FROM INTERNAL INTERLOCUTORS TO PSYCHOLOGICAL FUNCTIONS OF DIALOGICAL ACTIVITY

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This article introduces four studies inspired by the theory of the dialogical self. Types of imaginary interlocutors and their psychological functions were considered in Study 1. Four basic types of interlocutors involved in internal dialogues were mentioned: Faithful Friend, Proud Rival, Helpless Child, and Ambivalent Parent. Study 2 concerned relationships among role-playing game (RPG) players and their heroes. The outcomes showed that, if the confrontation with the RPG hero was taken up, it typically led to a new insight concerning mutual connections between the player's usual self and the self of his or her hero, with a simultaneous experience of autonomy and success. Studies 3 and 4 focused on the relationships between internal dialogical activity and personality traits measured by the NEO-PI-R by Costa and McCrae (1992). In Study 3 the respondents having imaginary dialogues scored lower on Assertiveness and higher on Self-Consciousness, Fantasy, Aesthetics, Feelings and Openness than those having monologues. In Study 4 the Dialogical Activity Scale (DAS) corresponded with Openness and Neuroticism, and four facets: Aesthetics, Feelings, Self-Consciousness, and Self-Discipline. The studies were discussed in terms of processes explained by the notion of the dialogical self and their connections to levels of personality described by McCrae and Costa (1999) or McAdams and Pals (2006).

The notion of the dialogical self is rather new (Hermans & Kempen, 1993; Hermans, Kempen, & van Loon, 1992). However, the phenomenon under consideration is one with which we have been familiar for quite some time. Human self-reflective activity is dialogical in its nature; dialogues among people have

a twofold structure—that is, direct communication and simultaneous mental confrontation of two points of view: my own and a partner's—and development of science and literature are salient examples of the internal (and external) dialogical activity (Puchalska-Wasyl, 2001). Human development is based on a dialogical relationship (Fogel, de Koeyer, Bellagamba, & Bell, 2002), neuropsychological functioning of the human brain has dialogical features (Lewis, 2002; Lewis & Todd, 2004; Schore, 2004), and internal relationships among different points of view for a given issue are strictly dialogical. Thus a brilliant and clear-cut metaphor—"dialogical self as a society of mind"—(Hermans, 2002) is well grounded in everyday observations, clinical data, and scientific results. One of the challenges for the theory and research is an analogy between a regular conversation, dialogue, and internal dialogical activity. The philosophy of dialogue by M. Buber (1958) and E. Levinas (1967) emphasizes the core features of the dialogical interaction between two persons, and Cooper (2003) shows their application to the dialogical self.

Although the phenomena implying dialogical self are common and many case studies concern this topic, the correlational and experimental studies inspired by this approach are not numerous (e.g., Chmielnicka-Kuter, 2005a; Puchalska-Wasyl, 2005a; 2005b; 2006; Raggat, 2000; Stemplewska-Żakowicz, Walecka, & Gabińska, 2006; Stemplewska-Żakowicz et al., 2005; Trzebińska, Miś, & Rutczyńska, 2003). How to investigate the dialogical self and its functions? How may the theory stimulate empirical investigations?

Taking as a starting point an integrative model of personality introduced by McAdams and Pals (2006) or by McCrae and Costa (1999), one can pose the question: How is the dialogical self located in the three main domains of personality—basic tendencies, characteristic adaptations, and the self? On the one hand, the answer seems obvious: Dialogical self is a highly dynamic notion offering a new perspective for a theoretical interpretation and research on the self. On the other hand, because dialogical activity is so basic and crucial for human functioning, it can be related to basic tendencies. Moreover, when internal dialogues lead to the solution of personal dilemmas and contribute to a process of agreement and/or disagreement between persons, the dialogical self is obviously related to characteristic adaptations.

The present project is focused on a few and selected (possible) ways of investigating the dialogical self in relation to: (1) basic tendencies—personality traits, (2) characteristic adaptations—specific functions of internal interlocutors, and (3) self-narratives—personal meanings of imagined figures or one's own identity.

Study 1: Types and Functions of Imaginary Interlocutors

Dialogical self theory considers dialogicality as a fundamental principle of human functioning. In our opinion, within a broad phenomenon of internal activity one can distinguish three subgroups of processes: (1) change of perspective, (2) monologue, and (3) dialogue. The first we understand as a confrontation of different points of view without voicing them. An internal monologue occurs when only one I-position of the dialogical self is speaking and the other one is silent. During the inner dialogue at least two I-positions are voiced and interacting. Thus, we assume that in monologues people have only a silent listener, whereas in internal dialogues they have imaginary interlocutors. We limit the scope of this study to the latter subgroup of processes, wherein I-positions become interlocutors as figures involved in internal imaginary discussion.

Hermans's (1996) conception of dialogue seems to provide a convenient background to empirical analyses of such conversations with imaginary figures. The theory allows us to explain the different issues pertaining to dialogical activity in general and to pose many questions concerning the various aspects of dialogicality. Assuming that internal dialogue with an imaginary figure is a special type of inner dialogical activity, and consequently that imaginary interlocutors are voiced I-positions activated during those particular conversations, one can make an extrapolation from the distinction between internal and external I-positions to the differentiation between internal and external figures.

The dialogical self conception treats internal dialogical activity not only as a normal phenomenon but also as a process that may stimulate human development. This suggests various positive psychological functions of dialogicality. In that context, the following questions are posed: What are the affective types of

imaginary interlocutors, and what are the functions of internal dialogues?

Methods

Measures

Three methods were constructed by Puchalska-Wasyl (2005a, 2005b; 2006) and administered in the present study.

1. The Initial Questionnaire is based on our assumption that there are three types of internal activity: (a) change of perspective, (b) monologue, and (c) dialogue. The purpose of the questionnaire is to induce the subject's self-reflection and determine which I-positions are the respondent's interlocutors, which are listeners, and which of them give new and different points of view to the person. The method includes a list of potential I-positions. The participants can choose some of them and can add their own to the list. The same I-position can be included in the dialogue, monologue, and perspective categories. The I-positions included on the list are divided into internal and external ones (see Hermans, 2001; 2004; Hermans & Hermans-Jansen, 2001). Consequently, internal figures are felt as a part of myself (e.g., "I as a daughter," "I as an optimist," "I as a pessimist"). External figures are part of the environment (e.g., "my mother," "my father," "my friend") or imaginary figures (e.g. friends produced in dreams and fantasies; Caughey, 1984).

   Besides the Initial Questionnaire, two other instruments were used for determining inner dialogical activity: the Dialogue-Monologue-Perspective (D-M-P) Questionnaire and the Figure's Emotional Climate Inventory.
2. The D-M-P is not an independent method. It should be used just after the Initial Questionnaire and elaborates on it. The D-M-P Questionnaire is used to determine functions fulfilled by imaginary "partners" of internal dialogical activity. The method includes the list of 24 potential functions related to inner dialogues (D), monologues (M), and a change of perspective (P). These functions were formulated in colloquial language; for example, *Dialogue with X: . . . gives me a sense of being understood; . . . is a form of seeking some new experiences; . . .is*

the only way of telling the other person what I really think; . . . is a form of preparation for new types of situations.

The D-M-P Questionnaire has three analogical versions (D, M, and P) pertaining to three types of internal activity, respectively. For each version there is a matrix in which the rows represent particular functions whereas the columns correspond with I-positions reported in the Initial Questionnaire as "partners" of the given type of inner activity.

Focusing on their own figures, one by one, a respondent is asked to choose all of the functions fulfilled by the figure during the internal activity of a particular type (he or she marks an "X" in a given box). The subject is allowed to add one or more specific functions that are not in the list.

3. The Figure's Emotional Climate Inventory can be treated as a modification of the Self-Confrontation Method by Hermans because it draws on the list of 24 affects (Hermans & Hermans-Jansen, 1995). The inventory is used to describe each of the I-positions—reported by the person in the Initial Questionnaire—in terms of emotional climate. Focusing on the imaginary interlocutors, one by one, the person is invited to answer the following question: When you enter into internal dialogue, how does the figure usually feel as your interlocutor? To describe the figure emotional climate, the subject estimates the intensity of each affect using a scale of 0 to 5 (0 = not at all; 1 = a little bit; 2 = to some extent; 3 = quite a lot; 4 = much; 5 = very much). A slightly modified procedure is applied with reference to the listeners in inner monologues and I-positions representing different points of view. As a result, all of the imaginary figures are characterized by affective patterns as expressed in four indices: index S (feelings referring to the motive of self-affirmation), index O (feelings referring to longing for contact and union), index P (positive feelings), and index N (negative feelings; Hermans & Hermans-Jansen, 1995).

SUBJECTS

The study was performed on a group of 63 people (31 women and 32 men). They were between the ages of 19 and 32 (M = 23.11; SD = 2.67). Of the participants, 53 were university students

and 10 were graduates. As far as we know, they were not familiar with dialogical self theory. Each marked at least one I-position, which was reported as a respondent's interlocutor, and each was able to have inner monologues and/or to change points of view.

The total number of imaginary interlocutors described by the subjects was 649. On the individual level, their numbers ranged from 1 to 23 (M = 10.47; SD = 0.66). The differences suggest that some respondents focused on their main (regular) interlocutors, whereas others enumerated all the figures they were able to identify in internal activity.

Results

First, hierarchical cluster analysis of the functions for all the imaginary interlocutors (n = 649) was performed and seven meta-functions were differentiated. They were described as follows:

- Support: a source of hope and feelings of safety; a way to give a sense of life.
- Substitution: a substitute for a contact that is impossible in real life; the only method of expression of one's own real thoughts.
- Exploration: an escape from ordinary life; an attempt at seeking some new experiences—for example, the imaginary performance of a forbidden act.
- Bond: a way to experience certainty of being understood and a close bond with somebody.
- Self-Improvement: a scolding for one's own mistake; a warning not to make the same mistake again.
- Insight: a new point of view; some advice; standing back from one's own problem; perceiving advantages and disadvantages, and help with making a decision.
- Self-Guidance: a form of preparation for new types of situations; an incentive to work, to continue one's own work, to change it or to give it up.

In the next step, nonhierarchical cluster analysis of affective patterns (S, O, P, and N feelings) for all of the partners of internal dialogues was performed. Taking into account Hermans's

TABLE 1 Means on the Affective Indices for Four Types of Imaginary Interlocutors

Affective Pattern		Types of Imaginary Interlocutors				ANOVA	
		Faithful Friend (n = 260)	Proud Rival (n = 148)	Helpless Child (n = 110)	Ambivalent Parent (n = 131)	$F_{(3, 645)}$	$p <$
S	M	14.79	11.63	7.15	11.00	132.06	0.001
	SD	2.95	3.77	4.23	3.34		
O	M	14.37	5.32	5.30	12.77	230.21	0.001
	SD	4.12	3.81	4.39	4.04		
P	M	31.95	18.86	8.70	22.50	692.63	0.001
	SD	4.10	6.15	4.56	3.99		
N	M	4.26	6.07	21.11	16.02	449.19	0.001
	SD	3.61	4.10	6.49	5.20		

categorization of types of experiences, four groups of imaginary interlocutors were distinguished (see Table 1):

1. +HH type: strength and unity (high S, high O, high P, low N). Figures of this kind are caring and loving ones. At the same time, they are full of strength, drawing on the good relationship between them and the individual. That is why they were called Faithful Friends.
2. +S type: autonomy and success (high S, low O, high P, low N). These are self-confident and autonomous figures, often convinced of their own superiority, so they were named Proud Rivals.
3. −LL type: powerlessness and isolation (low S, low O, low P, high N). This kind of figure was called Helpless Child, because it resembles a child who first waits for help and eventually gives up, plunged into feelings of powerlessness and isolation.
4. +/− type: ambivalence (high P, high N). Figures of this type are strong and loving ones. However, at the same time they are very critical of the person to whom they talk. For this reason they were named Ambivalent Parents.

Further analyses focused on differences among these four types of interlocutors in a range of seven meta-functions. The intensity of fulfilled meta-functions was defined on z-scale (M = 0,

SD = 1). The four groups of imaginary figures were compared by means of MANOVA (F(21) = 6.54, $p < 0.001$) and ANOVA. Additionally, due to correlations among means and standard deviations, the analyses were verified by the Kruskal-Wallis test. The T3 Dunnett test was conducted as a *post hoc* analysis because of heterogeneity of variance (see Table 2).

Only in one function, Substitution, were there no differences among the four groups of interlocutors. It is worth noting that the four types of imaginary figures are divided into two groups. The first one includes two types: Faithful Friend and Ambivalent Parent. The only significant difference between them is in Support. The second group consists of Proud Rival and Helpless Child. These interlocutors differ form each other only in Self-Improvement. In general, the first figure cluster in comparison with the second one is characterized by significantly higher indices of Support, Exploration, Bond, and Insight. Moreover the first group scores on these meta-functions above the average, whereas the second one is below the average.

The meta-functions differentiating interlocutors within these two groups—namely, Support and Self-Improvement—suggest a functional specificity of the types of imaginary figures. Faithful Friend is more often a source of Support than Ambivalent Parent. Helpless Child more frequently fulfills the function of Self-Improvement than Proud Rival. At the same time, the index of Support characteristic of Faithful Friend and the index of Self-Improvement typical of Helpless Child are significantly higher in comparison with the analogous indices for the other three types of interlocutors. For that reason, Support can be treated as specific to Faithful Friend, whereas Self-Improvement serves this function for Helpless Child.

In summary, the specificity of dialogue with Helpless Child stems mainly from the meta-function of Self-Improvement. It means that people having imaginary conversation with a helpless and hopeless figure try to learn how not to make the same mistakes in the future. A dialogue with Faithful Friend is related to the meta-function of Support. It is, for example, a source of hope, gives feelings of safety, and sometimes even contributes meaning to life. Additionally, like a dialogue with Ambivalent Parent, it gives a certainty of being understood by a close one (Bond) and makes it possible to stand back from one's own problem or to

TABLE 2 Comparison of Functions in Four Types of Imaginary Interlocutors

Function		Types of Imaginary Interlocutors				ANOVA		H Kruskal-Wallis		T3 Dunnett	
		Faithful Friend (n = 253)	Proud Rival (n = 135)	Helpless Child (n = 105)	Ambivalent Parent (n = 125)	$F_{(3,\,614)}$	$p <$	$H_{(3,618)}$	$p <$	Differences between types	$p <$
Support	M	0.62	−0.34	−0.51	0.07	50.97	0.001	129.46	0.001	a, b, c, e, f	0.001
	SD	1.07	0.77	0.70	0.97						
Substitution	M	0.04	0.06	0.00	0.20	0.93	n.s.	3.69	n.s.	—	n.s.
	SD	1.05	1.00	1.00	1.03						
Exploration	M	0.30	−0.08	−0.18	0.32	8.20	0.001	19.59	0.001	b, f	0.001
	SD	1.19	0.85	0.79	1.22					a, e	0.05
Bond	M	0.25	−0.37	−0.30	0.10	16.71	0.001	46.94	0.001	a, b, e	0.001
	SD	1.09	0.65	0.81	1.05					f	0.01
Self-Improvement[1]	M	−0.03	−0.06	0.57	−0.07	5.87	0.001	16.46	0.001	b, d, f	0.01
	SD	0.98	0.98	1.06	0.90						
Insight	M	0.29	−0.20	−0.21	0.15	10.76	0.001	32.42	0.001	a, b	0.001
	SD	1.01	0.91	0.92	1.02					e, f	0.05
Self-Guidance	M	0.29	−0.13	0.12	0.15	5.03	0.01	14.26	0.01	a	0.001
	SD	0.94	1.01	1.04	1.08						

Note. Significant differences between types of interlocutors: a) FF—PR; b) FF—HC; c) FF—AP; d) PR—HC; e) PR—AP; f) HC—AP; 1) 289 figures were taken into account.

receive advice (Insight). Sometimes it is also a form of seeking new experiences (Exploration). All of the indices of the meta-functions characteristic of the Proud Rival are below the average except for Substitution. Thus, the most important (although not specific) meta-function fulfilled by Proud Rival is Substitution. It means that if our imaginary interlocutor is characterized by feelings of superiority or self-confidence, usually the dialogue is a form of seeking arguments to convince him or her, or a catharsis if actual contact is impossible.

Discussion of Study 1

In the current study, four types of imaginary interlocutors were distinguished on the basis of their emotional climate. They differ in the range of meta-functions fulfilled in internal dialogues. The findings are difficult to comment on, because of a lack of comparable results. However, there is some research that focus on issues of a child's imaginary friends (Bouldin & Pratt, 1999, 2001; Gleason, 2002; Gleason, Sebanc, & Hartup, 2000; Pearson et al., 2001). Despite the lack of empirical evidence that there is a continuity and functional equivalence between the children's imaginary figures and inner dialogues conducted with imaginary interlocutors by adults, Watkins (1986) held that there is a strict relation between these two phenomena and, consequently, one should seek their formal similarity.

A study by Harter and Chao (1992) is particularly relevant to the phenomenon of imaginary friends. The authors claimed that preschool children have two types of imaginary companions. Girls typically create friends who are less competent than the self, whereas boys do just the opposite: They create companions who are more competent than the self. A girl's imaginary figure is usually incapable, dependent, and sometimes even handicapped. On the other hand, boys describe their companions as strong, brave, and generally surpassing the self. Moreover, boys enumerating the figure's strengths do not mention that the imaginary friend is of any help to them, whereas girls often emphasize their own activity in aid of imaginary companions. It is worth noting that children in the context of their own helplessness derive feelings of safety from both types of figures. Taking into account the emotional climate of children's imaginary friends rather then their functions, it

is possible to compare the figure constantly waiting for help to Helpless Child and the autonomous and successful figure to Proud Rival.

Among adults' imaginary partners in dialogue, one can encounter powerless and helpless interlocutors continually waiting for help (Helpless Child), or independent and successful ones (Proud Rival). If the adult has an internal dialogue with the first of these types, the imaginary conversation fulfills the meta-function of Self-Improvement (i.e., how to avoid the same mistakes in the future). This may suggests that dialogues with the Helpless Child function as a source of self-instruction and address the question of how to improve one's own behavior, which is close to the self-improvement motive by Sedikides (1993). The most important (although not specific) meta-function of the second type—Proud Rival—is Substitution. It means that an inner dialogue with that figure tends to confront one's own point of view and that of an authority. The dialogues with both Helpless Child and Proud Rival do not fulfill the meta-functions of Support and Bond. Feelings of safety are provided to adults through dialogues with Faithful Friend and Ambivalent Parent. As figures permeated with feelings of love, care, and intimacy, they are able to satisfy the need for contact and the certainty of being understood (Bond), as well as the need for safety and hope (Support). Additionally, Faithful Friend and Ambivalent Parent as trustworthy interlocutors gain the meta-functions of Insight and Exploration. Not only are they able to give advice, they can also share with a person some new, exciting experiences simulated in imagination.

Study 2: Dialogical Self in Role-Playing Games

Dialogical self theory laid the basis for the study of relations between role-playing games (RPG) and I-positions. We assumed that game heroes could be treated as imaginary figures in the self and can have a significant impact on players' lives (Hermans & Kempen, 1993; Hermans, Rijks, & Kempen, 1993).

The research participants—RPG players—construct fictional characters (e.g., warrior, magician, trouble-maker, singer, adventurer) and, by means of narrative and dialogue, play their roles in imaginary worlds. RPGs are defined as "shared fantasy," as they engage individual imagination that is guided by the rules

of the game (Hughes, 1988). One can discern several levels of interactivity in RPG, among which the most intriguing takes place between the player and his or her hero (see Chmielnicka-Kuter, 2005a). The reported study focused on the dynamics of RPG players' self-narratives under the influence of their heroes' voices. The main questions were these: What kind of references can be distinguished among participants of RPGs and game heroes, and what is the nature of their relationship?

Method

MEASURES AND SUBJECTS

The Self-Confrontation Method (SCM) by Hermans and Hermans-Jansen (1995) and a short form collecting personal data were applied to 30 RPG participants (24 male and 6 female) aged 16 to 28 (M = 21.8; SD = 2.6). Subjects were recruited for the study by announcement and by personal contacts. Most were students of different disciplines, both humanities and sciences; four were psychology students, but none of them was familiar with the dialogical self theory. As we were interested in the relationship between the player and the hero, that is felt, for some reason, as important for him or her, we did not place restrictions concerning the sort of game, the game training, or the frequency of playing. All participants were involved with RPGs for at least half a year, although there were also "chronic" players who reported 9, 10, or 11 years of training. The heroes, which participants told us about, belonged to different game systems, including *Warhammer Fantasy Role Play* and *Vampire: The Masquerade.*

In a short personal form we posed additional questions concerning the relation between the player and the hero as a starting point of our research procedure: "Do you ever think about your hero outside of the game session and direct preparation to it?" (Yes/No). "Do you ever take the point of view of your hero outside of the game session and direct preparation to it?" (Yes/No). "If you do, try to specify situations when this occurred." Eight of the 30 participants declared that they neither thought about nor took the perspective of their hero; 13 said they did think about the hero outside of the context of the game but didn't take his or her perspective; and nine reported doing both. Among players who reported taking the hero's perspective, three did not specify

situations when taking the perspective of the hero's takes place and six did.

Each participant took part in three individual research sessions. During the first session he or she was to tell the story of his or her life on the basis of three sets of questions (concerning personal past, present, and future) proposed by Hermans and Hermans-Jansen (1995). Then, an analogical task was given to a hero with reference to his or her "life story." In addition, players were asked to express what they thought about their heroes, and the heroes were invited to express their attitude toward the players. After all valuations were extracted from the stories, each player was asked to rate his or her own valuations with reference to the list of 24 affective terms (Hermans & Hermans-Jansen, 1995; see Study 1). In the end, each was invited to rate the hero's valuations using the hero's perspective.

The second session (one to two weeks later) was devoted to the analysis of interrelations between the player's usual I-position and the alternative I-position of his or her hero. At the end of this session, the participant was given an individual task of paying attention to these aspects of his or her everyday experiences and relevant experiences of his or her RPG hero. An extra task (standard for each participant) was to observe the situations when he or she could use the role-play hero's point of view to take a new, inspiring view of his or her life events. These analyses and tasks were to set the direction of the participant's confrontation with his or her hero.

During the third session (two to three months later), the participant was confronted with the valuations constructed in the first session. He or she could accept the valuation's content, modify it, replace the old formulation with a new one, eliminate an inadequate valuation, or add an entirely new one. Once again, the participant rated the affective climate of his or her experiences and the experiences of the hero from the hero's point of view.

Results

From more than 100 valuations reflecting changes in players' meaning systems, 87 valuations were selected. These accepted valuations expressed personal meanings most directly related to a confrontation with the hero.

The instruction to use role-play heroes' perspectives to experiment with players' self-narratives (valuations) led to changes in these self-narratives in the case of 20 participants. In the other cases (10 participants), no clear changes could be found. The changes in the formulation of the valuations reflecting changes in players' meaning systems were as follows:

- an insight expanding the horizon of the player's reflective self-consciousness,
- discovery of common/shared points of view or similar experiences;
- reevaluation of the player's experience under the impact of the hero's story/perspective;
- taking up actions under the influence of the hero's style;
- an overt experimenting with one's self-narrative by using the hero's behavior;
- clear(er) definition of the boundaries of one's actual or desired self as an impact of the hero's self;
- testing desirable behavior in the game before trying it out in real life; and
- parting with the hero after its positive or negative significance was realized.

Valuations reflecting changes in players' meaning systems were rated across affect terms. The averages of S, O, P, and N indices for these valuations were computed. The mean scores on these general indices show that, on the latent level, the self-enhancement motive (S = 11.49) is more important in the confrontation with RPG hero than the contact and union motive (O = 3.8). The confrontation is experienced in a positive (P = 20.7) rather than in a negative (N = 7.57) way. Taking the types of valuations and their number into consideration, the most typical result of the confrontation with the hero is the experience of autonomy and success: +S type is represented in 54% of total valuations reflecting changes in players' systems (for details, see Chmielnicka-Kuter, 2005a; 2005c).

The meaning systems of players who took up dialogical confrontation with their heroes were analyzed on the angle of differentiation, integration, flexibility, and positive quality—the characteristics responsible for adaptivity of the meaning system, according to Hermans and Hermans-Jansen (1995). We assumed

that RPG players show certain differentiation and flexibility, as they are able to create another I-position and another story for the purpose of the game and to shift between their usual I-position and their hero position during the game. Self-narratives constructed by players before and after the confrontation with the game hero were compared.

On the group level there were no statistically significant differences in differentiation, integration, flexibility, and positive quality of players' meaning systems before and after the confrontation with the game hero (the McNemara test and contingency coefficient were applied). On the individual level, however, such differences were observed beside examples of their stability. An analysis of such changes shows a few patterns of individual changes:

1. When growth in flexibility is observed, there is growing differentiation, maintenance of previously well-developed integration, or its further improvement.
2. When an increase in differentiation is found, this corresponds with (a) the maintenance of low integration or (b) the fall or maintenance of good integration. The growth in differentiation does not correspond with the change in well-being, but it sometimes goes hand in hand with an increase of meaning system flexibility. The notion of differentiation can be widened when we take different I-positions into consideration (Hermans & Hermans-Jansen, 1995). We observed that in the case of players whose self-narratives were poorly differentiated (regardless of their readiness to take up confrontation with the hero), the game hero's narrative widened the repertory of valuations of the player with at least one type of valuation.
3. When growth in integration of the meaning system takes place, there is a decrease in flexibility and maintenance or further improvement of well-being. In only one case did increase of integration not weaken flexibility.

As a part of the research procedure, participants were asked to express what they thought about their heroes, and the heroes were invited to express their attitude toward the players.[1] The questions were inspired by the theoretical assumption of intentional ability of I-positions in the self space and the

notion of innovation as an effect of dialogical exchange between I-positions (Hermans, 1996, 1999; Hermans & Hermans-Jansen, 1995). Literature devoted to RPG phenomena emphasizes rules enabling game satisfaction and reinforcing players' ability to make a distinction between the game action and real life. On the other hand, there are descriptions of voluntary breaking or involuntary confusion of social frames of the hero's action, the game situation, and the outer reality (Fine, 1983); the importance of the game character for the player's social functioning outside the game (Caughey, 1984); the enthrallment of the player's self with the hero's vicissitudes, which are known to him or her to be false but at the same time are felt to be true (Stromberg, 1999); and the challenge of identification with the hero and keeping the distance from him or her and the moral quality of his or her actions (Hughes, 1988). Such phenomena, as well as experiences mentioned by several participants, may contribute to the development of a mutual relationship between the player and his or her game hero.

In the first research session, there were 117 valuations expressing the attitudes of players to heroes and heroes to players, 59 from players and 58 from heroes. In the third research session, there were 126 such valuations, 63 from each I-position. According to the instruction, valuations reflecting these references might take the form of a statement (e.g., "I admire her") or addressing (e.g., "I admire you"). The majority of these valuations took the form of a statement (85%) regardless of their author and addressee, and they appear to be stable regardless of whether there was a confrontation with the hero or not. This observation suggests that the character of relations between the player and his or her hero is rather distant and conservative. It resists the attempts of dialogical confrontation of these two I-positions, even if, in fact, the confrontation results in a change of the player's meaning system.

An analysis of the content of these valuations leads to the conclusion that the relation is experienced in quite a dissimilar way from the players' and the heroes' I-positions. If a players' attitude toward his or her hero is idealized (heroes are superior and of special value for the player), the hero's attitude toward the player is usually sober or even critical. The affective side of these valuations shows that the mutual relation of player and his or her

hero involves the self-enhancement motive more than the contact and union motive on either side, but is experienced as more ambivalent from the heroes' point of view (See: Chmielnicka-Kuter, 2005b, 2005c).

Discussion of Study 2

Internal dialogical activity of the self engaged in RPG involves the self-enhancement motive. It means that this activity can lead to increasing autonomy and assertiveness in interpersonal contacts and in developing the individual's ability to engage in competition. When this activity is too intensive or insufficiently reflected by a person, it may result in overemphasizing of the S-motive at the cost of the O-motive and, as a consequence, can make players' personal contacts with other people difficult.

Internal dialogicality evoked in RPGs is far from the democratic model proposed by Watkins (1986). Although players declare admiration for their heroes, they don't accept them as an equal part of the self, and the relations with them resemble the I–Me mode of relating as described by Cooper (2003, 2004). They prefer to talk *about* them rather than talk *with* them. On the other hand, game heroes (magicians, rulers, warriors, adventurers, bizarre inhabitants of underworlds), often by nature, are not very interested in the selves and the worlds of their players and can even despise them.

In many cases the game hero's narrative (as intertwined with the player's narrative) enriches the palette of experiences attainable for a player who lacks some type of valuation. The question is this: What process or state is lying behind this observation—fragmentation and projection of experiences that are unacceptable, or dangerous for players or actual lack of some experiences? In the first case we would rather see the compensatory function of the dialogicality connected with RPG; in the second one—the developmental potential of this kind of dialogicality—some heroes' experiences can symbolize the direction of further development of the player's self.

As the research group was rather small and quite differentiated in respect to game training, frequency of playing, and sort of games, generalization of the above interpretations should be made with caution.

Study 3: Two Types of Internal Dialogical Activity and Their Personality Correlates

According to Hermans's dialogical self conception, each individual is potentially able to engage in internal dialogical activity. As the cases presented by Josephs (1998) show, some people prefer rather one-sided communication (monologue), whereas others are more willing to engage into two-sided conversation (dialogue). These statements are consistent with the assumption about three types of inner dialogical activity: (1) change of perspective, (2) monologue, and (3) dialogue (see Study 1).

In the present study we pose these questions: Are there any personality differences between people having inner dialogues versus ones having mainly monologues, and which are the main factors underlying these differences?

Method

MEASURES

Two questionnaires were administered in the study:

1. The Initial Questionnaire by Puchalska-Wasyl (see Study 1).
2. The Revised NEO Personality Inventory (NEO PI-R) by Costa and McCrae (1992). The questionnaire consists of 240 items and measures five general factors and six facets for each general dimension (that is, 30 particular traits).

SUBJECTS

The sample was made up of 94 people between the ages of 19 and 32. On the basis of the Initial Questionnaire they were divided into two groups:

Group 1: Subjects who have inner dialogues—63 persons (31 females and 32 males; 53 university students and 10 graduates; mean age M = 23.05; SD = 2.65). They were the participants of Study 1.

Group 2: Subjects who conduct mainly internal monologues—31 persons (17 females and 14 males; 26 university students and 5 graduates; mean age M = 22.43; SD = 3.37). These people in the Initial Questionnaire pointed to the I-positions that were

TABLE 3 Comparison of Traits in People Having Inner Dialogues vs. Monologues

Trait	Type of Dialogical Internal Activity						
	Dialogue (*n* = 63)		Monologue (*n* = 31)		Differences		
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t(92)*	*df*	*p <*
Neuroticism	49.00	13.47	43.65	11.48	1.89	91	n.s.
Extraversion	51.55	12.50	53.81	12.61	−0.82	91	n.s.
Openness	56.97	9.28	50.87	13.87	2.52	91	0.05
Agreeableness	47.13	10.30	44.87	14.61	0.86	91	n.s.
Conscientiousness	50.29	12.76	50.65	11.44	−0.13	91	n.s.
Self-Consciousness (N4)	50.21	10.97	43.35	12.09	2.75	91	0.01
Assertiveness (E3)	49.81	11.70	54.97	10.81	−2.06	91	0.05
Fantasy (O1)	54.85	9.41	49.10	11.65	2.57	91	0.05
Aesthetics (O2)	52.47	10.97	46.35	16.15	2.15	91	0.05
Feelings (O3)	53.84	10.27	47.29	14.69	2.50	91	0.05

Note. The table includes only the subscales in which significant differences were noted.

silent listeners in their inner monologues. They also claimed that sometimes they changed their points of view; however, generally they were not able to determine (either to choose from the list or to add to the list) any I-position involved in an internal dialogue.

Results

All of the participants were asked to describe their own personality traits by means of NEO PI-R. Next, both groups of respondents were compared using t-student test. The results are presented in Table 3.

It was found that persons having inner dialogues scored significantly lower on Assertiveness and higher on Self-Consciousness, Fantasy, Aesthetics, Feelings, and Openness than people having internal monologues. This means that people entering into imaginary dialogues in comparison with ones having mainly monologues are characterized by a more vivid and creative imagination (Fantasy), a deep appreciation of art and beauty (Aesthetics), and receptivity to inner feelings and emotions (Feelings). They are curious about both inner and outer worlds,

and their lives are experientially richer. They are willing to entertain novel ideas and unconventional values, and they experience positive as well as negative emotions more keenly (Openness). At the same time, these persons are more disturbed by awkward social situations, uncomfortable around others, sensitive to ridicule, and prone to feelings of inferiority (Self-Consciousness). They prefer to stay in the background and let others do the talking (Assertiveness).

Discussion of Study 3

It is consistent with common sense that people entering into internal dialogues have a more vivid and creative imagination (Fantasy). It can also be taken into account that they are able to differentiate emotional states and appreciate them as an important part of inner life (Feelings). In general, they are curious about the inner as well as the outer world, and their lives are experientially richer (Openness). However, the fact that men having imaginary dialogues are high scorers on Aesthetics is an unexpected result. Watkins's (1986) idea concerning the dramatic or poetic nature of the human mind may shed light on this finding. Every person has the capacity to create imaginary figures, but artists—especially writers, poets, painters, and sculptors—are considered to have the most of this potential.

Generally, one can say that people willing to have inner dialogues are more creative than those having mainly monologues. At the same time they are more self-conscious (Self-Consciousness) and less assertive (Assertiveness). As a result of Study 1, it was stated that one of the functions of internal dialogues was to test one's own arguments during an imaginary talk. One can advance an interpretative hypothesis that forceful, socially ascendant, and assertive people do not need to prepare themselves for a real discussion by means of an imaginary conversation.

Study 4: Personality Correlates of Internal Dialogical Activity

The results introduced in Study 3 allow us to interpret dialogical internal activity as a trait-like disposition that differentiates people and is a proper subject for an individual differences approach.

In the present study, an internal dialogical activity is defined in terms of engagement in dialogues with imagined figures, continuation or simulation of social dialogical relationships in one's own thoughts, and confrontation of the points of view representing different I-positions relevant for personal or social identity (Oleś & Oleś, 2006). The subject of the present study is a relationship between internal dialogical activity and five personality factors measured by NEO PI-R by Costa and McCrae (1992)—namely, Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness. The hypothesis postulates positive correspondence between dialogical activity and Openness. Attention is also given to the particular facets to which the dialogical activity is related.

Method

MEASURES
1. For assessing the dialogical activity, the Dialogical Activity Scale (DAS; Oleś & Oleś, 2006) was used. In its original form the scale consisted of 25 items, including one buffer item. The items were designed in a Likert-type format with five alternative answers (from 1 = "I strongly disagree" to 5 = "I strongly agree"). Reliability of the scale was high: Cronbach's α = 0.92. The validity of the scale was checked by correlations with the State Trait Personality Inventory (STPI; Spielberger & Reheiser, 2003)—namely, with anxiety as trait and state (both $p < 0.01$) and with curiosity as a state ($p < 0.01$); and with Exploration as a dimension of identity in adolescents ($p < 0.01$), measured by means of the Ego Identity Process Questionnaire (Balistreri, Busch-Rossnagel, & Geisinger, 1995).
    As a result of feedback from the scientific community, the scale was revised. Items concerning identity dialogues and ruminative function of internal dialogues were added. A new pool of experimental items was generated, and the scale was revised on the basis of empirical data (reliability analysis). The current version of the scale consists of 47 items, including a buffer one. The reliability of the total scale is high: Cronbach's α = 0.91. Principal components factor analysis conducted on the items confirmed one general factor representing dialogical activity. On the basis of inter-item correlations, six subscales

TABLE 4 Dialogical Internal Activity and Basic Dimensions of Personality: Analysis of Regression

Variables	B	Beta	t(46)	$p<$
Openness	0.60	0.45	3.55	0.001
Neuroticism	0.37	0.29	2.28	0.05
Constant	32.56		1.25	—

$R = 0.53$; $R^2 = 0.28$; F(2,46) $= 8.69$; $p < 0.001$

were defined covering different aspects of internal dialogues. They showed satisfactory reliability: Cronbach's α ranging from 0.63 to 0.77 (Me $= 0.71$).

2. Five basic dimension of personality were measured by the Revised NEO Personality Inventory (NEO PI-R) (Costa & McCrae, 1992; see Study 3).

SUBJECTS

The study was conducted on a sample of 48 pedagogy students (36 females and 12 males). Mean age: M $= 21.6$, SD $= 1.0$. The students answered the NEO PI-R and then the Dialogical Activity Scale.

Results

The mean level of internal dialogical activity for a total sample was M $= 139.0$, SD $= 26.5$ (range of the scores was from 46 to 230); there was no significant difference between females and males (t(46) $= 0.14$, n.s.). The Dialogical Activity Scale correlates significantly with Openness (r(46) $= 0.44$, $p < 0.002$), and on a level of tendency with Extraversion (r(46) $= 0.28$, $p < 0.06$) and Neuroticism (r(46) $= 0.28$, $p < 0.06$). These results allow us to pose the questions: Which personality dimensions explain internal dialogical activity, and to what extent? An internal dialogical activity was defined as a dependent variable and five personality factors as independent variables in a regressive model. A stepwise analysis of regression revealed that 28% of variance in the scale measuring dialogical activity is explained by linear combination of Openness and Neuroticism (see Table 4).

An analogical analysis of regression on a level of particular traits brings even more spectacular results. A stepwise analysis of

TABLE 5 Dialogical Internal Activity and Basic Dimensions of Personality: Analysis of Regression

Variables	B	Beta	t(44)	$p <$
Aesthetics (O2)	1.28	0.30	2.31	0.05
Self-Discipline (S5)	−1.74	−0.29	−2.37	0.05
Feelings (O3)	1.98	0.34	2.52	0.05
Self-Consciousness (N4)	1.60	0.27	2.18	0.05
Constant	77.61		2.96	0.005

$$R = 0.62; R^2 = 0.39; F(4,44) = 6.79; p < 0.001$$

regression revealed that 39% of variance in the results of the scale measuring dialogical activity is explained by linear combination of four particular traits (see Table 5).

Discussion of Study 4

The results of Studies 3 and 4 are highly consistent: Internal dialogical activity is moderately related to Openness, and the result is in agreement with the hypothesis in Study 4. Moreover, regardless of all differences in methods, procedure, and samples, three facets or scales important for dialogical activity are the same—namely: Aesthetics, Feelings, and Self-Consciousness. In Study 4 there is another important scale, Self-Discipline (negatively), and in Study 3, two other scales: Fantasy, and Assertiveness (negatively).

Summing up the results of Study 4, an internal dialogical activity measured by DAS corresponds especially to Aesthetics and Feelings as the components of Openness. Internal dialogical activity is also positively related to overcriticism as a component of Neuroticism, and negatively to Self-Discipline as a component of Conscientiousness. Probably dialogical self is especially active when a person has a high level of openness to new experiences, is self-critical, and is not self-disciplined. A full picture of "dialogical personality" implies a person who is imaginative and individualistic, creative and innovative in thinking, and interested in the external world, a person who actively explores now horizons of experiences, who is spontaneous, reflective, and self-reflective; internally complicated and prone to over-criticism of himself or herself; suffering from low self-esteem; not very well organized

and not self-disciplined, but intuitive and empathic (see Costa & McCrae, 1992).

The proved relationship between dialogical internal activity and Openness to experience clearly fits Hermans's (2002, 2003; Hermans & Dimaggio, 2007) description of dialogicality in terms of healthy and creative exploration of the self. Validation of the DAS and its correlation with Neuroticism suggest that dialogical internal activity is related to anxiety. A higher level of anxiety indicating internal conflicts or dilemmas seems to be specific for higher dialogical activity. On the one hand, internal conflicts can be worked through and resolved by means of internal dialogues; on the other, a higher level of anxiety may be stimulated by dialogical thinking, especially when a person confronts two or more identity-relevant I-positions.

Investigations in the Dialogical Self: Contribution to the Theory

Four studies give a broad perspective for possible directions, as to how the theory of the dialogical self can inspire empirical investigation and how empirical results can stimulate further development of the theory.

Even though meta-functions of inner dialogues obtained in Study 1 are not direct implications of the dialogical self theory, the analysis focused on the role of the dialogues with imaginary interlocutors was inspired by this theory. The presented meta-functions seem to reflect psychological meaning of internal conversations as emphasized by other theoretical approaches. Planning and control of actions—the functions proposed by Vygotsky (1962, 1999)—may have a partial equivalent in Self-Guidance. An imaginary testing of planned activities—noticed by Mead (1934)—resembles Substitution. An insight and ability to stand back from one's own problems—discussed by Jung (1961)—can be perceived as similar to the meta-function of Insight. Psychodynamically oriented authors enumerate many functions of imaginary communications—for example, providing support during stressful times in life, compensation for loneliness, and help with the exploration of new situations. They can be compared to Support, Bond, and Exploration, respectively. Finally, gaining of emotional control, autonomy, and other abilities resembles the meta-function of Self-Improvement (see Benson & Pryor, 1973;

Bouldin & Pratt, 1999; Harter & Chao, 1992; Manosevitz, Prentice, & Wilson, 1973; Meyer & Tuber, 1989; Myers, 1979; Nagera, 1981; Rucker, 1981; Singer & Singer, 1990; Somers & Yawkey, 1984).

Although the psychological literature mentions many functions of inner dialogues, only a few are simultaneously stressed by different theoretical approaches. In Study 1 it was found that inner dialogue fulfills seven meta-functions—more than any of the theories assumed. It was also established that, depending on the type of imaginary interlocutors, some functions are more specific than others. In that context one can pose the hypothesis that particular conceptions and empirical analyses take only single types of inner conversations into account and, as a consequence, only their single functions. Thus they manage to describe merely a fragment of the reality. In that sense, theoreticians and researchers of the phenomenon are challenged by our findings as inspired by the theory of the dialogical self. The conclusion is that the whole hitherto existing expertise concerning dialogical imaginary activity demands a new integrating model.

When we reflect on our findings from the perspective of life span, some new questions emerge. Particularly, what are the main functions of internal dialogues in different stages of life? How do the types of internal interlocutors change during the life course? In what way do internal dialogues contribute to developmental crises and passages? What is a repertoire of internal figures, and how does it change during the course of life? And last, but not least, do all people have mental representations of all four types of internal figures?

Internal dialogical activity of the self engaged in RPG, analyzed in Study 2, involves a single basic motive—self-enhancement. It seems to be representative of the emphasis that culture places on the success of the individual (Hermans & Hermans-Jansen, 1995; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Spence, 1985). Internal dialogicality based on the O-motive, or combining both basic motives, is rather unusual in the case of RPG convention. Remembering that RPG is a kind of group activity, one could pose the question: Is there any kind of group activity in our culture that facilitates dialogues with the O-motive-oriented imagined figures? Perhaps participation in self-help organizations or support groups enables a person to have experiences, including imaginary ones, motivated by the longing for contact and union with others. These

activities may involve O-motive and, at least partially, fulfill it. If the balance of the basic motives in the dialogical self is, in fact, biased by cultural values, it would appear that the main function of participation in such groups is maintenance or improvement of self-worth. In such a case the O-motive would be in the service of the S-motive.

The results of Studies 1 and 2 confirm that internal dialogical activity involves personal meaning system and specific adaptations. A challenging question in Studies 3 and 4 was whether internal dialogical activity corresponds with basic tendencies in personality—the traits. We found clear empirical proofs for such a relationship. The general dimensions of the Five Factor Model and particular facets (traits) are, in large part, inherited, according to the theory of Big Five (McCrae & Costa, 1999). Thus, relatively high correspondence between internal dialogical activity and the dimensions of personality is intriguing. Does it mean that predisposition to internal dialogues is (partly) inherited? And has the dialogical self some basis in personality traits? Five personality dimensions constitute the basis of human nature, according to the theory of the Big Five. Self-reflective consciousness is also a cardinal feature of a human being, so an ability to conduct internal dialogues would have the same status. The question can be posed as to whether dialogical activity depends on personality traits or, in the reversed case, whether internal dialogical activity contributes to the development of personality traits.

So, the conclusion is that imaginative dialogical activity, as postulated by Hermans (2002, 2003), involves all three levels of the integrated model of personality proposed by McCrae and Costa (1999) and McAdams and Pals (2006). The variables and processes defined on grounds of the dialogical self theory have clear connections to the variables representing each of the three levels of personality: to the traits (Studies 3 and 4), to characteristic adaptations (Study 1), and to identity or personal meanings of players and heroes in RPGs (Study 2). Now, a new challenging question arises: Which dynamic processes postulated in an integrative model of personality are dialogical in their nature?

For an inspiring and rather new theory, possible empirical areas for exploration are especially important (see Hermans & Dimaggio, 2007). From our point of view, the following topics

are important for exploration: (a) adaptive and nonadaptive functions of internal dialogues; (b) changes of identity implied by internal dialogical activity—namely, confrontation or agreement between subjectively significant I-positions; (c) possible relationships between internal dialogical activity and self-esteem or self-efficacy; (d) dialogical activity and internal integrity vs. multiple organization of the self; and (e) individual differences of internal dialogical activity as well as specific profiles of dialogical activity in different cultures or social groups. Such areas should be challenges for future developments of dialogical self theory.

Note

1. The additional questions, used at the stage 3 of the first session to elicit valuations reflecting mutual relations of players and their heroes, were as follows:

   a. Player's reference to the hero:
      Tell about your personal attitude to your role-play hero (the character you identify with in the game). What is . . . (the name of the hero) from your point of view? What would you say to him or her or about him or her?
   b. Hero's reference to the player:
      Imagine that you are this figure now. Tell about your personal attitude to . . . (the name of the player). What is . . . (the name of the player) from your point of view? What would you say to him or her or about him or her?

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