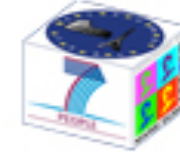




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# Dialogical methods for investigating social representations in various professional practices

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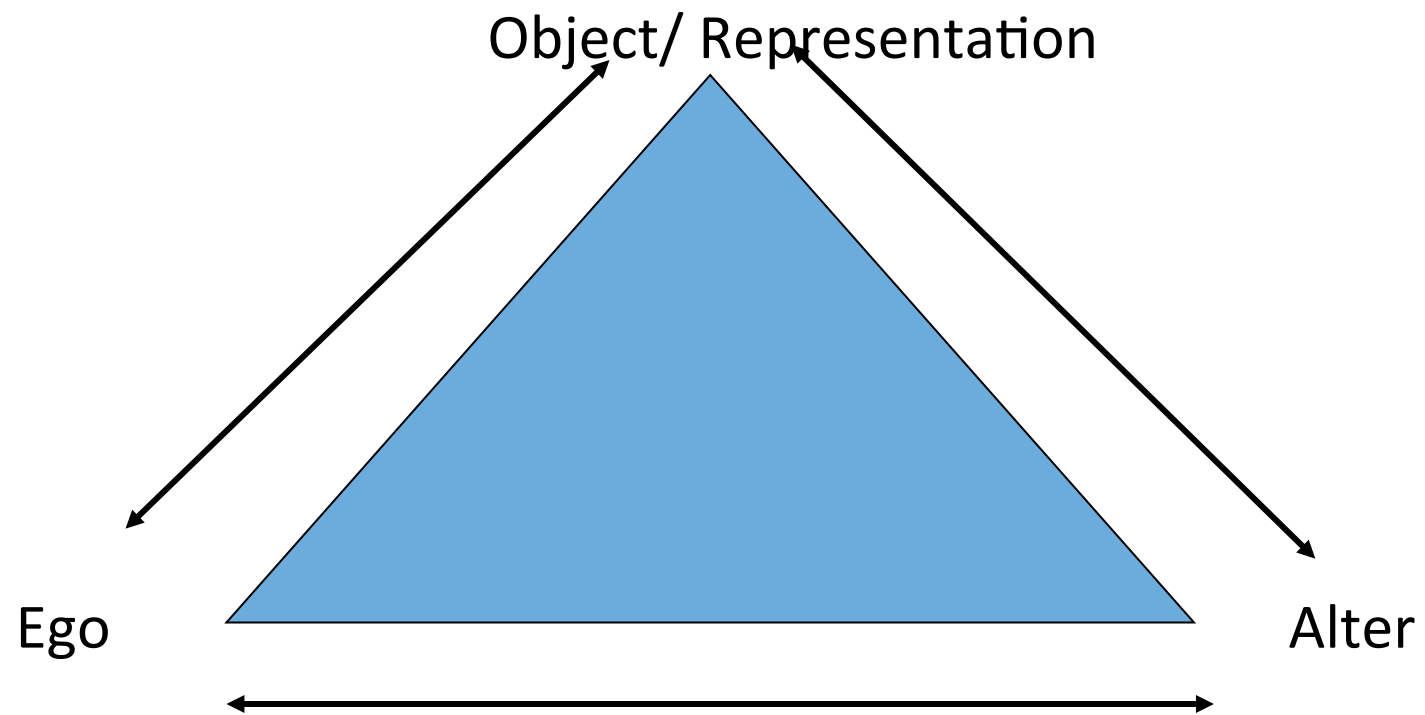
# Aims of this lecture

- 1. Social representations and dialogicality
  - Approaches to social representations
  - 'Dialogical' approaches
  - Dialogicality in relation to social representations
- 2. Problem of designing dialogical methods
  - Epistemologies based on the Ego-Alter-Object
- 3. Dialogical methods in professional practices: examples
  - Caring for the disabled
  - Psychotherapy
  - Family therapy
  - Educational practices

# Relationship between dialogicality and social representations

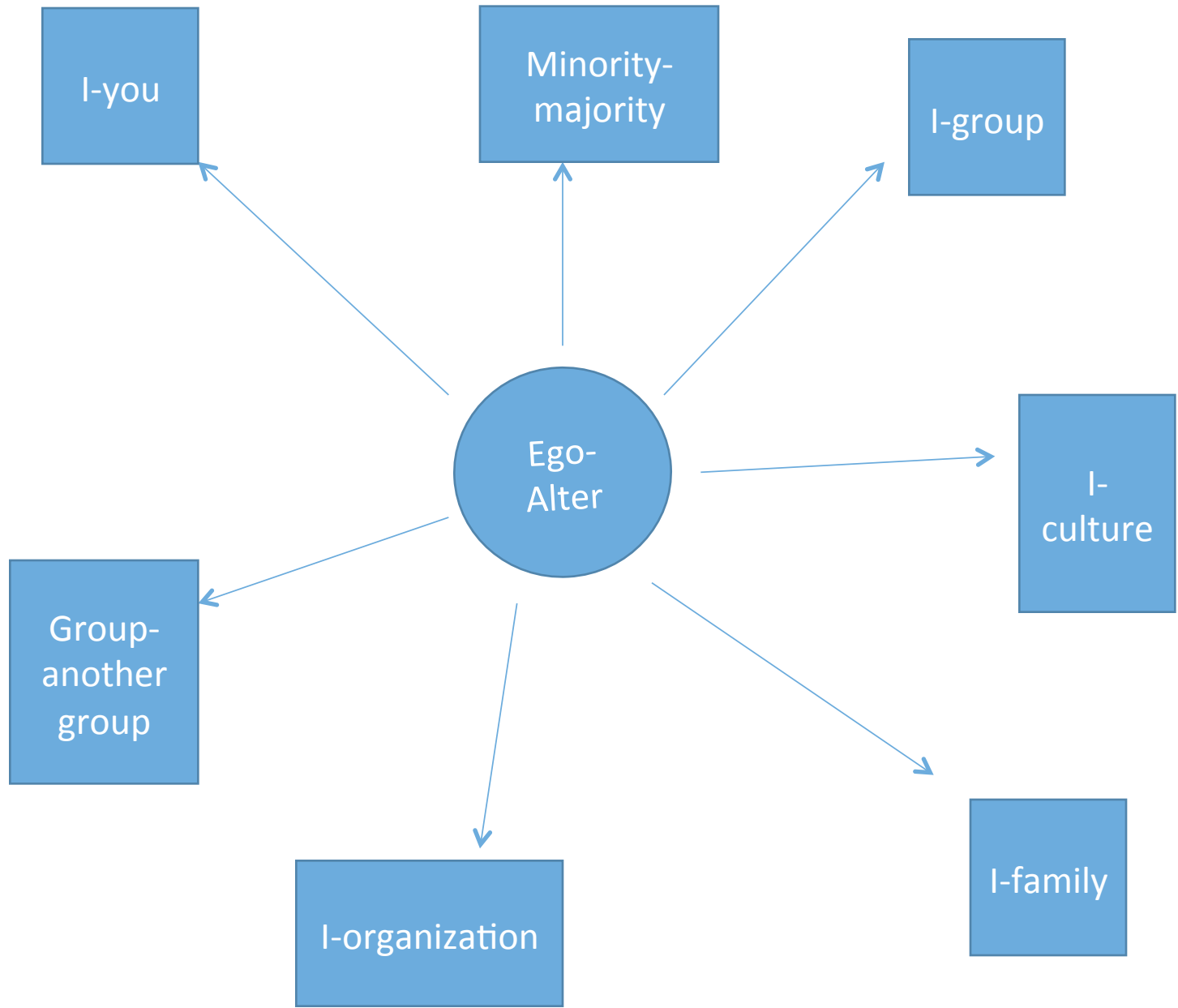
- Approaches to social representations: Moscovici's original approach; Structural approach; Anthropological approach; Organising principles; dialogicality
- These pose different QUESTIONS and use different CONCEPTS; therefore, they require different METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES
- What questions does this pose for the methodological polytheism?
- Moscovici's point of departure was *interaction*. He *explicitly* introduced the Ego-Alter-Object distinction in 1972; its *implicit* meaning can be already discerned in *La Psychanalyse* in 1961. In *La Psychanalyse* the Ego (lay people, professionals) is confronted with the Alter (e.g. the Church, Communist party, journalists, politicians) with respect to the Object (psychoanalysis)
- Two kinds of empirical data: from the Ego and from the Alter. They were equally important and mutually interdependent.

# The Ego-Alter-Object



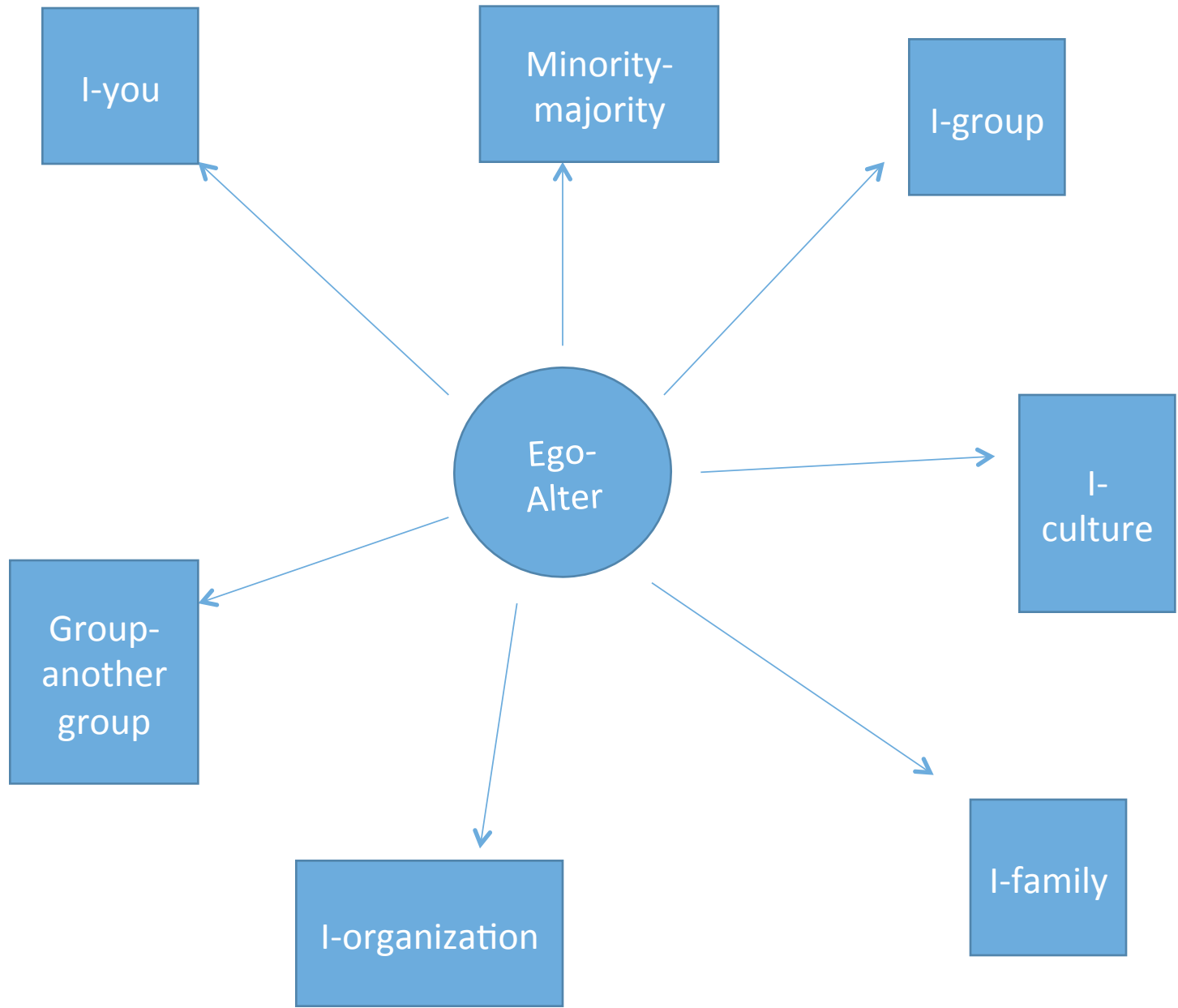
# Dialogical approaches

- various approaches that call themselves 'dialogical'; e.g. dialogical self (Hermans); linguistics in France; ecumenical approach of Per Linell;
- My approach to dialogicality is based on the concept of the Ego-Alter-Object (implicit in the dialogical philosophies of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Fichte, Hegel, Neo-Kantian Marburg School, Mikhail Bakhtin).
- The specificity of the Ego-Alter interdependence in social representations and in dialogicality rests in the *uniqueness* of communication. This means that the data obtained from the particular Ego and from the particular Alter cannot be inductively 'generalised' to other situations without attention to the specificity and uniqueness of the communication between the interdependent parties
- Moscovici's study of social representations of psychoanalysis as a unique single case study based on uniqueness of communication



# Relationship between dialogicality and social representations

- Dialogicality as epistemology of daily life and of professional practices
- The meaning of the Self-Other interdependence: NOT 'neutral' information processing or a pure cognitive function, but it is an ethical interdependence
- **Axioms and concepts** of dialogical epistemology
- Axioms:
  - the Ego-Alter as an irreducible ethical and *ontological* unit
  - the Ego-Alter-Object as an irreducible ethical and *epistemological* unit
  - the Ego-Alter and the Ego-Alter-Object as being interdependent in the terms of dialogical thinking (imagination, multivoicedness or heteroglossia, intersubjectivity, the search for social recognition, trust and responsibility), dialogical communication and dialogical action.





# Relationship between dialogicality and social representations

- Concepts of dialogical epistemology are derived from axioms
- Solving concrete problems - more specific concepts are required. For example, a professional may wish explore *resilience* of people with deafblindness, *social representations of authority* in schools, or *patients' satisfaction* with a particular health service practice. Resilience, authority or satisfaction, are examined from the dialogical perspective as *dialogical concepts*
- For instance, in order to understand the meaning of resilience in a specific problem, the researcher considers the quality of the Self-Other(s) interdependence, features of collaborative intersubjective thinking, trust, etc.
- An empirical exploration of a specific problem (a social representation of something) must not abandon the Ego-Alter-Object interdependence

# The problem of designing dialogical methods

- The Self-Other interactions: heterogeneous relations (e.g. Self-group, family-culture) and voices (e.g. Self-inner Other; Self-external Other) and other kinds of dynamic relations. The complexity of such interactions has led to questions about the problem of designing dialogical methods
- Michèle Grossen (2010): ‘to what extent is it possible to develop analytical tools that are fully coherent with dialogical assumptions?’ Any analysis contradicts multivoicedness and the complexity of interactions. While dialogical approaches are holistic, any analysis presupposes breaking down the data into elements, eliminating the dynamic nature of the data. These concerns shared by others
- Persistent attempts to cope with the complexities and heterogeneities
  - Designing more dynamic methods (Lehman (2012) proposes a dialogical sequence analysis in order to study clients’ utterances in psychotherapy
  - Dialogical Methods for Investigation of Happening of Change in family therapy (Seikkula, Laitila and Rober, 2012) - the micro-analysis of topical episodes
  - Salgado et als (2013) – a review of dialogical methods; criticism of their limitations
  - Gillespie and Cornish (2014) – sensitising questions

# One does not test axioms

- The presupposition that one can develop dialogical methods by overcoming weaknesses of current empirical methods contradicts the very idea of the dialogical mind according to which the Self-Other forms a unique and unbreakable relationship. Equally, if we presuppose that dialogical phenomena are multi voiced, dynamic, heterogeneous, intersubjective, etc., this means that these are foundations or axioms or 'the unquestioned givens'.
- If something is 'the given', or if it is an axiom from which the researcher starts, then he/she does not ask or test whether 'the given' exists
- Example from information processing: Shelly Chaiken (1980) took it for granted that humans are information processors. Building on this 'given', the author distinguishes between systematic and heuristic information processing in persuasion. Using an inductive type of design Chaiken found that high involvement in a persuasive message was related to systematic information processing while low involvement was connected with heuristic information processing. The researcher makes her 'givens', or her axioms, like 'humans as information processors', part of the research design without questioning them: axioms are indubitable presuppositions from which the researcher starts.

# One does not test axioms

- If dialogical epistemology presupposes that the Self-Other forms a unique relation, it implies that in dialogical research and professional practices this relation is an axiom or 'the given', and therefore, it is not questioned. If we presuppose the triangularity of the Ego-Alter-Object, multivoicedness, etc., then we do not design a study to test for the existence of these 'givens'
- Example: presupposing multivoicedness, we study forms, qualities and properties of multivoicedness in different conditions of the unique Self-Other interdependence
- Mikhail Bakhtin - Dostoyevsky's novels -presupposing multivoicedness, Bakhtin showed its properties and specificities
- Independent voices in a constant tension - nothing finished in a dialogue, tension is orientated towards new events, towards new interpretations of the other's words
- Bakhtin views the problem of polyphony not as a search for method but for understanding of the unfinalised human existence, self- and other-consciousness, whether in daily life, in art or science.

# Single case studies: Uniqueness of the Ego-Alter interdependence

- Uniqueness of the Self-Other interdependence is the foremost feature of dialogical epistemology and therefore, in order to capture uniqueness, one must explore each case of the Self-Other interdependence as a specific instance.
- My aim: to show qualities and features of dialogicality (trust, responsibility, search for recognition, intersubjectivity, imagination) manifesting themselves
- Moscovici's study of social representations of psychoanalysis
  - the citizens' (the Ego) thinking and communications
  - the Communist Party and of the Catholic Church (the Alter)
  - Psychoanalysis (the Object)
- Single case studies wrongly confounded with qualitative methods Yin (2003).
- It is vital to single case studies is the concept that the Self and the Other (e.g. socio-cultural context) are interdependent, both contributing empirical data.
- The problem defines how the researcher designs a single case study

# The Ego-Alter interdependence in dialogical professional practices

- In non-problematic communication, dialogical features like co-construction of meanings, heterogeneity, multivoicedness, unfinalisability of messages and others, are adopted largely **implicitly** and are routinely implemented
- In a discourse involving people with communication difficulties the participants become **explicitly** aware of these dialogical features because they cannot be routinely applied; the disruption of communicative synchrony and misunderstandings
- Some cases.

# Congenital deafblindness

- Communication involving people with congenital deafblindness (CDB) - an extreme case of difficulties - carers and researchers working in the field of CDB - methodically explored the nature of the dialogical mind. The terminology which they systematically use, e.g. 'co-construction', 'co-creating communication', 'co-production' 'co-presence', 'co-development' and possibly some other 'co-' indicates their supreme dialogical concerns.
- Souriau - a 'hyper-dialogue' - people with CDB, in order to establish communication, all dialogical experiences must be explicitly acknowledged, negotiated and agreed upon
- The opposition between implicit and explicit knowledge in conversations involving people with CDB - tension due to the difficulties to recognize elements which are and are not tacitly shared, and which are intended to be shared, thematized and topicalised
- tension arising from the discrepancy between different scenarios in the mind of the person with CDB and the carer; to trust the Other -the belief that the Other adopts the listening attitude which is sustained despite the difficulty in predicting the intended meaning - trust as the search for dignity and social recognition facilitates dialogical relations
- None of these dyadic relations remain stable during the course of conversation involving people with CDB, but they are constantly reorganized and adapted to new situations as the topic of conversation develops and changes.

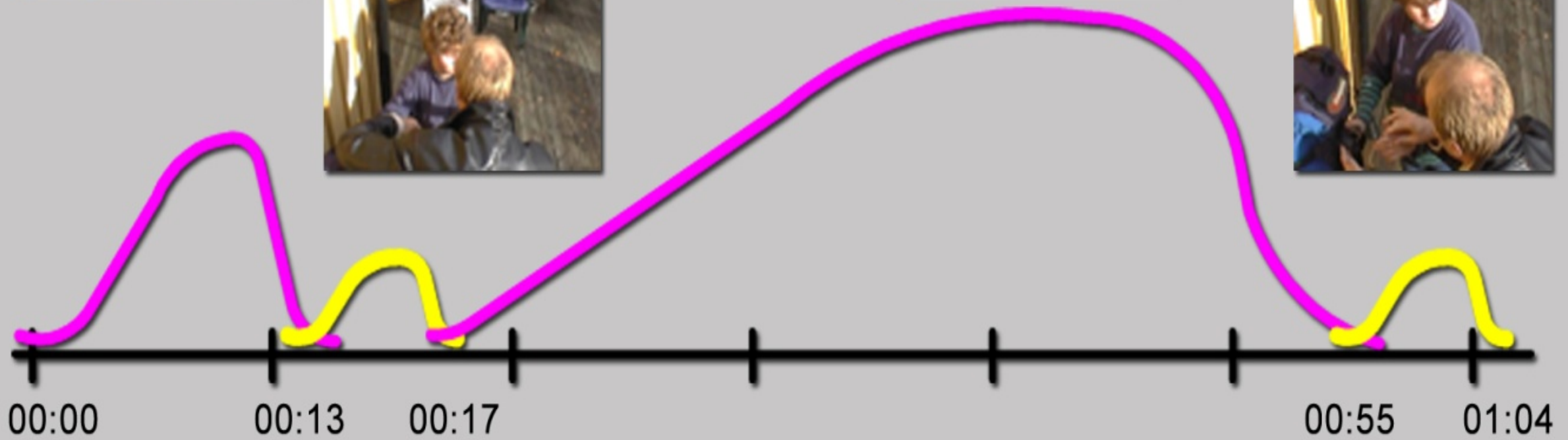
# Congenital deafblindness

- **The uniqueness of tactile dialogues**
- The *uniqueness* of each individual with CDB. Different degrees of CDB (e.g. residual vision and hearing); they may have other conditions (e.g. autism, learning difficulties), and specific personality features. Co-creating meanings together with their carers through repetitions, co-creating narratives
- Meanings based on tactile communication of people with CDB are unique to each Self-Other dyad; mutual reciprocation of gestures and signs and their sharing; Tension arising from the search for intersubjectivity and the struggle for social recognition.
- People with CDB - a constant risk that using their unique tactile gestures they have co-created with their carers will not be understood by other carers
- Resilience - when they encounter such problems in communication; dialogical trust depends on the listening attitude of the Other which acknowledges the speaker as an agent



# Congenital deafblindness

- Vege had worked with Ingerid for 10 years: The aim of his study was to examine the extent to which the carer contributes to the development of sustained communication
- The term 'co-presence': as a prerequisite for mutuality and sustained attention to one another. Participants may be physically co-present yet each could be closed in their own monological worlds.
- Vege defines 'co-presence' as an attitude, a state of mental, bodily and emotional awareness of co-existing in each other's presence; an active state of attention that offers the individual who is CDB perceptible signs of attentiveness, which consist of expressions that have an emotional effect on the other.
- Awareness of co-presence - **if the person with CDB suddenly stops responding in the middle of a conversation - may indicate a transition from external to internal dialogue – taking a temporary dialogical position of a thinker. This position is indicated when the person does not direct his/her gestures at the listener but at the Self. This temporary directing of attention towards the Self may indicate that he/she is engaging in making sense of his/her own position within the dialogue**
- The challenge for the carer is to recognize, acknowledge and respect that the person with CDB is engaged in thinking
- The exploration of the transition between external and internal dialogue was one of the features of Gunnar Vege's (2009) research.



**A big smile**



# Re-constructing shared experience and constructing a narrative

- Ingerid and Vege were fishing for crabs - sharing emotions whilst feeling crabs moving in their palms and then on a bare forearm; sensations and movements of a crab crawling on arms and hands, excitement and location of movements of the crab
- The following day Ingerid and Vege talked about their past shared experiences and they re-created the crab-line theme. Gunnar 'placed the crab in his palm' and Ingerid touched his palm in the same way as on the previous day. Then she 'allowed the crab to circle in her palm'. Ingerid took more initiative and 'said' that it felt like the crab going up her arm and showed it by her fingertips
- The co-construction of the narrative continued through touching the aspects that had made impressions - fixed and stabilized meaningful signs; attention to imagination as a guiding force in this co-construction of narrative is facilitated by Gunnar's capacity to take the perspective of the Other, to re-create the atmosphere of joint experience and to provide space for Ingerid's self-expression.

# Multivoicedness in dialogical practices

- Multivoicedness/heteroglossia an axiom characterizing the Self-Other(s) interdependence
- Dialogue involves not only the voices of actual participants, but also voices of participants who are not present, as well as with the past and contemporary cultural and institutional standpoints
- Diverse forms of multivoicedness:
- Bakhtin: The hero's and the author's intentions may clash and lead to transformations of one another's intentions and so contribute to the dynamics of dialogue (e.g. the hero's intention to carry out a particular action while the author may, through the mouth of the hero, question the morality of that intention; heteroglossia may refer to external and internal dialogues
- Multivoicedness may refer to the professional's repetitions of the partner's dialogical contribution in order to confirm that it was understood correctly. In such situations the professional or carer articulates both his/her own words and the voice of the partner with cerebral palsy.

# Multivoicedness in dialogical practices

- Cerebral palsy is a disorder of movement and posture caused by trauma to the brain before or at birth. A person with cerebral palsy may have multiple disabilities, ranging from severely limited voluntary bodily movements, uncontrollable spasms, epilepsy and atony, to learning difficulties. People with cerebral palsy may have problems with articulating speech, and to make themselves understood, they use a range of gestures, facial expressions and bodily movements. In order to facilitate their interactions with others, they may use electronic and/or paper-based alternative and augmentative communication systems.
- In the given example we note that the different voices that M is using to co-construct the narrative with A refer to different kinds of shared knowledge; cultural (e.g. not liking spiders), personal (e.g. appreciating emotional features of the story), dialogically established forms of interaction (e.g. anticipations and imaginations of what will happen, expressing interest in the story, inner comments). Whatever forms the multivoicedness take, they testify to the fact that dialogues are not linear strings of single voices, of transparent meanings or question-answer sequences. Multivoicedness not only shows the richness of communication, but it also challenges professionals and their clients to take account of the competing voices in dialogue.

## An extract from Spider:. M = non-speaker; A = carer

- *M: (pointing on board)*
- *(vocalisation)*
- A: Thursday
- *M: (pointing on board)*
- *(vocalisation)*
- A: night
- *M: ye*
- *M: (pointing on board)*
- *(vocalisation)*
- A: was
- *M: (pointing on board)*
- *(vocalisation)*
- A: *(nods)*
- .huhh funny
- *M: after*
- *M: (smiling)*
- *(pointing on board)*
- *(vocalisation)*

A articulates the word 'Thursday' to which M pointed on the board. The utterance 'Thursday night was funny after [sic] went home' was spoken with a narrative tone – like when telling a story

## An extract from Spider:. M = non-speaker; A = carer

- A: *(laughing)*
- M: *(smiles)*
- *(pointing on board)*
- *(vocalisation)*
- A: *(smiling)*
- M: *(smiles)*
- A: (tuts) went ho::me
- M: aye
- A: *(nodding)*
- *(tuts)* I missed all the fun as if speaking to herself
- M: *(laughing)*
- A: what did you do eliciting the response from M
- M: *(pointing on board)* *(pointing on board)*
- *(vocalisation)* *(vocalisation)*
-



## An extract from Spider:. M = non-speaker; A = carer

- A: *(smiles)*
- .
- .
- .
- A: .hhh .hhh ye::s :tell me more
- M: *(laughs)*
- M: *(smiling) (pointing on board)*
- A: put hhh .hhh
- M: *(smiling) (pointing on board)*
- A: *(smiles)*
- M: *(knowingly)*
- A: a spi::de::r

eliciting response from M

voicing M's word

## An extract from Spider:. M = non-speaker; A = carer

- *M: (looking on board) (laughs)*
- *A: (looking on board) (laughs)*
- Mm I think I know what's coming as if talking to herself
- *M: (pointing on board) (laughs) (laughs)*
- *A: in::: (in tone of anticipation)* voicing M's utterance
- *M: (nods)*
- *A: Judith::'s be:d!*
- *M: (nods)*
- *A: ((tuts)) .hhhh (.) does she like spiders (serious tone)* commenting on M's message,
- *M: (shaking head) (pointing on board)* which expresses dislike of spiders
- *(laughing) (vocalisation)* in the culture they share

# Multivoicedness in psychotherapy

- Grossen and Salazar Orvig (2011) investigate not only the voices of participants who are present but also echoes of the voices that took part in past discourses, or even in imagined discourses. Taking and rejecting epistemic responsibility: In the extract below, in lines 1 – 3 the mother uses the term ‘brusque’ that had been first used by the absent teacher. In the actual discourse it was reintroduced by the therapist’s reformulation of the mother’s utterance in line 6 below, and then addressing the child in line 9:
- 1 M 34: (. . .) the teacher also told me (. . .)
- 2 M 35: (. . .) he is quite brusque also in his- in his- in his
- 3 behaviours he’s a::
- 4 T 39: [a direct]
- 5 M 36: [a little bit] excited, a bit direct yeah yeah +
- 6 T 40: so he’s brusque and then it provokes reactions’
- 7 M 37: from the others’
- 8 M 38: yeah (T looks at Alain)
- 9 T 42: (to Alain) how do they react when you are brusque’

# Multivoicedness in psychotherapy

- The term 'brusque', (M 35) was integrated into the therapist's discourse, but it did not indicate who was epistemically responsible for the meaning expressed by that term. The therapist's expression 'so he is brusque and then it provokes reactions' implicitly requires the mother to take a position with respect to that expression. Lastly, the therapist addresses the child using the term 'brusque' as if it was the therapist's chosen term while the reference to the teacher is now completely lost.
- In sum, the speaker may simultaneously take several positions, for example, as an author of his/her utterance, as someone who responds to the interlocutor, as someone who echoes an opinion of his/her parents or of a political party, or as someone who is anxious about the opinion of his/her interlocutor. The richness of styles, genres, as well as of stereotypes expressed in and through the diversity of voices would not be possible if speakers did not rely upon cultural, institutional, socially shared, and common sense knowledge.

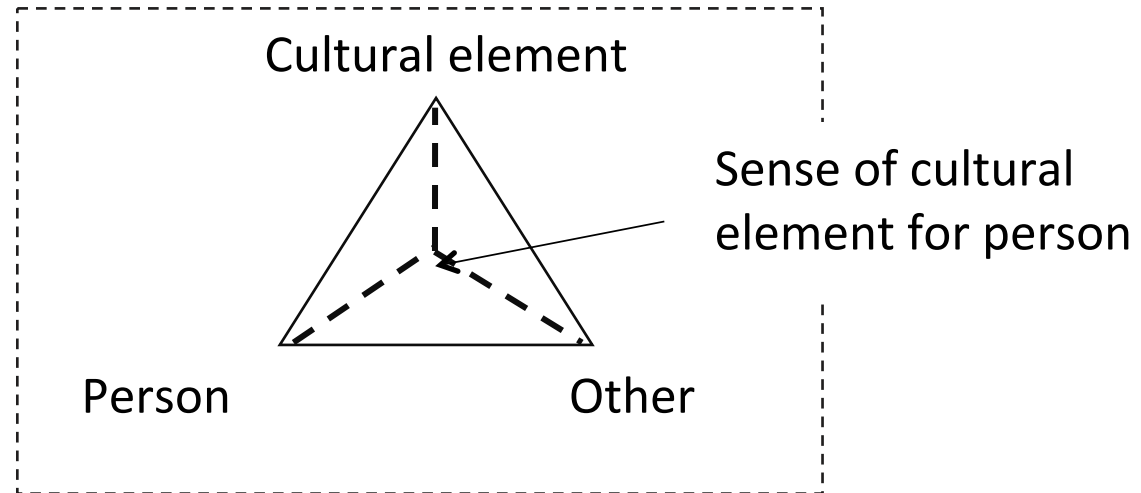
# Revealing and concealing secrets: family therapy

- Individuals or families not willing to reveal sensitive information or secrets that threaten their integrity and social recognition (e.g. incest, mental and physical illness, alcoholism, extramarital affairs, suicides, homicides, artificial procreation, adoption)
- Keeping a secret may lead to tensions and conflicts; disclosing to certain individuals while excluding others; barriers among members of a family, the formation of coalitions, stress and loneliness of the excluded family members.
- One secret is linked with other secrets, e.g. a suicide in the family may be linked to a mental illness or to poor marital relations and so on. Secrets encourage imagination and fantasies, which may be highly exaggerated and relations between members may be ruined due to presumed untrustworthy and half-true communications, silences and taboos
- Conventional knowledge implies that if the whole story of the family secret is revealed, then it is possible for truth to be made known. However, multiple voices are telling different 'truths' and none of them can count as a definite truth because they were dealing with a process never to be completed (Bakhtin, 1981)
- 'selective disclosure' captures more fully the complexities of family communication as a multifaceted process in time, allowing for the creation of an open dialogical space

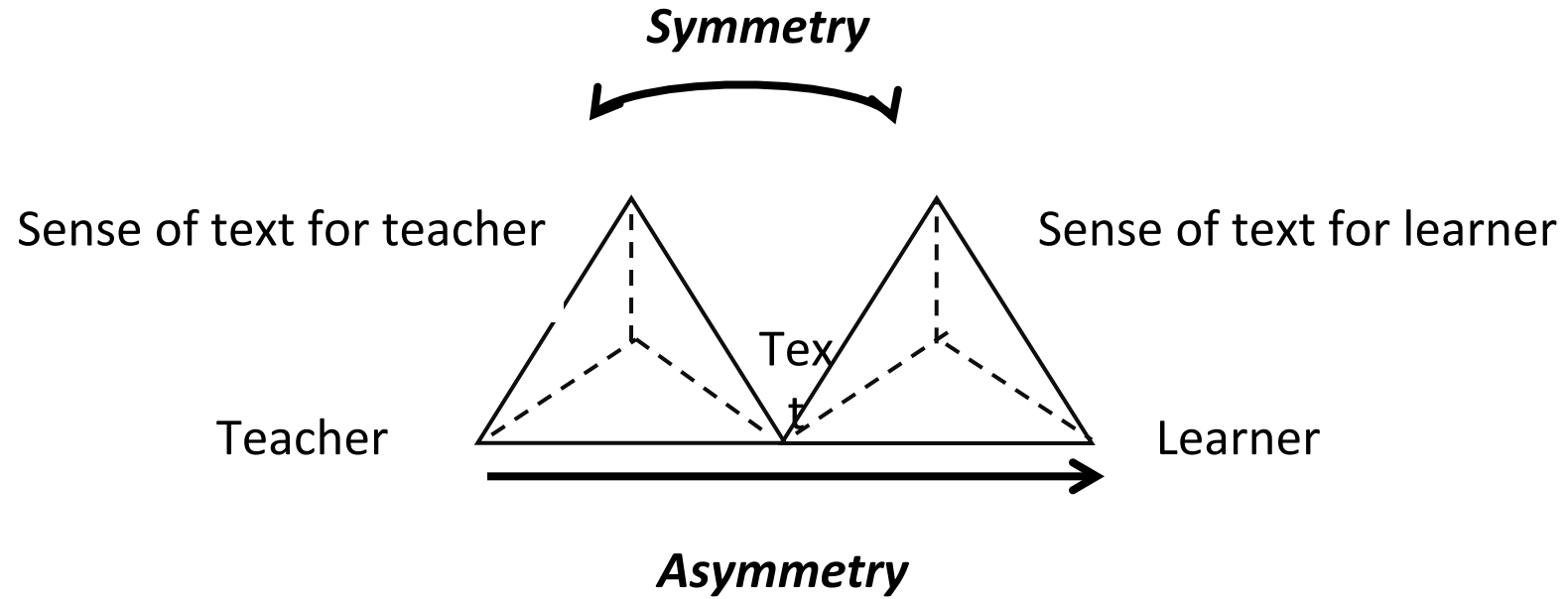
# Revealing and concealing secrets: family therapy

- Flåm and Haugstvedt, (2013) - caregivers' awareness of children's first signs of sexual abuse, circumstances facilitating and hindering such awareness, and trust/distrust in relation to such circumstances. The disclosure of a child's signs largely determined by dialogical sensitivity of the trusted caregivers to the child's report, in particular if that involved another trusted person; the child in need of a great deal of encouragement from the adult to disclose
- The child, abused by a trusted person (e.g. a parent, a neighbour), might feel responsible for the abuse or be frightened. The adult might not be a good listener, might disbelieve the child and be lacking in dialogical sensitivity
- Flåm and Haugstvedt (2013) - numerous instances showing the caregiver's disregard for the child's information; the child unable to speak directly and using indirect questions: "Do I HAVE to go to uncle?" or "Do I HAVE to wash the dishes even though I get paid?" Interpretation of such questions as a reluctance, unwillingness or laziness; sensitivity provides opportunity action. Example: Mother was about to leave for a night shift and the daughter asks: 'Is it YOU, mommy? Do you HAVE to leave for work?' - husband was abusing their daughter

# The semiotic prism



# Trust in teaching-learning interactions





# Can one generalise from single cases?

- Conventional knowledge - one needs more than a single case to be assured – or at least to expect - that the matter in question has a general validity. This ignores that ‘generalization’ in human and social sciences can be answered in different ways.
- Bent Flyvbjerg (2006) - against conventional misunderstandings of single case studies; single cases must be strategically selected to bring out their richness, and to make them most effective for analytic generalization. Several possibilities around choosing the case for study: extreme or deviant cases that can provide complex and productive data that cannot be obtained from inductive studies; in accord with this perspective - studies based on discourse involving people with communicative disabilities
- Moscovici’s study of psychoanalysis as a social representation - a single historical event, different kinds of intellectual polemics generated in that study - these are transferable to other kinds of events typified by that event e.g. religious clashes, contemporary problems of migration, or epidemics of severe illnesses.

# A single case study versus an inductive study of 'history'

- A study which explored temporal distancing as a determinant of the perception of the just world (Warner et al, 2012, the EJSP). Introductory psychology students were randomly assigned to read, online, a vignette about a victim in the near condition (the victim was abused last year) or a vignette about a victim in the distant past (five years ago), and make judgement about blaming the aggressor. In this case, the context, i.e. the vignette, serves as a background, or an independent variable, i.e. 'near past' or 'distant past'. Not treated as a historical event; no role of circumstances of the assault, personal experience, psychological background. The participants are treated or classified as subjects without history and culture, as undifferentiated and undefined. All what matters here is the researchers' hypothesis about the effect of 'near past' and 'distant past' and attributing these categories, quite mechanically, social reality.
- The theory of social representations explores the formation and transformation of common sense knowledge and beliefs of **unique** social phenomena in specific socio-political and historical situations. Like historical events, phenomena studied in social representations are unique. Both the relevant features of the context and the data from participants and objects of representations are interdependent.

# Another example: disregarding the context

- The French historian Le Roy Ladurie - a study of false witchcraft beliefs over several centuries by peasants of Languedoc. The British philosopher Quentin Skinner – a critique: He argues that Le Roy Ladurie treated these beliefs as irrational beliefs –as a ‘mass delirium’. Such assumption excludes other possible explanations for holding false beliefs
- Any belief, including a false belief, must be treated not on its own, but as a part of the whole social phenomenon under study; as part of a set of diverse beliefs that allows for the formulation of a preliminary theory. A false belief may ensue from other beliefs and, indeed, could be reasonably inferred from those. With respect to a concrete case of false witchcraft beliefs, Skinner refers to the Bible where witch-hunting is ‘the directly inspired word of God’. The Bible states ‘you shall not allow a witch to live’ (Exodus, 22, 18) and since in the 16<sup>th</sup> century the word of God could not be questioned, and any inferences from the Bible would be treated as rational at the time; peasants might not even be aware of any such connections but their beliefs could have been related to myths about witches transmitted over generations
- The views of the sociologist Emile Durkheim. Durkheim treated collective representations inferred from religion as rational: they were part of institutional rules, morals and customs – although some beliefs were more rational than others. One can think about various possible relations between beliefs and explanations..

# Dialogical generalisation

- The choice of a marginal or a critical case. If a marginal (critical) case does not show any effect, one can assume that non-critical case, too, would be without effect (if a committed member of the Communist Party has no social representation of Marxist economy, non-committed individuals would likewise not have such representations)
- Generalisation of theories
- Charles Sanders Peirce did not start with the search for data - Instead, real life phenomena were in front of him to be observed, to be made sense of, or to be explained. The researcher observes a single event as a whole, and devises a preliminary theory concerning that whole by means of intuition (or what Peirce called instinct). In 'Scientific Imagination' Peirce argues that when a researcher desires to know the truth, 'his first effort will be to imagine what that truth can be' (Peirce, 1.46). This is accomplished by abductive reasoning by which Peirce meant 'examining a mass of facts and in allowing these facts to suggest a theory' and in doing so the researcher gains new ideas. Such a preliminary theory merely suggests that something may be or may-not be the case (5.171; 6.475; 8.238) and the researcher must be prepared to discard or to change it if it proves to be irrelevant. Yet if abductive reasoning proves to be correct, 'it allows characterizing the dynamics of the unique case while it arrives at generalization' (Salvatore and Valsiner, 2010, p. 817).
- Let us conclude that conceptually underlain and well designed single case studies provide the basis for theoretical generalization and that even a single episode in the flow of experience of a single person can serve such purpose Nevertheless, such studies must show their 'clear axiomatic stand' (Valsiner, 2014).