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**Abstract** In the light of the preceding article (Hermans, 2001), a new method, the Personal Position Repertoire (PPR), is presented that can be used in research and practice. The method is illustrated with several actual case studies showing the different parts and steps of the method to be followed. Special emphasis is given to the organization and reorganization of the position repertoire, to the implied meaning units and their affective connotations. Three key concepts are elaborated in the method: multivoicedness, dialogical interchange and power. The illustrations show how these concepts can be investigated in their combination. Finally, two case studies are presented from a couple, a Dutch woman and an Algerian man, living on the contact zones of two cultures. The place of cultural positions as part of their position repertoire is discussed.

**Key Words** affect, dialogue, meaning, multivoicedness, polyphony, position repertoire

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# The Construction of a Personal Position Repertoire: Method and Practice

Whereas the preceding article (Hermans, 2001) was focused on the theory of the dialogical self, the present contribution deals with a method, based on the same theory, and its application in practical settings. The method, the Personal Position Repertoire (PPR), is based on the following considerations.

First, the purpose of the method is the study of the organization and reorganization of a person's position repertoire with attention to the personal meanings that are associated with the different positions. Positioning and meaning construction are closely related issues.

Second, the method is both quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative part of the method enables the researcher or practitioner to compare, on the basis of particular dimensions, the commonality and differences of the several positions within the same individual and facilitates the comparison of different individuals. The qualitative aspect is based on the consideration that the construction of meaning

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is more than a measurable, quantitative matter. Meaning construction and reconstruction require proper attention to the stories people tell about their lives and to the ways people affectively organize events that are part of their personal and collective histories. The quantitative parts of the method are to be seen not as fixed results but as invitations to a discussion between psychologist and participant. The outcomes of the quantitative analyses require the interpretation of the participants and are taken up as elements in a broader discussion with the psychologist.

Third, closely related to the qualitative aspect of the position repertoire, the notion of 'voice' will be of central importance to the method presented here. The utterances of people, recounting the events in their everyday life, will be reported as they are spoken by the participants of the investigation themselves. That is, the utterances of people talking about their experiences and reflecting about some relevant aspects of their lives will not be hidden from view or covered by the interpretations and scientific concepts from the psychologist or researcher. Certainly, these psychological interpretations and concepts are a central part of the method to be discussed in this article, but the words, concepts and interpretations from the participants are reported in their original formulations so that their voices can be heard as they want to be heard.

Fourth, this is a general method for the investigation of the content, organization and reorganization of people's position repertoire. Like the theory of the dialogical self, the method is not restricted to any psychological subdiscipline but rather of a more general nature. This implies that research and practice in one psychological subdiscipline may be relevant to research and practice in any other subdiscipline or discipline. This point of view implies that research or applications in developmental psychology, clinical psychology or psychotherapy may contribute to the understanding of cultural processes or cultural positioning.

Fifth, it is not suggested that this is the only method for assessing the multivoicedness and dialogicality of the self. One of the purposes of this article is to present an example of a dialogical method with the possibility that other researchers may create other or even better theory-guided alternatives. Moreover, the PPR is not devised as a standardized method. It can be adapted and revised according to the purposes and needs of individual researchers or practitioners in their specific settings and circumstances. Rather than offering a ready-made method for 'measuring' the self, the purpose is to offer psychologists and participants a methodological framework that they may reconstruct in

view of the theoretical outlines exposed in the preceding article. The method requires, moreover, a commitment of psychologist and participant, and its application may profit from the psychologist's professional experience with a specific group of participants. In sum, the method functions as a skeleton, and the flesh around the skeleton is the outcome of cooperative enterprise of two parties.

## The Matrix of Internal and External Positions

Imagine a mother who meets her daughter's friend for the first time. She immediately dislikes him. Later, she tells her husband that her daughter's friend is 'just like Peter', her brother, who used to exhibit the same behavior (smoking without asking for permission, making deprecating remarks about other people, etc.). After this meeting, the mother discusses this experience with her husband, and finds out that she feels herself to be very vulnerable when she is faced with such a person. Moreover, she is afraid that her daughter will not be able to protect herself against the misbehavior of her new friend. Gradually, the mother becomes aware that her critical attitude toward her daughter's friend can be traced back to the relationship with her own brother, who always made her feel very vulnerable.

In this example we see at least two external positions in the self of the mother: her daughter's friend and her brother, who are experienced in similar ways. At the same time, there are two internal positions involved: the mother as a critic and the mother as vulnerable. In this simplified example, the two external positions have in common that they trigger the same set of internal positions. From a theoretical point of view, the two external positions are 'functionally equivalent', which means that they evoke, consciously or unconsciously, the same pattern of internal positions. The two internal positions, in turn, are also functionally equivalent as they are both directed toward the same pattern of external positions. In other words, patterns of internal and external positions emerge from person-world interactions.

The above repertoire of two internal and two external positions is highly simplified because usually there are more internal positions and more external positions in a person's repertoire, resulting in more complex patterns of internal-external relationships. The PPR was devised to assess these more complex patterns with attention to the dialogical relationships that may develop between positions. This can be illustrated with the case of an actual client involved in a process of changing patterns of positions. This case will be used to explain the

structure of the method and the different steps to be followed in its application in research or practice.

### Content and Organization of Nancy's Position Repertoire

Nancy,<sup>1</sup> a 47-year-old woman working as a part-time secretary and a mother of two adolescent children, contacted a psychotherapist (Els Hermans-Jansen) in a period in which she was plagued by psychosomatic complaints (e.g. severe headaches and muscular tensions). These complaints were accompanied by problems that she experienced in relation to her social surroundings. She constantly felt forced to defend herself against others and was simultaneously dependent, to a very high degree, on the approval and evaluation of others both at work and in her private life. She felt a persistent urge to be at the center of attention and saw other people as competitors. Her persistent need to be seen and confirmed could never be fulfilled in a world in which almost everybody was felt as an adversary.

After about a year and a half of psychotherapy, not much had changed and the problems continued as described. In order to give the therapy a new impulse, the therapist, in collaboration with me as a personality psychologist, decided to suggest that Nancy examine her position repertoire and work further from there. The therapist gave Nancy a list of approximately 50 internal positions and 40 external positions (see Appendix for the most recent list) and asked her to select those positions in which she recognized herself and which played some role in her life. At the same time, she was given the opportunity to add some positions formulated by herself and phrased in her own language. Table 1 presents an overview of the positions that Nancy had selected as relevant, including those that she herself had added (marked by C).

Next, Nancy was invited to estimate the extent to which in her experience a particular internal position is prominent (in a positive or negative way) in relation to a particular external position. Concentrating on the first position, the participant indicates on a 0–5 scale the extent to which the internal position is prominent in relation to the external position (0 = *not at all*, 1 = *very little*, 2 = *to some extent*, 3 = *quite a lot*, 4 = *considerably* and 5 = *very considerably*). The result is a matrix of internal positions (rows) and external positions (columns) with the prominence ratings (extent of prominence) in the entries (see Table 1 for Nancy's matrix).

Usually, internal positions differ to the extent in which they are prominent in relation to a variety of external positions. For example, Nancy's position as a listener received a high prominence rating in

Table 1. Nancy's internal positions (rows), external positions (columns) and their prominence ratings

	Child (Dan)	Partner	Sister (Doris)	Sister (Mary)	Friend (Carla)	Friend (Sally)	Somebody loved	Employer	Father	Figure in book	TV-personality	Somebody admired	Brother (Paul)	Mother	Therapist	Problematic person	Physician	Ex-partner	Acupuncturist	Overall prominence
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	
1. Listening	5	2	4	4	4	4	3	2	1	3	3	4	3	4	3	2	4	1	2	58
2. Vulnerable	3	3	4	4	3	4	3	3	3	4	4	2	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	57
3. Understanding	4	3	4	4	5	5	4	1	3	3	3	3	4	2	1	2	2	1	0	54
4. Freedom seeker	2	2	2	3	4	3	2	3	2	4	4	4	4	3	2	4	0	4	0	52
5. Faithful (C)	5	5	4	4	3	4	4	4	3	1	1	2	3	2	3	1	1	1	1	52
6. Accepting	4	2	2	3	5	4	4	1	4	3	3	3	4	2	1	2	2	1	1	51
7. Warmth seeker	4	4	3	3	2	4	4	1	4	3	3	3	2	4	1	1	2	0	1	49
8. Recognition seeker	2	5	3	3	3	1	2	5	5	2	2	2	2	5	2	0	2	0	2	48
9. Conscience	3	2	2	2	3	3	3	4	3	2	2	2	3	3	2	1	1	1	1	43
10. Caring (C)	5	3	4	2	4	3	3	2	3	1	1	2	0	2	1	3	1	1	1	42
11. Doubter	3	2	3	3	3	1	2	3	4	1	1	1	3	3	1	3	2	3	0	42
12. Woman	2	5	3	3	1	3	3	1	1	4	4	3	0	1	2	1	2	1	1	41
13. Dreamer	3	4	3	3	4	3	4	1	2	3	3	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	37
14. Careless (C)	2	3	4	3	3	2	3	0	1	3	3	3	2	0	2	0	1	0	1	36
15. Sacrificing	1	2	3	3	1	5	2	2	2	0	0	0	4	4	1	4	0	2	0	36
16. Uncertain (C)	2	2	1	1	2	1	1	3	4	1	1	3	2	2	1	4	2	1	1	35
17. Fearful	2	1	2	2	3	3	1	4	3	1	1	0	2	3	0	2	2	1	0	33
18. Idealist	3	3	2	2	2	3	3	1	0	3	3	1	1	0	3	0	2	0	1	33
19. Always nice	2	1	3	2	2	3	2	2	3	1	1	3	1	2	1	1	1	1	0	32
20. Relativizing	2	1	2	2	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	31
21. Creative	3	3	4	3	3	2	3	2	0	3	2	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	30
22. Perfectionist	2	2	2	1	1	2	1	5	3	1	1	2	2	0	1	1	0	1	0	28

Table 1. Continued

	Child (Dan) 1	Partner 2	Sister (Doris) 3	Sister (Mary) 4	Friend (Carla) 5	Friend (Sally) 6	Somebody loved 7	Employer 8	Father 9	Figure in book 10	TV-personality 11	Somebody admired 12	Brother (Paul) 13	Mother 14	Therapist 15	Problematic person 16	Physician 17	Ex-partner 18	Acupuncturist 19	Overall prominence
23. Child in myself	1	3	3	2	0	2	2	3	1	1	1	2	1	2	2	0	1	0	1	28
24. Critic	2	2	1	1	0	1	1	3	3	1	1	1	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	27
25. Spiritual	1	1	3	4	4	0	2	0	2	2	2	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	25
26. Fighter (C)	4	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	0	2	2	0	0	0	2	0	2	1	2	24
27. Pusher	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	3	1	0	0	0	2	1	0	3	0	0	0	23
28. Sexual	1	4	0	1	2	0	2	0	1	3	3	2	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	22
29. Jealous	1	3	1	2	0	1	1	2	0	2	2	2	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	21
30. Mother	4	2	1	1	2	1	2	1	0	3	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	20
31. Demanding	2	2	0	0	2	1	1	2	2	1	1	1	0	2	1	0	1	0	0	19
32. Materialist	2	2	0	1	0	0	1	3	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	13
33. Aggressive (C)	1	0	1	2	0	1	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	10
Overall prominence	85	82	78	78	75	74	73	70	69	64	62	60	55	55	43	41	37	28	23	

*Note:* The entries of the matrix refer to the extent to which a specific internal position comes forward in relation to a specific external position. The overall prominence index is the sum score of all the ratings within a row or column. The indication C refers to the positions that were added by the client.

relation to her son, but a low prominence rating in relation to her father, who was experienced by her as unapproachable. This difference exemplifies the contextualized nature of the process of positioning: a particular internal position is more or less prominent in relation to a particular external position (see the rows in the matrix). The same idea applies on external positions: a particular external position is more or less prominent in relation to a particular internal position (see the columns in the matrix).

In addition to the contextual nature of the position matrix, it is possible to assess the extent to which an internal position is prominent across the wide range of all external positions included in the repertoire. This 'overall prominence' results from adding the ratings within each of the rows of the matrix. The resulting sum is at the right side of the matrix. As Table 1 shows, the 'listener' receives the highest overall prominence in the internal part of Nancy's repertoire and the 'aggressive' is attributed the lowest degree of prominence.

In a similar way, the overall prominence of the external positions can be assessed by adding the ratings within each column of the matrix. In Nancy's case her son receives the highest degree of prominence in the external part of her repertoire. This means that in the contact with her son, a relatively large variety of internal positions is evoked with a relatively high degree of prominence. At the lowest end is her acupuncturist, who has attracted relatively few internal positions with a rather low degree of prominence. This part of the organization of Nancy's position repertoire reflects a more general finding in the application of the present method in a great variety of people: the more important a significant other is in the life of a person, the more internal positions are evoked in the contact with this person. The significance of another person or group in the external domain of the self is reflected by a high density of positions in the internal domain.

### Background Theory

The PPR can simply be explained (also to the participant) by using a stage metaphor. A number of (internal) characters enter the stage from the left, and a number of (external) characters enter the stage from the right. The PPR is devised to study how these two groups of characters are related to each other, both within and between the two groups.

As indicated by the stage metaphor, the notion of space is paramount in the dialogical self. Positions are depicted as 'moving in space' and described in highly dynamic ways as represented by processes like 'positioning', 'repositioning' and being 'positioned'. With this idea in mind, the instruction in the PPR is formulated in terms of 'To what



extent is this internal position prominent in relation to that external position?' The term 'prominent' refers to the dynamic and spatial quality of the process of positioning and, moreover, facilitates the clients' assessment of their positions in contextual ways (a position is prominent in some relationships and not in others).

Within the realm of internal positions, a distinction has been made between 'social positions' and 'personal positions'. Social positions can be equalized with the traditional term 'role', and as such they are governed by societal prescriptions and expectations (e.g. father, employer, chairman). Personal positions, on the other hand, receive their form from the particular ways in which individual people organize their own lives, sometimes in opposition to or in protest against societal expectations. This is not to say, however, that personal positions are not subjected to social evaluation. Some personal positions are more appreciated and rewarded in a particular social community than others (e.g. being a listener is more rewarded than being a destructive person).

In everyday life, social positions are typically combined with a particular set of personal positions. For example, a mother (social position) is seen as a 'good mother' if she is a caring person (personal position) in relation to her children. A pastor (social position) in a religious community receives the respect of the members of this community if he is guided by his conscience (personal position) more than by his materialistic concerns (personal position). As these examples suggest, the expectations of a community toward the behavior of a person in a particular social position are based on implicit or explicit associations between a social position and a set of personal positions. Some personal positions 'fit' a social position whereas others do not fit, or even contradict, it.

The position matrix allows the researcher or practitioner to study the association between social and personal positions as part of the repertoire of a particular person. In Nancy's case, her position as a mother can be studied by comparing the profile of this position in the matrix (row 30) with all the other internal positions (rows of the matrix). This can be done by calculating the (product-moment) correlation between the profile belonging to this position and the profiles belonging to the other positions. In Nancy's case the highest correlation was found between her position as a mother and her position as a creative person ( $r = .74$ ), suggesting that in her repertoire she as a mother and she as being creative are strongly corresponding positions, that is, the two positions tend to go together across a variety of other people. The specific position of the mother as part of the organization

of the repertoire can be further specified by examining the second highest correlation. In Nancy's case the mother position showed the second highest correlation ( $r = .64$ ) with the 'idealist'. These results suggest that for Nancy her position as a mother was moving together with two positive personal positions, the creative person and the idealist. In this way a particular social position is 'colored' and structured by its association with surrounding personal positions.

What is the rationale behind the list of provided positions (see Appendix)? The main purpose behind the list is to provide the participants with a number of positions that have sufficient variation so that they have the opportunity to select those positions that they recognize as relevant in their own lives. In line with the same purpose, the participants have the opportunity to add their own terms (between brackets) behind the term provided in the list, so that a particular position becomes more specific or more expressive of their own history and life situation.

Another criterion for the selection of the terms is the notion of opposites. Position and opposition are not only linguistically related terms but they also need each other in the process of meaning construction. The quality of 'warm' can only be understood as contrasting with 'cold'. In a similar way, 'optimism' is a meaningful term only if its opposite, 'pessimism', is taken into account, as Marková (1987) and Rychlak (1988) have extensively argued. Therefore, a series of opposite pairs are included in the list of internal positions (e.g. optimist vs. pessimist, idealist vs. materialist, stable vs. vulnerable, victim vs. dominating). The place of a particular position as part of the organized position repertoire can be more profoundly understood by studying not only the ratings and correlations of a particular position but also the ratings and correlations of its linguistic opposite.

It should be emphasized that linguistic opposites, as shared by the members of a linguistic community, have to be distinguished from opposites of a more personal kind. In the latter case, two terms can function as opposites in a repertoire even if they do not sound like opposites from a linguistic point of view. A personal opposite exists if one position is backgrounded in the self-system whereas another position is foregrounded. Such personal opposites can be found by examining negative correlations between the positions in the matrix. In Nancy's case, for example, a negative correlation ( $r = -.51$ ) was found between her sexual position and her sacrificing position, suggesting that her sacrificing position moved to the background when her sexuality was foregrounded. It was found, moreover, that Nancy's sexual position covaried with her position as a dreamer ( $r = .63$ ). Such

correlations may be helpful in understanding Nancy's sexuality as part of an organized position repertoire, that is, as contrasting with sacrifice but as consonant with dreaming.

Many of the internal positions sound like trait terms. However, there are some noticeable differences with the concept of trait. One of the differences has already been mentioned: positions are investigated as situation-specific, whereas trait theories (e.g. the Big Five) typically have a trans-situational pretension, assuming that traits are valid across a wide variety of situations. Another difference is that positions are considered to be self-reflective and traits are not. A position can be depicted as an *I-Me* relationship, that is, the *I* is considered to be able to tell from a particular position a particular story about the *Me* and about the world. So, as a pessimist, the *I* can think of itself and its relation to the world in a quite different way than the optimist does. Whereas trait terms assume a reification of the person in terms of a personality profile, positions are assumed to be *I*-positions and as such they are self-reflective and self-evaluative. Not only the internal positions, but also the external positions function as *I*-positions: I can take the perspective of, say, my father and imagine how he views himself, his relations with my siblings and his relation with me. In the same way that there is a gradual transition between *Me* and *Mine*, there is a gradual transition between *I* and *You*. The *You* is part of the self, although it has a separate existence at the same time. Moreover, it is supposed that any external position can be differentiated in terms of a variety of sub-positions. For example, a woman may, as a protecting person, experience her husband as 'vulnerable' but, in situations where the husband defends his own autonomy, as 'aggressive'. In other words, from the perspective of the participant constructing a position repertoire, a significant other can be perceived as being in a variety of positions that are opposed and organized in similar ways to the internal positions of the perceiver him- or herself.

Another difference is that trait terms, by their intrinsic nature, can neither conflict nor integrate with each other. Although traits may represent contrasting poles on a dimension or continuum, they cannot conflict, disagree or be reconciled with each other, as positions can. In contrast to traits, positions are conceived of as characters that are able to construct different world-views and that can agree and disagree with each other, question and answer each other, and convince each other of a particular truth. When traits are considered as positions, they are transformed from characterizations to characters. When one treats a combination of traits as a position repertoire, it is changed from a personality profile into a society.

So far, the position repertoire is described as a methodological elaboration of the spatial nature of the dialogical self. The underlying assumption is that space is basic to voice and dialogue and even precedes these capacities, both from an ontogenetic and from a phylogenetic point of view. However, where and how can dialogical relationships emerge in the position repertoire? In order to address this question, we return to Nancy's case.

### **The Relevance of the Child Position in Nancy's Repertoire**

After the construction of the position repertoire, Nancy's daily experiences were brought into connection with the positions identified by her as relevant (mentioned in Table 1). The intention was to concentrate on those positions playing the most influential role in her present life. In order to do this, Nancy kept a diary and drew a relation between her daily experiences and the positions standing out as her most dominant during the period of study. After a few sessions, 'the child in myself' appeared to be the position that received the most attention from Nancy when she was reflecting about the experiences in her daily life. During the sessions and in her diary she questioned the egocentric attitude and the unlimited pretensions of the child in herself, which prohibited her from finding much satisfaction in her life.

To my surprise, the child had received a relatively low place in the overall prominence order as shown in Table 1. In the discussions with Nancy it became clear that she tried to suppress this position in her daily life. She preferred to behave as a well-mannered person, always willing to listen to people and to understand their point of view. The child in herself was felt as an obstacle that hindered her from having satisfying relationships both with other people and with herself. Therefore, she tried to suppress the child as much as possible in an attempt to fulfill her ideal of being a sociable person.

The place of the child in the repertoire is significant from a methodological point of view. As we have observed in discussions with various clients, a low place in the overall prominence order of the internal positions may have three different meanings. First, it may signify that a particular internal position is not very relevant with respect to the person's social milieu as represented by the external positions included in the repertoire. In Nancy's case the 'materialist' has such a low place. Although she has selected this position as something she recognizes in her own life, it has a generally low pattern of ratings in the matrix, suggesting that it does not play a very significant role in her repertoire. Second, a position may be very important but its relevance is restricted to a few significant others in the external domain of the self. For Nancy

this pertains to her position as a mother: There are a few high ratings and a large amount of low ratings in the corresponding row of the matrix. As a mother she relates primarily to her son and she recognizes herself as a mother in a character of a book she has read. The third possibility is that the person suppresses a particular position as undesirable or forbidden and, as a result, the corresponding row shows a pattern of relatively low ratings. In Nancy's case this applies to the child in herself that she wants to get rid off. In the discussion with the therapist, she expressed that she didn't want to let this character play a major role in her life and therefore tried to suppress this aspect of herself in an attempt to hide it. In such a case the corresponding row in the matrix shows a pattern of ratings that is lower than expected on the basis of the actual relevance of the position.

Yet there are indications in the matrix that suggest that the child position is more important in Nancy's life than one would suspect on the basis of its relatively low ratings. These indications can be found by comparing the profiles in the rows of the matrix. For this purpose, correlations can be calculated between the rows of the matrix and one internal position, which is seen as pivotal, as a starting point. When Nancy's child position is taken as a starting point, the highest correlations are found with three other characters: the faithful ( $r = .61$ ), the jealous ( $r = .58$ ) and the recognition seeker ( $r = .57$ ). This suggests that the child position comes forward in the relationships in which Nancy feels faithful, jealous and where she seeks recognition. For a proper insight into the nature of a position (the child in this case), the place of this position in the overall prominence order should be compared with the place of the highest correlating positions in the same order. It is noteworthy that not only the child but also the jealous figure have, as undesirable positions, relatively low places in the prominence order. The more desirable recognition seeker has a much higher place, and the very desirable faithful figure has received even one of the highest places (see Table 1). Apparently, an undesirable figure (the child), which is attributed a *low* place in the prominence order, has a high correlation with a desirable figure (the faithful), which is *high* in the prominence order. This specific organization of the repertoire suggests that the undesirable position functions as a 'shadow position' (Cooper, 1999). It means that this position, although it is pushed to the background of the self-system, accompanies, as a less visible shadow, a more acceptable position that is assigned a place in the foreground of the system (comparable with Jung's concept of 'persona'). Although the shadow figure is less conspicuous and prominent, it may be very influential from a background position, as was observed in Nancy's case.

**Table 2.** Hierarchical relation between position, valuation and affect

Position A				Position B			
valuation		valuation		valuation		valuation	
affect	affect	affect	affect	affect	affect	affect	affect

The person tells stories from different or opposed positions:

Each position implies a variety of valuations (meaning units)

Each valuation implies a variety of affect

## The Matrix of Valuations and Affect

Whereas the position matrix enables the researcher or practitioner to study the organization of internal and external positions, it doesn't help identify which stories are told and which meanings are expressed from the perspective of a particular position. In order to address this issue, a hierarchical model (Table 2) is presented that is derived from our earlier work on valuation theory and the self-confrontation method (Hermans & Hermans-Jansen, 1995).

### The Relation between Position, Valuation and Affect: Overview

In the model presented in Table 2, positions are at the highest level of organization, valuations (meaning units) on the middle level, and affects on the lowest level. The idea behind this model is that the person who is localized in a variety of positions expresses more than one valuation for each position and more than one affect for each valuation.

The term 'valuation' refers to the active process of giving positive or negative value or meaning to the events in one's life. Usually, valuations are elicited by open questions inviting the participants to talk about important events or circumstances in their past, present and future. These questions lead, with the assistance of the psychologist, to the formulation of a number of sentences representing meaning units that are important in the eyes of the participant.

The assumption is that each valuation has an affective connotation, that is, each sentence is associated with a profile of affects that, in their combination, represent the particular affective tone of the valuation in question. Moreover, an affective connotation may be seen as the surface expression of basic psychological motives or story themes.

### The Reorganization of Nancy's Position Repertoire

During Nancy's therapeutic process, it was observed that the dominant position of the child gradually diminished in favor of another position that became increasingly prominent in her life: the independent. She

became aware of the fact that her life was terrorized by her child position and felt increasingly opposed to the fact that this position was 'spoiling her life' to a large degree. Often she was angry at herself and protested against her excessive dependence on other people in her environment. During therapy the independent position was discussed and stimulated in close correspondence with her everyday life experiences so that, finally, this position became stronger than the child position. This could be seen as a turning point (McAdams, 1993) in her life so that she entered a new phase in her life in which she felt that she could cope with her problems in a more autonomous way. This doesn't mean, however, that the child position disappeared from the scene. This position required her attention during the entire period of therapy and it was always in the background of the self-system, ready to come forward if the opportunity arose. The innovation of Nancy's self was not in the disappearance of the child position and in the introduction of the independent one, but rather in the reorganization of her repertoire as a whole. The child was confronted with an opponent, the independent, who enlarged her influence in the system with the support of the therapist and as a result of Nancy's initiatives to change her life in profound ways. This reorganization of the repertoire reflects the theoretical view of the self as composed of contrasting positions, with each position being able to tell a specific story (highest level in Table 2).

During therapy, Nancy was invited to tell from each specific position a particular story about her life. From the child position she described, for example, her father as somebody who was very hot-tempered, never allowed her to say what she wanted to say and didn't allow her to have any contact with him. From the same position Nancy also talked about her brother and sisters, whom she saw as her rivals in receiving attention from her father and mother. In this way two valuations, one about the father and another about her siblings, were expressed from the perspective of the child position. Like the child position, the independent position can also be elaborated in terms of different meaning units. This organization reflects the general theoretical idea that from each position the individual may tell different stories implying relevant meaning units. These meaning units are supposed to be on the middle level of organization of the self in Table 2. The general assumption is that a number of events that are part of a self-narrative are combined and organized into meaning units that receive positive or negative value in the eyes of the person. Therefore, the active process term 'valuation' can be used to refer to the constructive nature of a meaning unit.

When people value something as important, they have feelings in relation to the things they value. Valuation implies affective involvement. Knowledge of the affective component of a valuation has something to say about the often implicit aspects of the valuation itself. For Nancy, the valuation referring to her father was associated with a high level in the affect of self-alienation in combination with a low level of anger. This combination could be seen as indicative of her dependence on her parents. The valuation referring to the competition with her brother and sisters, on the other hand, was associated with a high level of self-alienation in combination with a relatively high level of anger that revealed her increasing capacity to liberate herself from the dominant influence that her unapproachable father figure exerted as an established part of her extended self over the years. As these examples suggest, it is not the strength of a particular affect but rather the profile of affect that provides information about the valuation in question. Feeling anger in combination with freedom represents an experience that is different from the combination of anger with powerlessness. It is the patterning of affect that articulates the specific nature of a valuation. This patterning represents the theoretical assumption that each valuation implies an affective connotation that indicates the specific quality of personal involvement. This affective connotation is on the lowest level of organization in Table 2.

Using James' (1890) classical distinction between *I* and *Me*, the model presented in Table 2 could be summarized in one sentence: the *I* can be located in different positions (highest level) and is able to tell, from each position, a specific story about the *Me* belonging to that position, thereby expressing different meaning units (middle level), which each have their specific affective connotations (lowest level).

### Personal Valuations from the Child Position

Three months after the construction of the position repertoire, the therapist and Nancy decided to investigate the child position in more detail. This was done by performing an investigation on the most significant meaning units from the perspective of this particular position. The purpose of this investigation was to achieve both for Nancy and for her therapist a more profound insight into the self-narrative of the child, including its specific memories of the past, experiences in the present, and desires and anxieties for the future. The basic idea here is that each position can be seen as an author who is capable of telling a story about herself as an actor from the perspective of that particular position. (See Sarbin, 1986, for the author-actor distinction in the context of narrative psychology.) Nancy's meaning



system as constructed from the perspective of the child position is presented at the left side in Table 3 together with a number of affective indices that will be explained later in this article.

During the discussion of the results from the child position, the most important discovery for Nancy was that she, more than she expected, was opposed to the unbridled desires and demands of the child in herself. By performing the self-investigation and discussing it thoroughly, the excessive pretensions of the child stood out clearly and elicited a furious counter-reaction from Nancy, formulated in her own words as follows:

It is a hole, that endlessly wanting to be confirmed, that excessive request to continually be considered nice. . . . The feeling is that it is never enough. The child has too much power at hand and paralyzes things. An end has to come to that nagging. The child wants too much, my future is also being paralyzed.

This counter-reaction gave a new turn to Nancy's story: she was now motivated to search for an 'opposing position' capable of offering some healthy counterweight. This objective thus stood central in the following sessions.

### **Personal Valuations from the Independent Position**

After a few brief explorations in which the 'demanding figure' and the 'fighter' (see Table 1) were discussed, among others, the awareness grew in Nancy of the growing salience of the independent:

The independent one is a new world for me, but I still have to learn it. In my work, I am busy practicing this. Also, in conversation with John [her partner], I sometimes have a different opinion. This is getting stronger. Before, if someone had another opinion, I started to doubt my own. Now the independent is starting to really surface.

As this excerpt demonstrates, the introduction of a new position (the independent) in the internal domain of the self has immediate implications for the organization of the external domain of the self. Nancy explicitly refers to her work situation and to her partner as parts of her external world in which her independent position becomes actualized. This illustrates the theoretical idea that internal and external positions are not separate worlds but relations. The therapist, as a new external position, stimulates the inclusion of a new internal position (the independent one), which, in turn, leads to the introduction of other external positions or the redefinition of existing ones (partner, employer). In this way internal and external positions interact in the innovation of the self.

Table 3. Valuations from the child and independent positions constituting part of Nancy's position repertoire

Valuations from the child position	<i>S</i>	<i>O</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>N</i>	Valuations from the independent position	<i>S</i>	<i>O</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>N</i>
1. I want attention and I want recognition	0	2	3	32	1. Yes, then you should do this in a good way; not by nagging but by staying realistic; I determine what happens, often in consultation	12	2	16	12
2. I am dependent on others or their approval of me	2	1	5	34	2. You do not have to be; e.g. my new training; my brother-in-law has his suspicions, this touches the dependent child; I say: I can do it; I am who I am now and I can do it	16	3	21	14
3. My brother and sisters are my rivals; they also demand attention from the one whom I could also get attention from	2	1	5	38	3. [does not play a role in the current situation]				
4. My mother plays us off against each other; I really feel pushed aside; I do my best to be even sweeter	1	0	0	41	4. Then I try to involve the independent one somewhat more and get some distance; this still plays a role; it is a pitfall; I have to be really alert, she [the mother] still does it	9	0	7	22
5. As a teenager, my father did not allow me to do much; he was strict and hot-tempered; I was never allowed to say what I thought; he didn't allow me to have any contact with him; I never noticed that he liked me	0	2	5	30	5. I can relativize this [no contact] from the position of independence; he's been dead for a long time; I see better now what happened; I think he was a coward because he clearly chose for my mother; he thought he had to, that he had no choice	10	7	12	10

Table 3. Continued

Valuations from the child position	<i>S</i>	<i>O</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>N</i>	Valuations from the independent position	<i>S</i>	<i>O</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>N</i>
6. I feel quickly rejected (e.g. Jim went to his son and stayed away longer); I immediately think that he likes his son better than me; I pull myself down really quickly	2	5	5	31	6. I use the independent to relativize this; the child now gets her wrist slapped: 'Don't put on such an act'; but this is still really hard	13	4	14	15
7. I have wrestled so long with the unrecognized child; I see no future whatsoever (I have also not succeeded with any other therapy)	1	1	0	34	7. What I learned here in this therapy: that the child asked for too much attention and still does; from the independent position, I now say: you just stay where I put you (this is where the independent is very strongly prominent)	14	6	21	14
8. The child feels best when I am doing creative work (painting), and during vacations the satisfied part of the child comes out	6	8	30	10	8. Yes, doing creative work, that's allowed by the independent one, that playfulness is there too, that is really good, that helps the independent one to relativize. I have more control over that child, then the child can play more of a prominent role	14	11	28	2
9. How do I generally feel as a child?	4	4	10	14	9. How do I generally feel as an independent?	13	0	21	16
10. How would I like to feel as a child?	16	16	40	4	10. How would I like to feel as an independent?	20	14	47	2

*Note:* *S* = feelings of self-affirmation; *O* = feelings referring to contact and union with the other; *P* = positive feelings; *N* = negative feelings. The *S* and *O* indices range from 0 to 20 and the *P* and *N* indices range from 0 to 50.

Eight months after the investigation performed from the position of the child, it was decided to have Nancy conduct a comparable study from her position of the independent. In order to strengthen the dialogical relations between the different positions, Nancy was invited to provide an answer from the independent position to the valuations formulated previously from the child position. These answers are presented on the right side of Table 3. This is the point where the two spatialized and opposed positions move into a relation of question and answer, which is, like agreement and disagreement, a basic form of dialogue (Bakhtin, 1929/1973).

### Background Theory

The described procedure can be clarified by referring to the notion of 'emplotment'. As Polkinghorne (1988) proposed, a plot combines two dimensions, one chronological, the other nonchronological. The chronological dimension shows that the story is made up of events along the line of time. The nonchronological dimension emphasizes that events form a *configuration* so that, scattered though they may be, they form an organized whole. In other words, emplotment not only liberates a narrative account from the pure time sequence, but also allows for a construction in which stories and their implied meaning units are treated as parts in an organized whole. The principle of juxtaposition (Bakhtin, 1929/1973) is a form of configuration in which the notion of space is given priority over time. This means that the chronological ordering in terms of a beginning, a middle and an ending is not the final word of emplotment. The constructive activity of emplotment allows for a juxtaposition of events, in which the original time sequence is changed in the service of finding new configurations. In Nancy's case, the two positions, originally dispersed over time, are brought together in the second investigation in an act of juxtaposition. The effect is comparable to bringing together two photos that are made of the same person at two very different moments in time. The juxtaposition of the pictures causes a shock that can result only if temporal differences are transformed into spatial oppositions.

Another quintessential feature of this part of the presented methodology is the fact that the voice of the participant is heard in the formulation of the valuations. Valuations are formulations not *about* the participants but *from* the participants, and they are the final editors of the statement resulting from the conversation between participant and psychologist. It is one of the purposes of the investigation to approach the participants as authors of their own stories and to see them as experts of the meaning they give to the events in their own lives. In

the present approach, the psychologist is seen as an expert in theory and methodology and has experience and knowledge about a broader array of people, groups and communities. The participants, on the other hand, are considered to be experts in the meanings that they give to the events in their own lives and to be knowledgeable about the particular circumstances and events that play a major role in their personal history. This depiction of the roles of psychologist and participant creates a platform for a dialogical relationship between two parties, who, each from their specific expertise, collaborate as coinvestigators in a research project on the participant's meaning system. At the same time the analyses of the valuations produced by the participant, with the assistance of the psychologist, represent, together with the discussions of the results, the qualitative part of the investigation.

The therapeutic assistance aimed at a reorganization of the position repertoire. The strategy, followed by the therapist in close collaboration with the client, was to foreground, first, the child position and, later, the independent position so that they became opponents at the front of the system, where an active interplay between the two positions, in relation to relevant others in the external domain, was encouraged. The result was a dominance reversal of the two internal positions (Hermans, 1996).

### **Questions for Eliciting Valuations**

For the elicitation of relevant valuations, several open questions are used that refer to the temporal dimension of the participant's self-narrative, that is, to the past, present and future (see Table 4). The questions invite individuals to reflect on their life situations in such a way that they feel free to mention those events or circumstances that are most relevant from the perspective of the present situation. The participants are free to interpret the questions in any way they want. The participants are also encouraged to phrase the valuations in their own terms, so that the formulations are as much as possible in agreement with what they intend to say. The typical form of expression is the sentence (according to James [1890], the basic unit of text). In a sentence the subject brings together those events that the person feels belong together as elements of a personal unit of meaning. In the case of a complex unit of meaning, the subject is permitted to use several sentences for its expression. A quick response is not required, and there is no one-to-one relation between question and answer. The main purpose of this part of the method is to encourage the participants to tell those parts of their life story that they feel are most significant. The individual is encouraged to mention any experience that comes to

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**Table 4.** Main questions of the self-confrontation method
 

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**Set 1: *The Past***

These questions are intended to guide you in reviewing one or more aspects of your life that may have been of great importance to you.

- Has there been anything of major significance in your past life that still continues to exert a strong influence on you?
- Was there in the past any person or persons, experience or circumstance that greatly influenced your life and still appreciably affects your present existence?

**Set 2: *The Present***

This set again consists of two questions that will lead you, after a certain amount of reflection, to formulate a response:

- Is there anything in your present existence that is of major importance to you or exerts a significant influence on you?
- Is there in your present existence any person, persons or circumstance that exerts a significant influence on you?

**Set 3: *The Future***

The following questions will again guide you to a response:

- Do you foresee anything that will be of great importance for or exert a major influence on your future life?
- Do you feel that a certain person, persons or circumstance will exert a significant influence on your future life?
- Is there any future goal or object that you expect to play an important role in your life?

You are free to look as far ahead as you wish.

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mind and, typically, each question leads to more than one valuation. Interviewer and participant are sitting side by side, a spatial configuration that symbolizes a cooperative relationship and, moreover, gives the participant an optimal opportunity for profound self-reflection. Each valuation is written by the interviewer on a separate card and is available in this form for the next part of the investigation, in which the affective connotation of the valuations is examined.

### **Assessing the Affective Connotation of Valuations**

Whereas the formulation of the valuations draws primarily on the expertise of the participants, the exploration of the affective meaning of the valuations is more the product of the methodological expertise of the psychologist. For the investigation of the affective connotation of the valuations, a valuation  $\times$  affect matrix is used (see Table 5 for Nancy's matrix). For this purpose a standard list of affect terms (columns in the matrix) is presented to the participant. Concentrating on the first valuation, the participant indicates on a 0–5 scale the extent to which he or she experiences each affect in relation to the valuation

Table 5. Affect Matrix: Nancy's affective ratings from the child position and from the independent position

	Affect																												Sumscore			
	joy	powerlessness	self-esteem	anxiety	happiness	worry	strength	shame	enjoyment	caring	love	self-alienation	tenderness	guilt	solidarity	self-confidence	loneliness	warmth	trust	inferiority	intimacy	safety	anger	pride	energy	disappointment	inner calm	freedom	S	O	P	N
Child's valuation no.	0	4	0	4	0	2	0	3	0	0	0	4	1	2	0	0	4	0	0	4	1	1	1	0	0	4	1	1	0	2	3	32
1	0	4	1	4	1	4	1	3	1	0	0	4	0	2	0	0	4	1	1	4	1	0	1	0	1	4	0	0	2	1	5	34
2	0	3	1	4	1	4	0	3	1	1	0	5	0	4	0	0	4	0	0	4	0	0	3	1	1	4	1	1	2	1	5	38
3	0	5	0	5	0	2	1	3	0	0	0	5	0	4	0	0	4	0	0	5	0	0	3	0	0	5	0	0	1	0	0	41
4	0	4	0	2	0	2	0	4	0	1	1	5	0	2	0	0	4	1	1	2	0	1	1	0	1	4	1	0	0	2	5	30
5	0	4	0	4	0	4	0	3	0	2	1	4	1	3	1	1	2	1	1	4	1	1	1	1	0	2	0	1	2	5	5	31
6	0	4	1	4	0	5	0	3	0	0	0	3	1	2	0	0	4	0	0	4	0	0	1	0	0	4	0	0	1	1	0	34
7	4	1	2	1	4	1	1	1	4	1	3	1	1	1	1	2	1	4	4	1	3	3	1	1	2	1	2	2	6	8	30	10
8	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	4	4	10	14
General feeling	4	1	4	1	4	1	4	1	4	4	4	0	4	0	4	4	0	4	4	0	4	4	0	4	4	0	4	4	16	16	40	4
Ideal feeling																																
Independent's valuation no.	1	1	3	1	1	2	3	0	1	2	0	1	0	0	2	3	1	0	3	1	0	1	2	3	4	3	1	2	12	2	16	12
1	3	2	4	2	2	3	4	0	1	2	0	1	1	0	1	4	4	1	3	0	0	2	2	4	4	0	1	3	16	3	21	14
2	[deleted]																															
3	0	2	1	2	0	2	3	3	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	2	3	0	2	1	0	2	3	3	0	3	0	3	9	0	7	22
4	0	1	2	0	0	0	3	1	0	2	3	0	2	1	0	3	3	1	3	0	0	0	3	2	1	1	3	4	10	7	12	10
5	0	2	3	0	0	2	3	1	0	2	1	1	1	0	1	3	2	1	3	0	0	1	3	4	4	4	0	4	13	4	14	15
6	2	1	4	1	1	1	3	0	1	2	2	1	1	0	2	3	1	1	3	1	1	3	4	4	4	4	1	3	14	6	21	14
7	3	0	3	1	2	0	3	0	3	3	2	0	3	0	3	4	0	1	3	1	3	3	0	4	4	0	2	4	14	11	28	2
8																																
General feeling	1	2	3	2	3	3	4	0	2	0	0	1	0	1	0	2	3	0	4	1	0	1	2	4	4	1	2	4	13	0	21	16
Ideal feeling	5	0	5	0	5	0	5	0	5	3	5	0	3	0	2	5	0	5	5	0	3	5	1	5	5	1	5	5	20	14	47	2

Note: S = affect referring to self-enhancement; O = affect referring to contact; P = positive affect; N = negative affect. The S and O indices range from 0 to 20 and the P and N indices from 0 to 50.

Nancy's valuation no. 3 was deleted by her as irrelevant at the second investigation.

(0 = *not at all*, 1 = *very little*, 2 = *to some extent*, 3 = *quite a lot*, 4 = *considerably*, and 5 = *very considerably*). The participant, working alone now, rates each valuation (rows in the matrix) with the same list of affect terms, and the different valuations can then be compared according to their affective profiles. The list of affect terms used in the present investigation is an adaptation of a list used in earlier investigations of valuation systems (Hermans, 1987a, 1987b). On the basis of the affective ratings for the different valuations, a number of indices can be calculated that in their combination represent the affective organization of the valuation system:

1. Index *S* (at the right side of Table 5) is the sum of the scores for four affect terms expressing self-affirmation. This sum is computed within each row (valuation) of the matrix. For the affect terms representing self-affirmation, see the indication 's' above the columns.
2. Index *O* is the sum of the scores for four affect terms expressing contact and union with the other: see the indication 'o' above the columns of the matrix. When for a particular valuation the experience of self-affirmation is stronger than the experience of contact with the other,  $S > O$ . When the feeling of contact with the other prevails,  $O > S$ . When both kinds of experiences coexist,  $S = O$ .
3. Index *P* is the sum of the scores for 10 positive affect terms: see the indication 'p' above the columns of the matrix.
4. Index *N* is the sum of the scores for 10 negative affect terms: see the indication 'n' above the columns of the matrix. For each valuation, again, the *P*-*N* difference can be studied. This indicates the degree of well-being the person experiences in relation to a specific valuation. Well-being is positive when  $P > N$ , negative when  $N > P$ , and ambivalent when  $P = N$ . (Note that the scores for *S* and *O* may range from 0 to 20 and for *P* and *N* from 0 to 50 for each valuation.) (For the theoretical relevance of the combination of the *S*, *O*, *P* and *N* indices, see next section: Background Theory.)
5. At the end of the completion of the matrix an additional question is posed in order to assess the 'general feeling' of the participant: 'How do I generally feel these days?' This question does not ask for a specific valuation but is devised to assess the general affective state of the participant. The participant answers directly with the list of affect terms that was used for the characterization of the valuations.
6. The final row of the matrix is an answer to the question: 'How would I like to feel?' The difference between the *S*, *O*, *P* and *N* indices for the general feeling and the ideal feeling can be used as



an index for the general well-being of the participant. Well-being is high if the difference between the general and ideal feeling is small on the four indices and low if the differences are strong. Additional information about the well-being is provided by the correlation between the affective profile of general feeling and the ideal feeling (not included in Table 5). A high correlation usually is an indication of high well-being as far as reported by the participant. (For psychometric properties of the above indices, see Hermans, 1987b; for clinical and methodological elaborations, see Hermans & Hermans-Jansen, 1995.)

In Table 5 the above indices are calculated for Nancy on the basis of her affective ratings of the valuations from the perspective of her two main positions, the child and the independent. These same indices are also included in Table 3 in connection with Nancy's valuations and her general and ideal feeling as characteristic of her two positions. What is the rationale behind these indices, and how do they contribute to the insight in the organization of Nancy's self?

### Background Theory

The concept of valuation is very open to the everyday world of the individual. It refers to anything the person finds to be of importance when talking about his or her life-situation. It is any unit of meaning that has a positive (pleasant), negative (unpleasant) or ambivalent (both pleasant and unpleasant) value in the eyes of the self-reflecting individual. Valuations can include a broad range of phenomena: a dear memory, a difficult problem, a beloved person, an unattainable ideal, an intriguing dream, an influential talk with a friend, and so forth. The person is differentially oriented toward the immediate situation, the past and the future, and different valuations emerge as a result. In a self-investigation, as described in the preceding sections, meaning units from the past, present and future can be brought together in an act of juxtaposition so that their commonalities, contrasts, oppositions and conflicting relations can be brought to expression.

The different valuations are combined into a valuation system that expresses what an individual has to tell from the perspective of *one* position. When an individual is invited to tell his or her story from the perspective of different positions (e.g. I as a teacher, I as a father/mother, I as a pessimist, I as a critic), it is assumed that the individual is able to formulate different valuation systems. In other words, an individual may tell different personal histories and evaluates these histories differently depending on the position from which

it is told. In reverse, different positions may emerge at different periods of life, implying that a position repertoire can be changed as a result of developmental processes and new situations in which the person becomes involved.

The theory assumes that each valuation has an affective connotation represented by a particular pattern of affect. When we know more about the particular affective profile of a particular valuation, we know more about the valuation itself, which also implies that the affective meaning of a valuation cannot be separated from it. Moreover, by comparing the different profiles from different valuations, we know more about the affective organization of a particular valuation system, and, in the case of several valuation systems, the organization of the different systems as a complex whole.

In order to articulate further the affective component of the valuation system, the latent-manifest distinction can be introduced. At the manifest level, a large number of personal valuations can be distinguished within a particular position. At the same time there are a great number of positions in the foreground or background of the repertoire. Moreover, valuations and positions may change considerably as part of a person's life history. This phenomenological richness may vary not only within a single individual across time and space but also across individuals. At the latent level, a limited number of basic motives can be assumed to be in operation. They are active in all individuals and in all periods of one's life, and these motives are reflected (latently) in the affective component of a valuation system. Study of the affective component can therefore reveal which particular motive is active in a particular valuation. The basic motives reflect the person as a motivated storyteller (Hermans & Hermans-Jansen, 1995).

Two motives have been elaborated: the striving for self-affirmation, or *S* motive (i.e. self-maintenance and self-expansion), and the longing for contact and union with the other, or *O* motive (i.e. the search for alliance with somebody or something else). This distinction was the result of a literature review in which were considered the perspectives of various authors on the basic duality of human experience. For example, Bakan (1966) took agency and communion as fundamental; Angyal (1965) relied on the concepts of autonomy (or self-determination) and homonomy (or self-surrender); and Klages (1948) considered *Bindung* (solidification) and *Lösung* (dissolution) to be the two basic human motives. Working in a narrative context, McAdams (1985) has identified the distinction between power and intimacy, again suggesting the basic character of the *S* and *O* motives. Note that the basic motives in valuation theory are considered not as causal

explanations but as basic themes in people's self-narratives (compare the distinction between hero stories and love stories as they can be found in fairy tales, folk tales, epics, musicals and other narrative forms).

When a valuation represents a realization of the *S* motive (e.g. 'I passed a very difficult test'), the person experiences a feeling of strength and pride in connection with the valuation. Similarly, when a valuation represents a realization of the *O* motive (e.g. 'I enjoy the moments when my son plays the piano'), feelings of intimacy and tenderness are associated with the valuation. In other words, the latent motivational base becomes manifest in the affective pattern associated with a particular valuation.

The four indices *S*, *O*, *P* and *N* allow, in their combination, the study of the realization of the basic motives. On their way to fulfill their desires, people meet obstacles. If these obstacles are overcome, positive feelings emerge. If the obstacles are felt as insuperable, negative feelings emerge. In other words, positive and negative affect results, to a significant degree, from the fulfillment or frustration of basic motives.

Note that other motives than the ones mentioned here can be incorporated into the affective component of a valuation. The described motives and their translation into an affective profile is just an example of the way in which the affective component of a personal meaning can be investigated by taking into account more permanent and general motives or broader narrative themes.

### Continuity and Discontinuity among Positions

When Nancy's valuations from the two positions are compared, there are at least two conspicuous findings. First, most of the valuations from the independent position are associated with relatively high levels of *S* affect and, at the same time, with high levels of *P* affect. The general feeling also has a relatively high level of *S* affect and somewhat more *P* than *N* affect. This suggests that in her independent position Nancy is successfully coping with some problems that bothered her from her position as a child. On the contrary, from the perspective of the child position, almost all the valuations have low levels of *S* and *O* affect and simultaneously high levels of *N* affect. To some extent this affective combination is also characteristic of her general feeling. These results indicate that both her *S* motive and *O* motive remain unfilled, with many negative feelings as a result.

The second observation concerns valuation no. 8. Apparently, this valuation is an exception both in the system of the child and in that of the independent. In the system of the child, this valuation is the only

positive one, as indicated both by the text and the great amount of positive affect. In the system of the independent, this valuation is the only one where the text refers to a constructive cooperation between the two positions, a cooperation that is very positive from an affective point of view. This finding contributes to the insight into the nature of the relationships between opposing positions. Simply put, the two positions are like adversaries involved in a continuous conflict with one another and disagreeing with each other in most situations. However, in some situations (e.g. where Nancy can be creative and playful) the adversary relationship is transformed into a cooperative relationship. From this finding we may learn that conflicting positions are not conflicting regardless of the situation at hand. Apparently, the situation is codetermining the nature of the relationship among the two positions. A particular position that looks undesirable at first sight may be a valuable and comforting partner in another situation at some other point in time (for a similar finding, see the case study of Mary and the witch: Hermans & Hermans-Jansen, 1995, pp. 187–195). Findings of this kind run counter to the idea that positions can be divided into two groups: the good guys and the bad guys. This overgeneralizing statement has to be replaced by the following: a particular position is ‘good’ or constructive in a particular situation and ‘bad’ or ‘destructive’ in other situations. This conclusion can be seen as corroborating the view that positions function as parts of organizing and reorganizing structures, rather than as separate agents.

As the preceding observations suggest, Nancy’s position repertoire and associated meaning systems reflect both continuity and discontinuity. The positions of the child and the independent are discontinuous insofar as there are strong textual and affective differences and contrasts between their respective valuations. At the same time there is a large degree of continuity because coalitions between otherwise opposite positions can be realized. Moreover, the dialogical relationship of question and answer and agreement and disagreement keeps the positions closely together as partners involved in continuous communication.

### **Background Theory: The Notion of Chronotope**

Apparently, the coalition of the two positions is bound to particular places in combination with particular periods in time (e.g. being somewhere on vacation in a particular period of the year). This issue is taken up by Bakhtin (1981) in his notion of ‘chronotope’ (literally ‘time-space’), which he introduced to point to the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in

novelistic literature. Although most of Bakhtin's writings are focused on literary studies, it was his intention not to restrict himself to literature alone. The notion of chronotopes can also be used to understand better the everyday lives and experiences of people. Discussing Bakhtin's work, Morson and Emerson (1990) comment: '... different social activities are also defined by various kinds of fused time and space: the rhythms and spatial organization of the assembly line, agricultural labor, sexual intercourse, and parlor conversation differ markedly' (p. 368). Indeed, positions are called up, typically in their combination, at particular places-at-regular-times, and, as connected to such time-spaces, they contribute to the organization of human experience. Moreover, Bakhtin (1981) sees a close link between 'chronotope' and 'meaning': 'Every entry into the sphere of meaning is accomplished only through the gates of the chronotope' (p. 258; see also Sampson, 1993).

As already noted, the concept of valuation is a meaning unit emerging from a person's self-narratives and, as such, a valuation is founded on time and space as the basic constituents of narratives in general (Bruner, 1986). The specific nature of the concept of valuation allows participants of a self-investigation to construct relevant meaning units in such a way that time and place are included and interconnected. Nancy did this explicitly in her valuation no. 8, where she referred to 'vacation', which can be seen as a specific chronotope in her everyday life.

The valuation as a space-time construction is different from the more general term 'value'. The concept of value is often used in an abstract way so that it can be easily reified (e.g. 'justice', 'equality', 'brotherhood', 'freedom of speech'). If such values are used as generalized categories, they may lose their connection with particular times and spaces so that they become easily decontextualized. It could be said, for example, that the Americans, in their fight against communism, were in Vietnam to protect the value of freedom, whereas the North Vietnamese defended their territory in the service of the same value. The paradoxical statement that two parties fight against each other in order to protect something that they seem to have in common can only be understood if the abstract values can be placed in their historical, ideological and political context. A particular value that seems to be the same on an abstract level becomes different for different people or groups if this value is treated in terms of a spatio-temporal process. This would imply a thorough analysis of the social positions of individuals and groups and their valuations as contextualized constructions of reality.

### Multivoicedness and the Problem of the Unity of the Self

As argued in the preceding article (Hermans, 2001), the unity of the self is seen not as an *a priori* given, but rather as an achievement. Rather than starting from the assumption that 'the mind functions as a unity' or 'the person tells a coherent story', it is assumed that the self is multivoiced and dialogical. In the present article, a method is presented that, for strategic reasons, aims at a far-reaching 'polyphonization' of the self before a synthesis or unity is created. This polyphonization is realized by constructing a system of positions that is filled with opposites, contrasts, conflicts and narrative fragments. The strategy is first to decentralize the self as much as possible in order to establish links and connections between the positions at a later stage in the procedure. This is done by establishing dialogical relations between the positions and exploring the formation of coalitions.

In the following the methodology of establishing coalitions of positions is further explored by discussing the position repertoire of a client, Fred, who described himself as a 'persistent doubter'. Fred is a 50-year-old man, married and father of three adolescent children, and working as an administrator in a small company. At the time of the investigation he was offered a new function in the company but felt unable to decide. More generally, he was faced with the problem that he was satisfied with his work only if all details were accomplished in a perfect way. This exhausted him, with the consequence that he lacked the energy to take on new tasks and challenges. In discussing his position repertoire (with 35 internal and 22 external positions), it became clear that there were three positions that played a main role in his present life: the doubter, the perfectionist, and, somewhat at the background but very important to him, the enjoyer of life (see Table 6). Although the enjoyer of life seemed to be an enduring feature of his personal history, this position was certainly suppressed by the combination of the doubter and the perfectionist, the second one compensating for the anxiety aroused by the first one.

During 18 months following the construction of Fred's position repertoire, I had sessions with him on a four-week basis in which we discussed his daily experiences in relation to the three positions (doubter, perfectionist and enjoyer) identified as central in this period of his life. We discovered that the perfectionist could be tackled by learning to delegate tasks to other people at the right moment. That is, before a task was completed in full detail, Fred learned to contact other people whom he asked to cooperate on some of the tasks. He even delegated some tasks before he started the job. After practicing his new style of working for more than one year, it was decided to investigate

*Table 6.* Fred's positions of the doubter, perfectionist and enjoyer of life at Investigation 1 and Investigation 2

Investigation 1: Doubter & perfectionist versus enjoyer of life  
Investigation 2: Enjoyer & perfectionist versus doubter

Correlation between enjoyer & perfectionist and deep-down inside: .81

Correlation between enjoyer & deep-down inside: .32

Correlation between perfectionist & deep-down inside: .41

Valuation linking the doubter, perfectionist and enjoyer:

'I accept the perfectionist in myself; I'm convinced that this is something that has grown in me, probably as a result of fear of failure; at the same time, the enjoyer cannot exist without the perfectionist; however, I don't let the perfectionist destroy me any more; they should learn to deal with each other and to make compromises; when something is performed well, I can enjoy it.'

his position repertoire again. The most significant finding of this second investigation was the fact that the perfectionist and the enjoyer had formed a coalition that was strong enough to push the doubter to the background of the self-system. This new organization of the repertoire contrasted strongly with the organization at the time of the first investigation. Whereas at the first investigation the perfectionist formed a coalition with the doubter, this character changed camps and joined the enjoyer of life, so that a new powerful coalition was formed that led to a reorganized repertoire. This reorganization represented a turning point during the process of counseling which enabled Fred not only to perform his tasks with more pleasure but also to take the decision to change his position in the organization.

In order to study the nature of the new coalition (the perfectionist and the enjoyer) more closely, it was decided to study the correlations with another position, which was a standard position introduced into the list of provided positions: 'I as deep-down inside' (see Appendix). The investigation was organized in such a way that the separate positions (the perfectionist and the enjoyer) could be compared with the same positions as a coalition (the perfectionist and the enjoyer). The results showed that the coalition showed a high correlation ( $r = .81$ ) with 'deep-down inside', higher than the correlations of the separate positions with 'deep-down inside' ( $r = .32$  and  $r = .41$ , respectively, see Table 6). This difference in the extent of the correlations suggests that the coalition is not simply an addition of the separate positions but rather, as a Gestalt, has a surplus value above its constituent parts.

In order to get an overview of the relationship between the three positions (doubter, perfectionist and enjoyer), Fred was invited to phrase the relationship between the three positions as he saw them at the end of the second investigation. He then, with my assistance, formulated

the connections between the three positions in terms of a valuation in which he incorporated the history behind this connection as he saw it (see Table 6). Note that he expressed in this sentence his personal necessity of living with the doubter, which he described in terms of 'fear of failure'. Moreover, he emphasized the necessity of the enjoyer to make a deal with the perfectionist. This formulation suggests not only that the different positions are the product of a historical development but, also that, once they are rooted in the self-system, they have the quality of a 'destination'. The observed change is more in the structure of the positions and in their relative dominance than in their appearance or disappearance.

### Background Theory

There is one position in Fred's example that is particularly relevant to the notion of the unity of the position repertoire: 'deep-down inside'. This position was included in the repertoire with the purpose of studying the compatibility of multiplicity and unity. In a study of biculturalism, LaFromboise, Coleman and Gerton (1993) proposed the notion of bicultural competence as the capacity to alternate between two cultural positions (e.g. between one's culture of origin and a second culture). The authors discussed several dimensions of bicultural competence. One of them was 'role repertoire': 'the range of culturally or situationally appropriate behaviors or roles an individual has developed', assuming that 'the greater the range of behaviors or roles, the higher the level of cultural competence' (p. 406). Another dimension was called 'groundedness', referring to a sense of belonging or a sense of personal place. People who have the experience of having a well-developed support system have more feeling of being grounded in a particular culture. In this view a highly developed bicultural competence does not exclude the possibility of being rooted in more than one cultural position.

In the tradition of Kelly's (1955) personal construct theory, Butt, Burr and Bell (1997) objected to the idea proposed by postmodernist thinkers that the notion of self is at best outmoded and at worst an ideologically produced illusion, and that fragmentation and plurality of identities have replaced the unitary, coherent self of traditional psychology. In an empirical study, these authors found that their respondents had a strong sense of 'being themselves' in a variety of relationships, and yet felt themselves to be quite different kinds of people in these relationships. Such data can be seen as a warning against the conclusion that multiplicity and multivoicedness exclude a clearly developed sense of self.



The possibility of combining bicultural competence with the feeling of being rooted in more than one culture, as discussed by LaFromboise et al. (1993), and the compatibility of relational multivoicedness with a well-developed sense of self, as found by Butt et al. (1997), may encourage research on the relationship between unity and multiplicity in people's position repertoire. Elaborating on these ideas, the position 'deep-down inside' was included in Fred's repertoire. This position allowed the study of the compatibility between the existence of two positions going together in a coalition, on the one hand, and the experience of being rooted 'deep-down inside', on the other hand. The findings suggest that a recently formed coalition between formerly adversary positions (perfectionist and enjoyer) could become rooted in Fred's developing position repertoire within a relatively short period of time (approximately one year).

The unity of the position repertoire can be further enhanced by inviting the participant to formulate explicitly the nature of the relations between those positions that are most prominent or influential in a particular period of life. As a response to this question, Fred formulated a brief text in which he took, from a theoretical point of view, a 'meta-position' (Hermans & Kempen, 1993), comparable with what Leiman and Stiles (2000) called the 'observer position'. Such a meta-position has several specific features: it creates a certain distance toward the other positions; it provides an overarching view; it enables the participants to interrelate the positions as part of their personal history; it provides an opportunity for evaluating the several positions and their organization; and, finally, the direction of change and the importance of one or more positions in view of future possibilities become apparent. In summary, the meta-position contributes, more than most other positions, to the integration and unity of the repertoire.

The concepts of coalition and meta-position may illustrate the fact that positions in a person's repertoire are not as neatly separated as a list of positions (Appendix) would suggest. Positions may actually operate as combinations and as groups, and they do so on a quite implicit level and in a quite natural way in our daily lives. They may be even overlapping so that they operate as clusters. In the presented methodology, for research and practical purposes, positions are distinguished that may feel in daily life as 'just me as I am'.

## The Structure of Cultural Positions

In the preceding article (Hermans, 2001), three perspectives for future research on self and culture were proposed: the shifting of attention

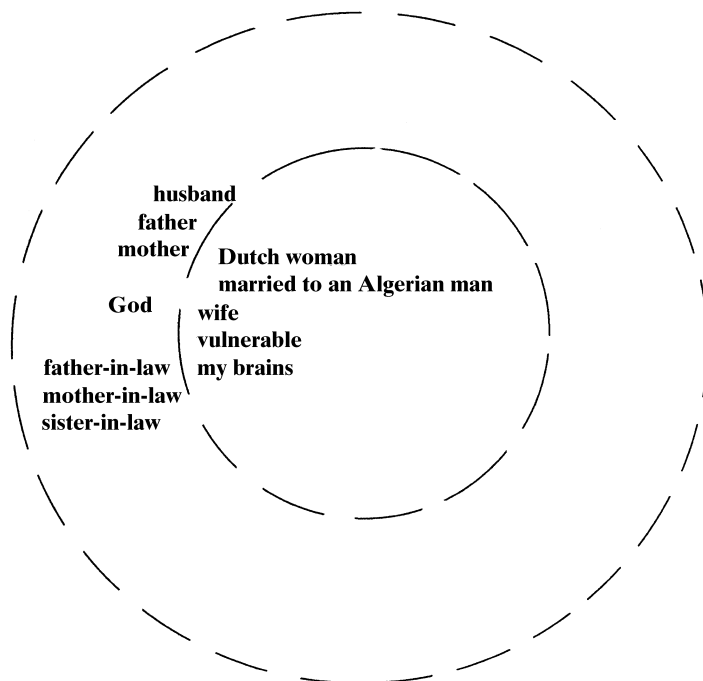
from core to contact zones; increasing complexity; and the experience of uncertainty. The following part of the present contribution presents and discusses the position repertoire of two people who live, as a couple, on the contact zones between two cultures: Sylvia, a 42-year-old Dutch woman, and Ali, a 45-year-old Algerian man. I contacted the couple as a researcher and explained to them that I was interested in doing a study on the repertoire of two people who live on the boundaries of two cultures. They expressed their interest in performing such an investigation and in discussing the results.

The couple have lived for more than 20 years in the Netherlands, where Sylvia is working as a technician in a Dutch company and Ali as a manager in a large Dutch organization. They have five children who are educated in the Islamic tradition, although Sylvia received a Catholic education. Sylvia describes herself as 'somewhere falling between two cultures' and she emphasizes: 'I think we do not belong to any group, neither to the Dutch, nor to the Algerians,' and she adds: 'This makes us a bit dissociated, we live by ourselves a lot.' She expresses her indignation regarding the position of Algerian women: 'The Algerians keep their women at home, they don't need to study, they are just good for housework. . . . I'm glad that my husband has a different attitude, he is different from his culture.' Ali, from his side, characterizes himself as 'integrated in Dutch culture' and adds that he makes a distinction between 'integration' and 'adaptation'. To my question what he sees as the difference, he answers with an example: 'If I have lunch together with a female colleague, I phone my wife and tell her about my appointment; this would be impossible in Algeria.' For him this is an indication that he is really able to live and to behave as a Dutch citizen, which is, in his view, more than adapting himself to an 'alien' culture.

The couple not only live on the contact zones of two cultures, but they are, moreover, involved in a long-lasting, everyday contact with each other. When two people are in communication with each other, how do they organize their repertoires? How do they construe each other and their family members? Moreover, how are the cultural positions of these persons located in their repertoire?

### **The Position Repertoire of a Dutch Woman Married to an Algerian Man**

Sylvia constructed a repertoire consisting of 36 internal and 24 external positions. In discussing the repertoire with her, I was particularly interested in two cultural positions that were part of the internal domain of her self: 'I as a Dutch woman' and 'I as married to an



*Figure 1.* Position repertoire of a Dutch woman living in the Netherlands, married to an Algerian man

Algerian man.' Both positions had a relatively high degree of prominence for Sylvia: 'Married to an Algerian man' was in fourth place in the overall prominence order of the internal positions, and 'I as a Dutch woman' was in fifteenth place. The two positions also had a high correlation with each other ( $r = .82$ ), indicating that they go together across a wide variety of external positions.

Figure 1 is a visual representation of the internal and external positions that are immediately relevant to the two pivotal positions 'Dutch woman' and 'married to an Algerian man'. The positions mentioned in the internal domain have high correlations (typically higher than .60) with each other and, therefore, can be seen as a group of positions that go together. The positions depicted in the external domain are selected because they all have high prominence ratings (level 3 or more on a 0–5 scale) regarding all the internal positions mentioned in Figure 1, as indicated by the corresponding entries in the position matrix.

Apparently, the pivotal positions 'Dutch woman' and 'married to an

Algerian man' go together with Sylvia's role as 'wife', suggesting that her cultural positions are clearly related to a specific role definition. The pivotal positions correlate not only highly with a social position (her role as a wife), but also with a personal position ('vulnerable'). The relevance of this correlation was also evident in the discussions we had after the investigation: Sylvia had the feeling of somehow falling between two cultures, not clearly belonging to any of them, and she explained that she felt very vulnerable as a result.

The position 'my brains' was included in the repertoire as a response to the question: 'Which part or aspect of your body do you feel to be particularly strong?' This question was included in the PPR (see Appendix) together with another question: 'Which part or aspect of your body do you feel to be particular weak?' These questions were included in the position repertoire following an idea proposed by Raggatt (2000), who included similar questions in his 'personality web', a semi-structured interview for mapping the dialogical self. Such questions refer explicitly to the embodied nature of the dialogical self. In her answer to the first question, Sylvia referred to her brains as a part of her body in which she trusted if she had to cope with problems. As an answer to the second question, she referred to her 'dizziness', as something that happened if 'things become too stressful'. The correlation between her cultural positions and a specific body part ('my brains') emphasized for Sylvia that she had to think very hard if faced with the many problems and questions in her daily life as a person belonging to two cultures. One of the problems which Sylvia was plagued by for a long time, and which made her very vulnerable as married to a man from another culture, was her relationship with her family-in-law.

In the external domain of Sylvia's self, two groups of positions can be distinguished: her own family and her family-in-law. The correlations among the positions within the first group were high (above .60), as were the correlations among the positions within the second group, but the correlations between the first and the second group were low (approaching zero or slightly negative). These high within- and low between-correlations suggested an organization of the external domain of the repertoire in terms of an opposition between an 'in-group' (her own family) and an 'out-group' (her family-in-law). Indeed, in the interview it became immediately clear that Sylvia experienced a bad relationship with her family-in-law. One of the examples that she gave was that some family members had put her and her husband under strong pressure to provide money so that the family could live in the Netherlands for some time. Sylvia objected to this pressure because she

not only didn't feel responsible for the financial situation of her family members in Algeria but she also didn't appreciate her family-in-law's unquestioned expectation that she and her husband would share their income with them.

A special position was attributed to 'God', who showed moderately high correlations (approximately .40) both with Sylvia's own family members and with the members of her family-in-law. In her view, God was not at one side of the opposition between the two families but rather in the middle. This position seemed to have an integrating function in the organization of her repertoire.

### **The Position Repertoire of an Algerian Man Married to a Dutch Woman**

Ali constructed a repertoire consisting of 49 internal and 33 external positions. In the discussion I had with him about his specific situation, we distinguished three cultural positions: 'I as an Algerian', 'I as adapted to Dutch culture' and 'I as integrated in Dutch culture'. However, the results showed that these positions had very low levels of prominence, suggesting that they didn't play a very conspicuous role in Ali's life. Ali himself explained that after all these years living in the Netherlands, he felt really part of the Dutch community and didn't have the feeling that he was relating to other people as an 'Algerian' or as an 'Algerian Dutch', and even didn't have the impression that he was considered in this way by most people in his social environment. Therefore, I decided to focus in his case on the external domain of the self, and on the relationships between his own family and his Dutch family-in-law, so that his results (see Figure 2) could be compared on this point with the results of his wife.

Whereas the analysis of Sylvia's repertoire started with pivotal positions in the internal domain, the analysis of Ali's repertoire started with the positions in the external domain, with special emphasis on the relations between his family and family-in-law. When correlations were calculated among the external positions (columns of the matrix), a relatively large group of positively correlating (higher than .60) positions were found, including his wife, father, mother, children, father-in-law and mother-in-law. Unlike from his wife, he constructed an in-group that consisted not only of his own parents but also of his wife's parents. At the same time, Ali also had an out-group consisting of several positions with high within-correlations and low between-correlations with the positions of his in-group. This out-group consisted of Dutch people who had a discriminating attitude toward foreigners; a particular novelist (Michel Bouquet) whom he disliked

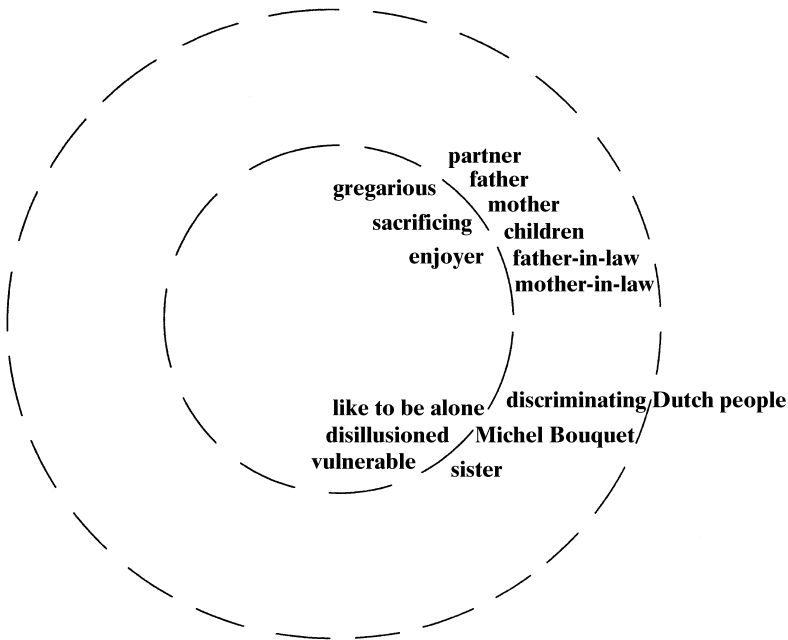


Figure 2. Position repertoire of an Algerian man living in the Netherlands, married to a Dutch woman

because he didn't agree with the writer's political views; and, finally, his sister.

Ali's and Sylvia's repertoires had both clear similarities and clear differences. The most conspicuous similarity is that they both had the tendency to organize the external domains in terms of an opposition between an in-group and an out-group. Apparently, external others can be classified in terms of opposing groups as fulfilling versus not fulfilling the needs and wishes of a large variety of internal positions. A salient difference, however, is that Sylvia's in-group versus out-group organization coincides with the two countries or nations (Dutch versus Algerians). Ali's organization, on the contrary, clearly transcends this dichotomous classification. He tries to keep the two families together on the basis of a feeling of loyalty to both of them.

There was, however, one exception: his sister. She was seen, both by his wife and by himself, as the 'witch of the family'. More than other Algerian family members, she was seen as the great scandal-monger of the family and always ready to manipulate others in the service of her own interests. Organizing his repertoire in this way, Ali could

maintain a double loyalty. As part of an Algerian family that required absolute loyalty with the own clan, he included his father and mother as part of his in-group, although his wife was opposed to both of them. On the other hand, Ali could maintain the loyalty with his wife by including his sister as part of his out-group, in this way agreeing with his wife and supporting her in disapproving his sister's manipulative behavior. As a result, his sister was attributed a place in his out-group and was associated with such internal positions as 'like to be alone', 'disillusioned' and 'vulnerable'.

From a methodological point of view, Sylvia's and Ali's cases demonstrate that a high correlation (e.g. between 'Dutch woman' and 'married to an Algerian man') does not indicate some kind of 'integration' between the two positions. In fact, it was found that Sylvia's internal positions, having high within-correlations, were prominent in relation to two groups of external positions, an in-group and an out-group, that were felt as manifesting conflicting value systems and, as such, not easily reconcilable. Therefore, a high correlation between positions indicates a relation of 'going together' rather than 'integration.'

### Background Theory

A significant feature of the present approach is the assumption that the self is culture-inclusive. On the methodological level this assumption is elaborated by distinguishing internal and external domains of the self, with cultural positions included in both domains. In Sylvia's case, 'Dutch woman' and 'married to an Algerian man' were, as two cultural positions, included in the internal domain of the self. Moreover, members of her own family and family-in-law, representing two very different cultural communities, were part of her external domain. In fact, she belonged to two cultures because she was a Dutch woman but, at the same time, part of the family of her husband. In other words, cultures and cultural oppositions are not outside the self as some kind of 'environment' from which the self can exclusively be separated. Instead, culture is in the self, both in its internal and in its external domains. This implies that collective voices, as represented by groups (e.g. 'discriminating Dutch' in Ali's case) or by significant others (e.g. own family or family-in-law in Sylvia's case), are constituent parts of the self and organize the self to a significant degree.

This is not to say that a cultural position (internal or external) has the same place in the organized repertoire as do the other positions. Cultural positions have the power to influence a large variety of social and personal positions from the beginning of life and thus, to a large degree implicitly, influence and organize the position repertoire as a

whole. From the present perspective, this pervasive influence of cultural positions is not to be understood as resulting in a unitary self in which all positions, personal and social, are subsumed by a unidirectional process of socialization. Rather, cultural positions imply differences, contrasts, agreements, disagreements, conflicts and integrations as part of a developing polyphony. Particularly, in a world in which cultures are increasingly meeting one another at their contact zones, cultural positions in the self are part of a dynamic field of tension, involved in a process of increasing complexity and challenged by a growing uncertainty (Hermans & Kempen, 1998).

As Gregg (1991) has argued, in-groups and out-groups are part of the self and form part of the self in their oppositional qualities. In the present research we have seen that a person is able to reconstruct societal demarcations of in- and out-groups so that they become to some degree 'personalized'. In this respect there was a strong difference between Sylvia and Ali. In Sylvia's case, the distinction between her in- and out-group reflected the traditional differentiation between an individualistic culture (the Dutch) and a more collectivistic culture (the Algerians). In Ali's case, however, there was no congruence between his personal classification and the traditional classification. He included his Algerian family members together with his family members in the Netherlands in a common group that transcended the boundaries of the traditional individualist-collectivist distinction. This suggests that 'official' cultural classifications (e.g. on the basis of country, race, ethnicity or religion) can be transformed into a personalized system of cultures as part of an organized position repertoire.

## **Summary and Perspective**

Why this theory and method? In addressing this question, a musical metaphor could be used. If a composer wants to bring to expression a musical idea, or set of ideas, he or she needs the right instruments to serve this purpose. The psychological analogue is that the self can relate to a variety of situations only if it is composed of a variety of positions. A growing complexity of our immediate social situation, personal history, collective history and globalizing world requires a concomitant complexity of the self. If the self is depicted as a society, the growing complexity of the world society goes hand in hand with the complexity of the self.

In giving theoretical form to the 'society of the self', the combined musical/literary metaphor of the polyphonic novel served as an inspiring source in formulating the theoretical framework of the dialogical



self. This framework brings together three concepts that in their combination form the heart of the present theoretical framework: multi-voicedness, intersubjective interchange (both between and within people) and power. As the result of power differences, some voices are not included or, if they are included, they are pushed to the background of the self-system so that their sound is subdued. How can the variety and potential richness of the voices be heard, including the things they have to say?

In order to address this question on the level of the self, the Personal Position Repertoire (PPR) has been devised in line with the theoretical starting points expounded in the preceding article (Hermans, 2001). The PPR is devised as a method for the investigation of the spatial realm of the self in such a way that insight is gained not only into the multiplicity of existing positions, but also into the more dynamic process of positioning, repositioning and being positioned in a variety of social contexts. As part of this process, special interest was devoted to those positions that, as a result of power differences, were suppressed or neglected as part of the repertoire. In order to facilitate dialogical processes, positions were approached as voiced positions, able to tell their stories and implied meaning units. Three kinds of interchange can be distinguished: internal-external, internal-internal and external-external. In the present contribution, an example was elaborated (Nancy's case) of the second type of dialogical interchange. Other types could be addressed in similar ways.

If an increasing number of people meet each other on the contact zones between cultures, the number and influence of cultural positions in the repertoire are expected to increase accordingly. It was argued that the increasing global cultural interconnectedness leads to increasing contacts between actual people from different cultural backgrounds. This has at least two implications. First, different cultural positions are combined and recombined in the organized position repertoire. As part of this organization, combinations and coalitions of cultural positions lead to complex selves that can be described as 'multiple identities'. Second, on the interface between cultures, shared and non-shared areas can be discerned in the selves of interacting individuals and groups. The greater the difference between cultures, the greater the probability that people from different cultural origins are faced with the existence of non-shared areas in the dialogical field. Large non-shared areas in combination with a high frequency of contact among people from different cultural backgrounds may enhance the probability of cultural misunderstanding and hinder an efficient organization of different cultural elements as part of a

functional whole. Non-shared areas can be explored and transformed into shared areas only if the dialogical relationships are not overly asymmetrical and laden with power differences.

The competence to deal effectively with different cultural positions and to organize them into a well-functioning repertoire requires: (a) knowledge of different cultures and their associated meaning units without superimposing one culture above other cultures on a *priori* grounds; (b) the ability to give cultural positions a voice so that the story of these positions can be heard and communicated with other voices in the self or with the voices of other people; (c) the construction of combinations or coalitions of positions that adequately respond to the demands of situations that imply a large degree of complexity or uncertainty; and (d) the foregrounding of a position or a combination of positions as required by a particular context without losing contact with other positions that are not immediately prominent in that particular context.

The competence to act as part of a globalizing world creates an unprecedented challenge to the relation between unity and multiplicity. The answer to that challenge is more a matter of chance than of choice. The prospect is to achieve a unity of the self via its polyphonization.

### Appendix: Standard List of Internal and External Positions

<i>Internal positions</i>	<i>External positions</i>
I as a man	My husband/partner
I as a woman	My wife/partner
I as a father	My father
I as a mother	My mother
I as a child of my parents	My father-in-law
I as husband	My mother-in-law
I as wife	My children
I as colleague	My brother
I as professional	My sister
I as member of a cultural community	My cousin
I as freedom seeker	My grandfather
I as victim	My grandmother
I as idealist	An acquaintance
I as independent	A fellow-student
I as clown	My teacher
I as mystic/spiritual	My colleague
I as warmth seeker	My subordinate
I as sacrificing	My employer
I as dependent	My friend
I as doer	My girl-friend
I as sexual	A figure in my dream
I as doubter	A TV personality
I as fighter	A character in a book

## Appendix: Continued

<i>Internal positions</i>	<i>External positions</i>
I as understanding	A figure in music
I as adventurer	Somebody who is dead
I as dominating	Somebody in my imagination
I as restless seeker	Somebody I admire
I as betrayer	Somebody I love
I as recognition seeker	A problematic person
I as avenger	My ex-partner
I as demanding	Somebody I play sports with
I as jealous	My adversary
I as perfectionist	My pet
I as understanding	A group in society to which I belong
I as guilty	A group to which I don't belong
I as optimist	A group to which I belonged in the past
I as vulnerable	Another cultural group
I as disillusioned	My therapist
My conscience	A supernatural being
I as enjoyer of life	My house
I as dreamer	Something in nature
My masculine side	..... (added by the participant)
My feminine side	..... (added by the participant)
The child in myself	..... (added by the psychologist)
I as pessimist	..... (added by the psychologist)
I as fearful	
I as materialist	
I as stable	
The strong part of my body	
The weak part of my body	
I as deep-down inside	
I as presenting myself to the outside	
..... (added by the participant)	
..... (added by the participant)	
..... (added by the psychologist)	
..... (added by the psychologist)	

*Note:* The internal positions 'I as deep-down inside' and 'I as presenting myself to the outside' are provided in every investigation because they reflect some basic aspects of the relationship between the internal and external world.

At the end of the investigation, the participants may add those positions that they want to include in the repertoire so that their own words may be studied in the context of the words provided by the standard list. The participant may also add positions that are imagined or longed for, although not part of their actual world.

On the basis of knowledge of the specific personal history of the participant, the psychologist may propose to the participants to add extra positions that are not in the standard list and not proposed by the participants themselves.

## Notes

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1. All clients in this article have been given pseudonyms to preserve their anonymity.

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