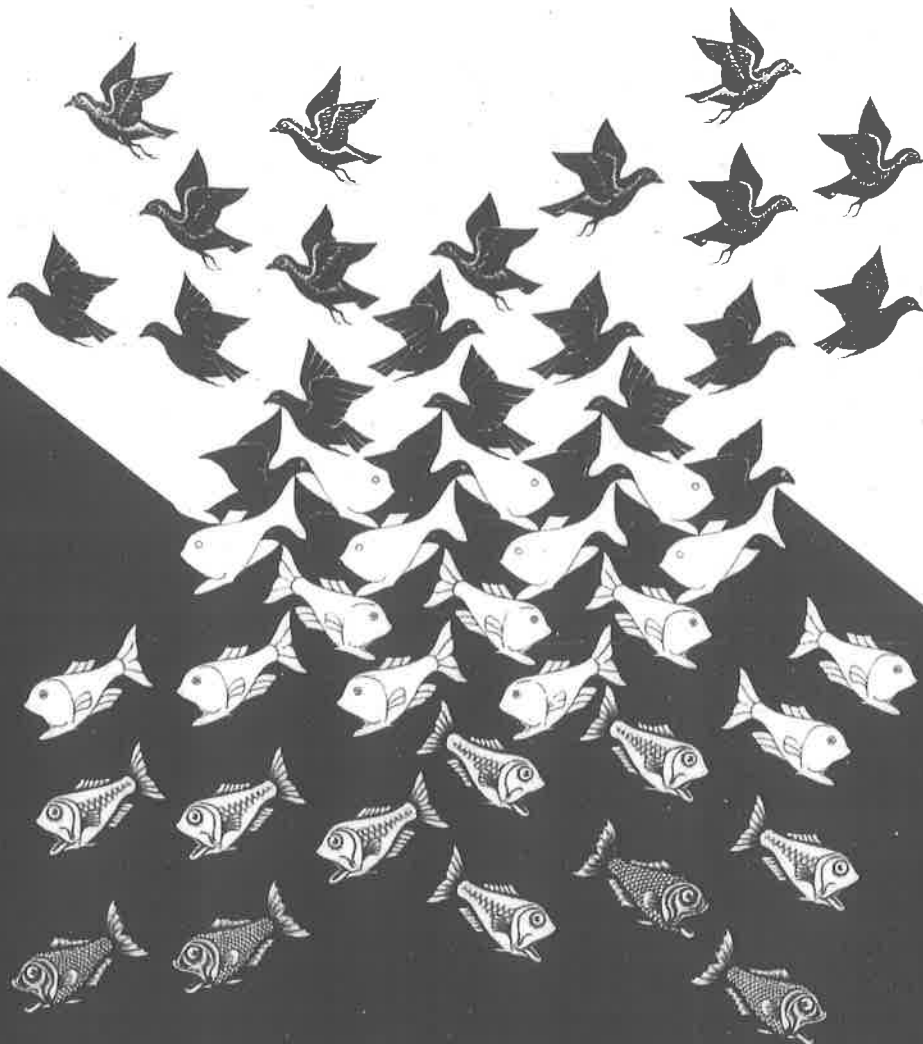


INTEGRATING EXPERIENCES

BODY AND MIND MOVING
BETWEEN CONTEXTS

EDITED BY
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SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL MOVEMENT

Weaving Individual Experience Into Society

Alex Gillespie and Tania Zittoun

It is not only a great honor, but incredibly productive, for us to read the foregoing commentaries. Our aspiration, over ten years ago, was that June's diary would become a shared empirical basis for substantive theoretical discussions; a dream that has now come to fruition. We are inspired by the insights which colleagues have brought to the data, and we have learned from the rigorous questioning of our terms and assumptions.

Our aim, in the opening chapter, was bold: to propose a model of the relation between the individual and society with movement, both spatial and psychological, as the interconnecting term. This model, we believe, provides one explanation for why humans are dialogical, having multiple often contradictory tendencies, within which agency arises. The reason is that the social world comprises multiple, often contradictory, contexts, and as people move through the social world they are socialized into, or internalize,

society from multiple standpoints within society. Our most macro argument was simply that sociocultural psychology needs to pay more attention to social and psychological movement, as a way to operationalize ideas about temporality in research. Our more specific argument was that movement in the social world leads to the accumulation of many layers of experience, which stand in dialogical relation to one another, and which drive the psychological struggle for integration.

The sheer number of issues raised in the commentaries clearly demonstrates the richness of focusing on a single well documented case study. Indeed, the same data could be used to address multiple theoretical questions. In the following response to commentators, we must necessarily be selective, and our focus will remain on the role of movement in psychological development. In this regard, there are several themes which cut across the commentaries which we want to address: ontological assumptions, conceptualizing movement, conceptualizing context, conceptualizing experience, methodology, fundamental questions and our overall goals. We will consider each issue in turn.

DISTINGUISHING EXPERIENCE AND CONTEXT: TOWARDS A PERSPECTIVAL EPISTEMOLOGY

Writing a paper is like building any piece of furniture; it needs a frame, a holding structure, to provide unifying support. In the case of a paper, this support comes in the form of theoretical assumptions. While it is common for authors to either leave their assumptions implicit, or, perhaps, discover them in the course of the research, we chose a more formal route, namely, to enumerate our assumptions at the outset. Thus we started by listing the tools and building blocks we planned to use; and we then put these to use as we displayed our analysis of the data, so as to illustrate our theoretical proposition. As compared to our actual research process, our presentation was backwards; we presented our theory and then used the data to illustrate it, when in actuality, the theory grew through our analysis of the data. In this sense our style of presentation clashed with our assumptions, with the former being foundational and the latter being relational. Our reason for this approach was so that we could be as transparent as possible about our assumptions.

The assumptions which we outlined received rigorous scrutiny, most specifically our conception of the relation between the subject and object, and specifically our attempt to distinguish June's experience from her physical, spatial, social and cultural context. Grossen resists our separation between context and experience, arguing that sometimes "context and experience are one and the same thing" (this volume, p. 205, see also Grossen 2001).

Marková (this volume) reminds us that there is no context which is not experienced. Valsiner (this volume PAGE), in a similar vein, writes that "context is an inherent—not external—part of the phenomena [...] There is no 'external context' to which autonomous individuals are 'put into'."

These useful and critical points have led us to the following clarification: Experience and context cannot be separated from the perspective of the actor (i.e., June). However, experience and context can be separated from the perspective of an observer (i.e., the researchers). Here we are building upon Mead's (1932) perspectivism. Mead, borrowing from Whitehead (see Stenner, this volume, p. 235, both on Whitehead and on a very accurate interpretation of our position), argued that the social and physical world comprised perspectives. It is in the intersection of these perspectives that human knowledge arises, and thus that the world comes to know itself. We suggest that the separation between subject and object itself is an epistemological distinction that only arises at an intersection of perspectives.

Imagine that Person A, while in a dark forest, sees a dangerous animal. Their moving away from the threat is a very real consequence of the perception of a dangerous lion. In this act of avoidance there is no separation between the "experience" of the lion and the "actual" lion; the distinction has no purchase from the standpoint of Person A. However, imagine also that Person B is in the same dark forest. Observing the behavior of Person A, who runs away shouting "lion," Person B scans the scene for the dangerous animal, but can only see a bush moving in the wind. Now it is from this standpoint, with the introduction of the observer's perspective, that Person B can separate subject and object for Person A. Person B might say that "Person A experienced a lion, but in reality it was a bush." The distinction between subject and object works as an observer's distinction, and it is useful for Person B analyzing the behavior of Person A. Does this mean that Person B has direct access to reality? No. It might be that Person C tells the tale of how Person B got eaten by a lion in the forest, because of mistaking a lion for a bush. In such a scenario, it might be that Person B's last thought is something like "oh no, I thought it was a bush"—where Person B has become an observer of their own initial experience. Such a stance is not relativistic, it is pragmatist (Cornish & Gillespie, 2009); Person B either is or is not eaten by the lion.

Applying this perspectival epistemology to the case study, we can say that from June's perspective we cannot distinguish her experience from the actual context: she experiences her context. However, we can also add an observer's perspective: historical research has shown things about World War II of which June was not aware, that is, things which from hindsight were part of the War but not part of her experience. Equally, as researchers, we can see things in her diary writings, such as the dialogical tensions, the genre, or addressivity, which it is unlikely that June herself, was aware of.

That is to say, as researchers, we see a context to June's diary writing, which (by virtue of being in the mind of the researcher) is independent from June's own experience. In short, we resist the fundamentalist question "is there a context beyond June's experience" and instead we maintain that we have a different point of view, and that it is in the difference between our perspective and June's perspective that the separation between experience and context makes sense. This, however, is not to privilege our own point of view: commentators may argue that what we take to be context which is "out there" is nothing more than our own experience, an illusory lion in the bush.

CONCEPTUALIZING MOVEMENT

The three key concepts in our analysis are: context, experience, and movement. Although we would maintain that our main contribution was to focus on the concept of movement, as a bridge between context or society and experience, this concept received least critical comment, and was, we are glad to note, largely accepted. Indeed, the concept of movement was enriched by Martin (this volume), who linked it to position exchange theory, Carré (this volume), who links it to the work of Giannini and the routine movements from the home to street to work to street to home, Martins (this volume), who links it to Bergson's conceptualization of temporality, and Stenner (this volume), who very profitably reminds us of the work on pilgrimage, the movement of leaving the home community to instantiate a transformation of the self—and the liminality that ensues when one leaves one's own community (Stenner & Moreno, 2013). What we really appreciate in these elaborations of the concept of movement, is how the concept turns abstract theorizing about time and temporality into something that is mundane, common place in everyday life, observable, and thus open to empirical research.

What we particularly want to emphasize about our proposition, it is that it is neither a focus on time *or* space; rather, movement is about moving in space-time. And it is our distinction between distal and proximal experiences that allows us to analyze movement as both physical (moving through places in proximal experiences, in specific contexts) and psychological (moving through distal experiences).

In that sense, we are happy to see how Stenner (this volume) expanded on our ideas about the importance of imagination, and especially, when mediated through the arts. He interestingly emphasizes that imagination, or the poetic experience, is itself movement and therefore an integrating dynamic, beyond the boundaries of temporal-material limited spheres of experiences: "Through art we sense the actual possibility of integrating

the finite with the infinite, and escaping the clutches of despair" (Stenner, this volume, p. 131). Imagination as integrative movement is for us a central dynamic in human experience, which has been very little explored in psychology, and which is one of our next objects of enquiry (Zittoun & Gillespie, 2015).

However, the concepts of context and experience received much more critical scrutiny; perhaps this is because they are more widely used, thus carrying more complex and conflicted literatures. Let us consider each in turn.

CONCEPTUALIZING CONTEXT

Marková (this volume) provides an excellent analysis of the term context. Some of the points she makes resonate with other commentators, such as Grossen's (this volume) point that the same location (e.g., an auditorium) can become different contexts (e.g., before a lecture, during a lecture, and going for lunch), and Carré's (this volume) point that the context of living in one place comprises many sub contexts (e.g., home, street, work etc.). The problem is, as Marková expertly unpicks, the term context has been used from talking about single words (i.e., the context of an utterance) to talking about larger social contexts (i.e., the context of June writing during the War). Moreover, aside from the term being used to cover diverse phenomena, both Marková and Grossen show how contexts are overlapping: there is the context of June writing her diary for Mass Observation and simultaneously the context of our analysis of her writing, and so on.

Our definition of context emphasized the societal dimension, namely, that context is the way in which society becomes real for people. To say that people are "in society" is too broad. Instead, we maintain that society creates numerous contexts (or maybe more accurately social situations, with associated social positions), through which people move. The term context, as we used it, thus operationalizes the idea that people move through society. The contexts analyzed (i.e., home, gardening, end of the war) were those which were psychologically real for June, contexts she refers to in her diaries. However, we recognize that this use of the term context is problematic because the term has fractal qualities, that is to say, it operates at many levels of resolution. The term stretches from the context of an utterance within the diary, to a social situation that June describes within her diary, to the pattern of life which June describes during a period of her life, to the larger contexts of England during the War, and our now using June's diary to advance psychology.

Another potential problem with the concept of context, or a society that is "out there," is the assumption that it is stable. Pfefferkorn and Abbey (this volume) make the point that societies are far from stable, and Chimirri

(this volume) emphasizes the role of June herself in making the future society that she and her contemporaries are moving into. We would agree with the Heraclitian view of everything in flux. But, we would add, change and flux are relative judgments which only make sense when some things change more than others. In this sense we would say that a street or a town is usually (but not necessarily) as relatively stable material and symbolic environment for the developing child. We call it “relatively stable” (Schutz & Luckmann, 1973), because on the scale of a peaceful day, buildings are stable, and cars and passers-by are moving, even though on the scale of a century, buildings come and go, the ground mountains move, and social movements and empires emerge and disappear. Institutions and societies are simply semiotic/material assemblages which generally evolve slower than, say, a soap bubble. Of course, human chronotopes (Morson & Emerson, 1990) are not homogenous and regular, and so it can accelerate and slow down locally, for some specific actors—as suggested by Nedergaard, Valsiner and Marsico (this volume). Indeed, the societal changes which occurred in England during the five years of our case study were huge, yet, these changes were not unconstrained, there was continuity and stability within which patterns of life were maintained.

In order to analyze change and transformation, we need to also account for stability and permanence. It is possible to speak about June’s memories of a place, and discovery of a new place, because these places have a materiality and a permanence, and subsist even when June is not there. Moreover, when analyzing June’s behavior within one context, within the time span of a few months, from that standpoint the changes occurring in that context, which occur over years or decades, is not necessarily relevant for the analysis. In this sense, what is designated as “stable context” is given by the research focus. If the research question is an utterance, then the relatively stable context is the social and semantic context within which that utterance exists. Equally, if the research question concerns the development of an individual, such as June, then, we would argue, the context is the relatively stable social, societal, and cultural context within which she lives her life.

CONCEPTUALIZING EXPERIENCE

Finally, let us turn to the concept of “experience.” Our conceptualization of experience receives critical scrutiny from Larrain (this volume), and it is also discussed by Lehmann (this volume), Valsiner (this volume), and Stenner (this volume). A common question is whether we were overly harsh in separating proximal from distal experiences? As Martin (this volume) pointed out, all proximal experience is infused with and shaped by distal

experiences. While we agree that “pure” proximal experience is impossible, because our previous experiences always form the template for subsequent experiences, that the analytic distinction is useful to highlight the fact that people can be more or less distant from proximal experiences. For example, a reverie in imagination is clearly more of a distal experience than enjoying eating one’s dinner. Separating proximal and distal experiences is useful for analyzing how experiences from one domain are carried over into another.

A key concern about our conceptualization of experience, for both Larrain (this volume) and Stenner (this volume), is that experience is active, it is a moment of process, and as such, experiences cannot be integrated, rather, integration is an experience. This distinction is very useful, helping us to refine our conceptualization. While we presented experience as somewhat flat and undefined, it now is clear that it is necessary to consider hierarchies of experience. That is to say, there are experiences, and there are experiences of previous experiences, and even experiences of the clash or integration of previous experiences. Indeed, what we have called a distal experience could be conceptualized as an experience of a previous experience. More specifically, and very much in line with Stenner (this volume, 2011), and James’ (1904) radical empiricism, if we put experience first, then experience is ever-present. There is no “getting” outside of experience.” Rather, the integration of experiences is an ongoing process of self-reflection and self-construction which occurs within human experience.

However, this emphasis on experience as constitutive should not lead to solipsism within human experience. Although we agree with Stenner (this volume) that subjectivity is an effect of experience, and not the cause of experience, we would also argue that once subjectivity is established (in a developmental sense), then there is a subjectivity that persists across different experiences. The subject is not born anew within each experience—a point which we are sure Stenner would agree with. Thus, to avoid confusion, it is crucial to differentiate ontogenetic and microgenetic time frames (Sato, Kasuga, Kanzaki, & Wagoner, this volume). The subject is an effect on experience at an ontogenetic level (i.e., subjectivity is produced by experiences across a life course); however, this subjectivity transcends microgenetic experiences, where the subjectivity persists between micro contexts and associated experiences.

Without focusing on the term, Grossen (this volume) also provided us with a really useful conceptualization of experience. Building on Valsiner (2007) and Gillespie (2008, 2012), she differentiates four levels of experience: (a) embodied experience, (b) represented experience, (c) metaperspectives, and (d) meta-metaperspectives. This conceptualization, which we fully agree with, is particularly suited to an analysis of the role of others in June’s experience. Indeed, Grossen expertly demonstrates how it can

elucidate the case of June's diary writing, revealing how tensions between these layers of experience propel transformation. Grossen, in a more micro analysis than ours, insightfully also shows movement between these layers: June writing about herself, becomes the object of a subsequent reflection, becoming the object within the text; embodied experience is articulated in words, and then read from the standpoint of the reader (i.e., third person point of view). Thus, even within very micro sequences, June moves position in relation to her own experience, gaining increasing distance from her experience, being able to reflect on it, discover tensions, and struggle to resolve them.

While we fully agree with Grossen's (this volume) conceptualization of experience, we maintain that it is most suited to a different question, namely, how do tensions within June's experience lead to transformations. We conceptualized experience in terms of proximal and distal experiences because it is a distinction which is particularly suited to analyzing movement, that is, how experiences from one context can reverberate within another context. In this sense, our research question is not in contradiction with Grossen's analysis but it is antecedent to it. While Grossen focuses on the play of tensions within June's experience of writing, our question concerned the origin of those tensions. To illustrate this point, let us focus on one of the excerpts analyzed by Grossen, in which June writes "I should not have join the services if it had not been for this because of the stigma of man-chasing" (Grossen, this volume, p. 213). Grossen shows how this is part of an autodialogue, in which the tension is between not joining and joining military service, with the introjection of the voice of others. While we fully agree with this analysis, we would also point out that if one wants to understand where the dialogical tension has come from, one needs to appeal to changing contexts: first a pre-war context in which June experiences and internalizes the stigma of man-chasing, then a war context in which that representation is applied to women who volunteer to the services, which then June experiences, and then a context in which there is conscription into the services. It is the layering up of experiences through these changing contexts, we would argue, which creates the dialogical tensions that Grossen so expertly analyses.

Grossen (this volume, p. 216) writes that "what brings about an integration of experiences (or some kind of psychological development or reconfiguration) is not the movement itself, but the tensions between June's various experiences as they are put into words in her diary and the dialogical traces they leave." We agree that the immediate driver of integrating experiences is June working out the tensions in her own experience through diary writing. But, we would also maintain, that it is legitimate and interesting to ask: where do the tensions within June's diary come from? To answer this question, one needs to have a conceptualization of a contexts "out there"

which can produce a variety of (often incompatible) experiences, and that it is June moving physically and psychologically through such contexts that layers up the experiences which we can observe in tension. That is to say, the tensions we observe within June's diary writing do not begin and end with her; rather, they are reverberations of the contradictions and tensions of the society of which she is a part, and of which she is moving through, even as she is writing about them.

THEORETICAL GENERALIZATION FROM CASE STUDIES

Valsiner (this volume; Molenaar, & Valsiner, 2008) makes a powerful argument for in-depth case studies as fundamental for generalization and theoretical elaboration. Over the years we have been exploring the strength of multiple readings of in depth-case studies for the development of theories (Gillespie, Cornish, Aveling & Zittoun, 2007; Zittoun, Cornish, Gillespie & Aveling, 2008). This, we have argued and proposed, requires shared data sets, as well as collaborative work (Zittoun, Baucal, Cornish & Gillespie, 2007; Cornish, Gillespie & Zittoun, 2013). The current volume, the data about June which was shared amongst commentators, and the richness of the insights provided by commentators, we feel provides its own evidence for the value of collaborative analysis of in-depth case studies for theoretical development.

First, many have commentators have built on the shared data and thus proposed complementary analysis. For example, Grossen (this volume) reveals the dialogicality of the diary, Marková (this volume) examines the diverse levels of relationality and context, Martin (this volume) shows how taking in account the position exchanges adds depth to the understanding of June's conduct, Märtin (this volume) shows how a closer attention to time gives volume to events (see also Chimirri, this volume). Within these analyses of the shared data, a recurring theme is the transformation of June realizing that it is actually quite pleasurable and empowering to date multiple men, both in sequence and in parallel. This moment, we suggested, was a moment of coincidence of multiple spheres of experience allowing new integration and the emergence of new conduct; while other commentators emphasized different dynamics, such as tensions within June's own experience (Grossen, this volume; Marková, this volume), changes in the societal context (Chimirri, this volume; Märtin, this volume), and a more existential shifting of perspectives with a reversal of power relations (Martin, this volume). Discussing between these interpretations is important, and in doing so, we suggest, we are doing more than interpreting June's case, rather, we are engaging in a process of theoretical integration and

thus generalization. In short, this is an example of generalization beginning with a single case study (Valsiner, this volume).

Second, some commentators have drawn on comparable case studies which share the characteristics of distal experiences, transformation, or negotiating boundaries. Stenner (this volume) draws on Proust to explore the power of imagination to explore and join distal experiences to proximal, adding thickness to life and thus escape to the prison of irreducibility of time and linear causality. Nedergaard, Valsiner, and Marsico (this volume) explore a character of an Ibsen play in which the main character, a woman, pushed the boundaries of her sphere of experience, thus gaining freedom, transforming her world, and allowing the emergence of self. Pfefferkorn and Abbey (this volume) explore a slightly different evolving historical context to highlight broader different levels of cultural guidance. These additional case studies also reveal how the comparative analysis of case studies can lead towards generalizable knowledge. Specifically, it is comparing between cases, exploring contextual differences and deep similarities, using generalizable concepts (such as self, agency, psychological tensions, boundaries, rites of passage, etc.), that step-wise models are developed which are both valid for unique cases and useful in the analysis of different cases.

ON FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS

It is striking that many of our colleagues raise fundamental questions in reply to our paper. These questions are related to the horizon of mortality (Belzen, this volume), personal philosophies based on an existential realization of youth being a passing phase (Marin, this volume), freedom and what makes life worth living (Stenner, this volume), the fundamental ethic dimension of otherness (Marková, this volume) and the possibility of self-determination and intentionality (Chimirri, this volume). Should these questions, debated for millennia in religions and philosophies, be part of what psychologists address? We argue unequivocally—yes. That we are touching upon such fundamental questions gives us confidence that we are homing in on important issues.

Together with many others we have been worried about psychology becoming a science of the small and superficial (Toomela, 2010; Yurevich, 2007; Zittoun, Gillespie, & Cornish, 2008). Psychology is a moral science (Brinkmann, 2004; Marková, 2013) which should provide insight on the big questions. Cultural psychology sets as its goal to understand human life as culturally constructed. And culture is precisely what humans create and use to deal with a complex, unpredictable and infinite world, and their own fundamental frailty and morality. It is because the fundamental questions of otherness, freedom, self-determination, facing death, are part

of the human lot, that we believe that psychologists should address them. These are indeed what the persons we study through rich data are dealing with. This is ultimately where we, as authors, join them; and these are so fascinating, because we see them struggling with the very same questions that we are (Devereux, 1967). Eventually, it is also as scientists that we learn to reflect and distance ourselves from these others and their unique experiences; but through it, we learn about human lives and our own lives. Accordingly, we were both surprised and happy that our chapter triggered reflection on such fundamental questions. Perhaps this is yet another indication that a rich in-depth case study can bring us close to the heart of what psychology should be.

GOALS AND AUDIENCE

Having considered issues of epistemology and methodology, issues of experience, context and human psychological development, and fundamental questions about ethics, freedom and existentialism, it becomes clear that we are at risk of violating the advice we give to our students: not to be too ambitious, and to explore only one idea per analysis and to have in mind one clear audience. In this vein, some commentators raise questions about our focus and our target audience. For example, Chimirri (this volume) asks about our many possible goals and Belzen (this volume) asks about our potential and multiple audiences. Clarifying these issues will form the conclusion of our commentary.

First, we had a practical goal. We decided to use the wonderful opportunity of the Niels Bohr Lectures in Cultural Psychology to bring together the theoretical work which we have been pursuing together and with many colleagues over the past decade. In 2003 and 2004, while we were at the University of Cambridge, we worked with Flora Cornish and Emmilie Aveling first to make a research proposal to the Nuffield Foundation to locate and transcribe a suitable diary, and subsequently to analyze the data. Our dream then was to have a rich longitudinal single case data set which would be in the public domain and which could serve the basis for theoretical debate. The project took much longer than we anticipated, and it led us to work with many colleagues, and even organize a European Science Foundation workshop on collaborative research and collaborative data analysis (Cornish, Zittoun & Gillespie, 2007). We see our contribution to the Niels Bohr Lectures in Cultural Psychology series, and specifically the responses of all the commentators, as the culmination of this project.

Second, we had a theoretical goal. We used June's diary to explore an emerging idea which we believe to be theoretically generalizable to many other contexts. Our analysis, in this sense, is not meant to be representative

of the data; if someone else analyzed the data, different things would, quite rightly, emerge. Indeed, in our previous analyses we analyzed June's use of symbolic resources (Zitoun, Cornish, Gillespie, & Aveling, 2008), the voices within June's diary (Gillespie, Cornish, Aveling, & Zitoun, 2007), and June being caught between conflicting representations of womanhood (Zitoun, Aveling, Gillespie, & Cornish, 2011). The present analysis, however, has had a different focus. We have tried to address the question of where the tensions within June's experience, which drive transformation, came from. In this sense, we have taken a step back from analyzing the tensions within the diary, to explore how these tensions originated in June's trajectory through the War, and specifically, in her movement through three geographic and social contexts. Thus we aimed to make a theoretical contribution linked together previous theoretical work on the way in which people manage transitions (Zitoun, 2006; Zitoun, Duveen, Gillespie, Iverson, & Psaltis, 2003) and the way in which people move within social and institutional worlds (Gillespie, 2005; Martin & Gillespie, 2010). Vygotsky is widely cited for claiming that psychological processes originate in social interactions; however, he also acknowledged that his account of how this occurred was incomplete (Zitoun, Gillespie, Cornish, & Psaltis, 2007; Gillespie, 2007). Our contribution has been to show that there is a relationship between an individual's movement through society, into and out of various social relations and milieu, and the individual's psychological movements of mind, that is, their dialogical tensions, and self-reflections.

Our audience for this theoretical contribution is most immediately cultural psychologists. It is a luxury of the Niels Bohr Lecture in Cultural Psychology that it provides such a focused audience, an audience that is so demonstrably willing to engage with both theoretical ideas and empirical data. Arguably, a more diverse audience would have limited the depth of discussion and theoretical exploration which could be pursued. We decided not to include critiques and limitations of existing studies within our chapter. Our aim, we like to think, was more positive and constructive than critical. Our aim was to add to the literature a focus on movement, specifically the relation between movements in the social world and movements within the semantic and psychological domain. While cultural psychologists often write about time and temporality in the abstract, we wanted to make these important insights concrete, by arguing that time usually manifests in an empirical sense as movement, either through physical or symbolic worlds. We wanted this idea to receive critical scrutiny, for our conceptualization to be probed, challenged and elaborated. Ideas can grow only in social situations in which there is trust and respect; and the substantive and critical engagement of our colleagues is the proof and the actualization of this type of respectful community (Perret-Clermont, 2004). However, ideas, initially nurtured in such a community, and which survive the scrutiny of

that community, must then move on to circulate more widely. In effect our effort toward an integrative approach to understanding humans-in-society is just one little step in a broader need for theoretical integration. If it might facilitate further integrated dialogues, we would be delighted; but about this, we can only say, like June (June 5th, 1945): "come what may!"

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