AMBIVALENCE IN INTERGENERATIONAL FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS:
New Perspectives on Methodology
June 24 to 28, 2014

This conference was co-sponsored by The Henry J. Leir Luxembourg Program-Clark University, The University of Luxembourg, and The Niels Bohr Centre of Cultural Psychology at Aalborg University in Denmark.

Conveners:
Jaan Valsiner, Psychology Department, Clark University, Integrative Research Unit on Social and Individual Development (INSIDE), Université du Luxembourg, as well as Niels Bohr Centre of Cultural Psychology, Aalborg Universitet, Denmark, and Isabelle Albert, Integrative Research Unit on Social and Individual Development (INSIDE), Université du Luxembourg

Participants:
Daniela Barni, Catholic University of Milan, Italy
Stéphanie Barros Coimbra, University of Luxembourg, Luxembourg
Thomas Boll, University of Luxembourg, Luxembourg
Céline Dujardin, University of Luxembourg, Luxembourg
Dieter Ferring, University of Luxembourg, Luxembourg
Eugenia Gouvedari, University of Luxembourg, Luxembourg
Mogens Jensen, Aalborg University, Denmark
Katarzyna Lubiewska, Kazimierz Wielki University, Poland
Olga Lehmann, Norwegian University of Technology, Norway
Livia Mathias Simão, University of São Paulo, Brazil
Elsa Mattos, Universidade Federal da Bahia, Brazil
Boris Mayer, University of Bern, Switzerland
Camila Nassar, University of Casabana, Columbia
Annekatrin Steinhoff, University of Münster, Germany
Luca Tateo, Aalborg University, Denmark

The recipient of The Henry J. Leir Student Conference Participation Award was Kevin Carriere, Psychology Department, Clark University and currently graduate student at Georgetown University.

Schedule

**June 25:** Arrival Day
5:00 PM Reception
7:00 PM Dinner

**June 25:**
9:00 AM Opening and discussion of joint goals.
Isabelle Albert and Jaan Valsiner

9:30-10:00 **Models of ambivalence: causal and catalytic**
Jaan Valsiner and Luca Tateo

10:00-10:15 Break

10:15-12:00 **Transgenerational issues in family contexts: where are the ambivalences?** Short introductions to previously distributed case examples
Stephanie Barros, Gaby Marinho Ribeiro and Isabelle Albert—The case of saudade
Mogens Jensen—Desired ambiguities and dealing with ambivalences in the context of social work
Luca Tateo—Searching for a way out (from adolescence)
Livia M. Simão (with Vivian Pontes) -- Facing ambivalences while pregnant

12:00 PM Lunch

2:00 PM **Looking for solutions: how to research ambivalences?**
DISCUSSION LED BY:
Camila Nassar
Olga Lehmann
Kevin Carriere
Elsa de Mattos—elaboration of
*Construction of the Value of “Responsibility” in the Transition to Adulthood*
3:30 PM  Break

3:45 PM  **Still looking for (maybe finding?) solutions**
DISCUSSION LED BY:
Luca Tateo
Thomas Boll
Eugenia Gouvedari
Kevin Carriere

5:00 PM  **What are we all looking for?**
Dieter Ferring

5:30 PM  **Moving Ahead:**
Daniela Barni (with Silvia Donato)—Ambivalence in the family transmission of values.

**June 26**

9:00 AM  **From yesterday to today**
Isabelle Albert, Boris Mayer and Beate Schwarz

9:30 AM  **Contributions from cultural psychology**
Luca Tateo and Jaan Valsiner

10:00 AM  Break

10:30 PM  **Qualitative methodologies and the study of trans-generational ambivalences**
DISCUSSION LED BY
Jaan Valsiner
Anne Carolina Ramos
Celine Dujardin
Olga Lehmann
Maliina Lyberth

12:00 PM  Lunch

2:00 PM  **Quantitative orientations to methodology to study ambivalences**
Short presentations beyond the drafts that were distributed:
Thomas Boll - Ambivalence in family caregivers for older people: emotion-theoretical views
Katarzyna Lubiewska – Assessment of attachment ambivalence
Annekatrin Steinhoff – Ambivalence as a matter of fact?

4:00 PM  **Moving ahead (again)— from what we learned here and how it can reflect in the book**
Discussion led by Beate Schwarz, Boris Mayer, Isabelle Albert, Lívia Simão, Luca Tateo and Olga Lehmann
General Conclusions
Isabelle Albert and Jaan Valsiner
Contributions to the conference theme will be published as a book project entitled:
“CULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY OF TRANSGENERATIONAL FAMILY RELATIONS:
INVESTIGATING AMBIVALENCES”
Editors: Isabelle Albert, Emily Abbey and Jaan Valsiner
To be published by Information Age Publishers, Charlotte, N.C.

List of contents:
Introduction by Jaan Valsiner, Isabelle Albert & Emily Abbey

PART I. Conceptual Issues
1. Tensegrity as existential condition: the inherent ambivalence of development by Luca Tateo (Niels Bohr Professorship Centre for Cultural Psychology, University of Aalborg, Denmark)
2. The research act: Creating knowledge from the not (yet) known by Eugenia Gouvedari

PART II. Life-span and Transgenerational Focus
3. Ambivalence and Intergenerational Construction of 'Responsibility': A Case Study with Brazilian Youth by Elsa Mattos (UFBA - Federal University of Bahia, Instituto de Psicologia, Brazil)
4. Transgenerational Ambivalence in the Time to Come: How meanings regulate being pregnant and facing miscarriage by Vívian Volkmer Pontes & Lívia Mathias Simão (University of São Paulo, Brazil)
5. Changing family structures and intergenerational relations – a challenging context for developing ambivalence by Kairi Kasearu & Dagmar Kutsar (Institute of Social Studies, University of Tartu, Estonia)
6. Ambivalences in adult children providing care to their older parents: a cognitive emotion-theoretical view by Thomas Boll (University of Luxembourg, Luxembourg)

PART III. Phenomena
7. Saudade, an ambivalent phenomenon in the Portuguese soul by Stephanie Barros Coimbra, Gaby Marinho Ribeiro & Isabelle Albert (University of Luxembourg, Luxembourg)
8. Desired ambiguities and dealing with ambivalences in the context of social work by Mogens Jensen (Aalborg University, Denmark)
9. Ambivalence in the Family Transmission of Values: Recognizing Differences and Assuming Similarity by Daniela Barni & Silvia Donato (Family Studies and Research University Centre, Catholic University of Milan, Italy)
PART IV. Measurement Issues

10. Attachment ambivalence: Adaptive meaning and measurement problems by Katarzyna Lubiewska (Kazimierz Wielki University of Bydgoszcz, Poland)

11. Towards a context-sensitive analysis of the emergence and the results of ambivalences by Annekatrin Steinhoff (Department of Sociology, University of Muenster, Germany)

12. They may take my duties, but never my rights! The Psychology of Rights and Duties by Kevin Carriere (Georgetown University)

General Conclusions by Isabelle Albert, Emily Abbey & Jaan Valsiner
Abstracts

Tensegrity as existential condition: the inherent ambivalence of development

Luca Tateo

Niels Bohr Professorship Centre for Cultural Psychology, University of Aalborg (Denmark)

In the chapter I will develop the concept of “tensegrity” in psychology (Tateo & Marsico, 2013), that is replacing the idea of equilibrium in psychological system with the principle of catalytic dynamic tension (Tateo, 2014). I will argue that the environmental relationship with the organism does not exert on a state of static equilibrium, rather it interacts with a psychological system which is already in a state of dynamic tension. This will allow me to overcome the causal model of explanation of mind/culture relationships in favor of a more dynamic and developmental model. This theoretical model should enable to better understand the processes of continuity and discontinuity in development not in terms of opposition but in terms of mutual inclusion (Tateo & Iannaccone, 2011).

In general terms, I will maintain that psychological processes are characterized by an inherent ambivalence at cognitive affective and ethical levels. In particular during the developmental age, the individual/culture relationship is guided by specific institutions, e.g. family and school, that behave like near-equilibrium open systems, in which the system organization and functioning defines at the same time the range of acceptable structural indeterminacy and the boundaries of the system itself with respect to the environment (Sawada & Caley, 1985). This context of guided development generates a set of ambivalences that the individual is negotiating and make sense of, while developing his own self and personal culture. For instance, educational contexts are constructing situations in which ambivalent sets of guidelines are continuously produced (be independent but follow the rules, be mature enough but can’t do whatever you want, be sociable but don’t speak in classroom, etc.). In the inherent tension of the self, these set of suggestions and constraints constitutes the cultural framework for the elaboration of the personal trajectory.

The proposed theoretical model could help to look at developmental phenomena in a new look. Rather than a sequence of equilibrium states and crises, development could be seen as a self feeding process of dynamic tensegrity between the organism and the environment oriented toward the future goals. Studying education and family relationships by looking at the elements of ambivalence and tension as systemic features would then enable to account for a wider range of phenomena.

References:


The research act: Creating knowledge from the not (yet) known
Eugenia Gouvedari

The chapter will unfold the concept of ambivalence in developmental processes through the perspective of semiotic-cultural psychology. Ambivalence will be seen on an abstract level as inherent in developmental processes and not contingent on certain conditions (resonating with Luca Tateo’s “tensegrity” and dynamic tension).

Starting from its inescapability I will explore theoretically the dialectical tension between freedom and constraint, reproduction and innovation in relation to the process of research development and theory construction. In this self-reflective process we construct bridges that momentarily create stability.

Building bridges creates a monolithic unification of two points but it also presupposes ambivalence before, in the not yet there phase of envisioning. The building of bridges with all the AS IF not yet actualised, the scaffoldings and the constraints involves the ambivalent tensions that can be captured by a catalytic model of causality. Before the establishment of theoretical and inter/transdisciplinary synergies, before the use of new metaphors in theory there are multiple potential research trajectories that are selectively and serendipitously regulated into one specific research trajectory.

Taking the present book as an example of the construction of the bridge between quantitative and qualitative approaches in psychology the different manifestations of ambivalences can be viewed on diverse levels of meaning-making.

Transgenerational Ambivalence in the Time to Come: How meanings regulate being pregnant and facing miscarriage
Vivian Volkmer Pontes and Lívia Mathias Simão
University of São Paulo, Brazil

Maternity is an event that implies a multiplicity of diverse changes in familial life cycle putting in place discontinuities in women’s social identity and responsibilities. Two main and interrelated kinds of change contribute for those discontinuities: first, changes in the contextual social role to be played by the now pregnant woman, which are usually followed by changes in other spheres of action (Boesch, 1991, p. 72); second, changes in self meanings constrained (Valsiner, 1998) by new ways of I-other relationships in face of the future status of being mother (Cole, 1999), “switching” woman’s self perception.
Self discontinuities happen simultaneously to a process of gradual fitness to the new condition, allowed by changes in personal and collective fields of meanings and practices, preparing ‘that woman already in transformation’ to the time to come.

It is important here to highlight the familial myth stories (Boesch, 1991) about pregnancy, birthing and child rearing, as for they not only “constrain” (Valsiner, 1998) “things as they are” in the everyday experiences of the woman who just found herself pregnant, but also constrain what can be next, i.e., the expectation and imagination about the future (the continuity of pregnancy, the birthing and motherhood). Nevertheless, what can be is always marked by uncertainties (James), authoring (Simão, 2014a) new meanings trying to better cope with the ambiguities brought by the present in face of the future uncertainties.

In such a way, when a woman becomes pregnant, a process of reconstruction of meanings takes place, touching ambiguity (Abbey, 2006) and temporality (Simão, 2014b). This process is not only oriented by what is lived as present, but mainly by what is not yet stated or known, by what is expected as a possible and desirable disclosing, the child birth. Besides, as it occurs at the level of I-Other-World (Simão, 2010), such a transformative process regards the whole familial and acquaintance system to which the pregnant woman belongs. Moreover, it is a tensional triadic process, embracing the relationship among (1) the world (the others here included) as it is felt and thought now; (2) the world (others included) as it would be desirable now; and (3) the world (others included) as it is imagined and desired for the time to come.

In sum, we can briefly say that transition to maternity generates transgenerational ambivalences touching I-Other-World relationships. Aiming to better elaborate this proposal, we will bring to analysis a case study of a woman with reproductive trajectory marked by recurrent miscarriages. This case was part of a previous doctoral research of the first author (Pontes, 2013), aiming to reanalyse it now in the frame of the above synthesized ideas and to discussion the following questions: 1) can we understand generational ambivalences as personal events that happen as reconstructive tensions in I-Culture-Other temporality? 2) If so, what we earn at the research and professional practices in pursuing this way?

**Keywords:** Transgenerational ambivalence, self discontinuities, pregnancy, miscarriage, I-Other-World relationships.

**References:**


Changing family structures and intergenerational relations – a challenging context for developing ambivalence

Kairi Kasearu & Dagmar Kutsar

Institute of Social Studies, University of Tartu, Estonia

In this chapter we discuss the interplay between changing family forms and structures and their influence on intergenerational relationships, which creates a new context for individual wellbeing including the appearance of ambivalence. In recent decades the family institution has gone through rapid changes, the share of divorced and separated families has increased all over the world (Therborn 2004), in European countries fast majority of couples start their family as unmarried cohabitation and these unions have become more permanent and stable (Kasearu and Kutsar 2011). Thus, the meaning and borders/boundaries of family have become more changing and thus unclear. The question arises, who are my family members and what kind of rights, duties and obligations I have towards them. These changing family patterns are new challenges for individuals’ wellbeing and interpersonal relations. For instance, studies have confirmed that unmarried couples are less likely supporting their partners’ parents (Daatland 2007), there are mixed feelings regarding to filial responsibilities to help elderly divorced parents and stepparents (Ganong & Coleman 1998), grandparents are less likely giving care to grandchild sets including step grandchildren (Tanskanen, Danielsbacka & Rotkirch 2014), the expectations and experiences of stepfather’s authority vary (Mitchell 2013). We aim to elaborate more broadly the association between changing family and its influence on parent-child, parent-grown-up child and grandparent-grandchild relations by focusing on the ambivalence. Moreover, the former socialist countries have witnessed most dramatically the changes of family institution in the context of changing political, economic and social environment. In this context of post-socialist societal transformation the gap in values on the basis of age has deepened (Raudsepp, Tart & Heinla 2013). Thus, we argue that on the one hand the changes at societal level have had influence on family change, which in turn will shape the relations between family members and create a context for psychological ambivalence at individual level. To support our theoretical ideas, we apply empirical evidences from different surveys (VOC-IR, Estonian Household Panel, Estonian Longitudinal Survey etc).

References


**Ambivalences in adult children providing care to their older parents: a cognitive emotion-theoretical view**

*Thomas Boll*

*Research Unit INSIDE, University of Luxemburg*

Ambivalences in family caregivers for older people are analysed from an emotion-theoretical point of view and the benefits of this approach are delineated. The topic is confined to psychological ambivalence as an experience of the individual with a special emphasis on emotional ambivalence as co-presence of positive and negative emotions about the various aspects of adult children’s care provision. The stage for understanding mixed emotions in this context is set through a description of the multi-faceted nature of the caregiving situation: (1) Various difficulties of the older parent (e.g., diseases, problems with activities of daily living, suffering), (2) multiple tasks of the caring adult child (e.g., skilled nursing, help with daily activities, emotional support provision), and (3) several gains and losses for the older person and the caring child. The generation of positive and negative emotions is analysed from a cognitive point of view according to which emotions toward caregiving arise from subjective appraisals of the various facets of the caregiving situation. These appraisals are, in turn, conceived to consist in comparisons between what adult children desire and what they believe with respect to the caregiving situation. Fulfillments of such desires are assumed to lead to positive emotions (joy, pride, admiration, etc.) and frustrations of such desires are assumed to result in negative emotions (sadness, pity, guilt feelings, etc.). Because adult children have multiple desires (e.g., own welfare, welfare of old parent, welfare of other relatives) and multiple beliefs about the caregiving situation, various combinations of positive and negative emotions and thus ambivalences are expected and described. This kind of analysis is further applied to emotional ambivalences about “big care decisions” (e.g., initiating nursing home admission) and “small care decisions” (e.g., taking a care off-time over the weekend). In concluding, heuristic benefits of this emotional-theoretical approach are summarized: Options for a refined description,
measurement, understanding and management of emotional ambivalences in the context of intergenerational caregiving.

**Saudade, an ambivalent phenomenon in the Portuguese soul**

*Stephanie Barros Coimbra¹, Gaby Marinho Ribeiro² & Isabelle Albert¹*

*University of Luxembourg¹, Catholic University of Louvain²*

Ask a Lusitanian person¹ what *saudade* means and you will get a broad range of responses. The word *saudade* takes indeed its roots since decades or even centuries in the Lusitanian culture and is not readily explicable with one word or even one sentence. According to several authors, the word *saudade* is in fact unique, specific to the Lusitanian cultures and it has even for some an “untranslatable” character (Braz, 2006; Leal, 2000).

Some authors suggest that *saudade* is a feeling that can only be felt and expressed by Lusitanian populations because only the Portuguese language has a word to express it (Pereira Junior, 2014). However, one may consider that despite the untranslatable character attributed to this word, the meaning and the emotion related to it can nevertheless be felt by non-Lusitanian individuals, too.

Beyond the specificity of the untranslatability of the word, it demonstrates other salient features that deserve some further and closer attention, such as its temporal character or, more interestingly, its ambivalent dimension as well as its semantic and emotional scope (Magalhães, 1995; Neto, 2014). The ambivalent character is conferred to *saudade* insofar that this emotion induces sometimes opposed feelings such as sadness or nostalgia while raising happy memories and joy. In general, one aspect does not come along without the other; “*it is a delightful pain of the absence, a feeling of smooth melancholia... a delectable pain...*” (Pereira Junior, 2014, p.90) or “*tormento puro, doce e magoado – pure, sweet and painful torment*” (Camões quoted in Roquete and Fonseca, 1974, p.439).

Although it has been largely analysed in literary works, very few research has investigated this phenomenon from a psychological perspective so far. Our attempt will be to go back to the original context to which the word was initially related, being the migrant waves during the period of the great Portuguese conquistadores. In fact, based on a previous study (Neto & Mullet, 2014), we will aim to assess the dimensions and importance conferred to the word *saudade* by Portuguese immigrants (and other Portuguese speaking immigrants) currently not living in Portugal. The younger generation, being often the first generation immigrants’ offspring, that were born or that grew up in the « new » country frequently perceived as the Eldorado by their parents, will also be included in our sample in order to compare through a questionnaire only available in Portuguese, the two generations’ perspectives and comprehension of the word *saudade*.

**Keywords:** Saudade; Lusitanian culture; Ambivalence; Phenomenon

---

¹ A *lusitanian person* refers in this context to an individual originating from a Portuguese speaking culture such as the Portuguese, Brazilian or Cape Verde culture, etc...
Mogens Jensen  
Aalborg University, Denmark

Social workers in pedagogical treatment face both ambiguity and ambivalence when adolescents are placed in residential care. In my chapter I will describe the ambivalences in this pedagogical treatment and analyse aspects of the overcoming of the scepticism and ambivalence the adolescents show, when they are placed at the institutions – very often against their own will. I will suggest a conceptual framework to analyse the relation between the social workers and the adolescents and I will present and analyse examples from recordings of dialogues, which take place every second week as part of the treatment. The aim is to conceptualise factors in the ambivalent relation between the social workers and the adolescents and how the social workers can handle this ambivalence.

Ambivalence in the Family Transmission of Values: Recognizing Differences and Assuming Similarity

Daniela Barni & Silvia Donato

Family Studies and Research University Centre, Catholic University of Milan, Largo Gemelli 1 – 20123, Milano, Italy

Over the past few decades the field of psychosocial research has seen growing interest in value transmission across generations because of the relevance of this process for individual development and for societal functioning. The long-term effect of parents on their children's value development has long been recognized (Grusec & Hastings, 2008) and, interestingly, prior research has shown that parents’ judgments about their children’s attributes influence their effectiveness in socializing children. In the current chapter we suggest that each parent may have contradictory views of her/his children’s values and that parent-child relationships are experienced between two poles, accuracy versus bias, which may be seen as generating ambivalence, that is, a tension between possible differences and assumption of similarity, or relationally stated, between personal distancing and approaching.

In judging their children, parents can be indeed accurate and biased. Accuracy and bias are subject to different types of evaluative motives (Gagné & Lydon, 2004): When individuals have access to information and are motivated by epistemic needs (i.e., need to accurately understand the target to make predictions or important decisions, or to understand or control a relational phenomenon), their evaluations should be more accurate. In contrast, when individuals are motivated by esteem needs (i.e., need to maintain positive beliefs about the self, the target, or the relationship), their evaluations may be more biased. Overall, parents may be able to function effectively on a “day-to-day basis” by adjusting accuracy and bias according to their motivations and the state of their relationships. Positive outcomes in the relationship depend on the dynamic balance between truth and bias: On the one hand, parents who have an accurate judgment of their children should be able to match their teaching efforts to their children’s cognitive and emotional states (e.g., Hastings & Grusec, 1997). On the other hand, bias in judgment may be beneficial: Parents tend to have less conflicted and more supportive relationships with children who (is judged to) share their attributes, including values (Suitor & Pillemer, 2006).
Ambivalence research was traditionally interested in parent-child value similarity. In Luscher’s heuristic model (2002), at the micro level, each family can be conceived as an emotional unit that contains the potential for closeness and subjective identification, reinforcing similarity between children and their parents. This similarity, which is psychologically gratifying, can be however experienced by family members as a threat to their individuality. In value transmission, especially from adolescence, parents need to permit children to form their own separate views, while at the same time communicating and reinforcing the values and perspectives parents endorse (Barni, 2009). Extending this previous research and considering parents’ judgments as multidimensional processes, we focus on the competing needs (i.e., evaluative tension) of parents in judging their children’s values and on the joined implications of accuracy and biases on the parent-child relationship. In doing so, we draw attention to the need for methodological approaches that appropriately include accuracy with biases and assess their unique as well as shared contributions to intergenerational relations.

Keywords: Parent-child relationship, Values, Accuracy, Bias, Ambivalence

References


Attachment ambivalence: Adaptive meaning and measurement problems

Katarzyna Lubiewska

Kazimierz Wielki University of Bydgoszcz, Poland

The aim of the chapter is twofold. First, the concept of ambivalence in attachment is analyzed from an evolutionary point of view making the distinction between two levels at which ambivalence inhibits or promotes optimal adjustment. Then, methods of attachment ambivalence assessment are described with the focus on its limitations and possible new directions in attachment ambivalence measurement.

Ambivalence underlying attachment is proposed in the present chapter to be defined from two levels. First, homeostatic ambivalence, is delineated by basic psychological needs for autonomy and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000) and is analyzed in attachment theory in terms of general proximity seeking-exploration and approach-avoidance tendencies toward closeness with attachment figure. Ambivalent balance between both poles constitutes healthy, optimal
adaptation of each individual to environmental and social demands related with stress coping and self-maximization strategies. However, taking more narrow perspective of individual strategies engaged in (stressful) situations in which attachment behavioral system is activated, ambivalence between approach-avoidance simultaneous tendencies is conceived as indicative for attachment insecurity (anxiety) and thus as not optimally adaptive. From evolutionary perspective situational activation of behavioral attachment system always calls for proximity seeking, while its deactivation pave the way for exploration. At this level upholding of inconsistent evaluations and approach-avoidance simultaneous tendencies indicates hyperactivation of attachment system related with relational anxiety (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2008), and as such may be labeled as maladaptive ambivalence. Although this pattern of attachment was introduced decades ago (Ainsworth et al., 1978) as one of three patterns describing individual differences in attachment, only few studies up to date investigated attachment-related ambivalence (Levy et al., 1998; Maio et al., 2004; McClure et al., 2012; Mikulincer et al., 2010; Surjadi et al., 2013).

Furthermore, all of these studies analyzed one manifestation of ambivalence - potential ambivalence defined through existence of simultaneous and inconsistent attachment components. Potential ambivalence may be not accessible to awareness and is measured indirectly through self-reports or behavioral manipulations (e.g., by using formula of Thompson & Zanna & Griffin [1995], applied to positive and negative items). Yet, under some conditions individuals may be fully aware of their ambivalence. Such felt ambivalence can be assessed directly (e.g., by ambivalence scale score). Although potential ambivalence informs about psychological processes underlying attachment, felt ambivalence may add to this explanation. Moreover, in psychological practice, reporting on felt ambivalence may not only provide diagnostic information about attachment quality but also trigger therapeutic effects. Transfer of potential ambivalence to felt ambivalence may be increased in conditions of simultaneous activation of both inconsistent components. Regarding that studies on felt ambivalence are lacking, scales assessing potential attachment ambivalence are time-consuming and demand high cognitive load from participants, and assess predominantly ambivalence in intimate relations, the chapter discusses limitations of attachment ambivalence measurement tools and introduces new potential directions in attachment ambivalence assessment with the focus on implementation of the evaluative space grid response scale format (Larsen et al., 2009) enabling simultaneous activation of inconsistent components within ambivalent attachment.

Towards a context-sensitive analysis of the emergence and the results of ambivalences

Annekatrin Steinhoff

Department of Sociology, University of Münster, Germany

The main objective of this chapter is to outline that the experience of ambivalences, and ways of handling them, are a dynamic function of individual competencies and social interactional processes, which are embedded in a broader cultural framework of values and norms. The latter provide the individual with particular kinds of value orientations and evaluations of characteristics and behaviors. Accordingly, ambivalent conceptions of the self, others, and relationships can result from an individual’s involvement in (diverse) social contexts. Whether diversity is indeed associated with ambivalence, however, may be due to the degree of
commitment to a particular relationship, as well as the capability (and the motivation) to take different perspectives on a situation, a person, or a relationship.

In a similar vein, the consequences of ambivalent feelings, i.e., e.g., emotional distress or new opportunities for adaption, are not determined by the experience of ambivalence as such. Rather, they are a function of how ambivalence is handled (Lüscher, 2007). Whether an individual who experiences ambivalences regards them as positive or negative, handles them creatively or feels inhibited is likely a function of his/her options to disclose his/her innermost feelings. This, in turn, is a matter – and may be a cause – of specific aspects of relationship quality (cf. the broad research literature on the links between parental rearing styles and children’s potential for self-disclosure, as well as Lüscher’s (2005) typification of how ambivalences are handled in inter-generational relationships). Also, the individual’s social cognitive, and also communicative, skills are likely to influence whether ambivalences become a merit or a risk to a relationship and/or the counterparts’ mental states.

I will argue that a comprehensive investigation of the emergence and the results of ambivalences calls for an exploration of individual capacities and social interactional opportunities to feel, realize and handle ambivalence. The analysis may be fruitfully inspired by clinical research, and knowledge about therapeutic negotiation of ambivalent feelings. It may also gain from taking a longitudinal (develop-mental) perspective on perceptions and constructions of the self and particular kinds of relationships.

References


They may take my duties, but never my rights!
The Psychology of Rights and Duties
Kevin Carriere
Georgetown University

The modern era has been characterized as one of individual rights, rather than collective rights or individual or collective duties (Moghaddam & Finkel, 2005). All of the latter are scarcely acknowledged in the United National Declaration of Human Rights even though it has been acknowledged that each right has a corresponding duty attached to it (Finkel, 2005). Within the family context, there is a constant negotiation from parents to children in regards to various rights and duties and how these are played out in the every day life. A thorough review of rights and duties research will display a gap in the literature of the negotiation of them both within the family but also within larger groups. Using a narrative analysis of Western individuals, we will explore how rights and duties are used to deal with ambivalence, and at the same time, provide the conditions to create ambivalence themselves. Further research on showing the dynamic movement of rights and duties and the importance of power in creating and defining the fuzzy borders of ambivalence in an attempt to maintain power will be discussed.