—and therefore also of him or herself within that world—from the narrative construction of meaning, which constitutes the condition of psychological survival. The use of symbolic tools is emphasized as crucial element for the constant construction and reconstruction process of meaning. In line with the theory of the

dialogical self the authors point to the intrinsic plurality as well as the dialogical nature in which these construction processes take place. Therefore, the person is pictured as multiplicity of various I-positions which operate through the constant construction of intra-individual as well as inter-individual relations and "through a permanent actualization and reconstruction of the very structure of those I-positions." (Rosa, Duarte & Gonçalves, this volume, p. 164).

The actual structure of the position-repertoire is guided and regulated by various signs and meta-meanings.

Referring to Hermans and colleagues (1992) the embodied nature of the self as well as the historical and the cultural forces which govern psychological processes are also mentioned. It is precisely the situatedness of the dialogical self within the socio-cultural sphere I will discuss in further detail. Reviewing the above three examples I find the theory of the dialogical self most compelling. Moreover, the first two example—prayer as coping mechanism and discourse in drug-trafficking—can easily be translated into a dialogical self perspective and more importantly profit from such a translation. As the dialogical self allows for various positions to be in negotiation within the self-concept, the self-concept in e.g. Denise's case (in Barcinski's study, this volume) could very nicely be mapped out and further discussed.

One main feature constituting the self, which all of the three chapters have put forth, is dialogicality, the core characteristic of the theory of the dialogical self. Another shared viewpoint is that the individual is more or less actively constructing his or her own meaning system about the world (and hence his or her place within it) through symbolic mediation. As mentioned above, the theory of the dialogical self (as extended by Rosa, Duarte & Gonçalves, this volume) can account for both features. But why are these two characteristics so important in explicating the self-concept in the first place?

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Why dialogicality?

Outlined by Markova in 1990 the term dialogicality generally concerns phenomena which fall under the heading both of dialogue and dialogism (Markova, 1990, pp. 1-4). Markova's definition of dialogue, which only concerns "face to face interaction between two or more persons using a system of signs" (Markova, 1990, p. 1), has commonly been extended with the Bakhtinian conception of dialogue, including but also extending far beyond the face-to-face interaction with a social other (as described by Wertsch, 1990, p. 73). Here the dialogical interaction, which nevertheless is fundamentally social, may be carried out with imaginative friends, social others who are not present at the time, or simply between various perspectives a singular human being may take (compare to Hermans & Kempen, 1993; Hermans, Kempen & van Loon, 1992). Extending the term in this manner dialogicality, as elementary form of human communication can thus be taken as the primary characteristic of cognitive processes.

While dialogue is always intrinsically social, the importance lies in the fact that it is hence always embedded in a particular socio-cultural context. The socio-cultural embeddedness becomes apparent when the definition of dialogism is taken into consideration. 'Dialogism' refers to "an epistemological approach to the study of mind and language as historical and cultural phenomenon." (Markova, 1990, p. 4). The situatedness of dialogical approaches can further be clarified with the principles of dialogical logic, which are best described with a short example that contrasts dialogical logic with the Aristotelian logic. When one and the same utterance is produced twice, once from person A and once from person B, the dialogical perspective would need a contextual setting to accurately understand the meaning of the second utterance. It might mean the interlocutor has not heard correctly, it might mean the partner has not agreed and

for a strengthening of the opinion the same utterance is repeated. But it may also serve as an agreement, or else as an expression of astonishment. Thus, from a dialogical perspective the same unit of analysis may mean two (or more) very different things, depending on time and context. From an Aristotelian logic an utterance repeated always means *the same* thing, it is identical. The same utterance is understood as remaining constant over time and situation (Hermans & Kempen, 1995, pp. 106-107). A dialogical perspective hence necessarily implies a situatedness in time and context.

Thus, sharing Vygotsy's assumption of social action and interaction representing the very basis from which any higher mental function derives from (Wertsch, 1990, p. 19) and assuming dialogicality to be the prime characteristic of this social interaction, it becomes evident why a socio-cultural perspective should pay so much attention to dialogue. Dialogue, as core premise of social communication and interaction, represents a fundamental characteristic of not only cognitive processes but of the humanin-the-world as a whole.

Viewing the human-in-the-world as a *whole* is another aspect of dialogicality which is worth emphasizing. Once the notion of dialogue is applied it makes even less sense to detach either the individual or the environment as isolated entity or 'atomic part'. As Markova (1990) has asserted:

> Wholes, as unit in dialogism, cannot be analyzed into 'component parts' simply because there are no such parts. Each supposed 'atomic part' exists only in an interdependent relationship with other parts. […]. The wholes […] are bound by *internal relations* rather than by external relations, and dialogical (dialectical, co-genetic) logic is defined as the study of such relations. (Markova, 1990, p. 14, original emphasis)

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From this perspective each so called 'atomic part', "and its counterparts with which it forms its whole, co-develop mutually through their progressive interdependent differentiation and transformation." (Markova, 1990, p. 14). Again, it is the interdependence, the mutual emergence of human and sphere which strikes me as worth investigating. One simply would not exist without the other.

Both the dialogical process depicted within the theory of the dialogical self as well as the dialectical processes described within the case study of a woman's drug trafficking identity construction fallow the general premises of dialogicality. Yet, simply acknowledging that all three chapters discussed here apply dialogicality in one way or another will not suffice for explaining the relation of dialogicality, symbolic mediation and the formation of the self-concept. In a similar fashion Vygotsky has already stated that "it is meaningless to assert that individuals have a sign, or have mastered it, without addressing the ways in which they do or do not use it to mediate their own actions or those of others" (Wertsch, 1991, p. 29).

Thus, I will turn to the concept of symbolic mediation and how the authors have applied it in combination with dialogicality to make sense of the individual human being.

Why symbolic mediation?

All authors (Barcinski, this volume; Peshek, Kraus & Diriwächter, this volume; Rosa, Duarte & Gonçalves, this volume) have followed Vygotsky's call. The college students don't simply *have* religious practices; they also *use* them as coping mechanism when experiencing rupture within their day to day life (Peshek, Kraus & Diriwächter, this volume). Denise does not only *have* social discourse and local practices, she also *uses* them for her identity construction as frame of reference (Barcinski, this volume). And so the concept of the self from a dialogical perspective should not only be characterized by

dialogical interactions that take place between various positions, these dialogical interactions should also be analyzed in relation to symbolic mediation (as Rosa, Duarte & Gonçalves, this volume, have argued for).

Why should symbolic mediation be so pertinent for the formation of the selfconcept? Peshek and collegues (this volume) have pointed to the significance of the bi-directional interaction between person and environment while exemplifying it with the means of prayer practices. The bi-directionality occurs over a set of symbolic mediations. Barcinski (this volume) has directly shown the significance of the symbolsystem in relation to the formation of the self-concept as the respective discourse serves as reference frame. And Rosa, Duarte and Gonçalves, (this volume) emphasize that the hierarchy and general structures of the position-repertoire within the self are symbolically mediate as the dialogical interaction resorts to sign- and symbol-systems such as language. Stating it more broadly, human action in general typically employs mediational means such as tools and language and these mediational means shape the action and hence also the human him- or herself in essential ways (Wertsch, 1991, p. 12). Emphasizing the special coupling relation of language and the psyche Slunecko (2008) has proposed that language serves as possible platform from which both the socio-cultural system and the personal system of consciousness may be accessed. Here the parallel structures of the psyche and the language system are by no means random anymore. With language the psyche can express its structure while at the same time, through the act of social communication, the psyche may take on a communicative structure present within language.[21]

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[21] „Die Besonderheit des Verhältnisses von Bewusstsein und Kommunikation ergibt sich daraus, daß strukturelle Koppelung hier nicht mehr zufällig und ereignishaft ist, sondern über Sprache verfüg-, erwart- und planbar wird. Über Sprache werden die beiden Systeme einander als Medium zugängig: Über Sprache kann das Bewusstsein den Kommunikationen seine Form einprägen (d. h. Kommunikation zu seinem Medium machen); umgekehrt kann sprachliche Kommunikation psychische Systeme dazu bringen, kommunikative Form anzunehmen." (Slunecko, 2008, p. 70).

While all of the examples discussed here have described the microgenetic incidence in which the intricate interplay between media and psyche can be analyzed, the socio-cultural atmospheric dimension which on its own has a mediational character has only been hinted towards by Peshek and collegues (this volume) without further elaboration. The mediational process of the socio-cultural atmosphere always already has inspired and 'started' the respective complex symbol-systems such as language and religious practices. The subtle structuring process of the human sphere always formats not only the specific symbol applied, but also the context of when and how it is applied. In other words, *the socio-cultural atmosphere always already has us before we act and react with symbolic mediation in a dialogical manner*. As Slunecko and Hengl (2007) might have added to Vygotsky's general appeal for the analysis of the usage of signs and their meditational means, while humans may be perceived as having signs, signs and symbol systems always also simultaneously have humans (Slunecko & Hengl, 2007, p. 46).

Symbolic mediation vs. atmospheric mediation

"I am always aware of a moving sort of glass between me and the world, my present and my heritage, what is seen and what is not seen and only felt" (Prince-Hughes, 2004, p. 4)

The heightened senses of a woman who has been diagnosed with an autistic spectrum disorder enables this particular individual to constantly be aware of a phenomenon which usually goes unnoticed. The moving glass between oneself and the world is present around all of us. The reason why humans usually do not notice it is because the glass moves in the same manner for most of us. As Bennett (1993) has pointed out, it is particularly difficult for societies that generate themselves in isolation (e.g. small towns in the Mid-West of America, indigenous people in the wide prairieland of

Mongolia…) to grasp the power of a moving glass between humans and the world. Categorical cultural differentiations simply do not exist in isolated social groups and thus cannot be detected (Bennett, 1993, p. 31). In such cases it would need a disorder, as in the case of Dawn Prince-Hughes and her autistic perception of the world, to notice that a variety of moving glasses exist within the world and that the perspective each human has of the world depend on the dynamics of the movement of the glass. And even then, humans may become aware of slight cultural differences without attributing them to a general socio-cultural atmosphere which constantly inspires collectives to form and take shape in particular manners.

I would like to remind the reader of the greenhouse effect described above. The moving glass in this case refers to the climate in which the person makes sense of who she or he is. Different socio-cultural atmospheres provide different perspectives for humans and the various perspectives have their own dynamics, as does the moving glass. Action and interaction are always enveloped by the socio-cultural atmosphere, which always have their own characteristics and dynamics. These dynamics are composed of abstract belief systems, of cultural practices and habits, of the media we employ (e.g. language and tools), of the personal as well as the overall historic trajectories, of the simple feeling of belonging here rather than there, of the smells and the sounds and all the other stimuli within our surroundings and of the feelings we foster for one another etc. Within this sphere, which is a self-generating system, humans unfold and perceive the world from a shared perspective[22].

In contrast, Vygotsky discussed mediation in a somewhat more tangible manner. His interest predominantly resided in signs and symbols and in the application of whole

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[22] „In beiden Regimen, dem vorgeschichtlichen wie dem Geschichtlichen, hat das menschliche Dasein zu dem, was modern und zu glatt Umwelt heißt, nie nur ein Anpassungs- und Einpassungsverhältniss; vielmehr erzeugt dieses Dasein selbst den Raum um sich, durch dem und in dem es vorkommt. Zu jeder sozialen Form gehört ein eigenes Welthaus, eine Sinn-Glocke, unter der die Menschenwesen sich allererst sammeln, verstehen, wehren, steigern, entgrenzen." (Sloterdijk, 1998, p. 57).

symbol-systems such as language (Wertsch, 1991, p. 28). Nonetheless both aspects of mediation are equally important. The socio-cultural atmospheric mediation is seldom detected and thus more difficult to grasp. Nevertheless it is present at all times, taking in all of our changes while at the same time mediating them. The socio-cultural atmosphere differs from the more commonly known symbolic mediation in that it mediates these complex symbol systems before they can mediate our actions.

The dialogical self as mediated by the socio-cultural atmosphere

Why the theory of the dialogical self

The theory of the dialogical self (Hermans & Kempen, 1993; Hermans, Kempen & van Loon, 1992)has not only gained much attention within the last decade, it has also been elaborated upon and transcended a great deal (e.g. Rosa, Duarte & Gonçalves, this volume). What has made this theory so attractive to social scientist across fields? One aspect of this sudden popularity is what I have pointed out earlier; the nature of dialogicality and its irreducibility of singular elements within a whole. Thus, various facets of the self can finally be described without picturing the self as saturated, in-between and not belonging anywhere (e.g.compare to Badawia, 2002; Gergen, 2000). The possibility of multiple positions in dialogue with each other has been especially alluring to those social scientist interested in multicultural or cross-cultural personalities (e.g. Bhatia, 2002; Bhatia & Ram, 2001; Josephs, 2002). The theory of the dialogical self enables a positive description of a person who at the same time feels "Italian" and "Egyptian" without feeling fractured or not belonging anywhere. To the contrary, children negotiating various positions may very well feel as though they belong both to the Italian culture as well as to the Egyptian culture and the English culture. Yet, the actual feeling of the self (positive vs. negative) is not purely the result of negotiations taking place on the intra- and

inter-individual levels. The general sociocultural atmosphere in which the human develops and negotiates plays a crucial role as well (Joerchel, 2006). Therefore, the dialogical self theory can profit from taking the socio-cultural atmosphere into consideration as well.

The dialogical self within the socio-cultural sphere

The question of what makes the dialogical self culture-inclusive has been answered amongst others with e.g. the ability to occupy multiple positions and thus also for "contact between cultures within the individual person" (Hermans & Dimaggio, 2007, p. 35), the dialogical capacity to negotiate contrasting cultural positions (Hermans & Dimaggio, 2007, p. 35), the incorporation of personal as well as social and collective voices (Hermans & Dimaggio, 2007, p. 37), as well as power relations between social positions and personal positions which are governed by institutional and cultural structures (Hermans & Dimagio, 2007, p. 38). All of these examples have their own value, shedding some light on various problematic aspects of e.g. multicultural selves. Yet, the overall atmospheric mediation has not been discussed in relation to the dialogical self theory. Social scientists have hinted towards the powerful mediational processes of cultural atmospheres (e.g. Gillespie, 2007[23]; Valsiner & Rosa, 2007[24]), which has not adequately been address within the theory of the dialogical self. In more general terms Gillespie (2007) proposes the work on more complex semiotic systems such as social representations (Moscovici, 1983) or symbolic resources (Zittoun, Duveen *et al.,* 2003) to account for socio-cultural atmospheric processes. While these advances within socio-cultural psychology have proven to be fruitful in a variety of ways, none of them seems to be able to touch upon the more subtle structure which already structures and mediates

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[23] "Neither Vygotsky nor Mead provides an adequate theory of complex trans-individual systems that circulate in society." (Gillespie, 2007, p. 688).
[24] "The biological bases of the body works through the cultural experience, that further modifies the body." (Valsiner & Rosa, 2007, p. 701).

social representations in the making, symbolic recourses ready to be used, or the discourse circling (as discussed with the case of Barcinski, this volume).

Portraying a human being who is forming a self-concept while at the same time always already being formed by the socio-cultural atmosphere would be a great achievement for the theory of the dialogical self as it would stabilize the situatedness of the self in the making. How could one make sense of the dialogical self, in dialogical interaction with personal positions as well as social positions and through symbolic mediation, which already is inspired and started by the socio-cultural atmosphere?

Prospects for a dialogical self mediated by a socio-cultural sphere

It is no surprise that ideas emerge in parallel within the human sphere (e.g. Darwin and Wallace, Vygotsky and Bakhtin). Each concept can only be formed when a certain path leads to it; a path that includes past, present and future. A range of ideas and concepts have to have already emerged, as well as future aspirations, for novel and unprecedented phenomenon to be able to occur. Important here is that each past action, coupled with future aspirations, leading to present novelties, are inspired by present and past socio-cultural spheres. Within the sphere a particular atmosphere mediates not only actions and the meanings of symbols and signs, but also the very structures of the whole complex symbol system and the relations of these parts to one another. As these spheres, which habitat humans with all of their constructions, ideas, material objects and biological microbes, are self-generating, the very advance of a single element can be said to have emerged in parallel to all other counterparts within the sphere (Sloterdijk, 1998, 1999, 2004).

Thus, as soon as a human individual is in dialogical interaction with either social positions, personal positions, or with cultural symbols and objects, the enveloping socio-

cultural atmosphere has already tainted the meaning and the structure of this action. This mediational process, which happens simultaneously on a societal and personal level, can be added to all of the processes described by the theory of the dialogical self. Take e.g. the collective voice, which is depicted as socially and culturally influencing the self-formation. Not only do they affect all other positions within the self-concept and not only do they introduce social language into the self, but, the very way in which collective voices and social language is able to 'influence' personal voices in the first place is mediated by the socio-cultural atmosphere. I have chosen to bracket the term 'influence' as it may lead to a misunderstanding of the socio-cultural atmospheric mediational characteristics. As stated above, neither the sphere nor the humans 'influence' each other, each forms the constitutive counterpart of the other.

What needs to be added her and what has not been explicated by the theory of the dialogical self, is that also the personal voices have already been mediated by the sociocultural atmosphere. Each voice or action that emerges has always been started by the socio-cultural atmosphere before it can form into a detectible unit. In this manner the socio-cultural atmosphere has also already inspired social institutions and whole complex symbol systems individuals use to mediate their action (e.g. prayer practice in times of rupture, Peshek, Kraus & Diriwächter, this volume; discourse on women and power, Barcinski, this volume; or symbolic mediation when in dialogue, Rosa, Duarte and Goncalves, this volume). No position within the dialogical self, or any interaction which takes place either intra-individually or inter-individually, is spared of the general inspiration which seeps through every single element within the human sphere. The theory of the dialogical self could thus begin to consider not only dialogical interaction on the intra- and inter-individual levels, but also on more complex and abstract levels. Such a contribution would be especially important for the theory of the dialogical self as it

proposes to be culture-inclusive. Being reminded of Wertsch's quote at the very beginning of this chapter: "[t]he basic goal to a socio-cultural approach to mind is to create an account of human mental processes that recognizes the essential relationship between these processes and their cultural, historical and institutional setting" (Wertsch, 1991, p. 6). Thus, from a socio-cultural perspective the theory of the dialogical self should also include the general socio-cultural setting in which dialogical interactions take place, the socio-cultural situation in which I-positions are able to form, negotiate their positions and are re-negotiated.

Conclusion

The interactive perspective assumes a particular dynamic between various elements of a general whole, the overall system or, in Sloterdijk's (1998, 1999, 2004) terms, the sphere. Interaction, how I understand it, not only refers to the dynamic processes between various element, but also to the automatic change in all parts of the system, should one element be altered and the thereby resulting socio-cultural atmosphere which in turn inspires every interaction. This is an important stance to take as it excludes the assumption of one singular element—e.g. the individual human being—being able to construct his or her environment without further processes guiding and constraining such a construction. In other words, when the person constructs his or her environment, he or she is simultaneously constructed by his or her environment. The novelty *always* functions in a two-way loop, dynamically rearranging the whole system. While the human being constitutes its own atmosphere, the atmosphere in which various decisions are made necessarily constitutes the human.

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Appendix D

Locating the Dialogical Self within a Cultural Sphere

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Citation:

Joerchel, A. C. (2011). Locating the dialogical self within a socio-cultural sphere. In M. Märtens, B. Wagoner, E. Aveling, I. Kadianaki & L. Whittaker (Eds.). *Dialogicality in focus: Challenges to theory, method and application*. Chapter 2, pp. 27-39. New York: Nova Science Publisher.

"Spheres are the spaces where people actually live.
I would like to show that human beings have, till today,
been misunderstood,
because the space where they exist has always been taken for granted,
without ever being made conscious and explicit."
(Peter Sloterdijk)[25]

Locating the dialogical self within a cultural sphere

Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to suggest that the theory of the dialogical self adapt a spatial conception of culture – a cultural sphere – for a better theoretical understanding of the dialogical self in relation to culture. In opposition to cross cultural psychology, Hermans and colleagues have stated that culture and the Self should be conceptualized as decentralized, permeable and fluid (e.g., Hermans & Kempen, 1998; Hermans, 2001a, 2001b; Hermans & Dimaggio, 2007). Keeping to these premises this chapter proposes a view of culture which manifests itself within the interrelatedness of individuals and their environment (Boesch, 1991; Valsiner, 2003). This perspective is discussed and elaborated with the concept of a cultural sphere as inspired by Boesch (1991) and Sloterdijk (1998, 1999, 2004).

After briefly pointing to some problematic aspects of the conception of culture within dialogical self literature, the need for a novel understanding of culture within dialogical self theory is sketched. The space in which dialogical interactions are culturally organized is emphasized with the notion of a cultural sphere. This cultural sphere is first introduced with Boesch's (1991) conception of the symbolic action sphere and further discussed with two examples on the intricate interrelatedness of two floating poles within

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[25] http://www.petersloterdijk.net/, retrieved March, 2010.

a micro-sphere: two lovers, and a mother with her new born child. The two examples of such intimate intersubjectivity illustrate Sloterdijk's (1998, 1999, 2004) contribution to the idea of spheres: the starting point of the human condition necessarily being two human beings. The focus here lies not so much on the symbolic meanings individual actions may carry, but rather on the resonating process within a conjunctional experiential space (Mannheim, 1924/1982). The examples of the two lovers and of the mother and her child are then set into a wider frame of reference – a cultural sphere – and discussed in relation to dialogical self theory. While the overall aim of this chapter is to outline a more solid understanding of the relationship between culture and the self within dialogical self theory, some empirical implications will be pointed to at the end of the chapter. But first, let us turn to the conception of culture within dialogical self theory and why a novel understanding of the Self and culture is needed.

Culture within dialogical self theory

The definition of culture

Hermans and colleagues have proposed that dialogical self theory is especially useful in today's globalizing world as it is 'culture inclusive' (Hermans & Kempen 1998; Hermans 2001a, 2001b; Hermans & Dimaggio, 2007). More precisely, Hermans and Kempen have challenged the cross-cultural conception of culture as geographically localized. Furthermore, diverging from the Cartesian individual paradigm Hermans and colleagues stress that the relationship between culture and the Self is more complicated than either a reified understanding of culture or Self could account for (e.g., Hermans & Kempen 1998; Hermans 2001a, 2001b). Thus, in accordance with Hannerz's (1992, cited in Hermans & Kempen 1998) developments, Hermans and Kempen propose a cultural flow, which stands in opposition to culture seen as a single essence. The cultural flow can

be distinguished as a) ideas and modes of thought, b) forms of externalization of these ideas and modes of thought and as c) the social distribution of these (Hermans & Kempen, 1998, p. 1115).

This conception of culture certainly has no single essence and is more dynamic and fluid than the traditional and reified definition suggests. It nevertheless fails to capture the essential features of human culture. If conceptualized purely by thought modes and ideas, their externalization and distribution, then simple *cultural habits* and *common patterns* which constitute a large proportion of everyday interactions remain neglected. The Spanish 'lisp', for example, is certainly no mode of thought, idea, or an externalization or a distribution of it. It is a simple cultural habit which has evolved over a course of time. And yet, this pronunciation of the z as a *th*, which Spanish people do, is cultural. It is cultural in the sense that this sound has emerged as a symbolic mediation (Valsiner, 2003) out of the interaction between the individual human being and his or her environment (Boesch, 1991).

The implementation of culture

The definition of culture as cultural flow, as Hermans and colleagues have suggested, does not account for cultural habits and practices (such as the Spanish 'lisp'), as cultural habits and practices do not necessarily fit the categories of thought mode, idea, or externalisation. Yet, precisely these simple habits and patterns, which are formed within a space between various poles of individuals and objects, between individual and environment, are at once cultural and mediate the Self (Mead, 1934). It is these cultural patterns which call for more attention within dialogical self theory. Cultural patterns and structures, their origination and their implication for the orientation of the dialogical interactions are often neglected in favour for the more traditional and mainstream

conception of culture as kind of "geography of the self" (e.g., the Korean self, the Japanese self as mentioned by Valsiner & Han, 2008, p. 5, or the Indian self discussed by Rasmussen, 2008, p. 43).

The implementation of culture as structural process corresponds well with aspirations of the theorists of the dialogical self. Hermans and Kempen (1998) state that the focus of a cultural dialogical self is "on intercultural processes that lead to the recombination of existing forms and practices" (p. 1113). Here the focus on processes, forms, structures and habits is clearly given. And yet, in the same article when discussing further research Hermans and Kempen ask questions such as "*Which voices are introduced as the result of distributive processes* across a population? To what extend are *cultural voices* heterogenous, and *what is the cultural unit or contact zone where they are shared with other individuals and groups*?" (p. 1118, emphasis added). Further, they encourage researchers to pay particular attention to the "mixing of *cultural positions or voices*." These thoughts are elaborated as follows:

> "When an artist of Arabic origin works in Germany, can this be conceptualized in terms of two separate *cultural positions* (Arabic and German) that are available and between which the person shifts from time to time? Or is a *third position* emerging that can be seen as a mixture of the two original ones?" (Hermans & Kempen, 1998, p. 1118, emphasis added).

More than a decade has passed since Hermans and Kempen have formulated these questions. Since then the theory of the dialogical self has undoubtedly further developed. Nevertheless, the mention of cultural voices, cultural positions, and geographically localized selves has prevailed (e.g., Hermans, 2001; Hermans & Dimaggio, 2007; Gratier, 2008; van Meijl, 2008; Choi & Han, 2008). And yet, revealing and analysing cultural positions or voices (and not the processes between them) implies the same reification of

culture that Hermans and colleagues aim to transcend (as has already been pointed out by some authors, e.g., Adams & Markus, 2001; Zabinski, 2008; Ruck & Slunecko, 2008). The habitual processes and intersubjective matrices (Coelho & Figueiredo, 2003) which constitute the Self are thus lost.

If culture is seen as a structural process which automatically takes place whenever humans or their dialogical positions interact − as in a cultural sphere − then all positions and voices are necessarily cultural as the interaction between them has already mediated each voice and each position while coming into existence (Valsiner & Han, 2008). Note that whenever a Spaniard speaks in his mother tongue, regardless of which position or voice momentarily is in the foreground, he or she is speaking with a Spanish 'lisp'. This particular cultural habit can be found in multiple positions and voices; it is not restricted to one. Furthermore, whenever a novel position or voice emerges within the Spanish language, it will always take on the colour the Spanish 'lisp' carries.

Thus, as the authors of dialogical self theory aim to conceptualize culture as a process, a revision of the use of the term culture within the theory is necessary. In the following paragraphs the definition of culture as a structural manifestation of human interaction will be sketched with the further suggestion of a cultural sphere.

Introducing the cultural sphere

Valsiner (2003) argues for a conception of culture as "exemplified through different processes by which persons interact with their worlds" (§7). From such a perspective, culture is understood as an organizing principle of each and every human action. It is at once everywhere, always in action, and yet rarely noticed. The interesting aspect of this action based definition of culture, is that every single action (let it be as trivial as breathing or as pronouncing the z as *th*) never occurs within a void and separated

from other actions and meanings. It is the organization of actions within a certain space –
a certain cultural sphere – which underlines the more trivial actions with meanings
(Boesch, 1991, p. 29-37). Once we leave the comfortable boundaries of our home
atmospheres, the immanent nature of various actions becomes apparent. For mountaineers
or divers the act of breathing may become something very conscious as it suddenly
becomes evident that this seemingly trivial task we perform every minute of our lives is of
vital importance. The Spaniard who travels to South America may suddenly notice that he
has a very particular way of pronouncing certain words. I would thus like to bring more
attention to the space in which mediational actions take place in order to contextualize and
situate the dialogical self within a cultural sphere.

The cultural sphere form Boesch to Sloterdijk

The cultural action sphere

The idea of human action being culturally organized within a specific kind of
sphere is not new to cultural psychology. In 1991, Ernest E. Boesch outlined the
differentiations of cultural action fields and action spheres. According to Boesch a *cultural
action field* embraces the totality of action opportunities. In other words, a cultural action
field suggests a range of potential uses of objects along with their symbolic values. Boesch
describes *action spheres* as 'centres' around which the individual action fields cluster.
These clusters of action fields relate to thematic areas in which various actions converge
on common purposes. Action spheres are thus areas of behaviour which group different
action – of individuals as well as of groups – serving a common purpose. Examples of
such action spheres can be 'family' or 'occupation.' If one looks at the action sphere
'family,' several *action domains* come to mind. A housewife may perceive the action
sphere family to be composed out of different task, such as cooking, sewing, cleaning,

taking the children to school and to sport activities after school, or organizing the family holiday. The husband on the other hand may perceive the action sphere family very differently. His action sphere family may consist of coming home for a family dinner, playing football with his son, or spending the weekend with his family at the lake. It becomes obvious that each member of the family may have a very different perception of what the action sphere family consists of, as each member of the family occupies different tasks revolving around 'family life' (Boesch, 1991, p. 71).

Moving away from individual actions and individual perspectives of action fields to the general structures and patterns within these fields, the following paragraphs will discuss not how individual actions structure the space around them, but how we may begin to understand the space between individuals. This shift of focus, the shift from individual action to the space in which the actions are conducted and in which intersubjectivity is patterned, will help to understand how cultural mediation manifests itself within the space between and so is at the same time a component of the space in which action is conducted, as well as a psychological organizing principle.

The space between

The action sphere 'family' is a psychological space which is arranged according to physical objects as well as psychological goals and constraints. Each particular action space (in this case the action spaces belonging to the sphere 'family') is filled with meanings and arranged according to them (Boesch, 1991, p. 30-31). In addition to the meanings that are created through individual actions, other intersubjective matrices underscore the space between the Self and the other with meaning. These dimensions of meanings are hard to grasp, as they are the social material which is not noticeable and yet which taints the human sphere with particular cultural atmospheres. These cultural

atmospheres are generated through resonating with the other in a specific space, which is not explicated by traditional symbolic interactionism (Coelho & Figueiredo, 2003). Sloterdijk thus proposes to focus on describing the qualities within the human sphere instead of the individual actions themselves.

According to Sloterdijk[26] (1998), the human sphere should be understood as an orb filled with sense, meaning and with all that lives. Furthermore, and more pertinent to the problem at hand, the space is also filled with the respective habits and patterns of all interactions taking place within it. It should be conceptualized as an *eigenspace* with atmosphere generating qualities which have emerged through the act of being together. Through the tensions, inspirations and the taking part in a sphere we are always a floating pole in sympathy-spaces, in mood-spaces, and in taking-part-spaces. As it is the *space* that is highlighted in Sloterdijk's conceptions, it is never the isolated entities or objects that seem to be of importance, but rather the *resonance* of our interactional relationship in our intentional worlds (Shweder, 1990). It is what is happening between individuals and their immersion with the other which constitutes them.

Within this atmosphere, the inhabitants always experience the world from a certain perspective and never on a direct basis. The individual human being is seen as an effect of the inspired (*beseelte*) space, which is situated at the same time between us and the other as well as within both of us. It is the space itself which orientates the forms of our reality. Important to note here is that while humans are the products of such spheres, the individual human beings themselves are not the producers, as might be the case from a constructivist perspective. There is no producer as such. The cultural atmosphere emanates

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[26] Before turning to Sloterdijk a word of caution is to be said. On the one hand the problem of translating Sloterdijk's German terminology into English prevails throughout this text. Furthermore, Sloterdijk has himself, on the other hand, purposely not adopted any scientific jargon as he argues that such a distancing technique would necessarily fail to capture the essence of the human condition (Sloterdijk & Heinrichs, 2001). Thus I would like to invite all scientific readers to leave behind the realm of familiar scientific jargon and, for the following paragraphs, enjoy a more poetic picture of floating beings.

from humans resonating within the same sphere and from actions and interactions with one another. The subtle experience of resonating within the space is highlighted within Sloterdijk's twosome quality of a human sphere and further elaborated in the following paragraphs.

Resonating with the other

According to Sloterdijk (1998, 1999, 2004), individuals *resonate* within a sphere and are able to flourish only because of their participation within it. Only in taking part in the mediational ongoing act of being together does one develop as a human being. At the same time, this taking part in the goings-on of the space between us and the other is what generates and manifests cultural forms and patterns, just as plants in a greenhouse generate oxygen.

The term resonate can best be comprehended with Mannheim's (1924/1982) notion of *contagion*. In this respect, to resonate with someone is to form a kind of existential relationship, a specific union with the other, the *vis-à-vis*. Humans have the ability, quite in the manner of contagion, to grasp in their immediacy things of the spirit through the spirit, things of the soul through the soul (Mannheim, 1924/1982, p.188-189). It is in this contagious manner humans resonate within spheres. As soon as a human inhabits a certain sphere, he or she directly touches and receives the *vis-à-vis* according to a very specific atmosphere and climate which can be found within the sphere.

Figure 1. *The meeting at the golden gate* by Giotto di Bondone; reprinted with permission from Sloterdijk (1998, p. 148).

Two lovers resonating with each other

The importance of the act of being together cannot be stressed enough. Sloterdijk (1998) highlights repeatedly that the 'commune' and the act of being together within the sphere is what constitutes not only the sphere but also the individual human being. To emphasize the interrelatedness within the general cultural sphere, a kind of macro-sphere, Sloterdijk first gives the reader a lengthy description of a kind of micro-sphere and begins his sphereology with the inspired municipality or commune (*gehauchte Kommune*). As an example of such a micro-sphere and the inspired goings-on within it, Sloterdijk soon refers to the perfect twosome: the couple who are deeply in love. Again, the importance here is always the immersion in the other. It is the awesome attention which envelopes the twosome as a combined halo of two holy individuals in face-to-face contact might achieve (see Figure 1). It is what John Donne (1896) celebrates in *The Ecstasy*:

"When love, with one another so

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Interanimates two souls

That abler soul, which thence doth flow

Defects of loneliness controls"

Here we have a situation of two human beings entering into a highly intimate micro-sphere. The example of these two lovers simply serves as an illustration of how immanent the immersion with the other is. The micro-sphere, or the inspired commune, of these two lovers clearly takes on a unique characteristic – a unique atmosphere – which develops out of the act of the two souls touching each other, out of the two human beings falling in love. Here one can easily imagine the two floating poles creating a very specific psychological field not only between each other, but also around and within each other, through the immergence of the Self with the *vis-à-vis*. Certain patterns and structures emerge out of the simple act of two souls touching, two spirits 'tasting' (Mannheim, 1924/1982, p. 188) each other. The two lovers represent two poles within their very distinct sympathy-space and mood-space which at once has emerged through their interaction and mediates their actions. It is the very close intimacy of the two lovers which beautifully illustrate the resonating process within the human sphere. A further example of such intimate resonance within a micro-sphere would be the first interactions between a mother and her child.

Intersujective intimacy at the beginning of life

The personal human sphere emerges very early in an infant's life. If we conceive a cultural sphere as emerging out of interpersonal interaction (Boesch, 1991) and the act of resonating together (Sloterdijk, 1998), of tuning into and resonating within the space of the other (Mannheim, 1924/1982), we can safely assume that this space already begins to

form in the uterus (Sloterdijk, 1998). In their review article on infant intersubjectivity, Trevarthen and Aitken (2001) state that "perceiving the mother's rhythmic vocal expressions of motive states from her speech can begin in utero, many weeks before birth" (p. 7). Similarly, Sloterdijk (1998) dedicates many pages to the description of the space between and around the infant and his or her caregiver. Such profound intimacy as the child experiences within the mother's womb will be lost forever once the infant has been born (Sloterdijk, 1998, p. 347-401). This loss, according to Sloterdijk, also explains the infants' craving for social contact from the very beginning of their lives. Indeed, "evidence shows that even new born infants, […] are specifically motivated, beyond instinctive behaviors that attract parental care for immediate biological needs, to communicate intricately […] with the interest and feelings displayed by other humans" (Trevarthen & Aitken, 2001, p. 3). The infant's craving for communication animates the initial self-other awareness as well as the reception of motives and emotions in intersubjective meanings.

Important to note here is that the "communicative behaviors displayed by infants shortly after birth are homologous with behaviors that are essential to the elaborate intersubjectivity of all collaborative intentional activity in adult society" (Trevarthen & Aitken, 2001, p. 6). Thus, this intersubjective behaviour is not the antecedent of cultural learning (as for example suggested by Tomasello, Carpenter, Call, Behne & Moll, 2005). Rather, from the very beginning of life humans take part in a cultural sphere in which the self emerges through the relation to the *vis-à-vis*. The space of the mother and child is from the very beginning structured in a particular manner. The first encounter of mother and child, the first *vis-à-vis* situation in which mother and child literally face each other (see Figure 2) is something very novel in which two souls touch each other and thereby create a new space for each other. The space between mother and child forms out of their

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process of tuning into each other, out of touching each other's souls. This resonating process happens immediately, unnoticeably and spontaneously.

Figure 2. Mother and child facing each other (*vis-à-vis*) for the first time.

From micro-spheres to a cultural sphere

The two examples were discussed in order to point to the subtleties of resonating processes within human spheres. The lover touches the soul of his or her partner and instantly begins to resonate with him or her. The actions, feeling, perceptions and, in fact, the whole being is mediated through atmospherical forces which emanate from resonating with one another. Likewise, the mother and the child form a space in which a particular atmosphere is generated and which, in turn, structures and organizes their beings. While these two examples were chosen to illustrate the subtleties of resonating with one another,

it is important to keep in mind that these examples represent a kind of micro-sphere, constituted by two floating poles. Yet, just as the individual human being is never isolated from floating in a sympathy-space with another, so is the micro-sphere never cut off from the general ongoing patterns of various clusters of action fields—of the cultural sphere.

The child is never born into a void. The space between the mother and the father, between the mother and the doctor, *ad infinitum*, is already structured before the child enters even the thoughts of the mother. The mother-child sphere into which the child is born already has a particular cultural atmosphere which taints and patterns all interactions that will take place within it. And so also the structural atmosphere which emerges through the resonating process of the two souls of mother and child is structured according to specific patterns and forms which already exist within the cultural atmosphere surrounding both mother and child.

Likewise, returning to the two lovers (Figure 1) it becomes clear that other interlocutors, other micro-spheres are around and intermingle with the lovers' micro-sphere. It is clearly visible that the two lovers are embedded within a greater cultural sphere. Certain cultural rules and structures have evolved out of various interactions and at the same time structure the individual actions. Which kind of clothing is worn by whom and when would be an example (in this case long flowing gowns that drop to the floor). Simple conventions and patterns have emerged which usually go unnoticed or at least un-reflected, but which nevertheless mediate actions (Slunecko, 2008). Acts of being together, which constitute the human sphere (Sloterdijk, 1998) are much more subtle than a baby's cry or the act of nursing a child in order to comfort him. A simple reception of the other is more than enough to spur the resonating processes (Mannheim, 1924/1982). The emphasis must always be brought back to the process of tuning into the mood-space, the meaning-space and the sense-space of the other. This resonating with one another and

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tuning into the space of the other is what generates a cultural atmosphere, which, in turn, mediates the individuals participating within the particular sphere.

Thus, the singular relationships of the Self and the other are themselves always already embedded within the greater cultural sphere which envelopes both interlocutors. While a very distinct novel space emerges for mother and child or for two lovers due to the resonating processes of one human being with the *vis-à-vis*, this space in turn emerges within a cultural sphere which simultaneously has a history and permanently undergoes restructuring as novel spaces emerge (Sloterdijk, 1999, 2004). Mother and child are never isolated from the general ongoing act of being together within the greater cultural sphere, nor are the lovers who together have created an ellipse with their combined halos. To conclude, in the following paragraphs the approach of culture as structuring processes within a human sphere will be discussed in relation to the theory of the dialogical self.

The dialogical self resonating within a sphere implications and suggestions

    Theoretical implications

As humans move within cultural spheres, culture is constitutive of the individual and the individual can never be found outside of culture (Sloterdijk, 1998; Slunecko & Hengl, 2007). Individuals automatically resonate within a particular cultural sphere and cannot escape it. For the dialogical self this would imply that the self, with all of his or her positions and dialogical interactions, should be conceptualized as resonating within a particular sphere. Each sphere in which the dialogical self moves always has a specific cultural atmosphere according to which dialogical interactions, voices and positions are structured. It is thus never the individual position or voice, as suggested by Hermans and Kempen (1998, p. 1118) which culturally influences the rest of the dialogical self system. Rather, as a wind blows though a tree top and leaves subtle traces behind on every branch,

so blows the cultural atmosphere through the dialogical self, structuring dialogical interactions in a subtlety which is rarely noticed. Remembering the Spaniard, he rarely thinks about how he pronounces a word, and yet, he does pronounce each singular word in a very particular manner. Further, just as a certain climate allows some trees to grow but not other, so too will some cultural atmospheres allow particular cultural habits to emerge and not others. Turning again to the example of language, the very early consonant-vocal combinations which children produce while learning their mother-tongue already exhibit patterns and characteristics typical of that particular language (see Penner, 2000) and will soon begin to lose the capability of pronouncing and combining vocals typical for other languages. Considering language as one action frame of the cultural sphere in which one grows it becomes evident how cultural spheres at once constrain and present future action possibilities (Boesch, 1991, p. 29-37).

We must then look at the mediational goings-on within particular spheres in order to describe how this particular sphere may simultaneously constitute individual human actions and thus also the Self. Theories that have developed out of the traditional symbolic interactionism school have clearly made a solid contribution to the field of psychology in terms of incorporating the other within psychological theory and within theory of the Self. The elaboration on the space around, between and within two interlocutors served the purpose of emphasizing the cultural structures within particular cultural spheres. Only once the cultural sphere in which particular actions and symbolic mediations take place is described can individual actions and in turn the dialogical interactions of the dialogical self be understood in relation to culture.

Bridging the gap between theory and empirical studies

In order to leave the realms of an individualistic paradigm I have suggested that the relation between culture and the Self should be conceptualized as a constitutive process, where culture and the Self simultaneously constitute one another. Furthermore, I have suggested that cultural processes emerge out of the act of tuning into the space of the other, simultaneously structuring the space as well as the human beings moving within the space. Such a conception was chosen in part as it is compatible with the aims and aspirations of dialogical self theory, which emphasise not only the necessity of the other within the origins of dialogical interactions (e.g., Hermans, Kempen & van Loon, 1992), but also the need for cultural structures and patterns to replace a static and localized notion of culture (e.g., Hermans & Kempen, 1998).

The strong emphasis on beginning with two individuals – instead of one – within this chapter is to suggest moving away from the focus on individual positions and their actions (e.g., the Arabic position) to patterns and structures which emerge within the space around and between interlocutors or positions within the dialogical self. This would imply that structural (and for that matter cultural) patterns can be found on the one hand within cultural tools and products (such as media, pictures, narrations etc., see for example Slunecko, 2008) and on the other hand within dialogical interactions (Valsiner & Han, 2008). The goal for empirical research would then be to find specific cultural patterns within cultural artefacts and relate these back to the dialogical self. One notable example of analysing cultural artefacts in relation to the dialogical self is Ruck's and Slunecko's (2008) interpretation of Frida Kahlo's *Tree of Hope*. With the interpretation of a self-portrait of the Mexican painter Ruck and Slunecko successfully show not only how different I-positions may appear in cultural artefacts themselves (the painting), which might not otherwise have come to the foreground (the silent positions). But also how one

can find cultural traces within the painting itself as Frida Kahlo make use of typical Mexican symbols and artefacts to express who she is. With the help of image analysis Ruck and Slunecko thus successfully discuss the spatiality of the Self on an empirical level.

Conclusion

The aim of this chapter has been to open up the space around, between and within interlocutors and to highlight the conception of culture as structural process which simultaneously organises the space in which positions move as well as the dialogical interactions between positions and thus also the dialogical self. For the theory of the dialogical self this means that it always develops within a cultural atmosphere which constantly, and usually unnoticeably, simultaneously resonates within each individual, structuring and formatting his or her dialogical interactions. The dialogical self, therefore, is also already embedded into the general cultural sphere and resonates with all of his or her resonating fellows. Taking this resonating process seriously, the dialogical self can be viewed from a slightly different angle: the self constructs itself not only through the act of dialogue (as dialogue itself is already inspired by the general cultural atmosphere), but rather, resonating processes govern the dialogical processes and cultural atmospheric forces that inspire them.

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Appendix E

Cultural processes within dialogical self theory: A socio-cultural perspective

of collective voices and social language

Amrei C. Joerchel

Abstract

The aim of this article is to highlight socio-cultural premises within dialogical self theory and to further underline these with a dynamic constitutive approach to language and a socio-cultural sphere. Discussing a dialogical self from these perspectives emphasises both the constitutive and the mediational aspects of cultural processes within person's interactions. The purpose of outlining a dynamic constitutive approach in relation to a socio-cultural sphere, in which dialogical interactions take place, is to contribute to further clarifying and thereby advancing the understanding of the culture-person relationship within dialogical self theory. For this purpose the relations of collective voices, social language and culture within dialogical self theory are analyzed within dialogical self literature with some references to Bakhtin. These conceptions are then related to language as dynamically co-constituting person's interaction via cultural mediation and to the notion of resonating within a socio-cultural sphere. In this sense culture is discussed as bi-directional structural processes that dynamically co-constitute individual actions as well as the socio-cultural sphere. Important consequences of such an approach—all personal positions and voices necessarily being culturally mediated through their interactions—are discussed with some implications for future research in the later part of this article.

Keywords: Dialogical self theory, collective voices, social language, dynamic constitution, socio-cultural sphere, cultural mediation

Introduction

Bakhtin's conception of dialogicality serves as one of the main steppingstones (next to James's classic works on the self) for the formulation of the dialogical self theory (Hermans, Kempen, & Van Loon, 1992; for further dialogical self developments see also e.g. Lyra, 1999; Hermans & Dimaggio, 2004; Valsiner, 2002; Saldago & Goncalves, 2007; Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010). While it has been argued that dialogical approaches are dependent on language or symbolic systems (e.g. Markova & Foppa, 1990), the perception of language guaranteeing the centrality of the relationship between psychological processes and socio-cultural settings (Wertsch, 1991) is often only referred to without further elaboration (e.g. Lyra, 2007). Thus, the aim of this paper is to trace the relation of language and culture within dialogical self theory and, by doing so, to underline the importance of understanding the person-culture relationship as a dynamic constitution (Slunecko, 2008). Highlighting the dynamic constitutive nature of self and culture within dialogical self theory serves the purpose of emphasizing one of the theories main aspirations: overcoming individualistic and reified views of culture and persons (Hermans et al., 1992).

As the aim of this paper is to highlight the socio-cultural nature of culture and self within dialogical self theory, the first step will be to discuss the premises of such an approach to culture, which describes culture as being manifested within and mediating the person-environment interaction (Valsiner, 2007). To exemplify this approach more clearly the discussion then turns to language as an example of cultural tools within a socio-cultural environment. More precisely, language—as cultural mediational tool—will be discussed as fundamentally co-constituting psychological and societal processes in various distinct manners. On the one hand the very genesis of psychological processes is guided partially by the specific symbolic system a person uses (Vygotsky, 1929/1994; Boesch,

2000). On the other hand, language is discussed as providing a protective linguistic atmosphere in which one moves and interacts according to patterns that vary depending on the specific linguistic systems in which persons move and interact (Slunecko, 2008; Slunecko & Hengl, 2006, 2007). The socio-cultural space, which encompasses the specific linguistic atmospheres, is inspired by Sloterdijk's (1998, 1999, 2004) conception of spheres. Once this dynamic constitutive approach to culture is sufficiently laid out, a closer look at the notion of culture within dialogical self theory—particularly culture as social position, collective voices and social language—will help further develop current understandings of culture and some underlying premises within dialogical self research.

Within the conclusion some theoretical implications from a socio-cultural perspective will briefly be discussed in relation to future empirical dialogical self research. Here too the aim is to explicitly highlight the dynamic mediating and co-constituting characteristics of cultural mediation in order to further move away from implicit individualistic and reified assumption of culture. In order to discuss some implications of a dynamic and mediational approach to culture the following paragraphs are dedicated to outlining this approach.

Culture

Culture and grasping its meaning in relation to the person has a long history in social thought (see Jahoda, 1993 for an overview). Giving a full account of all the attempts dealing with the culture-person relationship would not only be impossible within this framework, it would also be fruitless, as the goal here is to shed some light onto the current understanding of culture within dialogical self theory, and not to give an overview of previous accounts established within the social sciences. It is however important to keep in mind that this discussion is not a new one and that we thus can resort to already

established scientific formulations to further develop a solid understanding of person-culture relations within current theories. In this respect Valsiner (2007) has differentiated three main understandings of culture, which are useful to keep in mind while discussing the person-culture relations within dialogical theory. The three main meanings which have been used over the years within Psychology are as follows:

> Culture has been used to designate some group of people who "belong together" by value of some shared features. Here individual persons "belong to" a specific culture.

> Culture can be seen as systemic organizer of the psychological system of the individual person—culture "belongs to" the person and is part of the self, organizing it in ways that are functional for personal life.

> Culture "belongs to" how the person and the environment are interrelated. The meaning of "belong to" here breaks down—there is no specific "owner" (or "carrier") of culture. Instead culture becomes exemplified through different processes by which persons interact with their worlds. (p.21)

If one were to escape the traditional individualistic approach to self, as Hermans and colleagues propose to do (e.g. Hermans et al., 1992; Hermans, 2001; Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010), the first step is to disregard culture or the person as reified entity or as something that belongs to one or the other. Viewing the definitions above, only the last definition is fully exempt of any reification as culture is seen as a process—as construction of conceptual structures by activities of persons—or, as a semiotic mediation (Valsiner, 2007). Focusing on the emergence of phenomena resulting from person-

environment interactions allows for an approach that does not begin with the individual person as a Cartesian perspective usually does. Rather, it situates the person as starting premise within a social realm of happenings and emphasises the emerging cultural tools, which simultaneously guide and constrain all interactions taking place within the socio-cultural sphere (which necessarily includes inter-individual processes as well as intra-individual psychological processes). Culture can thus be understood on the one hand as organizing principle of human action (Valsiner, 2007), and on the other hand as structuring and patterning the human sphere (Sloterdijk, 1998, 2004). Furthermore, culture should be understood as dynamic constitutive of what it means to be a person in the first place (Slunecko, 2008; Slunecko & Hengl, 2006, 2007). How exactly cultural structuring and patterning of the human sphere as well as psychological processes functions is described in the following paragraphs with the example of language.

Language as access portal

Language, Slunecko (2008) suggests, is the access portal to both psychological and societal processes. Language itself is not simply the carrier of information that leaves either the sender or the environment and the receiver unchanged. Rather, through language the psychological system takes on societal forms while at the same time the societal processes, via language, take on structures and forms of psychological nature. The following two examples explicate what is meant by psychological and societal processes intermingle within the realm of language and how one takes on specific characteristics of the other.

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Two examples

Boesch (2000) discussed the importance of the meaning of rhythms and sounds over the actual information being transmitted in lullabies and little children's rhymes. In these examples it is easily imaginable how the same meaning could be transmitted to the child via other sentence structures or words that do not rhyme and follow certain patterns, being half as effective. Or how the actual meaning might not be soothing at all, were the child to understand and grasp the meaning of what was being recited and not perceive the lullaby as something soothing, something that bonded it to its caregiver. A prominent example is the well known lullaby *Rock-a-bye Baby*.[27] Here the actual information of the lullaby may be quite disturbing if one imagines a baby falling out of a treetop, and yet it is one of the more popular nursery rhymes used to sooth babies. Boesch (2000) thus argues that language in such cases takes on a bonding and southing function. The psychological process of bonding and soothing thus becomes apparent within the social contact, the social process of speech and within the realm of language.

While Boesch's (2000) example shows that language can take on psychologically soothing forms and thereby structure the social act of the infant-caregiver interaction, Klein (1994) exemplifies how language takes on societal structures, which then organize the psychological process of perception when describing space. According to Klein's observations the Guughu Yimidher in Australia do not use the left-right differentiation in their description of space. Instead of perceiving the space around them in terms of the commonly used bodily asymmetrical proportions, which left and right are built upon, the Guughu Yimidher use an absolute systems. This absence of the descriptive terms of left and right points to the notion that the space in which selves form is not a universal fact which simply needs to be translated into any language. Rather, it suggests that the space

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[27] Rock-a-bye baby, on the treetop, when the wind blows, the cradle will rock, when the bough breaks, the cradle will fall, and down will come baby, cradle and all.

itself already underlies cultural structures which have emerged out of, and continue to change during particular ways of being together.

Discussing how social interactions, and particularly speech and language, mediate psychological processes such as perception from a developmental perspective, Vygotsky (1978) argued that with the

> means of words children single out separate elements, thereby overcoming the natural structure of the sensory field and forming new (artificially introduced and dynamic) structural centers. The child begins to perceive the world not only through his eyes but also through his speech. (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 32)

And in 1929/1994 Vygotsky reminds us, that "in the language of many primitive races there is no such word as 'tree'; they have only separate words for each kind of tree" (p.59), implying that with the development of language the child perceives the world according to specific conceptual categories present within language. Thus, if the person grows up within a linguistic atmosphere which does not use categories of trees in general, he or she will not view different trees as belonging to the same category, but rather perceive various single trees and distinguish them according to their unique properties, e.g. a lime tree.

Societal and psychological structures within language

By looking at the langue structures we can thus on the one hand find some distinctive psychological features (e.g. the soothing and bonding functions of lullabies, Boesch, 2000) as well as social and societal structures that are then reflected within the individual perception (e.g. the spatial descriptions with or without the distinctions of left and right, Klein, 1994 or concept development as described by Vygotsky, 1929/1994).

At this point it is important to note that the term structure here should not be understood as a static world view that is then simply internalized as "an outward, ready-made creation" (Vygotsky, 1929/1994, p.62). Rather, Vygotsky points out, that after the structure comes into being it is "subject to a lengthy internal change which shows all the signs of development" (p. 62). In this sense language constantly forces open the functioning-circle—the psychological and societal processes—while simultaneously constituting it in a dynamic form. The person in turn is constituted by all of his or her cultural practices through medial and symbolic applications, just as cultural and societal practices are constituted by personal actions. Tracing this aspect back to the co-evolutionary development of the various systems, language is a key component in which both systems, the psychological and the social, become accessible (Slunecko, 2008).

Being able to access the underlying cultural structures of the space in which we move and develop or the psychological structures within language does not, however, imply that language is simply the means with which societal structures are translated into psychological processes or vice versa. Quite the contrary is the case. From Wertsch (1985) we learn that Vygotsky has already made this argument when discussing the characteristics of cultural tools such as language. According to Wertsch (1985) Vygotsky emphasized that cultural tools do not "simply facilitate an existing mental function while leaving it qualitatively unaltered. Rather, the emphasis is on their capacity to transform mental functioning" (p. 79).

While Vygotsky focused mostly on the development of mental functions, the capacity of language to transform social interactions, societal processes and the socio-cultural sphere in general should not be dismissed. Rather, language should always be understood as dynamically constituting both the psychological and the societal processes simultaneously. Such a bi-directional model explicitly rejects the notion of the individual

person being solely determined by cultural structures. As psychological functions are shaped and shaded by cultural processes, so are social interactions and indeed the cultural processes themselves changed by individual actions. In this sense a person's individual development will always be co-constituted (as opposed to determined) by specific cultural structures. The special perception of e.g. an Australian child belonging to the Guughu Yimidher will develop very differently from a middle European one. Of course both children will develop some sense for their surroundings. But the exact descriptions of this space will vary according to certain cultural tools the child uses (e.g. language). Likewise, societal change, as subtle as it may be, continuously occurs during the interactions of persons. While some societal change occurs wilfully by the hand of a particular person or group of persons (e.g. during a revolution), most societal changes occur through everyday mundane interactions and go unnoticed (e.g. linguistic changes may begin with subtle changes of different intonations of specific words and gradually move into more distinct forms of dialects).

Thus, as language may provide us with certain structures as to how to perceive the space around us and thereby structure our psychological mechanisms in a very particular manner, it furthermore providing us with a home, a protective and imaginative atmosphere, maintaining and expanding our life-worlds. These imaginative atmospheres are seen as a kind of semantic vital coating, which necessarily emerge within any human collective (Slunecko & Hengl, 2007). Mannheim (1922-24/1980) argues that without language a permanent relation between persons occupying the same conjunctive experiential space would be rather difficult. Thus, language is argued to be a necessary element of how persons function at any given moment in their history.

Transcending linguistic relativism

To differentiate between a dynamic constitutive approach from a linguistic relativistic one such as the "Sapir-Whorf hypothesis," it is interesting to note that in 1943 Whorf has already postulated that language represents a house of consciousness:

> And every language is a vast pattern-system, different from others, in which are culturally ordained the forms and categories by which the personality not only communicates, but also analyzes nature, notices or neglects types of relationship and phenomenon, channels his reasoning, and builds the house of his consciousness. (1942/1956, p.252; cited in Valsiner, 1998, p. 275)

Slunecko and Hengl (2007) themselves too refer to one of the core ideas presented by Whorf by pointing out that "conceptual categorizations of reality are, at least partially, determined by the structure of language" (p.42). While Slunecko and Hengl did not enter the discussion of how deterministic versus relativistic their interpretation of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis is, the pivotal difference of Whorf's emphasis on language structuring psychological thought processes and the approach sought for here is that language does not imprison human action and should not be seen as a unidirectional cultural force. In this respect, citing Valsiner (1998), language is assumed to be "an open-ended generative enterprise where we introduce subtle novelty into the very instrument that we use in that process" (p.276).

Thus, while language itself remains open for change, and indeed continuously does so, it nevertheless also co-constitutes psychological mechanisms and societal processes to some degree. The two examples of space conceptualization and the use of lullabies were chosen to demonstrate these two aspects of language and to show how both societal and psychological processes dynamically constitute each other through the use of cultural

tools. Yet, the subtlety of cultural processes guiding and constraining psychological mechanisms (and vice versa) is usually not obviously noticeable and is therefore better described with the notion of an implicit self-generating protective atmosphere. The notion of a "home-atmosphere" is thus related to the idea of a socio-cultural (atmo)sphere and further elaborated in the following paragraphs.

Of spheres and self-generating atmospheres

Inspired by Sloterdijk's (1998, 1999, 2004) notion of spheres, the socio-cultural sphere is understood as an orb that is filled with sense, meaning and with all that lives and is protected.[28] It should be conceptualised as an *eigenspace* with atmosphere generating qualities which emerge through being together in resonance. Through the tensions, inspirations, and the taking part in the socio-cultural sphere we are always a floating pole in sympathy-spaces, in mood-spaces, and in taking-part-spaces.

The focus here lies on the very subtle patterns and structures which are part of the human experience of belonging to a socio-cultural sphere. Because of their subtlety they are usually not noticed and seldom addressed. Within the socio-cultural atmosphere, the inhabitants always experience the world from a certain perspective and never directly. A certain understanding of what it means to be part of the socio-cultural sphere is experienced through the simple act of resonating together in a conjunctive experiential space (Mannheim, 1922-1924/1980). Sloterdijk (1998) describes this experience as *floating* within the sphere.[29]

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[28] Here the notion of "all that is protected" can be compared to Boesch's (2000) description of all that is safe and familiar within the *potential action field* or "Handlungsbereich."

[29] See Sloterdijk (1998) pp. 17-82, particularly pp. 45-46.

Floating beings

To clarify the experience of being part of a human sphere, Sloterdijk (1998) describes the human being as *floating being* ("Schwebewesen"). Here the term floating means being dependent upon shared atmospheres or moods ("Stimmungen") and collective assumptions ("Annahmen"). The individual is seen as an effect of the inspired or enlivened ("beseelte") space,[30] which lies between the individual and the other. This space is the medium in which our reality forms itself. As it is the space that is highlighted in Sloterdijk's conceptions, it is never the isolated entities or objects that seem to be of importance, but rather the patterns and structures of the interactional relationship in our intentional worlds (Schweder, 1990). It is what is happening between individuals, their dynamically constituting cultural processes, that always also shape human action and therefore also the self.

As such culture is seen as on the one hand emerging through human interaction and on the other hand simultaneously structuring personal action. This understanding of culture is not new to authors of dialogical self theory as e.g. Hermans and Kempen have already referred to Wertsch's formulation of cultural tools in 1995 where they identify mediated action as the basic unit of analysis and discuss its dialogical nature. Nevertheless the dialogical self has not been further elaborated in terms of being situated within a socio-cultural sphere. More importantly, while culture has been discussed by Hermans and Kempen in 1995 as mediating action, the implication of such an action-based conception of culture is not always adhered to within empirical research. This matter is further

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30 Sloterdijk's work on spheres has not been published in English yet (the fist volume of his spherology, Bubbles: Spheres Volume I: Microspherology, is due to be released in December, 2011). Here the translation seems especially difficult as the German term beseelt can take on various meanings. The term beseelt comes from the term Seele, which can be translated as soul, psyche, mind or spirit. Beseelt could thus be translated as ensouled, animated, or as prompted with an idea, a notion. As Sloterdijk (1998, pp.17-) begins his descriptions of spheres with the notion of life being breathed into a vessel, I have chosen the word inspired as this word also captures the notion of wind being blown into something. Yet, it is important to keep the other translations in mind.

discussed in the following paragraphs, in which we will now turn to dialogical self theory and to some cultural considerations within it.

The dialogical self as culture-inclusive

In 2001, Hermans elaborates the idea of the dialogical self as 'culture-inclusive' with particular emphasis on embodied forms of dialogue, collective voices and asymmetrical social relations. As the scope of this paper does not allow for a full reflection on all three arguments (let alone all considerations of culture within dialogical self literature), I will solely refer to collective voices and related functional terms: social language, social positions and ventriloquation.

Collective voices, social language and ventriloquation

Collective voices

Within dialogical self theory culture is described in part as structures and processes belonging to the self-system in terms of collective voices employing social languages via *ventriloquation* (Hermans, 2001). A distinction between personal and collective voices, which respectively correspond to social and personal positions, is made. Here Hermans describes social positions as "governed and organized by societal definitions, expectations and prescriptions, whereas personal positions receive their form from the particular ways in which individual people organize their own lives" (p.263). The notion of a collective voice is further describe as the voice of a cultural group, of the collective to which one belongs.

Social language

Social language is described as a "discourse particular to a specific stratum of society … within a given social system at a given time" (Hermans & Kempen, 1995,

p.107). As examples the authors list social dialects, linguistic behavioural characteristics of particular groups, professional jargons, language of generation and age groups, and other such categories. Social languages are found within a single national language (e.g. German, Russian, English, etc.) and among different national languages within the same culture.

Ventriloquation

The term ventriloquation signifies the simultaneity of two voices speaking at once. Hermans (2001) resorts to Bakhtin's conceptualization of vantriloquation to explain that social languages "shape what individual voices can say" by one voice "speaking through another voice or voice type" (p.262). Thus, the multivoicedness of the dialogical self not only refers to the "simultaneous existence of different individual voices, but also to the simultaneous existence of an individual voice and the voice of a group" (p.262).

Accordingly, culture is incorporated *into* the self-system as a collective voice speaking with social language from a social position. But how exactly do voices function in relation to culture and positions? When does a collective voice speak? What is the differentiation between a personal and a social position from which a collective voice speaks? In 1996 Hermans describes the notion of voice and position in spatial terms. Accordingly "[v]oice assumes an embodied actor located in space together with other actors who are involved in coordinated ... action" (p.44). And "a position is always located in relation or in opposition to other positions and is thus suited as a relational concept that allows the relative autonomy of personal positioning" (p.44). Furthermore, in 2001 he discusses the relation between personal and collective voices with reference to empirical evidence, which also suggests, that both voices "function as relatively autonomous parts of the self" (p. 262).

Dialogical self scholars do not anywhere explicitly state that social positions and collective voices are necessarily and always, by their nature, completely separate from personal positions and voices. In fact, the oppositional and relational characteristic of both social and personal positions and collective and personal voices are emphasized with the very notion of dialogicality. A personal position always functions in opposition to a social position and a collective voice always speaks through a personal voice. And yet, the fact that collective voices *always* speak through personal voices whenever an utterance is produced is not clearly emphasized. Thus, the exact relationship of cultural processes and psychological ones remains opaque. The main concern in this regard is whether collective voices speak over personal voices via ventriloquation—shaping what individuals can say—or whether a collective voice is in dialogical relation with other personal voices—influencing the whole structure of the positions repertoire by power relations. A third possibility (which will be argued for here) is that a collective voice always speaks through a personal voice while thereby being simultaneously in opposition to and in dialogue with other personal voices.

The first two possibilities—speaking through personal voices *or* being in dialogical relation with other personal voices—both seem to suggest that collective voices eventually represent singular positions within the self-system, also if these positions may take a 'we-like' quality (Hermans, 2003, p.105). The reduction of collective voices to singular positions is particularly questionable in relation to culture as this reduction would suggest a reification of cultural processes. Yet, here too cultural processes and how these function in relation to voices, positions and the whole self-system is not emphasized or explicitly elaborated. In 2003 for example Hermans states that:

> Cultures can be seen as collective voices which function as social positions
> in the self. Such positions or voices are expressions of historically situated

selves that are, particularly on the interface of cultures, constantly involved in dialogical relationships with other voices. (p.96)

Here we can infer that cultural processes function within the self-system as collective voices as described within the third possibility. A collective voice always speaks over a personal voice with the use of social language and as such is in dialogical relation with other personal voices. Conceiving culture as collective voices that speak over personal voices does not in itself reduce cultural processes to a singular position within the self-system. This point will be further elaborated upon with reference to Bakhtin (1986/2003) in the following sections of this paper. From this perspective dialogical self theory is compatible with a dynamic constitutive approach to culture.

The problem of accounting for cultural mediation within a dialogical self arises when a direct transference of 'culture' to a collective voice and then to a social position is assumed without stressing the dynamic and mediational processes that are characteristic of culture. It is in this case only a question of emphasis. When emphasis is placed on social positions (as a rather static entity) rather than for e.g. on social language (as a cultural tool used within the process of dialogical interaction), culture is usually discussed in terms of singular cultural I-position: e.g. the 'Arabic culture' might be represented within the self-system as an Arabic I-position while another position, e.g. the German I-position, might represent 'the German culture' and so forth. Yet, as will be argued with Bakhtin's (1986/2003) differentiation of single speech events and speech event types in the following paragraphs, focusing on language and its bi-directional mediational characteristic surpasses a reified and individualistic approach to culture by emphasising the dynamic constitutive characteristic as a socio-cultural perspective does.

Individual voices, social language and culture: Referring back to Bahktin

Bakhtin's (1986/2003) differentiation between single speech events (individual utterances produced by unique voices) and types of speech events or particular speech genres (types of utterances produced by types of voices), which Hermans (e.g. 2001, p.262) includes in his description of ventriloquation (see above), is an important one in depicting collective voices as access portal to both psychological processes and cultural ones. Note the differentiation between individual voices on the one hand and *voice types* on the other hand. The individual voice and the voice type represent two sides of the same coin: both are always present when individual utterances are produced. In this sense Bakhtin (1981/2003) states that "[e]very utterance participates in the 'unitary language' ... and at the same time partakes of social and historical heteroglossia" (p.75).

With social heteroglossia Bakhtin (1986/2003) described the individual utterance as being able to exist only within a particular sphere of communication. Furthermore, speech genres impose their own restrictions and structures upon the individual speakers and usually go unnoticed:

> We speak only in definite speech genres, that is, all our utterances have definite and relatively stable typical *forms of construction of the whole*. Our repertoire of oral (and written) speech genres is rich. We use them confidently and skilfully *in practice*, and it is quite possible for us not even to suspect their existence *in theory*. (original emphasis, p.83)

Returning to dialogical self theory we can thus infer that the conception of social language in relation to individual voices applies to *all* voices. All voices are already shaped by particular speech genres that have evolved over time in particular communicative spheres. Note that when individual voices produce singular utterances, they *always* do so through particular voice types and speech genres which are just as value

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laden and structured in a very particular manner as language is always ideologically saturated and represents a particular world view (Bakhting, 1981/2003).

Here too, as with Vygotsky (1929/1994), the simultaneity of the social and the psychological processes are highlighted. While Vygotsky (1929/1994) talked about the social processes being internalized and thereby structuring intra-individual psychological processes, Bakhtin (1982/2003) talks of particular social forms of speech that are always found within the personal utterance. Furthermore, both scholars point to the dynamic and bi-directionality of the two-folded characteristic of language and point out that language is not to be understood as a ready-made creation that is simply internalized without further development on either social or individual side. Both the individual and the social change and further develop through the use of language. In fact, to use Slunecko's (2008) terminology, both the social and the psychological facets of language, speech and utterances dynamically constitute one another and continuously change the form and structure of both.

Thus, when Hermans (2003) (or any other dialogical self scholar) talks of culture as collective voice that speaks over a personal voice, it is important to keep in mind that this collective voice always speaks through personal voices as the very nature of language entails both the social and the psychological processes. Therefore, when culture is discussed within the dialogical self-system, the focus should not lie on the social positions from which collective voices speak (as for example 'the German I-position'), but rather on the constraining and guiding principles of such cultural tools such as language, which dynamically constitute both individual actions as well as societal structures within the socio-cultural sphere. The following paragraphs elaborate both the implication of cultural tools mediating all personal interactions (including the production of utterances) as well as the notion of dialogical interaction always taking place within a socio-cultural sphere.

From social positions and voice types to cultural mediation and socio-cultural spheres

Discussing culture within dialogical self theory as process oriented mediation and as dynamically constituting both societal and psychological mechanisms generates two main implications. As outlined above, the first is concerned with cultural processes mediating dialogical interactions within the self-system on the intra-individual level. The second implication concerns the bi-directional and constitutive characteristic of cultural mediation and discusses the dialogical self as situated within a socio-cultural sphere in which cultural mediation is generated. This point will be discussed further down.

Cultural mediation on the intra-individual level

Concerning cultural mediation on an intra-individual level within dialogical self theory, the main implication we can infer from viewing the above arguments is to make an explicit shift from focusing on individual voices and their respective positions to their interactional processes—to the production of utterances. Such a shift necessitates that all voices and positions alike are always necessarily culturally mediated, as it is through the usage of cultural tools, such as language, that action and interaction are guided and constrain according to specific cultural structures (Vygotsky, 1929/1994; compare also Wertsch, 1985). Thus, as discussed above, it is not culture in itself that can be seen as a collective voice or as a social position. Rather, the cultural processes that guide and constrain dialogical interactions become accessible within the language with which each voice speaks. From this perspective collective voices signify the societal structure within each voice while psychological processes are simultaneously present, both representing two sides of the same coin, both simultaneously being culturally mediated in a bi-

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directional manner by language. The two language examples described above—lullabies and spatial conceptualization—were chosen to demonstrate this point more clearly. Within these examples language, as cultural tool, mediates on the one hand psychological processes, while on the other hand, simultaneously mediating social interactions.

Dialogical interactions within socio-cultural spheres

The explicit shift from individual voices and their respective positions to mediational processes within the dialogical interactions ultimately bares the questions of where this interaction takes place. This brings us to the second implication of a dynamically constitutive approach to culture within dialogical self theory: the situatedness of a dialogical self within a socio-cultural sphere. Before relating the socio-cultural sphere to dialogical self theory I would like to point out that this implication of a socio-cultural perspective—being situated within a socio-cultural sphere—is again not necessarily a novel conception for dialogical self scholars. Hermans (2001), for example, points to the guiding and constraining nature of cultural structures and patterns in relation to communicative acts and further states that "the microcontext of concrete dialogical relationships cannot be understood without some concept of macroframes" (p.264). In this sense Bakhtin (1986/2003) argues—and Hermans (2001) refers to this conception—that singular utterances are only able to exist within specific social milieus. Here Hermans clearly acknowledges the intricate interrelated nature of culture and self-development. It is therefore not necessary to introduce the socio-cultural sphere as novel conception to the dialogical theory. It is however the aim of this paper to elaborate upon this conception and bring forth various further implications a socio-cultural perspective generates within dialogical self theory. For further elaboration of what it means to only be able to exist within specific social milieus and to stress the importance of understanding macroframes

for a culture-inclusive self-conception, the following paragraphs return to Solterdijk's (1998, 1999, 2004) notion of spheres once more.

Relating atmospheres to the dialogical self

In contrast to singular voices and positions, cultural processes are here conceptualized more in terms of a wind blowing through the whole phenomenon of a self, as a tainting atmosphere within specific socio-cultural spheres. This atmosphere emerges out of the constituting forces of all inhabitants[31] and out of everyday mundane interaction (e.g. language), reiteration and habituation (Bamberg & Zielke, 2007). Each and every action is necessarily enveloped and saturated by the atmosphere and thus also every single dialogical utterance.

Relating such a cultural enveloping process to language, Slunecko and Hengl (2007) state that persons "all are inspired and formatted by our contemporaries' and predecessors' discourse" (p.56). Language not only fundamentally co-constitutes dynamically what we perceive in the world and which propositions we pick, but through the use of language the socio-cultural sphere also takes on personal psychological forms. This perspective can explain why language and

> 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. (Gratier & Trevarthen, 2007, p.176)

The subtle structuring processes of discourse are included into the description of what it means to be a human being. As discussed above, the person here is depicted as a 'floating being' (*Schwebewesen*), one that tunes into an atmosphere of resonating with

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[31] Humans and objects alike, compare e.g. Latour, 1999, specifically pp. 174-215.

others. All perception is necessarily tainted, directed and guided by the general atmosphere of specific societal structures. With and through persons resonating, an interdependent field emerges and within this field or sphere the general perception and understanding of what is happening 'out there' is determined. Accordingly, not only all *I*-positions, their properties and dialogicality emerge through the person-environment interaction (Bamberg & Zielke, 2007), but also the precise structure of their interactions, their social language and the connotations of all voices and utterances or, keeping in mind that *all* voices simultaneously speaks through them, the collective voices. In this sense culture is seen not as 'belonging to' the self-system, but rather as manifesting itself within the person-environment interaction where it also mediates this interaction.

Discussion

Implications and future research suggestions

While the aim of this paper has been to underline the socio-cultural potentials within the dialogical self theoretical framework, there is not much use in advancing theoretical implications without being able to implement these considerations on an empirical level. The theoretical implication of a dynamic co-constitution of culture and self calls for methodologies that focus, as Bamberg and Zielke (2007) have pointed out, on the dynamic and emerging processes of the interrelatedness of culture and self. The main methodologies applied for studying the self concept have been self-report questionnaires, interviews and content analysis of various data sources. Whether one uses questionnaires, interviews or focus groups, the tendency in research has been to ask people about their identities. Gillespie (2009) has pointed out that it is rather difficult to surpass the reflexive self-reported identifications and self-conceptions from such data. The question thus turns

to which kind of data and methods of analysis could be more productive in making visible the implicit dynamics, such as cultural processes, of identity?

The suggestion here is to move away from the actual *content* of self-reports and focus on more implicit *cultural and societal structures* that scaffold these self-reports or interviews. Furthermore, this shift of focus from content analysis to structure analysis need not necessarily be reduced to verbal interaction. In fact, since verbal interaction has been one of the main sources of gathering data for dialogical self research (Valsiner & Han, 2008), it would be desirable if more non-verbal material would be considered in identity research.[32] Ruck and Slunecko (2008) have contributed to dialogical self research in this respect with their paper on image studies. In this contribution they follow the reconstructive approach of the documentary method as postulated by Bohnsack and colleagues (Bohnsack, 2001; Bohnsack & Nohl, 2003; as cited in Ruck & Slunecko, 2008) and show how the arts, and more specifically pictorial images, portray a rich source for dialogical interaction between person and environment and how cultural structures can be made visible from interpreting these artefacts. The implication of a dynamic constitution of culture and person calls for further such research projects.

Summary

The aim of this article has been to discuss the notion of culture within dialogical self theory with the example of language as cultural mediation. The respective theory has aspired to set up a theoretical framework for a self that is 'culture-inclusive.' With the notion of ventriloquation, social language and collective voices it was able to emphasise

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[32] This is of course not surprising as Markova and Foppa (1990) have pointed out that dialogical systems are dependent on language. It indeed may seem strange that the whole article discusses language and that then the reader is urged to conduct empirical research in another field. Yet, it was stressed that language was chosen here as one example of cultural mediation. Language may be one of the most important cultural mediational means, but it is by far not the only one and empirical research should thus also consider other cultural tools such as pictures, literature, myths or simple every day habits.

the socio-cultural perspective which highlights cultural processes as manifesting themselves within the person-environment interaction while simultaneously mediating these very interactions.

Accordingly the term culture was described as structural processes that dynamically co-constitute individual actions as well as the human surrounding—the socio-cultural sphere. Viewed as autopoietic system, human beings constitute their media, their symbolic systems, and these systems constitute human beings (Slunecko, 2008). Both are structured by the other in a simultaneous loop of redefining and reformatting each other while at the same time these definitions are constantly forced open only to be again redefined.

The process of persons continuously and dynamically co-constituting each other was further addressed in terms of how people resonate with one another and tune into the general atmosphere of specific socio-cultural spheres. Sloterdijk's (1998, 1999, 2004) notion of spheres served as inspiration for describing how cultural structures are defined within the very core of human sphere. From this perspective the relationships of the terms collective voices, social language and culture within dialogical self theory were analyzed with the aim of highlighting socio-cultural premises within the theoretical framework and to then discuss some important implications on the intra-individual level as well as on a societal level.

Discussing collective voices, social language and culture from a dynamic constitutive perspective served to benefit the dialogical self theory, as it highlights the fact that all produced utterances within a dialogical self are necessarily culturally mediated and not solely individual voices and positions. Such a perspective is essential for future cultural identity research, in which the dialogical self model has often been applied with a reduction of culture to a kind of "geography of the self" (Valsiner & Han, 2008). The

focus shifts from individualistic and static premises to a more dynamic and saturated concept of culture. The discussion on socio-cultural atmospheres served to underline the bi-direcitonal characteristic of cultural tools. From this perspective culture cannot be explicated within dialogical self theory as belonging to the individual. It must be conceptualized as cultural mediation which is self-generating and a constituent of the socio-cultural atmosphere in which dialogical interactions take place. The aim of emphasizing these dynamic processes was to aid in further moving dialogical self theory away from the Cartesian paradigm.

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     Leopold-Franzens-Universität Innsbruck

2003-2004 Master of Science in Social Psychology
     Note: merit (gut)
     London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), UK

1999-2003 Bachelor of Art, Schwerpunkt Psychologie
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Ausbildungen

Seit 2009 Ausbildung zur Klinischen- und Gesundheitspsychologin
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Seit 2008 Psychotherapeutisches Fachspezifikum
     Österreichische Gesellschaft für Analytische Psychologie
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2007 - 2008 Psychotherapeutisches Propädeutikum
     Österreichischer Arbeitskreis für Gruppentherapie und
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Fortbildung

03/2011 „Schizophrenie: Im Brennpunkt – von der Diagnose bis zur Rehabilitation"
     Fortbildungsseminar der Österreichischen Schizophrenie Gesellschaft für
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Anstellungen

Seit 06/2010	Universitätsassistentin der Sigmund Freud PrivatUniversität (SFU), Wien
Seit 11/2009	Betreuerin im teilbetreuten Wohnprojekt der Psychosozialen Zentren (PSZ), Klosterneuburg-Kierling

Praktische Erfahrungen

03/09-06/09	Psychologisches Praktikum am Counseling Center der Holy Cross Anglican School, San Pedro, Belize
10/07-02/09	Fachassistentin der Österreichischen Autistenhilfe (ÖAH), Wien
03/05-06/05	Praktikum im Zentralinstitut für Seelische Gesundheit (ZI) Mannheim, Deutschland
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12/00-12/02	Forschungsassistentin in der Fakultät für Geschichte Clark University, MA, USA
06/98-09/98	Betreuerin im American Day Care Center Amerikanische Botschaft, Moskau

Akademische Aktivitäten und Positionen

Seit 2010	Erarbeitung und Durchführung von Übungen für die Lehrveranstaltung Entwicklungspsychologie I & II an der Sigmund Freud PrivatUniversität (gemeinsam mit Fr. Prof. Dreher)
2009	Projektleiterin und Herausgeberin (gemeinsam mit Mag. Katharina Hametner): „Kulturpsychologie und Qualitative Sozialforschung in Wien": Special Issue im Online Journals *Psychology & Society*. (www.psychologyandsociety.ppsis.cam.ac.uk)
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Vorträge/Kongressbeteiligungen

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Juni 2006   Diskutantin beim Symposium *Communication, emotion and self construction* im Rahmen der "Fourth International Conference on the Dialogical Self," Braga, Portugal

August 2004   *Identity as a dialogue of cultures: Children making sense of who they are*, Author: Amrei C. Joerchel, präsentiert an der "Third International Conference of The Dialogical Self," Warsaw, Poland

Mai 2004   *Identity in multiple cultures: Children growing up in three cultures*, Author: Amrei C. Joerchel, präsentiert an der "Fifth Inter-University Graduate Conference on Social Psychology," Cambridge

Juni 2003   *Infant sexuality as bonding mechanism: Sex and (non) sensibility in psychological theories*, Authoren: Amrei C. Joerchel, Nicholas S. Thompson, präsentiert an der "10th Biennial Conference of the International Society for Theoretical Psychology," Istanbul, Turkey

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