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## Methodological approaches to studying the self in its social context

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**Methodological approaches to studying the self in its social context**

RUNNING HEAD: Studying the self in its social context

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## **Methodological approaches to studying the self in its social context**

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### **Methodological approaches to studying the self in its social context**

“The literature in the dialogical self field,” Hermans (2008: 186) writes, “shows more theoretical advances than methodological and empirical elaborations.” The idea, that the self is dialogical in its nature and origin, clearly fits with theoretical ideas not only within psychology, but also within literary studies, anthropology, sociology, and clinical fields. But what methodologies are most suitable for guiding research? Research to date has been interdisciplinary, and accordingly, a wide range of methodologies have been used. In the literature one can find experiments (Hermans 1999; Stemplewska-Zakowicz, Walecka, and Gabinska 2006), self-report questionnaires (Rowiński 2008), self-confrontation method (Hermans and Hermans-Jansen 1995), anthropological data (Gieser 2008), interview data (Aveling and Gillespie 2008) and close textual analysis of biographical material (Barresi 2008; Gillespie 2005). Our aim, in the present chapter, is to discuss some of the main methods for studying the dialogical self and, elaborating on that, to introduce an additional methodology that is of a more interpersonal nature than most of the existing methods. As we will argue, such an additional methodology is needed in the light of the mutual complementing nature of intra- and interpersonal dialogues in Dialogical Self Theory.

The first section of the present chapter will sketch some benefits of the existing methodologies and argue that, at present, the available methodologies are not designed to investigate the dialogical self as socially situated. Existing methodologies enable us to examine the voices within the dialogical self, but not the relation between intra-psychological voices within the self and the inter-personal and socially situated perspectives of significant others within social relations. The second section will introduce the Interpersonal Perception Method (Laing, Phillipson, and Lee 1966) as a methodology which will enhance the ability of

the researcher to systematically examine the socially situated self. In brief, this methodology enables us to examine not only the voices within the self, but also the voices outside the self, and specifically the relation between these intra-personal and inter-personal domains. We conclude with a discussion of how this methodology might be best adapted for studying the dialogical self.

### **Methods for studying the dialogical self**

Dialogical Self Theory possesses high face-validity and connects with personal experience of an internal dialogue and the tensions of indecision. It is, for many, an everyday experience that the perspectives of significant others are woven into private thought. Yet more than intuitive appeal is needed if we are to advance the theory and produce further insights (Hermans 2008). We argue that a methodology is needed which will enable an analysis of the relation between the social and the psychological, to examine how perspectives within the social world become perspectives within the dialogical self.

More methodological approaches have been suggested for studying the dialogical self than we can review (see Hermans 2008). We will focus our review on three distinctive approaches, namely, the Self-Confrontation Method, Personal-Position Repertoire, the use of bi-plots to map internal and external I-positions and a brief discussion of the experimental paradigm (Stemplewska-Zakowicz, Walecka and Gabinska 2006). The purpose of this review is to illustrate the benefits of these methodologies in enabling us to address particular questions but also to highlight that existing methodologies do not enable us to examine the relation between the voices within the dialogical self and the actual perspectives of significant others in the social environment.

### *Self-Confrontation Method*

The Self Confrontation Method (Hermans and Hermans-Jansen 1995) addresses the process of personal meaning construction as individuals self-reflect and organise historical events and emotionally salient experiences into consistent and intelligible narrative structures (Lyddon, Yowell, and Hermans 2006). Clients are encouraged to orient to past and future selves through seven open stimulus questions. There are two questions about the past, two about the present and three concerning the future. The questions are unstructured and direct the client to consider unspecified focal events. For example: “Was there something in your past that has been of major importance or significance for your life and which still plays an important part today?” (Hermans, Fiddelaers, De Groot, and Nauta, 1990: 158). The client evaluates their own responses to create valuations and considers the emotional component of these valuations. In practice, the open ended questions allow the participant to self-reflect upon their life in a temporal context and dialogically interact with significant others in addition to past and future selves. Self-confrontation with their valuations leads to understanding and personal meaning construction by providing the client with an overview of the boundaries of their self taking the perspective of significant others, such as parents, siblings and employers in dialogical exchange. Hermans describes this as a “helicopter view” (Hermans and Hermans-Jansen 1995: 159).

An example of the Self Confrontation Method can be found in a study by Puchalska-Wasyl, Chmielnicka-Kuter and Oleś (2008). Role-play was used to explore the impact of taking the perspective of a hero upon participants’ self-narratives. A self-confrontation was established over three research sessions. In the first session both the participants’ and their heroes’ answered seven questions with both the participant and the hero using imaginative positioning to construct life narratives. Subsequently, valuations were generated and rated

with regard to emotional climate across 24 affective terms, such as joy, pride and worry. The second session focused upon the patterns of connections between the I-position of the participant and the alternative hero I-position. In the third research session, two to three months later, the participant was confronted with the valuations from the first session and could accept, reject, modify or create new valuations. Twenty of thirty participants experienced a changed life narrative using imaginative positioning to take the perspective of the hero in the second research phase. The researchers argue that the meaning making of participants was affected by taking the perspective of the hero. Specifically, the dialogical exchange between the two I-positions resulted in a self-confrontation which subsequently led to narrative innovation.

In a similar vein to Puchalska-Wasyl, Chmielnicka-Kuter and Oleś (2008), Stemplewska-Zakowicz, Walecka and Gabinska (2006) also considered self-narrative construction. In an experimental paradigm, participants were asked to construct a self-narrative from implicit and explicit positions: imagining the face of the significant other, verbal description of the other and addressing to an imagined other. The authors acknowledge dialogical self theory needs to move beyond internal and imagined positioning. In their introduction the authors state that explicit positioning involves “addressing the subject’s self-narrative directly to a significant other” (Stemplewska-Zakowicz, Walecka and Gabinska 2006: 75). Whilst we value the inclusion of explicit positioning, addressing the actual other, we contend that this is not realised in their experimental procedure as the method still relies upon the invocation of the imagined other.

A unifying strength of both the Self Confrontation Method and the experimental procedure used by Stemplewska-Zakowicz, Walecka and Gabinska (2006), is the creation of dialogical

moments of transformation, thus enabling examination, not just of the voices within the self but how they clash and the resultant dialogue which can produce change within the self. In the role play example, the influence of heroes' positions had a wide reaching impact on the meaning-making systems of players. Confrontation with the hero is associated with positive experiences linked with autonomy and success (Puchalska-Wasył, Chmielnicka-Kuter and Oleś 2008). The self-enhancing outcome of such confrontation makes this a method with excellent applications in a therapeutic setting. The Self Confrontation Method is temporal; it focuses on change, and can be subtle enough to further psychological change within a therapeutic context.

A limitation of the Self Confrontation Method is that it does not relate voices, or I-positions, within the dialogical self to the perspectives of significant others within the social world. Of course, in the case of the method used by Puchalska-Wasył, Chmielnicka-Kuter and Oleś (2008), not all heroes exist in reality but real significant others are a key aspect of the dialogical self. As Hermans (2008) notes, social interaction is at the core of a dialogical conception of self. Yet, actual interactions with others are not explored and therefore an extension of the method could move beyond the realm of imagined others and target the relations between interlocutors in their shared social experience.

### *Personal position repertoire*

The Personal Position Repertoire method (Hermans 2001) is a method for disentangling the myriad of I-positions within the self (and as such has a similar aim to the methodology proposed by Raggatt 2000). It introduces the innovation of distinguishing between internal and external I-positions. The self is composed of internal I-positions (e.g., I-as-mother, or I-as-academic-writing-a-chapter) and extends to positions which relate to others, external I-

positions, (e.g., the I-position of my children or the I-position of potential readers of this chapter). In the case study of Nancy, Hermans (2001) charts her repertoire of I-positions, both internal and external for illustration. The relationships from internal I-positions to external I-positions extend beyond the realm of the individual, interact with the social environment and are reflected back into the self. The internal position 'I-as-mother' can only exist in relation to the external position of child. I-positions can be inclusive of past, previous and future selves together with the organisation of each perspective in terms of significance and priority. The young child going to school, for example, is suddenly confronted with a number of new I-positions. The introduction to a teacher creates a new and significant external I-position which relates to the new I-as-pupil internal position. The young child must rapidly reorganise and reposition herself to manage new I-positions and to relinquish priority given to previous positions such as I-as-nursery child (Hermans 2001). The Personal Position Repertoire allows exploration of the movement between I-positions, specifically with regard to problem solving; a concern originating in the observations of Mead (1913). Mead (1913) noted that problems could cause conflict and restructuring within the self leading to perspective transcendence. Accordingly, it is expected that through tension and movement between internal and external I-positions, change within the self becomes possible (Hermans 2001, 2003).

The strength of the Personal Position Repertoire is the ability to chart the organisation and flux of internal and external I-position changes within the self (Gonçalves and Salgado 2001; Hermans 2001, 2003). The grouping of I-positions, constructed around social positions, allows the researcher to develop matrices of the individual I-positions which are associated with particular social selves (Hermans 2001). The attribution of values and significance to specific positions, and the changes to these values during therapy, allow the therapist to chart

progress and assist the client to reorganise their I-positions attributing lower significance and value to those positions which generate tension (Hermans 2001, 2003). The methodology may be best applied therapeutically where dialogical manipulations involving significant others-in-the-self may be used to explore difficult personal circumstances.

The internal processes of any individual are private and although the Personal Position Repertoire invites the introduction of imagined significant others and maps both internal and external I-positions thoroughly, the external I-position remains unconnected to the views of actual significant others. The method limits itself to studying intra-psychological dialogical thinking and not inter-personal dialogue offering the potential to develop a methodology which relates the intra-psychological to the inter-personal.

#### *Mapping the dialogical self: Bi-plots*

The bi-plot method provides a novel approach to the analysis of data resulting from the Personal Position Repertoire (Hermans 2001). Kluger, Dir and Kluger (2008) use a bi-cluster analysis to create a graphic map charting the range of internal and external I-positions evident in the case study of Nancy (Hermans 2001), mentioned in the previous section. Unrotated principal components analysis was carried out for the data to create a scatter plot displaying visually the full spatial arrangement of internal and external I-positions, thus providing a “global map of the internal theatre” (Kluger et al. 2008: 228). The bi-plot method reveals the patterns between I-positions. Each pair of points is plotted to incorporate the patterns of connectedness with all alternative points. For example, two points may be highly correlated with each other but will be located apart on the plot if they have differing patterns of connections with other positions (Kluger et al. 2008).

In her original Personal Position Repertoire matrix, Nancy selected 19 external positions and 33 internal positions of relevance (Hermans 2001) which were charted on the scatter plot. Kluger et al. (2008) propose that exploration of points close together on the plot can be illuminating as these indicate important connections between positions. For example, in Nancy's plot the external position of Nancy's 'employer' is closest to the internal position of Nancy as 'sacrificing' and closest to the external position of Nancy's 'father'. This suggests that the role of father and employer share commonalities for Nancy and evoke feelings of sacrifice. Kluger et al. (2008) also examine visually apparent clusters of related positions within Nancy's scatter plot. One cluster of related points contains the external position of Nancy's ex-partner and the internal positions of Nancy as 'aggressive', 'materialist' and 'demanding'. Engaging in dialogical activity with the ex-partner for Nancy will bring to the fore these internal positions which may well have negative connotations. Exploration with the therapist of what these connections signify may provide insight and heightened self-knowledge.

The strength of bi-plots is that they go beyond the comparison within internal and within external I-positions in dyadic relations and instead enable the simultaneous examination of the whole range of positions. Thus the relations, not only within internal and external positions, but also, importantly, the relations *between* these positions can be seen on one plot. This allows for analysis of the global organisation of dialogical relations elicited by the Personal Position Repertoire (Hermans 2001) and allows us to address the question of how all I-positions within the dialogical self fit together. The method also has significant benefits within therapeutic settings. The graphical representation of the plot is clear and easily intelligible and thus may assist in drawing the client into the process of joint sense-making alongside the therapist.

The bi-plot method successfully extends analysis of the Personal Position Repertoire to incorporate concurrent analysis of both internal and external I-positions elicited. However, as illustrated in the example, Nancy's external I-positions are related to the views of significant others as constructed by Nancy herself. The external positions in the plot do not relate to the actual viewpoint of significant others. As a result the analysis still allows one to address intra-psychological dialogical relations only and does not extend to the exploration of inter-psychological relations and the impact of interactions with actual significant others in a socially pertinent context.

*Summary: Relating the self to society*

“By placing internal psychological processes in the broader context of external social and societal process,” Hermans and Hermans-Konopka (2008: 5) write that the concept of the dialogical self provides a link “between self and society.” Indeed, the very term ‘dialogical self’ is meant to relate the external (dialogue) to the internal (self) (Hermans and Hermans-Konopka 2010: 1). While we agree that at a theoretical level the concept of the dialogical self does provide a link between the internal and the external, we suggest that available methodologies provide only limited means with which to study this link. In the three methodologies reviewed above we can see an increasing concern with “the-other-within-the-self” (Hermans 2008: 186), specifically, with the relation between internal and external I-positions within the self. However, each of these methodologies still takes the individual self as the unit of analysis. These methodologies study society within the self, but not the self within society or within social relations.

Focusing on the relation between the dialogical self and the social context opens up several important questions: What is the relation between external I-positions within the self and the actual perspectives of others? How do the voices in society become voices within the self? What are the processes of transformation? And how are the voices 'out there' woven into the construction of the self? These questions relate to one specific aspect of the concept of the dialogical self, namely, the relation between the self and society. In the next section we introduce a methodology from the field of interpersonal perception which we suggest can be adapted to address these questions.

### **Interpersonal Perception Method**

Dialogical theory assumes that the voices within the self are internalisations of voices in society and dialogical responses to them. For example, when preparing for a job interview we often rehearse the conversation we think we will have, taking the perspective of the interviewer. The extent to which an individual can take the perspective of the other is crucial for effective communication (Rommetveit 1974) and yet there is little access to this information contained, as it is, in silent, internal thoughts (Gillespie and Zittoun 2010). It is commonly assumed our knowledge of other's perspectives is accurate. Indeed, there are research findings which show that we have an accurate generalized view of what most people think of us (Kenny and DePaulo 1993; Norman 1969). However, other research reveals that the relation between what people think other people think and what those other people actually think is often quite weak (Cast, Stets and Burke 1999; Shrouger and Schoeneman 1979). Moreover, therapeutic practice has shown that often it is the mismatch between perspectives within selves and between selves that is the basis of many problems. For example, mistaking **their** own vulnerability for hostility from others can cause difficulties in

interpersonal relationships resulting in psychological distress and ultimately in a “destructive interpersonal cycle” (Cooper 2009: 89).

The Interpersonal Perception Method (IPM) (Laing, Phillipson and Lee 1966) examines the relation between what people think other people think and what those other people actually think. The IPM is elaborate and enables the identification of many types of intersubjective relationship (Gillespie and Cornish 2010). However, it is not only used to assess accuracy of perspective taking, but also to identify relational patterns, misunderstandings, and the origin of projected perspectives (e.g., Gillespie, Place and Murphy in press).

#### *Describing the method*

The IPM is a comparative self-report questionnaire methodology first developed by Laing, Phillipson and Lee, (1966) with the intent of being a useful measurement instrument in marriage and family counselling (White 1982). The original IPM questionnaire comprises 60 issues, grouped into six categories. Around each of these 60 issues, 12 questions require to be answered, giving a total of 720 questions.

The IPM assumes a theoretical framework in which the intersubjective relations between people are characterised by three levels, namely, (1) direct perspectives, (2) meta-perspectives, and, (3) meta-meta-perspectives. The term ‘meta-perspective’ refers to what each member of the dyad thinks the other member thinks. Accordingly, the term meta-perspective has a different meaning to the concept of meta-position used by Hermans and Hermans-Konopka (2010) who propose the term to refer to the process of the *I* engaging in the act of self-reflection about a number of positions, their patterning, and origin. Laing, Phillipson and Lee (1966) explain their concepts with reference to a married couple. Both

members of the dyad are asked about their own view (direct perspective), their estimation of the view of the other (meta-perspective) and their estimation of how the other views them (meta-meta-perspective) (for a comparable view, see Verhofstadt's chapter in this book).

A unique feature of the IPM is that it takes dyadic relations as the unit of analysis. Most methods in psychological research, including research on the dialogical self, take the (multi-voiced) individual as the unit of analysis. The IPM starts by looking at both sides of a relationship, thus enabling several comparisons to be made. Specifically, comparisons can be made *between* the perspectives of a dyad or group(s) and also *within* each member of the dyad or within each group, thus revealing the actual and perceived convergences and divergences of perspective.

Comparisons between individuals or groups reveal several key insights including the existence of agreements/disagreements, understandings/misunderstandings and crucially if there is any realisation of misunderstandings between each individual or group. Agreement occurs when two individuals or groups have similar direct perspectives. By contrast, disagreements arise when their direct perspectives differ but they are each aware of this. Misunderstandings arise when direct perspectives differ but there is no awareness of this. The underlying argument is that disagreements and divergences in perspectives occur but it is misunderstanding and the feeling of being misunderstood that can cause problems within relationships (Sillars, Koerner and Fitzpatrick 2005).

Comparisons within each member of the dyadic relation reveal perceived inter-subjective relations. Perceived agreement occurs when there is alignment between what one person thinks and what they think the other person thinks. Feeling understood entails an alignment

between what one person thinks and what they think the other person thinks they think. Comparisons within each individual or group reveal perceived agreement/disagreement, feeling understood/misunderstood and perceived understanding/misunderstanding (for comparable sequences, see Ho's chapter in the present Handbook).

The IPM is a systematic self-report methodology for analysing interpersonal perception within dyadic relations. It is suited to studying dialogicality because it is based on the assumption that people have multiple perspectives, and are able to think about themselves or some issue from both their own perspective and the perspective of others. It shares this assumption with the Self-Confrontation Method. However, it is distinctive as a methodology for studying the dialogical self because not only does it analyse the perspectives within an individual or group but it compares these to the actual perspectives of significant others.

Many authors have discussed interpersonal perception (for example, see Cook 1971; Hinton 1993; Jones 1990) but the focus has tended to be on questions of accuracy (for example, Funder 1980; Kenny and DePaulo 1993) rather than the role of interpersonal perception in constructing the self. Towards the end of his book, Jones (1990: 201) turns his attention to getting to know ourselves and states "self-knowledge can be a direct consequence of perceptions of others in our presence [...] it is obvious we can learn about ourselves by learning how others respond to us in the interaction sequence". This 'obvious' fact had been highlighted previously by Laing, Phillipson and Lee who stated "self-identity is a synthesis of my looking at me with my view of others' view of me" (1966: 5). The IPM enables us to analyse how this synthesis of views occurs.

Finally the IPM is also a flexible methodology. It is possible to take the original IPM questionnaire and adapt it to address the relevant issues within any given interaction, for example between an individual, dyad or family (White 1982). The IPM is amenable to a variety of research questions. Because it is questionnaire-based it can yield a large quantity of data with relatively little effort compared to other methods such as qualitative interviews.

*Example: Young people and employers*

Whittaker (2010) adapted the IPM in order to compare the perspectives of employers and unemployed adolescents seeking work. Young jobseekers often become frustrated and disheartened after several failed attempts to gain employment. Each failed attempt adds a negative voice into their dialogical selves. In order to understand the dialogical selves of young people in their social context, Whittaker used an IPM to analyse not only their views but also the views of potential employers. On the basis of interviews and discussions, Whittaker developed a questionnaire with nineteen statements focusing upon employment. Both employers and young people answered the questionnaire from their own perspective, the perspective of the other, and what they thought the other would think they thought.

Several interesting misunderstandings emerged. For example, employers thought that qualifications are not important but young people thought that employers place a great importance on qualifications. Employers place most emphasis on what a prospective employee can do, but the education system continues to emphasise academic achievements above other skills. This misunderstanding is unfortunate because within the dialogical selves of under-achieving young people, the lack of good grades can be a source of feelings of stigmatization and failure.

Using the IPM to connect the I-positions within these young people (I-as-seen-by-employers) with what potential employers actually think makes both theoretical and practical contributions. At a theoretical level it shows us that the view of employers which these young people have ‘internalised’ does not originate in the perspective of the employers. Instead it might originate in the academic institutions in which these young people have lived most of their lives and which tend to overemphasise grades. At a practical level, the IPM provides an avenue for intervention, namely, bolstering the identity of these young people by correcting their misunderstanding of the perspective of employers.

The use of the IPM, in this context, reveals the intra-psychological dynamics, namely, the feeling of failure associated with having low grades and thinking that other people value grades. But the IPM goes beyond intra-psychological dynamics, to reveal inter-personal and inter-group dynamics. It shows us that this general view of young people does not originate in the views of employers and is not as supportive of their identity as the real views of employees. Thus the IPM augments the intra-psychological analysis by situating the self socially and also, in this case, suggesting interventions which might benefit these young people.

### **Beyond self-report**

Research on the dialogical self has focused upon intra-psychological relationships between I-positions. The IPM was not developed to examine the dialogical self, rather, it was developed to examine inter-personal relationships. We have suggested that the IPM can be adapted to contribute to the aim of “placing internal psychological processes in the broader context of external social and societal process” (Hermans and Hermans-Konopka 2008: 5).

The IPM, however, is also a limited methodology. It is based upon self-report (people's responses to questionnaires are limited by their own self-insight). But this limitation is not unique to the IPM. The questions asked in the Self-Confrontation Method, Personal-Position Repertoire and analysed in the bi-plot method **also** depend upon self-report. But, to what extent can people self-report I-positions? Gillespie and Cornish (2010) argue that I-positions are not transparent to speakers, and they often need interpretation. To base our analyses on the self-reports of participants would be to severely limit our window on the self, and possibly risk reproducing common sense notions of selfhood. Researchers need to be independent observers of the dialogical self and accordingly should not limit themselves to self-report methodologies.

The limitation of respondent's self-report is most evident when answering questions about meta-meta-perspectives. In Whittaker's (2010) study the majority of participants struggled to comprehend questions about what they thought the other thought they thought. But, such difficulty does not mean that meta-meta-perspectives are not important in the data. On the contrary, they are often observable in everyday interactions. For example, one employer in Whittaker's study who struggled to answer the meta-meta-perspective questions was able to say fluidly, when talking about a young person who had not been committed to work, "I thought, they actually think that they're doing me a favour coming here." Within this utterance there is a meta-meta-perspective: the speaker thinks that the young person thinks that they are doing her a favour by coming to work. Yet, while such an utterance can often be found in everyday conversation, it does not follow that the employer discussed previously would be able to identify nor elucidate upon the meta-meta-perspective which she articulates fluently.

Moreover, it is not just at the levels of meta-perspective and meta-meta-perspective that self-report methods are problematic. Gieser (2008: 50) has pointed out that the embodied aspects of the dialogical self have been neglected. The tendency has been to study, usually using interview or self-report methods, the I-positions within the individual at a cognitive, or self-reflective, level. But what about I-positions which are implicit and manifest only in embodied action? For Mead and James the 'I' is an embodied precondition of self-reflection not necessarily aware of itself: it is the knower, not the known. Too much reliance upon self-report is likely to overlook the importance of the pre-reflective and reactive nature of many I-positions (see Lewis 2002, for the relevance of pre-linguistic forms of positioning in the dialogical self).

One potential way to avoid the limitations of self-report in research on the dialogical self is to adapt the IPM into a framework for analysing naturalistic discourse and action. Gillespie and Cornish (2010) have argued that Laing et al. (1966) developed a powerful framework but that the operationalisation in self-report was limited. Taking a Bakhtinian approach to the study of language (Aveling and Gillespie 2008; Wertsch 1991), they show how the framework of direct, meta and meta-meta-perspectives can be used as a coding frame to systematise dialogical analyses of discursive or observational data. Actions and utterances are coded in terms of what they reveal about the speaker or actors' direct perspective and what they implicitly assume and explicitly state about the perspectives of others. As with the standard IPM, such a coding frame should be used on data relating to both sides of a dyadic interaction in order to enable the aforementioned comparisons.

There are two advantages to using Laing, Phillipson and Lee's (1966) framework as a coding frame for naturalistic data. First, because the data do not rely on self-report, it is possible to

identify implicit I-positions (which speakers themselves might not be able to articulate nor be aware of, in response to a questionnaire). Second, using the IPM as a coding frame still yields the main benefit of the IPM questionnaire, namely, it allows researchers to understand the dialogical self in its social context, provided, of course, that two or more people/groups in relation are studied. The main limitation with using the IPM framework as a coding frame, in contrast to self-report questionnaire, is that it is much more time consuming as it requires interpretation and coding of individual utterances.

### **Conclusion**

Understanding the self as fundamentally dialogical entails research, not only on dialogues within the self but also the social dialogues in which the self is embedded. It is ambitious to develop a concept which is so explicitly positioned as a bridge between the self and society. The project requires a broad range of methodological tools. In the present chapter we have sought to review some of the most prominent methods for studying the dialogical self, and we have argued that existing methodologies do not explicitly study the self as viewed by other people, nor consequently, how these views relate to self's own views . Research has focused on the other within the self, but has not sought to relate this to the other outside the self.

We have introduced the Interpersonal Perception Method into the discussion of the dialogical self in order to make available a tool for self-report survey research which aims to situate the self within social relations. This methodology does not replace existing methodologies, but rather provides a complement. It enables researchers to address a specific question concerning the relation between the dialogical self and the social context. However, we have not advocated the Interpersonal Perception method without reservation. We have argued that the methodology needs to be recognised as limited, as all questionnaire methods are, by the

nature of self-report. I-positions are often implicit, and thus, by definition, closed to self-report analysis. Building on the work of Gillespie and Cornish (2010) we concluded by suggesting that at times it is necessary to engage in more qualitative analyses in order to reveal the more subtle dynamics of implicit meanings and positionings.

Clearly the methodological trajectory outlined in the present chapter is not finalised, and more empirical explorations are needed in order to understand how best to study the self in its social context. In this regard, perhaps the most important contribution of the IPM for researchers of the dialogical self is that it opens the door to studying the dialogical self from both the inside and the outside. Whether one uses the IPM as a questionnaire or a coding frame, the key insight is thus that one should examine not only how people view themselves or feel themselves to be viewed, but also how they are actually viewed by significant others, and thus how they are actually situated within the field of social interaction.

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