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Editors' Introduction: Radicalization and Deradicalization from the Perspective of Dialogical Self Theory

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This introduction clarifies the main reasons for a special issue on radicalization and deradicalization from the perspective of Dialogical Self Theory. After description of the origin and main tenets of the theory, the different contributions to the special issue are summarized.

Since the attacks on the Twin Towers in America, scholars from various disciplines have tried to better understand radicalism, and to formulate strategies for preventing and combating it. Psychological theories have conceptualized personality traits that - under certain circumstances - may lead to radical behavior. Sociologists point at processes of exclusion of particular social groups, economists stress unequal distributions of resources; and political scientists discuss it as a clash of civilizations that started after the Fall of the Berlin Wall. All those theories are pieces to the puzzle. Dialogical Self Theory (DST), the conceptual framework of this special issue, is relatively new in the debate of (de)radicalization.

DST was developed in the early 1990s because of dissatisfaction with an earlier approach that was represented by the Self Confrontation Method (Hermans & Hermans-Jansen, 1995). The central idea behind this method was to ask people what they found important in their lives, and what they thought was meaningful when they looked at their past, present and expected future. The strength of this Self-Confrontation Method was that it made room for affective meanings and a cooperative relationship between client and psychotherapist. The weakness of this method was that it had no explicit attention to the influential role of the other, and that it did not place the self in a broader social and societal context.

Given these weaknesses, the Self-Confrontation Method was “succeeded” by what is now known as the Dialogical Self Theory. This theory was Inspired by William James’ (1890) idea that the self is extended to the environment and Mikhail Bakhtin’s (1984) proposal that the mind is polyphonic. At first, the theory was presented in the article “The dialogical self: Beyond individualism and rationalism” in the *American psychologist* in 1992, by Hubert Hermans, Harry Kempen and Rens van Loon (1992). From William James the founding fathers of DST borrowed the notion of the extended self that allowed it to overcome the Cartesian separation between the self and the environment. The extended self is composed of everything that persons can call their own: my body, my clothes, my house, my wife, my

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children. People and things in the environment belong to the self as far as they are felt as “mine.” The Dialogical Self theorists took the notion of the polyphonic novel from Mikhail Bakhtin. By analyzing Dostoevsky’s novels, Bakhtin argued that in these stories there is not only one author at work, namely Dostoevsky himself, but multiple authors and voices that are represented by characters that are involved in dialogical relationships.

In a nutshell DST assumes, firstly, that the self can be conceived as a “society of mind” or as a multiplicity of embodied *I*-positions among which dialogical relationships can exist, and, secondly, that the “I” is capable of shifting from one position to another in accordance with different, and even contrasting, situations. The self is not autonomous and unified, but dialogical and multiple; so, it is not a substance within itself but deeply relational. And the other is not an outside entity but an existing part of the self.

In a later development DST was expanded to include the process of globalization which is outlined in Hubert Hermans and Agnieszka Hermans-Konopka’s (2010) book *Dialogical Self Theory. Positioning and Counter-Positioning in a Globalizing Society* (Cambridge University Press, 2010). In this work, the authors acknowledge that processes of globalization and localization have significant implications for the organization of the self and one’s personal position repertoire. They argue that due to globalization not only the society at large but also the self as a society of mind have become more complex, and that the number and heterogeneity of *I*-positions have a tendency to increase.

In the latest development of the theory, the dialogical self is described as a democratic self. In his work *Society in the Self: A Theory of Identity in Democracy* (Oxford University Press, 2018), Hubert Hermans (2018) sees democracy as metaphor for a dialogical organization of the self as a society of mind. He argues that “a democratic organization of the self adds value to both self and society in their interconnection” (p. 4) and that “[s]ocietal democracy and self-democracy are intimately interconnected” (p. 139).

So, when “the other” is not an outside entity, but already part of the self, why and under what conditions are some people no longer able to shift from their own position to the position of the other? Why do they become rigid and radical? Why and under what conditions do some voices become dominant and others peripheral? These are the questions that the authors of this special issue want to answer. They write from very different contexts and contribute to this special issue from different experiences. At the same time, they also analyze the problem of radicalization using DST as a common conceptual framework.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE SPECIAL ISSUE

Toon van Meijl analyses radicalization from the context of the migration and multiculturalism debate in European nation states. He argues that ethnic others are frequently locked in *I*-prisons by focusing exclusively on their positions as citizens with a migration background who are not yet integrated into mainstream society. He shows that DST not only highlights cultural differences, but also brings about partial but potent human commonalities to the surface. As a consequence, the focus may be shifted from sharply demarcated differences towards dialog, from which commonalities emerge that contribute to the process of de-radicalization.

Raquel da Silva, Catarina Rosa, and Jutta König explore dialogical positioning in the self-transformation of a former politically violent militant who was a member of a Portuguese armed organization called FP-25. The objective of this organization was to overthrow the

authoritarian regime in Portugal at that time. The interviewee was 19 years old when the revolution, which was also called the Carnation Revolution, occurred in Portugal on 25 April 1974. The authors highlight how the embodied emotional chords of personal positions, the development of meta-positions, and the positioning and repositioning movements within the dialogical self, facilitated the emergence of new and more adaptive positions within the personal meaning system of former militants.

Joana Silva, Raquel da Silva, Pablo Fernández-Navarro, Catarina Rosa, and Miguel Gonçalves explore identity fusion in the context of extreme violent behavior. An in-depth life story interview with a longstanding member of a football firm who was involved in several violent episodes, was qualitatively analyzed. The variety of *I*-positions in the self as well as the dialogical relations established between such positions were examined under themes associated with identity fusion, to try to understand pro-group radical violent behavior. The results suggest that a core coalition of internal *I*-positions and external *We*-positions favoring extreme ultra violence appeared to dominate the participant's self-system.

Rens van Loon writes about radicalization from his experience with coaching leaders in organizations. The obsession with big data and rational analyses in some of these leaders can take the form of radicalization in economic and political contexts. He introduces the concept of "transpositioning" that refers to the metaphorical transpositioning of one part of a positional repertoire to another part so that the second part is transformed by the first one. He argues that this process of transposition can be used in the service of deradicalization and presents case material as an exemplification of this process.

Piotr Oles addresses the question of how the process of radicalization can be explained by reference to the internal organization and functioning of the dialogical self. He notes that whereas social psychology is focused on social processes between individuals and between groups of people, DST is primarily interested in the question of how these general, social processes are mirrored and organized in the self. In his view there are three elements that are necessary to de-radicalization: reorganization of *I*-positions, restoration of a sense of belonging to a larger community and an increase in awareness of human values.

Frans Wijzen makes an in-depth study of a Muslim leader in Dar es Salaam who is portrayed as a radical by the media in Tanzania. The aim of this contribution is to test the fruitfulness of bridging Dialogical Self Theory and Critical Discourse Analysis in understanding the process of (de)radicalization. Both approaches are rooted in social constructivism, dialogism and narrative theory. The author concludes that both approaches have strengths and weaknesses. To understand social polarization and (de)radicalization, critical discourse analysis has the advantage that it shows that words constitute and are constituted by political agendas. Dialogical Self Theory can better explain that the other is not a stranger located outside but functions as an integrative part of the self. This makes compromises between quite different positions possible.

The contributions of this special issue went through a process of circular review. The authors had a chance to review each other's manuscripts. Therefore, as editors we invited each author to add a comment to the reviewed article at the end of their own manuscript. This procedure added to the integration of the special issue as a whole.

Finally, after reviewing the content of the different articles of this issue, we as editors conclude that as a bridging theory, DST has the potential of understanding radicalization as a multi-faceted and highly dynamic phenomenon that implies both individual and collective

ways of positioning. Therefore, we think that it is, better than most other theories, equipped to offer a comprehensive approach to the process of de-radicalization.

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