

**CONSTRUCTING ORGANIZATION THROUGH MULTIPLICITY:
A MICROGENETIC ANALYSIS OF SELF-ORGANIZATION IN THE
DIALOGICAL SELF**

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ABSTRACT. The self is in a constant process of becoming that demands the construction of “sameness” and identity throughout the irreversibility of time and changing experience (Valsiner, 2002b). Thus, self-organization is the constant and necessary task of a changing self. Occasionally, this dynamic organization may lead to recursive and inflexible patterns implicated in a perpetuating personal problem. The “Identity Positions Interview” (Gonçalves & Cunha, 2006) was designed to elicit dialogical processes while discussing a personal problem. This allows different dialogues to occur: 1) the actual dialogues from the interaction participant-researcher; 2) the imagined dialogues of the participant and others about the problem (e.g. “What would your mother say about the problem?”); 3) the imagined dialogues between Present and Future possible-selves (e.g. “What would the Future say to you?”). These different phases were inspired in therapeutic techniques that call upon the perspectives of social others or temporal movements as semiotic devices used to generate diversity and novelty in the present. Following a dialogical framework, two case-studies are presented to illustrate the emergence of novelty and difference and its regulation into recursive self-dynamics at a microgenetic-level. This idiographic study has two aims: a) to highlight the dynamism of I-positions within the Dialogical Self, and b) to depict the emergence of novelty, self-innovation and re-organization.

Keywords: dialogical self, development, microgenesis, self-regulation

Dialogical Self Theory (Hermans & Kempen, 1993; Hermans, Kempen & Van Loon, 1992) has brought the important features of self-multiplicity and dialogicality to the foreground of psychological enquiry. However, even in the midst of self-multiplicity and dialogicality, the self is constantly changing and constructing “sameness” and identity throughout the irreversibility of time and experience (Valsiner, 2002b). In this paper, we depart from of the assumption of human existence as a process of endless becoming that extends the issue of development to the entire life-span (as

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ontological development). Furthermore, portraying the self as developing in time and as an ongoing, self-organizing process (Whelton & Greenberg, 2004), we need to explain how the self achieves *order through fluctuation* (Prigogine, 1976 quoted by Caple, 1985, p. 174;) or, put simply, how the ‘self’ self-organizes (Lewis & Granic, 1999). This construction of stability within ongoing change – self-organization – allows for the construction of identity, continuity and self-recognition throughout the passing of time. Therefore, being and becoming are not opposed to one another but are two related functions (Caple, 1985). Thus, self-organization appears as a necessary task, with great adaptive value to the self, since: 1) a system that self-organizes becomes more complex and more able to coordinate interacting processes, 2) self-ordering allows for the regulation of novelty and difference as it emerges, and 3) this dynamic stability maintains a flexibility that allows for new levels of complexity to appear when threshold points are surpassed (Lewis & Granic, 1999).

This brings the question of the balance between emergence, innovation and stability to the core of theoretical and empirical enquiry in the Dialogical Self Theory (see also Hermans, 1999a, 1999b; and Lyra, 1999). The present paper will reflect and elaborate on these issues (stability, self-organization, innovation and change) and attempt to achieve a developmental account of self-organization of multivoicedness as a moment-by-moment process in the Dialogical Self with the illustration of two case-studies.

Searching For Development As It Unfolds In The Dialogical Self

According to Lerner, Jacobs and Wertlied (2003) and to Valsiner (2006), the last decades have been characterized by a renewed interest in the psychological science focused on the analysis of phenomena and interventions from an applied developmental stance. This renewed interest has marked the emergence of what these authors call a Developmental Science and this new approach to development has been influencing the work we intend to present here. This movement attempts to merge different theoretical approaches that conjugate in the same direction towards the study of human processes of development (Valsiner, 2006). The Developmental Science aims to achieve a holistic and explanatory understanding of human-developmental-phenomena-in-context, integrating different levels of contextual, ecological and individual organization, in an irreversible temporal and relational perspective (Lerner, Jacobs & Wertlied, 2003). According to this conceptual understanding, human beings are taken as dynamic organisms in their adaptation to the environment, always in the midst of self-innovation and self-regulation (Valsiner, 2000, 2002a). In this sense, developmental research on selfhood has to answer two interdependent and simultaneous questions like faces of the same coin: 1) how do we change? And 2) how do we remain the same?

These are not new questions in psychological enquiry. The dilemma of “how can I be the same as I was in my past?” has been present in numerous philosophical and

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psychological debates at least since the 17th century (Salgado & Hermans, 2005). Opposing both traditional ideas of an essentialist and Cartesian self and the post-modern relativistic stance upon selfhood, in the last years, Dialogical Self Theory (DST) has been presenting an interesting alternative for the theoretical description of the self and identity, addressing our inner-multiplicity while acknowledging its dialogical, relational and socio-cultural features. The Dialogical Self, theoretically described as a dynamic multiplicity of several I-positions in the landscape of the mind (each position uttering and voicing a particular and subjective view of self-existence and the world), creates the opportunity to account for our potentially diverse self-narratives according to a different positioning in time, space and specific audiences (Hermans, 1996, 2001). This alternative view on the self can also be framed within a dialogical epistemological stance that conceives human existence as an existence of addressing others, establishing intersubjectivity and relationships as the ground for selfhood development (cf. Fogel, Garvey, Hsu & West-Stroming, 2006; Trevarthen & Aitken, 2001). In an attempt to characterise the main assumptions of a dialogical existence, Salgado and Gonçalves (2007) assume the relational primacy for human existence referring to the inseparable communicational and existential unity between I and Other, since every process of subjectivity is always grounded in intersubjectivity. Furthermore, following Bakhtin (“to be is to communicate”, 1984, p. 287), if relationships are constituted in communication practices, then the (inter)subjective process is revealed through “dialogue – a simultaneous unity of differences in the interpenetration of utterances” (Baxter, 2004, p. 4).

Dialogical Self Theory: Where Do We (Empirically) Go From Here?

The main area of research produced within the scope of DST has been interested in portraying the several problems and objects of study as a product of a multiplicity of I-positions assumed as implicated in some conflict, negotiation, tension, and dominance relations (e.g. Hermans & Hermans-Jansen, 2004). However, the majority of studies do not usually establish a developmental description of how these processes are handled within the Dialogical Self. The field of the DST needs also to address the present challenge of explaining how agency and responsibility is achieved in the middle of “an assemblage of essentially unrelated fragments” (Richardson, Rogers & MacCarrol, 1998, p. 513), like the different I-positions that constitute our self-multiplicity. As some critical voices within the DST have alerted (Valsiner, 2004), the crucial question of this approach is not reiteration of the multivoicedness of the self, but attempting to describe how the self achieves its dynamic structure, stability and consequent individual agency within this multiplicity brought to the foreground by the ever-changing flow of lived experience. In sum, we need to describe how, even in the midst of our inner-multiplicity, do we recognise ourselves as the same as we were in the past and as individuals. Other researchers have developed interesting approaches to this question (e.g. Dimaggio, Fiore, Lysaker, Petrilli, Salvatore, Semerari & Nicolo, 2006; Lysaker &

Lysaker, 2004; Neimeyer, 2000) but are concerned mostly with the analysis of (self) narratives. However, most of these analytic methodologies do not focus on a moment-by-moment account of how voices emerge and organize. Comparing to those inspiring works, we attempt to further explore the microgenetic development of voices.

Thus, our main question is: How does the Dialogical Self deal with difference and self-innovation facing a personal problem? This focus on development as revealed in the flow of dialogue, led us to create a specific form of research methodology particularly suitable for studying processes of self-innovation and self-regulation in the organization of subjective experience as they occur moment-by-moment and in self-other dialogues.

The Identity Positions Interview: A Semiotic Tool to Facilitate Self-Innovation

The “Identity Positions Interview” (Gonçalves & Cunha, 2006) is a semi-structured interview created in order to more faithfully capture the moment-by-moment process of self-innovation and self-organization in facing a personal problem. In this procedure, investigator and participant are interlocutors in a dialogical process and become involved in a joint-activity process of co-constructing meaning (Hermans, 1999; Valsiner, 2001). Throughout the interview (see Table 1) the participant is confronted with certain semiotic devices used to facilitate change processes in meaning-making and self-innovation (as-if movements) in the usual perspective of conceiving that specific personal problem.

As we can see in Table 1, the interview begins with the choice and brief description of a participant’s personal problem which will be the topic of reflection and dialogue. Afterwards, researcher and participant collaborate together to arrive at a formulation of the problem in a brief sentence that contains the theme and the emotional dimension associated to it (adopting requesting r-p dialogues to arrive at a clarification of the self-perspective towards the problem). This sentence is then referred to as the Initial Position throughout the rest of the interview (Phase I). In this procedure, both researcher and participant are active participants in the exploration of deeper meaning-making processes about the problem being discussed (adopting eliciting and requesting dialogues). The interviewee is then confronted with a first evaluation procedure (Phase II) that consists in rating the degree of importance and discomfort raised by the personal problem at the present moment, on a scale from 0 to 10, and the degree of uncertainty that was felt in those ratings (through the enactment of requesting dialogues). The intention with the use of different evaluations throughout the procedure is not only quantitative, but also qualitative. As a quantitative assessment, the evaluations work as markers of difference in meaning-making, punctuating several moments in the procedure; and as a qualitative methodological procedure, they work as an artificial opportunity that the interviewer has to further explore possible differences in meaning-making as the procedure develops. In this sense, these ratings are viewed as semiotic

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Table 1

A general presentation of “The Identity Positions Interview”

Phases of the Interview	Types of dialogues occurring in the interview and examples of eliciting questions or requests
I) Establishing an Initial Position towards the problem	<p>Enactment of opening dialogues between the researcher and the participant about the problem (referred to as r-p dialogues): e. g. <i>“We would like for you to talk about a personal problem that concerns you in the present.”</i></p> <p>Enactment of requesting r-p dialogues: e. g. <i>“We would like you to formulate that in a specific personal sentence that has an emotional dimension and that we will refer to as your Initial Position.”</i></p>
II) First evaluation procedure	<p>Enactment of requesting r-p dialogues: e. g. <i>“Please rate the degree of importance that this situation presents to you in the present, on a scale from 0 to 10.”</i>; <i>“Please rate the degree of discomfort that this situation brings to you in the present, on a scale from 0 to 10.”</i>; <i>“Please rate the degree of uncertainty that you felt while elaborating the previous ratings, on a scale from 0 to 10.”</i></p>
III) Social Positioning Phase	<p>Enactment of r-p dialogues and imagined dialogues between self (participant) and social (absent) other (referred to as p-o dialogues): e. g. <i>“What would your mother say to you about the problem?”</i>; e. g. <i>“What would you reply to your mother, from the perspective of your initial position?”</i></p>
IV) Second evaluation procedure	<p>Enactment of requesting r-p dialogues: <i>Identical questions to the First evaluation procedure with emphasis on the evaluation of the present moment</i></p>
V) First Future Projection	<p>Enactment of imagined dialogues between self and future self (referred to as s-f dialogues): e. g. <i>“Imagine that you can dialogue with a positive future, ten years from now... What would the present ask the future?”</i>; <i>“What would the future say to the present?”</i></p>

Table 1 (continued)

VI) Formulating a Final Position towards the problem	Enactment of eliciting r-p dialogues: e. g. “After this reflection, would you change anything in your Initial Position?” Enactment of requesting r-p dialogues, in case the participant chooses to reformulate IP into a new Final Position (FP): e. g. “ <i>We would like you to formulate that as your Final Position in a specific personal sentence with an emotional dimension.</i> ”
VII) Third evaluation procedure	Enactment of requesting r-p dialogues: <i>Identical questions to the First evaluation procedure with emphasis on the evaluation of the present moment</i>
VIII) Second Future Projection	Enactment of requesting r-p dialogues: e. g. “ <i>Please imagine other alternatives in the present to this situation...</i> ” Enactment of s-f dialogues from alternative perspectives in the present: e. g. “ <i>Imagine that you are in this alternative now. What would you ask a positive future, ten years from now?</i> ”; “ <i>What would the future say to you, if you were in this alternative in the present?</i> ”
IX) Fourth evaluation procedure	Enactment of requesting r-p dialogues: <i>Identical questions to the First evaluation procedure with emphasis on the evaluation of the present moment</i>

devices that facilitate elaboration and expand meaning making processes and generalization of thought (this was inspired in the work on rating scales by Wagoner & Valsiner, 2005).

The next part of the interview is what we call the Social Positioning Phase (III): the participant is asked to imagine several dialogues with significant others about the personal problem. These dialogues with these social others are invoked in the form of as-if movements, asking the participant to imagine the reactions and questions of significant others about the problem being discussed. These (absent) social others are, thus, invoked as audiences or as imagined interlocutors in the present interaction between interviewer-participant and in the (inter)subjective communicational space. Hence, this part of the interview entails the actual r-p dialogues occurring but also elicits (preferably) imagined dialogues between self and others about the problem (although some participants adopt reflective dialogues about the interaction self-other).

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In this sense, while performing the social positioning phase of the task, we consider that the participant can assume different authoring positions in the elicited dialogues. For example, the participant can talk about the perspectives of significant social others about the personal problem (never leaving her/his position as an author of what is being said, adopting a reflective dialogue) or act as-if he was assuming the voice and the perspective of a significant other (transferring the authoring position to an Other, adopting an imagined self-other dialogue). In the first case, the participant might say: “My mother would say that I’m not worried” (note the use of self-reflective speech), talking about an Other (the mother) but never abandoning her/his place as an author of that specific utterance. In the second case, the participant might act towards the researcher as-if she/he was the mother, assuming and uttering her voice and saying “You’re not worried about this!” (note the use of direct speech).

This part of the interview, where the emergence of novelty is enacted while generating different possible perspectives to address and refer to the problem, was inspired in actual psychotherapeutic techniques that call upon the different perspectives of social others as a medium to introduce difference and therapeutic change on the dominance of a given maladaptive perspective (like the “experience of experience questions” in narrative therapy – White, 1992). A second evaluation procedure is introduced here (Phase IV).

The next phase is what we call future projection (Phase V) and (preferably) involves the enactment of imagined dialogues between an imagined future self or future moment (where the personal problem has disappeared) and the present moment (referred to as self-future dialogues). Thus, the participant is asked to imagine himself in a moment of his life when he no longer looked at the personal situation as a problem or when he had already accomplished a positive resolution for it (in this sense, through *as-if* movements an imagined self-future dialogue is elicited by the interviewer, although some participants may engage in a reflective self-future dialogue). This phase of the interview was also inspired upon some therapeutic techniques that facilitate a future projection as a motivational tool to induce therapeutic change (like the “miracle” question in Solution Focused Therapy – de Shazer, 1991). After the future projection, the participant is asked to think if s/he would like to change her/his initial formulation of the problem at this point of the interview (Phase VI). A third evaluation procedure then follows (Phase VII).

Afterwards, the participant is confronted with a Second Future Projection (Phase VIII) that this time involves imagined dialogues between a positive future and alternative formulations of the problem in the present – these are more opportunities to introduce self-innovation and change in the meaning construction concerning the personal problem (also with the engagement in imagined self-future dialogues or reflective self-future dialogues). A fourth and final evaluation (Phase IX) ends the

procedure, addressing the ratings in the present moment. As a closing synthesis, the interviewer always elicits a final reflection of the research experience.

Specifying a microgenetic methodology of analysis

We wanted to maintain this study within the scope of a developmental focus on self-innovation and self-organization processes. Thus, this clearly placed our research at the level of *microgenesis* (Diriwächter & Valsiner, 2006, also known as *Aktualgenese*) since our intention was observing how the participants dealt with the moment-by-moment dialogical engagement with the interviewer, creating meaning and semiotic organization throughout the different moments of the interview. This meant the following research goals:

- 1) To describe the pattern of self-organization implicated in the personal problem stated;
- 2) To depict emergence of novelty and self-innovation that might appear throughout the procedure; and,
- 3) To characterize how the Dialogical Self regulates and re-organizes its difference and innovation.

Hence, we developed a specific methodology of analysis as link between our theoretical lenses and research goals. The temporal sequencing of observations needs to take into account the intra-psychological processes of self-organization that occur in a dialogical encounter with an Other and this placed us within the scope of microgenetic methods (Lawrence & Valsiner, 2003). Microgenetic methods allow us to systematically observe the phenomena in detail throughout its developmental movement over time, with the goal of inferring the processes that underlie quantitative and qualitative aspects of development and change (Siegler & Crowley, 1991).

First stage of the analytic process: Identifying the utterance as unit for (further) analysis

The first stage of the microgenetic methodology we developed, involves the systematic observation of the video-taped interviews and its transcription, later divided into units of analysis. We selected the utterance as our unit of analysis because we view it as theoretically consistent with the Bakhtinian notion of *positioning* and the traditional notion of I-position in the DST. An I-position, at a microgenetic level, is conceptualized in this investigation as an “event of the self” (Holquist, 1990) linked to a “present-moment of lived experience” (Stern, 2004). It refers to a specific ego-centeredness of experience in the Here-and-Now-I-System (Valsiner, 2000) and to a particular temporal and spatial framing of subjective experience from which something is communicated and uttered to an Other. Given this unrepeatable positioning of the self in the flow of experience, selfhood processes can be conceived as a product of a

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polyphony of voices of different I-positions contrasting with one another and regulating one another in time.

According to the purposes of this research, and for the microgenetic analysis we have only selected some of the participant's utterances that were considered pertinent to achieve our research goals, namely:

1. Utterances related to the personal problem being discussed throughout the interview;
2. Utterances related to a self-referencing about the problem;
3. Utterances related to an other-referencing about the problem;
4. Utterances made understandable to the researcher given what was said before, after, or during the interview (This can happen when the researcher questions something trying to seek clarification of the perceived perspective and the participant agrees – e.g. Researcher: “*So, it would be something like: Professionally, I’m turning from an adolescent into an adult?*” Participant Antonio, case-study 1: “*Yes*” – utterance 7)
5. Other utterances, related to mere clarifications regarding questions of the interview or unrelated to the former criteria, were excluded from the following stages of the analysis.

Second stage of the analytic process: Microgenetic analysis of identified utterances

Afterwards, each utterance was analysed according to five dialogical parameters, inspired in previous works of dialogical thinkers such as Linell (in preparation) and Wortham (2001) to characterize that specific communicational act lived in that particular interaction, namely: 1) the communicational agent (*Who* is uttering); 2) the addressee that is being spoken to (*Whom* is being addressed in that communicational event; such as, present, absent or imaginary interlocutors or audiences); 3) the specific images of the self that are being communicated as the content of speech (*What* is said); 4) the form of communication, referring to the manner used to present specific images of the self towards the Other (*How* it is being said); and 5) the intentionality of the participant's communication (*Why* it is said), considered in terms of bringing to the foreground an image of identification or of contrast with the participant's presentation towards the interviewer. In the intentionality of communication we try to reflect upon the use of the content of speech: something can be uttered to clarify identification or a contrast to the personal position (as so happens through the use of irony). Throughout the development of this methodology, we specified a more explicit categorization of these dialogical parameters, arriving at the analytic categories presented in Table 2.

Table 2. A schematic presentation of the analytic categories for the microgenetic analysis

Parameters	Analytic categories
Who?	I as I I as an Other (specifying this Other)
Whom?	Myself The interviewer Other audiences/interlocutors evoked
What?	Communicated images of the self (through emotional content, self-descriptions)
How?	Self-description act Other-description act Future projection act
Why?	Identification process Unidentification process

Thus, the microgenetic analysis of each utterance corresponds to classifying each selected unit according to the following questions: Who? Whom? What? How? Why? Following a bakhtinian approach to communication, these parameters are considered relevant, since they enable us to specify discourse as an intentional and situated dialogical activity between interlocutors and audiences, relating through signs and socio-cultural practices.

Third stage of the analytic process: Identification of self-states and focus on repetition

This microgenetic analysis under these dialogical parameters allows detecting repeated positionings of the self towards others (the interviewer and the absent or imaginary interlocutors or audiences evoked during the interview), in an other-referencing and a self-referencing dialogical movement. We assume these positionings as self-states that are presented towards the actual interlocutor in that specific moment of experience and communicational event, in the course of dialogue and interaction (this is inspired both in the notion of presentation in the “*storytelling-event*” by Stanton Wortham, 2001, and in the notion of “*self states*”, as clinically significant self-

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organizing patterns, by Mikael Leiman, 2004). These self-states emerge from the microgenetic analysis into a *mesogenetic* (higher order) level of analysis and tend to organize the multiplicity of experiencing I-positions, operating under the influence of hierarchical signs that function as semiotic organizers of experience (Valsiner, 2001, 2002a, 2002b) – creating repetition and recurrence in the self, something that can be paralleled to the concept of *attractor* (in Dynamic Systems Theory; Fogel, Garvey, Hsu & West-Stroming, 2006). According to our conceptualization, the repetition of similar self-states constitutes the pattern of self-organization involved in that specific personal problem¹. This pattern usually starts appearing in the initial definition of the problem being discussed since this evokes the most familiar self-states associated with the problematic experiences and keeps being presented by the participant throughout the interview.

Fourth stage of the analytic process: Focus on process, difference and novelty

A new dialogical encounter with an Other and the confrontation with the several tasks of the interview may facilitate self-innovation in the usual perspectives taken towards the problem. We consider this stage of the analysis important to us since it focuses on difference and novelty, the active ingredients of change, the way we see it (see also Fogel et. al., 2006). If these novel I-positions become more differentiated and more elaborated, in time, they might lead to new semiotic processes and new patterns of self-organization. We would not expect this kind of differentiation in the course of a one time interview like this; however, these change processes can be much more common in successful psychotherapy cases.

Thus, in the final stage of the analysis we depart from the repetitive self-states towards the problem and start focusing on difference and novelty appearing throughout the interview, attempting to arrive at a developmental description of how these new positionings are handled within the Dialogical Self. This implies the systematic procedure of 1) detecting different self-states; 2) categorizing the dynamic processes involved in the emergence and regulation of difference and novelty; and, 3) modelling different developmental pathways to each of the participants. Then, we try to depict if difference triggers either occasional re-formulations of established patterns (as an accommodation of novelty through re-organization of the self) or forms of self-regulation in the Dialogical Self (resulting in the construction of “sameness” and stability through time).

We rely on the theoretical description of several forms of dialogical relations within the self, as described by Valsiner (2002a), to categorize how the Dialogical Self

¹ The criterion of repetition of elements for the inference of relatively stable patterns has been widely used in studies under the self-organization paradigm (e.g. Barton, 1994).

may actively obstruct its transformation and change in a moment-by-moment basis (impeding the synthesis and differentiation of novel I-positions), either by increasing multivoicedness or decreasing it through monologization of voices.

Two Illustrative Trajectories of Self-Innovation and Self-Regulation in The Dialogical Self

Case Study 1 - Antonio: “I am at the place where everybody arrives someday”

The participant² Antonio (a fictional name) is a 24 year old male student, currently graduating from university with a degree in Sports and Physical Education. His interview lasted forty minutes. He chooses to talk about the transition to his professional life, stating that “*The beginning of my professional life is something that makes me feel anxious*” (Initial Position – utterance 8). We have to clarify that, in the Portuguese language, the word anxious can refer to different or even opposing ideas: it can be associated with the negative experience of anxiety (as worry and apprehension) and/or refer to the positive experience of yearning and desiring something yet to come. In the beginning of the interview, this anxiety is simultaneously associated to ambiguous meanings, like the sadness of leaving behind an enjoyed, comfortable and successful academic life (“*But it is making me feel a bit sad because I’m leaving a kind of life that always felt good*” – utterance 12), the enthusiasm of embracing the anticipated and imagined professional challenges to come and some apprehension towards what the unknown future might bring. Antonio addresses this ambiguity in his dialogue: “*I feel...// It is that mix between being anxious and missing something...// But the anxiety (as yearning) is bigger...*” (utterances 20 – 22). In this initial part of the interview, Antonio and interviewer agree with the choice of this personal problem as the focus of discussion.

While performing the first rating procedure, Antonio presents himself as very focused on this transition; almost attributing most of his attention to it (he rates this situation in terms of importance with a 9, on a scale from 0 to 10). He also presents himself as very comfortable while anticipating these changes in his life, rating minimal degree of discomfort (a 2 from a maximum of 10) caused by this problem. He also presents himself as very certain in his position (rating the degree of uncertainty with 1), only reserving some uncertainties to what the future might bring.

² All the participants volunteered freely to this research project announced in the university campus. None of them was receiving any kind of professional mental health support or medication nor considered it as necessary.

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Antonio's Social Positioning Phase of the Interview: Looking at myself through the eyes of the Other

When asked to imagine the perspectives of social others about the Initial Position, the participant chooses to engage in dialogue between him and his father, and several of his friends: B. (an older friend), L. (a male friend from his high-school years) and V. (a female friend from his high-school years).

While imagining the reaction and the dialogue with his father, Antonio presents himself as satisfied for arriving at this stage in his life and as a source of satisfaction for this member of the family (which he considers an important role model). He stresses that this achievement would be the cause of great approval from his father, stating the relationship between these imagined voices in dialogue (his father and him assuming the point of view of his Initial Position) as a supportive relationship.

While imagining the reaction and dialogue with his friend B., Antonio presents himself also as a source of enjoyment for B., and imagines that this friend would encourage him if they engaged in dialogue about this subject. He also presents himself as privileged towards this friend, since he anticipates a more successful transition and career in the professional world than B. had – a professional that did not have the opportunity to graduate from college.

He also presents a very positive imagined perspective about the reaction and dialogue with his friend L., a former colleague from high-school that graduated the year before and is already working. He refers that L. also went through the same transition a few months ago, and would understand what he is feeling in the present. He assumes the voice of this friend, saying “*Welcome! // I've recently arrived but I'm just getting used to this new world. // You'll see that this is a different thing, a different thing from what I recently had.*” (utterances 148 – 150) We can see that Antonio indirectly and very briefly mentions, in the imagined dialogue with this friend, that this transition to the professional world also carries some negative things, like the loss of the former academic life that is going to end. However, he does not further elaborate this loss, immediately moving his dialogue to a more positive view about this change, stating that his friend would have a supportive reaction towards him and would be very pleased by the fact that they will both be professionals and will carry their friendship into this new stage of life.

Referring to his female friend V., Antonio states that he imagines that her reaction, although from a feminine perspective, would be very similar to the reaction of his friend L. He imagines that V., also presently graduating, would be proud of him and that she would support him in this transition. He assumes the voice of V., stating “*We will both get through this, because I'm also going through this now, and we'll see...*” (utterance 200). The imagined voice of V. also indirectly addresses some possible problems in the future. However, following this, when Antonio was asked how he

would reply to this reaction of V., he does not acknowledge any anticipated problems or negative experiences, referring that “*It is obviously also gratifying for me to see my friends arriving at this place*” (utterance 205). We will discuss this systematic avoidance on elaborating the negative aspects of this transition further ahead.

In the second evaluation procedure, Antonio presently assumes this situation as the most important thing in his life (rating with 10 the degree of importance), still presenting himself as very focused on this transition. While referring to the degree of discomfort associated to this situation, Antonio presents himself as very comfortable with this (attributing a degree of 1, on a scale from 0 to 10) and very confident in his position (attributing a 0 as an inexistent degree of uncertainty).

Antonio’s Future Projections in the Interview

When asked to imagine himself travelling ahead to a point in the future where he successfully solved all of his concerns related to his transition into the professional world and adulthood, Antonio leads us to a 10 year future projection, where he pictures himself as married and a father. He reflects that the questions he wants to have answered by his Future-Self are, after all, if his present enthusiasm has lead him to find professional and emotional stability or, in a word, happiness. Being positive about his Future-Self, Antonio imagines a confirmation of his positive expectations. In sum, the good times he will go through, along with some less fortunate periods which would only lead to better appreciating his positive evolution, would make him feel very proud of his achievement throughout these ten years. In this sense, Antonio presents himself as an optimist towards the future, as a happy and satisfied professional achiever, thus confirming his previous expectations throughout the interview.

By this time, Antonio was asked to think if he wanted to change anything in his Initial Position about the problem, and he declines this suggestion made by the interviewer, stating that he maintains the same concerns about his professional future, with the same emotional dimension associated to it, presenting himself as anxious towards this transition to professional adulthood (in this stage of the interview, the meaning of anxious becomes more restrict, referring to yearning this transition).

From the third evaluation procedure until the end of the interview, we witness a stabilization of the ratings and an end to the deepening of the meaning-making activity brought by the ratings. Thus, in the third evaluation procedure Antonio presents himself again as very focused on this situation, attributing the maximum degree of importance to it (a 10) with inexistent feelings of discomfort (a 0) or uncertainty (also a 0).

When asked to think about alternative perspectives towards the problem of his transition to adulthood, Antonio presents two contrasting and opposing options of the present. The first alternative he presents is referred to as “an accommodation” to student life. This image relates to being one of those students that postpone the responsibility of

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finishing their studies on time, due to over-enjoying their academic lives and all the parties and freedom associated to this period. He describes this alternative with a strong negative view stating that, if he was in this position in the present, he would not be confronting his responsibilities and would be living a way of life that was not adequate to his age and enjoying it through means that were not earned through his honest work and autonomy. The second alternative view of the present that he presents, also with a negative connotation, is what Antonio refers to as “a precarious entrance into the professional world” without the academic qualifications and specific preparation that he now has and that he considers a needed requirement for a successful career in his occupational field.

When asked to imagine a dialogue between these alternatives in the present and a positive and successful point in his future, ten years from now, Antonio questions if in the meantime he would have realized that he needed to graduate to develop a successful career. He states that, since what is intended in the interview is to imagine a positive future, he imagines that, in ten years time, he would have corrected these vocational “mistakes” and found his right path through graduation. Nevertheless, he spontaneously engages in what he considers a more “realistic” future projection, describing a negative evolution in ten years from now if he would occupy any of those rejected alternatives. In this sense, by spontaneously contrasting his present to these undesired alternatives and their different evolutions, he finishes the interview maintaining his presentation of someone who is certain and positive about his future professional success and who is satisfied and proud of the present transition taking place in his life.

In the last evaluation procedure until the end of the interview Antonio, as in the third rating, presents himself as very focused on this situation, attributing the maximum degree of importance to it (a 10) with inexistent feelings of discomfort (a 0) or uncertainty (also a 0).

A microgenetic look at some key moments of self-organization in Antonio's case

Antonio generally utters from a self-reflective experiential position as a communicational agent, talking about his present life and the transitions and transformations that are occurring in it and his reactions to it. He rarely talks as if he was an Other (as a significant or as a future other), seldom using direct speech even when the interview explicitly invites the participant to do so. In this sense, while not speaking as if he was an Other, he does not give an independent voice to these evoked interlocutors, and he does not abandon an omniscient self-reflective position.

In the beginning of the interview we see him uttering some ambiguity about these transitions in this life, since they leave him facing different emotions: sad for abandoning the former enjoyed lifestyle, satisfied and proud for achieving a major goal in his life (his graduation), anxious (both as apprehensive and as yearning) to his professional future, and somewhat uncertain about his future opportunities. In spite of

our expectations that the developments of the interview would lead to the introduction and the emergence of different perspectives towards the problem and the facilitation of self-innovation, the opposite pattern occurs. The social positioning part introduces others as reinforcing specific perspectives towards the problem, always positive: *I as anxious, as yearning my professional future* and *I as proud and confident about this transition...* The Future Projection Phase again introduces a very positive perspective of his view of the present and the alternative possibilities that are imagined, they do not lead to more novelty but to the reinforcement of his optimism about the present. In this sense, these Others (psychologically present as audiences or interlocutors) that are invoked do not validate certain perspectives that he expressed in the beginning about the problem. The focus on the problem becomes less frequent and less elaborated throughout the entire interview. Instead of introducing self-innovation, these Others are used as tools to reinforce a specific positive point of view, since they usually express agreement with the dominant perspective about the problem and seldom lead to the emergence of difference.

We thus witness a monologization of voices throughout the interview. This might resemble what Bakhtin referred to as the action of a monological narrator as opposed to a narrator that allows others to speak through him manifesting divergent voices (as in the polyphonic novel). This case-study presents an illustration of how the Dialogical Self can sometimes be so “monological” and distant from the polyphonic metaphor in the expression of self-narratives.

We are even faced with the question of who is really speaking throughout the interview. As this description of the interview tries to picture, after an initial and somewhat ambiguous phase, Antonio consistently presents himself (or others toward him) as very proud and pleased with this changing point in his life, satisfied with his academic achievements and very confident and sure about his professional adaptation and development. We hypothesize that this perspective is strongly related to a socially expected discourse that constrains Antonio’s presentations towards a psychologist as the interlocutor in this interaction (possibly perceived as an evaluator of his psychological adaptation). This discourse of glorifying adulthood, autonomy and individual agency leads to a general depreciation of negative feelings and an unacknowledged degree of loss about the past and uncertainty about the unknown future possibly also involved in this transition to a new stage of life. In this sense, we sometimes have the impression that the agent is uttering a social dominant positive discourse (as an *authoritative discourse*; Bakhtin, 1981, p. 342) that may not acknowledge or express the rich and ambiguous subjective felt experience.

Nevertheless, we find some interesting moments of emergence of difference in Antonio’s positive discourse and general trajectory throughout the interview, that we would like to discuss further. Our interest in them is related to the fact that these moments of emergence put into evidence some interesting specific forms of self-

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regulation of difference and multiplicity into sameness and stability of the presentation of the self. As we will try to clarify, these are usually associated to Antonio's brief, implicit or indirect verbalization of some opposing or divergent voices about his transition to the professional world that do not fit well with his more dominant positive view and socially expected discourse about these changes in his life.

As we noticed earlier, in the beginning of the interview while clarifying the personal problem that he wanted to discuss in this interaction, Antonio acknowledged that he would miss his academic life that is now ending and this sometimes created sadness. However, he minimized the importance of these negative feelings, since his desire to proceed was much more intense. While stating this, Antonio presents two different intersubjective positionings that seldom appear after: *I as sad for abandoning my academic life* versus *I as missing my academic life*. These self-states are immediately silenced in the dialogue, since he stops elaborating on them and finishes the clarification of these perspectives on the personal problem abruptly, stating: "*And that is it!*" (utterance 13). Afterwards, the interviewer tries to elicit further meaning construction around this problem, trying to access the emotional dimension evoked by the situation. Antonio then replies: "*I feel...// It is that mix between being anxious and missing something...// But the anxiety (as yearning) is bigger...*" (Utterances 20 – 22). As we can see, he presents himself as *I as missing my academic life* versus *I as anxious (as yearning) about my professional life*, with the latest self-state (a more positive voice) dominating and constraining the expression of the former (a more negative voice). According to the several forms of self-regulation of dialogicality within the self presented by Valsiner (2002a), this illustrates a relationship of *monologization* between voices, as a form of expropriating a voice from expressing and communicating difference within the self (this monologization has also been referred by Gonçalves, Matos & Santos, in press, as a kind of *hidden dialogism* within the self).

Another interesting example of monologization and silencing of another voice occurs several times during the interview. In the first evaluation, while reflecting about the degree of uncertainty about the previous evaluations of importance and discomfort associated to the problem of transition to an adult professional life, Antonio selects the meaning of *uncertainty* and applies it to his future professional life, stating that "*The degree of uncertainty is also one (meaning almost inexistent), because I only have some uncertainties related to what the future might bring, nothing else. // Anyway, the will to go forward is much bigger than the uncertainties...*" (utterances 57 and 58). Again, we see the emergence of two opposing presentations towards the interlocutor or self-states about the problem: *I as uncertain about my professional future* (a more negative voice) versus *I as confident about my professional life* (a more positive voice), with the later dominating the former. Antonio's presentation of *I as uncertain about my professional future* appears again during the second evaluation while rating the degree of discomfort that is associated to the situation of transition to a professional life. He states that "*This*

doesn't bring me any kind of discomfort, it is just the uncertainty of having all this willingness to enter the professional world and the possibility of not having opportunities... // Although I know I have some, so the degree of discomfort is minimal. // It is 0 or 1." (utterances 222 – 224). Again, Antonio briefly acknowledges the possibility of negative experiences in the future, but immediately shifts to another positive voice, explicitly minimizing the expression of the negative voice about his future.

As we can see, this personal problem implies a hidden dialogism between several different voices within the self, that create a self-organizing pattern through the process of monologization as the dominating positive voice regulates the expression of the other negative ones, expropriating them through silence in the Dialogical Self (see the illustration in Figure 1).

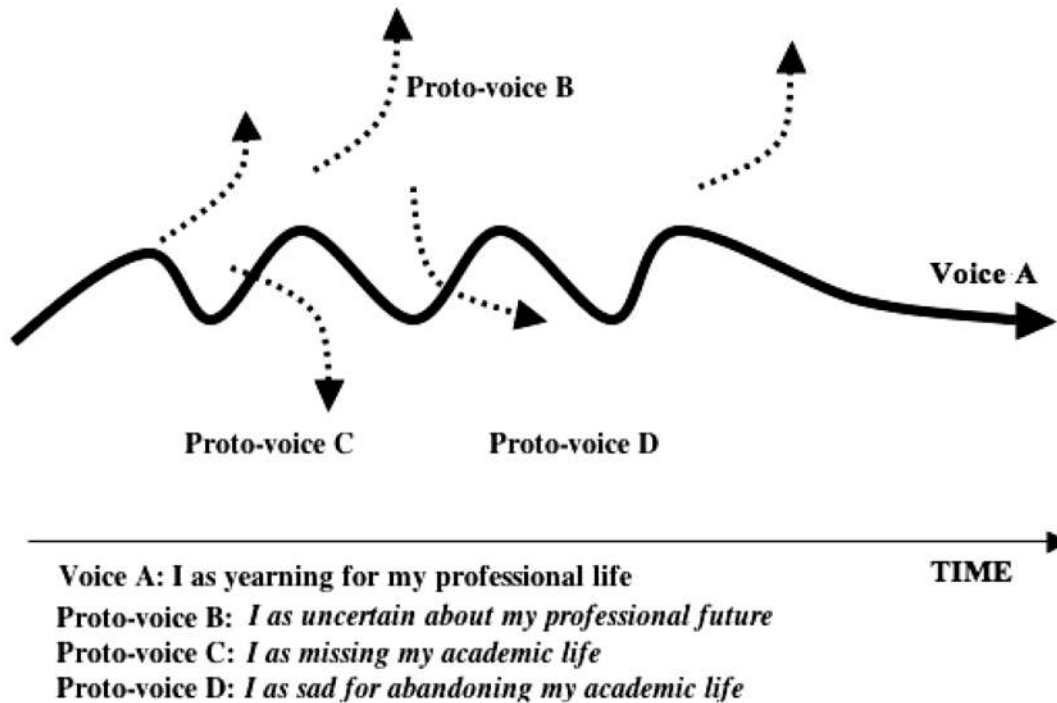


Figure 1. A tentative illustration of the general trajectory of Antonio's interview, representing the pattern of the multiplicity of voices (as self-presentations towards the interlocutor) about the personal problem occurring across time.

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In Figure 1, the bold line attempts to represent the dominating voice (Voice A: I as yearning my professional life) that becomes more elaborate and recurrent throughout the interview, as a repeated presentation of the self through time. This voice appears associated to a recurring pattern of self-presentation, pre-organizing and constraining the expression of other voices (proto-voices). The relation of dominance of this voice towards other proto-voices leads to the construction of “sameness” across time. Other voices (proto-voices B, C and D) expressing multiplicity and divergent perspectives about the personal problem and related to different self-presentations towards the interlocutor (represented in a discontinuous line and with a blocked arrow), do not become so frequent or elaborate and are silenced throughout the interview whenever they start to appear. We label them as proto-voices, precisely by the lack of differentiation and expression. In this sense, in the midst of microgenetic multiplicity across time, the Dialogical Self creates its stability and unity.

Case Study 2 - Maria: “Nobody accepts the imminence of dying”

The participant Maria (a fictional name) is a 24 year old woman, with a degree in Psychology, who chooses to talk about how the illness of her father is presently affecting her life, stating that “*I feel powerless and alarmed about my father’s health condition*” (Initial Position – utterance 16). Her interview lasted one hour and twenty minutes. Her father had a series of previous sudden strokes that affected his general motor ability and autonomy without impairing his cognitive skills. Even though his health has been stable in the last two years (after the latest episode), Maria describes this situation as a daily concern, something she cannot escape in her present life.

In the first evaluation procedure, she rates this situation as the most important thing in her life (attributing a 10 to it) since she is constantly focused on a new possible stroke and trying to induce behavioural changes in her father to prevent it. She addresses her reaction referring that “*It is a constant need to control his life so that I can control my life*” (utterance 25). She attributes a high level of discomfort associated to this situation (rating it with an 8), although admitting a reduction of distress as time distances the latest crisis. She indicates a minimal degree of uncertainty towards her evaluations of discomfort and importance (although attributing a rate of 3 or 4 on a scale from 0 and 10).

Maria’s Social Positioning Phase of the Interview: Looking at myself through the eyes of the Other

When asked to imagine the perspectives of social others about the Initial Position, Maria chooses to engage in dialogue with five people: her father, her mother, the “red-haired girl from the house on the Prairie” (referring to the character Laura Ingalls from the TV series “The Little House on the Prairie” – a strongly admired character in her childhood), her first boyfriend (from her adolescent years) and her first love (of her childhood).

While imagining the reaction of her father to her powerlessness and alarm about his health condition (her Initial Position), she assumes his voice (using direct speech) trying to calm her down and stating that there is no reason for worries or distress. In this sense, she presents herself as being excessively worried from the point of view of her father. However, in her reply to her father, perceiving that her reaction is not being taken seriously by him, Maria presents herself as even more alarmed and powerless. She reflects further on this imagined interaction saying that, after all, she cannot command his life by trying to decrease the activities of a dynamic person like him.

While imagining the reaction of the “red-haired girl from the house on the prairie”, Maria says that this character would not feel so powerless like she feels in this situation, because due to the fact that she lives in a world of fantasy, she would find a way to solve the problem. This way, Maria presents herself as dominated by powerlessness in this situation, contrasting with a “red-haired girl” determined to find some kind of resolution. In her reaction to this, Maria states that “*It is a situation... with no possible solution, in spite of our determination and tranquillity.!*” (utterance 74).

When imagining the reaction of her first boyfriend, Maria presents herself as being supported by him while he recognizes legitimate reasons for her powerlessness and alarm towards her father’s health condition. However, the perception of complete attunement and understanding arrives solely from her mother’s imagined reaction, as Maria explains that only both of them as being involved and implicated in the problem, can share the same feelings. She further elaborates, saying that this support is related not only to the confrontation with the illness of their loved one but also in the anticipation of future change in their lives, in the imminence of his death or severe impairment. Referring to this, Maria presents herself as someone who is forced against her will in her confrontation with change and refuses to adjust or prepare for the possibility of this negative event in her future.

In the last imagined dialogue with her first love as a child, Maria assumes his voice (using direct speech) that says to her “*Calm down, because it is a stupid thing trying to predict something that might not happen in the near future... (...) And you cannot lead your life so guided with that imminence, thinking it’s today, tomorrow or the day after...*” (utterances 108 and 110). And thus, in this moment of the interview, she draws a distinction from the kind of support she perceives from her mother and from her friends. In her response to this reaction, she expresses understanding of their good intentions but also a clear divergence with these interlocutors, stating that “*Everything they say, I already now... // But I can’t do it, neither they...*” (utterances 114-115) // Following this, and explicitly addressing these others, she says “*Everything you say... is impossible to achieve because nobody accepts the imminence of dying or illness*”. (utterance 118)

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In the second evaluation procedure, Maria maintains this situation as the most important thing in her present life (rating it with a 10); on the other hand, she attributes little difference in terms of the degree of discomfort (rating it with a 7 instead of an 8). When the interviewer tried to elicit further meaning-making about this, the participant justified this difference with a certain relief she was feeling as she kept on talking about the situation. In terms of the degree of uncertainty, Maria presents herself as increasingly more sure about her position (attributing a 1 to the degree of uncertainty).

Maria's Future Projections in the Interview

When asked to imagine that she could travel ahead to a point in the future where the Initial Position evolved in a positive way, Maria leads us to two future moments projected ten years into the future. In the first projection, that Maria refers to as “the more positive future”, she imagines herself as a mother, with a son who has a grandfather, and as a fulfilled professional woman. The second future projection, referred by Maria as “the less positive future”, is imagined as a moment when she is a mother that had dealt positively with her father’s death. Following this, interviewer and participant agreed on doing the future projection task twice, each one with different temporal “destinations”.

Maria starts addressing “the more positive future”, asking if she would be less powerless and alarmed by her father’s health condition; in turn, this future replies that she would have lost her powerlessness, as a consequence of no longer needing to control her father’s life. Afterwards, addressing “the less positive future”, she says she would like to know what would be her reaction following her father’s death or the kind of person that she would become after facing that experience. She does not actually reply to this from the future; however, she admits, from the future, that these feelings of powerlessness and alarm are useless since they cannot change the future or prevent the loss of her father. Although she hopes that this future, including this sad experience, would have helped her develop a more peaceful way of accepting the helplessness that comes with our human lives. She concludes her reflection stating: “*So, there's nothing we can do, and there is no need for constantly trying to control...* (utterance 165)”

By this time, Maria was asked to think if she wanted to change anything in her Initial Position about the problem (in a request for a formulation of her Final Position). The participant starts elaborating her new perspective, explaining that she has been trying to be less controlling and has been somewhat successful in her attempt to diminish her alarm and powerlessness arisen by her father’s health condition in her present life. She additionally clarifies this, presenting herself as someone who tries to be less controlling and less afraid of the future, saying that, as time goes by, “*... there has been a growing conscience that control does not lead to anything, and that powerlessness is part of our human condition. //* (utterance 175)”. As a corollary of this reflection, Maria reformulates her perspective towards the problem, saying that “*I feel*

more relaxed, or at least I try... // and I've been more relaxed and less obsessive about the future. //" (Final Position – utterances 179-180)

In the third evaluation procedure, Maria again assumes this situation as the most important thing in her life (rating it with a 10) and with a high degree of discomfort caused by it (a 9 in a scale from 0 to 10). Explaining the meaning of this rating, she states "*The discomfort caused by this... maybe a 9 since on one hand I am aware that I need to be less obsessive and more relaxed... // But, on the other hand, there is the feeling that it is impossible to achieve.//*" (utterances 187-188). The degree of uncertainty in this evaluation procedure kept being minimal (rated with a 0).

When asked to think about alternative perspectives towards the problem, Maria presents several alternative reactions that she could have in the present towards her father's health condition. The following alternatives are announced: "*being more relaxed, and less worried about the situation.//*" (Alternative Position 1 – utterance 193); "*I'm not afraid of change.//*" (Alternative Position 2 – utterance 196); and, "*I've become a less obsessive person or excessively worried about everything...//*" (Alternative Position 3 – utterance 199).

When asked to imagine a dialogue between these alternatives in the present and a positive moment in the future (the second future projection task of the interview), Maria asks the future if she has actually lost her fear of change (consequent to her father's death). Addressing herself in the present from her Future-Self, Maria starts linking the alternatives and explains a developmental path in these ten years: in order to become less afraid of change (Alternative Position 2), she would have become less obsessive and worried about everything (Alternative Position 3) and then more relaxed about her father's health condition (Alternative Position 1), arriving finally at a stage where she is not afraid of change or, in other words, she would have been adjusted to it. However, she continues her dialogue with the future and departing from the less obsessive and worried attitude in the present (Alternative Position 3), she asks the future whether this will be possible. The imagined response from her Future-Self leads her again to a more conservative position, as she says: "*I think the Future is going to say no, that's it... // (...) I think the future will say that life, with all that it brings, will make me a more relaxed and unworried person.//*" (utterances 208 and 210)". Thus, she is implying that only the confrontation with her father's death will conclude the process that will lead her to a more stable change.

In the final evaluation procedure, the participant maintains again that this problem is the most important thing in her life (rating: 10), but associates it with a more reduced level of discomfort (a 6 in a maximum of 10) and a minimal degree of uncertainty in her position (a 0). When asked to elaborate about the interview experience, Maria adds that talking about this situation in her present life helps her

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dealing with it in a more positive way, especially after anticipating positive future projections.

A microgenetic look at some key moments of self-organization in Maria's case

Maria starts the interview expressing that her position towards the problem, her father's health condition, elicits strong feelings of powerlessness and alarm in her daily life. The future possibility of another stroke episode or her father's death leaves Maria confronted with a negative experience that she does not want to accept and that she tries to prevent by controlling her father's behavioural changes. In this sense, the problem appears as a dynamic relationship between two self-states: *I as trying to control my father's illness* versus *I as powerless and alarmed by the situation*. The relationship between these two self-states is maintained through a mutual in-feeding balance between voices (Valsiner, 2002a) that creates a dynamics of monologization within the Dialogical Self, since these are the only expressed and accepted voices (and actions) towards the problem and create a dominating coalition of power (Hermans & Hermans-Jansen, 2004) in the relation with the other voices, that are rejected and silenced.

Looking at the Social Positioning Phase, we may say that, the initial formulation of the problem is maintained through the suppression and rejection of divergent alternatives that become illustrated during that moment of the interview, as we witness the expression of contrasting perspectives expressed by the social others. In this sense, we witness a kind of clarification of the hidden dialogism involved in the Initial Position and also an exploration of its negative field (or a counter-position in the A versus Non-A relation; Josephs, Valsiner, & Surgan, 1999), since the majority of these social others are expressed as independent authorial voices (using direct speech) uttering and elaborating this divergence and difference. Moreover, they are addressed as psychologically present interlocutors in the dialogue (since the participant uses direct speech in her replies) even if with an explicit rejection of their points of view: "*Everything you say... is impossible to achieve because nobody accepts the imminence of dying or illness.* (utterance 118)".

Thus, we consider that in these dialogues there are signs of dominance of the initial perspective upon those opposite voices expressed by others specifically appealing to a non-controlling attitude towards the future. Even though these voices are rejected by Maria, while assuming these voices speaking through her mouth, she is facilitating the emergence of novelty while, at the same time, exploring a different understanding of how her powerlessness is being fed by her controlling attitude. More specifically, she expresses the recognition of the mutual in-feeding between *I as trying to control my father's illness* and *I as powerless and alarmed towards the situation*.

In the future projection tasks, we witness a temporary process of dominance reversal (Hermans & Kempen, 1993) since Maria assumes that a positive future is associated with a less controlling attitude and that an adjustment to change implies an

acceptance of the inevitability of loss. Therefore, she is addressing herself from the opposite perspective, positioned in the counter-position: if the initial position is A, this counter-position is Non-A. She decides to reformulate her perspective (in a Final Position) integrating some elements of this counter-position. Namely, by saying that “*I feel more relaxed, or at least I try... // And I’ve been more relaxed and less obsessive about the future. //*” (Final Position – utterances 179-180), Maria integrates this less controlling attitude into her new perspective towards the problem, confronting her fear of the future and her powerlessness in her Final Position. Moreover, she seems to dwell through different alternative positions in a somewhat fragmented way for a small period of the Second Future Projection task until she stabilizes again in a return to the Final Position. However, this does not mean that change has occurred, at least in the sense of a stable and lasting dominance reversal of her beginning perspective. Maria herself addresses this issue, positioning herself as someone who will change her attitude towards the inevitable powerlessness of human life only after confronting her father’s death in the future – something that she is not ready to assume yet. Thus, she retracts herself in her changing perspective, returning to a more conservative (and somewhat familiar) stance.

We present a tentative illustration of Maria’s trajectory in the interview in Figure 2 (see next page).

In Figure 2, with the continuous black and grey lines (voice A and B), we intend to represent the dominating perspective towards the problem presented by Maria in the beginning of the interview. These mutually in-feeding voices expressing an initial balance between *I as trying to control my father’s health* versus *I as powerless and alarmed by the situation*, reject other perspectives that start arising through social others (note the dotted line expressing proto-voice C that is not further elaborated or the emergence of proto-voice D). However, with the future projection tasks and the development of the interview, some voices become more elaborate and integrated into an emergent new final position towards the problem, creating a new (yet unstable) synthesis that breaks with the initial dominating voices (represented as the transformation of proto-voice D into a more highly structured voice E). In this sense, in Maria’s case, we notice some re-organization of the Dialogical Self.

Some contrasting remarks

In Antonio’s case, we view the effort of one I-position to achieve the monologization of contrasting voices. As a consequence of this effort, stability within the Dialogical Self is attained and is reinforced throughout the interview. On the other hand, in Maria’s case, we witness an unstable balance between two contrasting I-positions that create unity through a coalition of power (Hermans & Hermans-Jansen, 2004), rejecting other voices. At some moments of the interview, Maria seems to dwell

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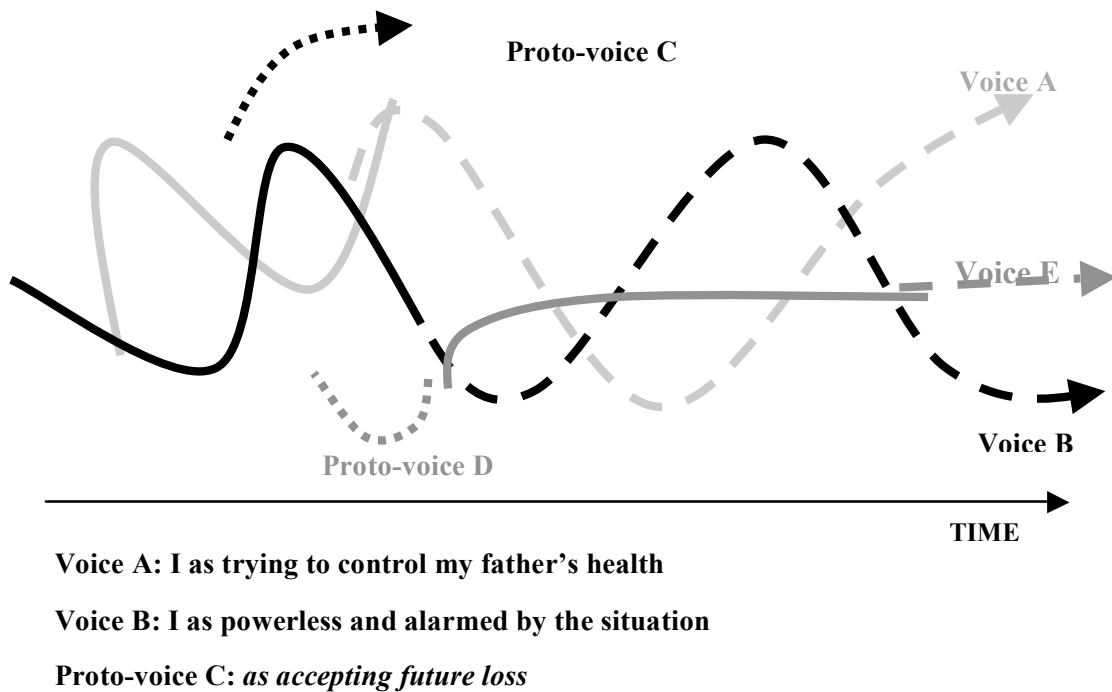


Figure 2. A tentative illustration of Maria's interview, representing the pattern of the multiplicity of voices (as self-presentations towards the interlocutor) about the personal problem across time.

and hesitate between different possible positions, resembling a decomposing polyphony of several voices in another type of self-organization dynamics. Nevertheless, at some moment, in both cases, we witness the monologizing effort of the dominant self-states towards divergent others, involving a rejection of some difficult or painful kind of experiences.

As these two case-studies show, unity and self-organization is a product of a monologizing effect that occurs in a polyphony of voices. Although it can be achieved in several forms, with one voice dominating others (as in Antonio's case) or with a dominating coalition between voices (as in Maria's case), these monologizing dynamics are always embedded in a power relation between voices. Hence, the dominating voice(s) regulate other divergent voices causing suppression and rejection of difference or silencing of the *other*. However, we do not see this domination in a negative way, we consider that this a necessary task with a great adaptive value, since it facilitates our decision-making abilities, presenting rapid forms of dealing with most of our usual daily challenges and rejecting difficult or unfamiliar experiences.

On the other hand, change is required when our common forms of self-organization do not help us deal adaptively with difference. In these moments, we need to explore difference, as creative and divergent resources to address challenges that are regularly found within us. In our view, re-organization starts appearing when our inner-alterity is no longer silenced and is given a differentiating and differentiated communicational existence. Hence, through this contrast between old and new, familiar and *alter*, a third voice comes into being and is synthesized, integrating resources or characteristics from the previous voices. This is what happens in Maria's case, as she starts differentiating an emergent voice through an appropriation of others' perspectives initially rejected but later integrated into her own position. This new voice (voice E: *I as more relaxed about the future*), nevertheless still unstable, appears as a potential new resource towards the problem since it is associated with a different emotional experience and a different behavioural attitude.

Final Remarks

In this paper, we have tried to highlight and elaborate on some of the challenges that the Dialogical Self Theory faces at its present state of theoretical and empirical development. The problem associated with the continuity of the self and identity construction through meaning-making processes in the midst of permanent experiential change is of special interest to us. As change at an experiential level is brought by the passing of time constantly presenting us with new moments of self-experience, the construction of "similarity" is a necessary task with adaptive value, allowing us to recognize ourselves moment-by-moment as one and the same person.

It is not our main intention to discuss the relative advantages of high-differentiation versus low-differentiation of self-identity. Instead, we are stressing that self-organization is a central feature of human psychological functioning and we are focusing on its processual dynamics, as we think is needed in the Dialogical Self Theory. The cases presented illustrate how we can depict self-organizing patterns on a moment-by-moment basis and why it is justified to claim that, to the Dialogical Self Theory, unity implies diversity (Salgado & Hermans, 2005). How we attain this unity within the multiplicity varies as an idiosyncratic feature as is empirically described.

Thus, this analysis seems to support the idea that self-organizing dynamics are many times fed 1) by monological processes that can constrain our multivoicedness; or 2) at other times are fed precisely by an extreme polyphony that blocks our decision-making abilities, given the paralysing multiplicity we may be facing (Valsiner, 2002a). Self-organization preserves equilibrium between openness and similitude in order to maintain its adaptive and developmental quality. If this is not the case, self-organization can become a rigid temporal stability that can no longer be sensible to the richness of our lived experience or be so loose that prevents the development of our relational and

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communicational life (as in dissociative states or schizophrenia; e.g. Lysaker & Lysaker, 2004).

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