



The Polyphonic Embodied Self and Educational Organization: A Case of Theory Transplantation

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Abstract

Building on Bakhtin's theories of polyphony and carnival, the article develops the concept of the polyphonic embodied self and uses it to suggest ways of rethinking educational organizations. The article examines a special relation of individual to the collective body, inspired by the grotesque body as a natural part of carnival time in the Middle ages, also allowing for resistance. Carnival creates parallel utopian human communities—and the basis for dreams. The unofficial world was marked by anti-power, by breaking taboos, and the ambivalent laughter culture was essential in the chaotic, but united multi-voiced body of carnival. According to Bakhtin's dialogic approach, organizations can be viewed as systems of relations among individuals and with the world. The authors treat this as a case of transplanting a theory into a non-native context and reflect on what could be the rules for such an application.

Keywords Dialogue · Carnival · Polyphony · The self · Education

Transplanting a theory from its native field to another one is a common practice. Educational theory is an applied field, and it thrives on borrowing from other disciplines. Yet it would be fair to say that we do not yet have explicit rules for such borrowing, nor do we have an ability to judge how successful such borrowing is. This paper begins a potentially much larger effort to develop such rules, or at least, to think about their feasibility.

An application of a theory to a non-native context produces an essential tension: how does one maintain fidelity to the author's intent, and still use it for purposes never intended by the author? At one extreme, one can simply get an inspiration

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from an outside theory, recreate it for one's field, and abandon all fidelity to the original. However, such a move would lose all explanatory power derived from the original theory's cohesion. It will cease to explain and predict, so a new theory would have to be built from scratch. The other extreme is to maintain high fidelity, which makes any transplantation impossible. For example, Bakhtin has created his theory of polyphonic novel for the purposes of literary criticism. To be completely faithful to his original theory would be to stay away from applying it to anything other than what the author intended. Such an approach renders all theory transplants invalid.

It seems important to indicate to which body of scholarship this paper does not belong. We did not want to revisit or contribute to the debate about the authorial intent launched by the new criticism movement (Wimsatt and Beardsley 1954). We remain agnostic on whether the authorial intent is *in general* relevant or irrelevant. However, for the purposes of transplanting a theory to a non-native context, that authorial intent is important in some respects, but is irrelevant in others. This paper is also not a contribution to the body of Bakhtin's scholarship (for a good overview of critical issues, see Emerson 2002). Our aim is not to clarify or explicate any of Bakhtin's constructs, or to demonstrate their origins, or development. We present no opinion on what seems to be two central issues: about the originality of Bakhtin circle's writing or on how much his work of literary criticism is actually a metaphor for the larger social world. Rather, our aim is much more focused: we want to show how Bakhtin's central concepts of polyphony and carnival can be applied to understanding of how educational organizations may operate. We will also reflect on what the process looks like, with an understanding that our reflections may or may not have implications for other similar cases of adapting a theory for a non-native context.

Bakhtin in Education

Many educational scholars have used various aspects of Bakhtin's theory for their own work that since the mid-eighties, when Bakhtin's writing have entered the English-speaking academic discourse through literary criticism and then philosophy. Each of these attempts can be treated as a separate case of the theory transplantation; each can demonstrate something unique about how the process works.

White has applied a whole set of Bakhtinian concepts to early childhood education in a number of publications. The most comprehensive is her 2016 book, where she introduces several Bakhtinian theoretical constructs. Her approach is to introduce such concepts as carnivalesque body and laughter and then cite vignettes from her own or others' empirical research and let the readers to recognize the concept in the snippet of reality. This is, undoubtedly, a very effective way of transplanting a theory to another context, for it triggers the readers' ability to re-recognize a known reality through a new conceptual lens and imagine the possibilities of an enriched view. Her choice of word "provocations" describes well the approach to theory transplantation. A completely appropriate at the time of introduction of a new theory to a field, it does not allow us to predict whether such introduction will be productive, and where it goes too far.

Matusov is another scholar who has been bringing Bakhtinian concepts into the educational theory discourse over the years (2007, 2009). In his 2007 essay, examines the consequences of the way Bakhtinian thought had entered the English-speaking scholarship, via the literary theory. Literary theorists studying Bakhtin charge education theory writers of “inappropriate, erroneous, or shallow use” of Bakhtin scholarship (Matusov 2007, p. 216). Matusov concedes that sometimes misapplication of theory happens in educational writings, but still defends the practice of what he calls “direct contact” with Bakhtin by educators. Ultimately, he writes, “there is no final authority to decide what is ‘misapplication’ and what is not but the authority of discourse itself within the academic community — an open, public discourse for the purpose of testing each other’s ideas and claims” (Matusov 2007, p. 232). We agree with Matusov’s position, and this essay is, in a way, a continuation of his line of reasoning, and advancing his position. Matusov, in effect, started to formulate the criteria separating misapplication from proper application of the theory. For example, he establishes an important rule: quotes from Bakhtin should not defend conclusions already made through other theoretical means. He also indicates that the broader principle of dialogism should be used while appropriating Bakhtinian thought to any applied theory..

Matusov’s own approach (2009) to using Bakhtin is similar to what one of the authors of this paper did in his earlier work (Sidorkin 1999). We both approach Bakhtinian writings as a disguised form of philosophy, using the literary studies where they speak of philosophy and trying to avoid using the literary criticism frame of references, and assumptions native to that field. The set of tools used by philosophers of education to apply philosophy is well established. It includes a version of the move White uses so successfully, by projecting Bakhtinian concepts onto educational reality. The approach also calls for first translating Bakhtin’s ideas into a larger philosophical frame of reference, and then finding connections to it within the educational discourse. The latter move is, essentially, an attempt to rename the recognizable educational concepts, question their original boundaries and connotations, and then use the new language to advance our thinking about education.

Bakhtin is not the first, and not the last exotic author whose theory has been transplanted into an alien field. Among other authors, we can name Shields (2007), Ball and Freedman (2004), Wegerif (2006) and many others. We will all benefit from making the process just a little more self-reflective.

Framing the Case

We start with recognizing that a theory cannot be applied to another field just because we like it, or just because it is exotic and relatively new to the existing discourse. There has to be a specific gap in the existing theoretical structures that has to be filled, or a specific unanswered question. In our case, there seems to be a real need to reconstruct the understanding of the self within educational theory. Education has inherited from developmental psychology the notions of the self as achieving greater and greater coherence, or integrity.

For example, Erikson's "Stages of Man" lead an individual towards making definite professional, moral and ideological commitments, and towards achieving firm identity and an optimistic outlook (Erikson 1982; Marcia 1989). Identity confusion and role diffusion are portrayed as dangerous outcomes to be avoided. According to Erikson, a mature identity is attainable when an adolescent frees herself from dependency on peers, just like she earlier freed herself from dependency on parents. Similarly, Kohlberg's post-conventional stages of moral development are associated with having definite moral principles (Power et al. 1989). The Kohlbergian scheme admits that morality occasionally conflicts with legality. The conflict is still superfluous in Kohlbergian theory; it certainly is not necessary. Damon and Hart (1991) offer us a concept which gravitates towards "systematic beliefs and plans" as the ends of the development of the self. Susan Harter states that "A major theme in the literature on the adult self is the need to integrate one's multiple attributes into a theory of self or personality that is coherent and unified" (ibid, p. 357).

In other words, the cognitive-developmental orientation wants to *overcome* the complexity of the self, to achieve the consistency of a single voice representing the self. The main point is that in order to achieve integrity, one's multiple identities should be "integrated" into a whole. This is problematic for educational practice, mainly because the development itself is understood as internalization of relations (Vygotsky 1978). The self is significantly embedded in relations, and undefinable without them. Maturation and development can no longer be understood as simplification of the inner landscape. We do not have an educational theory of the dialogic self, although there are attempts to build one (see for example Cresswell 2011).

In *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, Bakhtin (1963, 2009) develops a theory of polyphonic novel. For the purposes of this exercise, we will read the work with a supposition that "the novel" is a metaphor for society. The polyphonic novel will stand in as a social ideal, and his account of the hero (the character, the protagonist) is understood as a theory of the self. Again, this way of interpretation is no way implying that Bakhtin himself intended it to be so. Rather, this is an application of a technique we call "metaphorization" of theory. The move allows expanding the meaning of each concept beyond what was initially intended. The next section is the case of such intentional metaphorization that produces a certain new text, which can then later be used to generate an altered form of theory. It is not a translation from Russian in a usual understanding of translation, but also a translation in the new reality given by the structure of the metaphor.

The polyphonic self

In Bakhtin's view, we cannot really talk about the self as something constant, without the relational context:

The self is not a phenomenon with definite and socially defined typical and characteristic traits; it is not a specific formation consisting of univalent and objective features, all of which together answer the "who is he?" question.

Rather, the self is a distinct point of view on the world and on oneself; it is a meaning-generating and opinion-producing position (1963, p. 63).

The position is distinct from the identity politics; the self is not an identity, but rather an opinion about one's own identity, a position vis-a-vis one's identity. Bakhtin's notion of the self is intensely personal, but not individualistic; he is interested in the unique rather than the typical. He is interested in the *personhood*.

What Dostoevsky depicts is not the "poor clerk," but the *self-awareness* of the poor clerk... What in Gogol's worldview was given as the totality of objective traits forming a definite social character, Dostoevsky introduces into the worldview of the person, and makes it the subject of the person's torturous self-reflection. Even the appearance of the poor clerk that Gogol described, Dostoevsky wants to be seen by the clerk in the mirror... We see not who he is, but how he thinks of himself. Our vision is not of the reality of the self, but of the pure function of the self's comprehension of this reality (Bakhtin 1963, p. 64).

The self cannot be studied or understood as an object; it can only be addressed *to* and spoken *with*. The self is not only a product of circumstances; it is a point of view on such circumstances and is only fulfilled when it transcends the circumstances as an active, questioning and engaged *agent*. In her argument for a different position from the social constructionism of Cresswell (2011) where the self is restricted by social organization, De Oliveira (2013) promotes a cultural semiotic approach, leaving room for an agentive self. Cresswell presents "a non-essentialist psychology of the self" and criticizes Gergen's postmodern self that is radically open to new possibilities (De Oliveira 2013, p. 260). The research group of De Oliveira has worked with the self from a cultural semiotic development approach, conceiving "the self as a singular personal image, dependent on alterity..." (ibid, p. 261). According to de Oliveira, "Bakhtin's initial philosophical elaborations were severely critical towards psychologism, that is, a psychology based on concepts and methodologies that separate human beings from their concrete living settings, conceiving the subject as an autonomous self-contained being" (ibid, p. 263).

Bakhtin's ideas are not individualism in the sense of minimizing the influence of social groups and socially constructed categories, but rather a specific way of seeing the social world. In practical terms, when we speak or think about what "that teacher" or "this child" is, we initiate a *monologic discourse*. "Monologue pretends to be the ultimate word" (Bakhtin 2009, p. 293), and *monologism*, as opposed to polyphony, describes a message consisting of only one voice, the monological voice. If we take another approach, we could directly imagine or ask about the teacher's and the children's views and positions on each issue. Try using "she thinks" when you would usually say "she is". This could be seen as the first discipline of a *dialogical organization*, and a fundamental leadership principle.

Bakhtin describes the polyphonic organization of the self as expressed through the phenomenon of the inner speech in the following ways:

His inner speech is characteristically filled with words of others, words just heard or read... He floods his inner speech with the alien words, complicating them with his own emphases or fully replacing emphases, passionately arguing with them. Because of this, his inner speech is organized as a string of vibrant and passionate replies to all words he has heard and has been affected by over several days. [...]

All voices injected in his inner speech touch each other in a special way that is impossible in a real dialogue. Because the voices speak within one mind, they become somehow mutually penetrable. They are intimately adjacent, crowded, and overlapping, and create corresponding interruptions at the points of intersection (1963, pp. 320–321).

The “he” of these passages is Dostoevsky’s hero: Raskolnikov, hardly an example of a healthy self. However, other characters created by Dostoevsky, such as the saint-like Myshkin, and the tortured Stavrogin, all demonstrate various forms of inner dialogicality. Moreover, Dostoevsky himself, according to Bakhtin, possessed a highly dialogical self:

Where others saw a single thought, he could find and feel two thoughts, a bifurcation. Where others saw one quality, he uncovered the presence of another, opposite quality. In his world, all that seems to be simple has become complex and heterogeneous. In every voice, he could hear two arguing voices, in every expression—a crack and a predisposition to turn into another, contrary expression; in every gesture, he detected confidence and uncertainty simultaneously; he perceived the deep ambiguity and polysemy of every phenomenon (ibid, pp. 41–42).

In much of Western psychology, ethics, and philosophy, a mature self is usually associated with identity achievement, with a coherent worldview, consistency and integrity. In other words, a mature self has found one true voice within itself, and thus found a way of silencing all the other voices. In Bakhtin’s view, however, a mature person learns to orchestrate the inner dialogue without self-destruction (like Raskolnikov), but also without silencing the inconvenient voices (like Stavrogin). Bakhtin was arguing for inner polyphony. Therefore, achievement of a stable identity, including cultural identity, is not an ideal, but is rather a sign of an immature person. Being secure in knowing who one is could in itself be a troubling sign. Inner dialogues are fundamental to moral development towards a dialogical self and thus the foundation of pedagogical feeling, judgement, and tact (Bakhtin 2009; van Manen 1991).

In educational theory, the polyphonic self represents a radical departure from the dominant view of human development. We can imagine the self maturation as mastering the skill of inner dialogue. We can also think of helping children internalize the social relations they are engaged into, to be able to represent and articulate voices and positions different from their own. We may steer children away from acquiring set convictions, principles, and identities, and towards the ability to discuss every case with various positions, to ask people of their positions

rather than assuming positions, to seek voice within identities rather than categorizing themselves and others into rigid categories. However, we do not have space to prove here that such a conception of the self better fits the contemporary pluralistic multicultural society than traditional notions of integrity and cohesion.

The Instrumental Concepts

In the context of educational theory, the self is a teleological construct; it is something we aim to achieve. The polyphonic self as an educational aim cannot be shaped directly, without using specific pedagogical tools. It does not help us to know that to develop and flourish; the self must be involved in meaningful dialogue with others. What we need is a set of intermediary steps, of more instrumental concepts that can create a model a practicing educator can actually use. Here is where the advantage of theory transplants may be useful. Bakhtin also thought about the instrumental concepts to support his notion of dialogue in the polyphonic novel. Thus he created the theory of carnival, showing that carnival and carnival-like occurrences in the novel create special threshold situations that make dialogical encounters more likely to happen. Moreover, he included the concept of the carnival body and laughter while explaining the cultural mechanisms of carnival. The advantage of wholesale borrowing of a whole set of theories seems to be obvious. Yes, one could independently develop the notion of the complex polyphonic self that would be native to education, at the cost of great effort. It would be, however, much more time consuming to develop a whole set of supporting instrumental concepts to make the theory useful. Importing a series of connected concepts allows to be more appropriate in the busyness of theory construction.

We use Bakhtin's authorial intent to justify the connections among the main and instrumental concepts: Bakhtin indeed thought that dialogue is triggered by carnival, and that the collective body and laughter are important for carnival to occur. At the same time, we more or less ignore his intent while considering whether all these theories are applicable to education.

According to Bakhtin, every individual occupies a unique biographical position, that is how the body is situated in time and space, and this provides a view of the world. Where you sit or stand and what ground you occupy is the main vantage point in your relation to others (Good 2001). The dialogue affects and is affected by our corporeal position; we always talk from a unique perspective. All our knowledge is gained from a particular point of view. All meaningful and intelligent actions should entail both mind and body. It is the body that makes us unique, because no one else can occupy neither the body, nor the space it takes. The most fascinating theoretical perspective arises when Bakhtin links the deeply dialogical concept of the self with the idea of the embodied nature of the self.

In a certain and profound way, one of the most important relations we have, is the one we have to our own body. Bakhtin has developed the concept of carnival as a portal to the dialogical relation. Carnival, in turn can be described through the paradoxical concept of the grotesque body. Bakhtin's most interesting insights on the body come from his work on the French humorist and medical doctor in the

Renaissance, Francois Rabelais. In his novels, he explores not just any body, but the grotesque one: “The grotesque body, as we have often stressed, is the body in the act of becoming [...] The body swallows the world and is itself swallowed by the world” (Bakhtin 1984, p. 317). To be in dialogue, we need a certain way of physical being, a playful relation to our own and to the collective body.

Rasmussen (1992; Oksnes and Rasmussen 2013) points to children’s play as a primitive formation; primitive not as incomplete, but as something primary and, importantly, linked to embodiment. Children are often attracted to the body openings and body sounds, to “the lower stratum” and the belly, quite similar to the fascination with the grotesque body of medieval people. The interest of children in taboos related to bodily functions is an instinctive search for the carnival-like situations, which question and yet embrace the rules, and invert yet affirm the social order. However, there appears to be a contradiction today between the normalized, ordered, and clean modern body and other marginalizing and imperfect bodies. The grotesque body was a natural and important part of the carnival, also by allowing the possibility of resistance.

The carnival in medieval times was embodied in a way that is almost incomprehensible to us today. Grotesque realism, once a socially powerful comic genre, is a social form which can challenge ideological connotations with the purpose of generating laughter.

The principle of laughter and the carnival spirit on which grotesque is based destroys this limited seriousness and all presence of an extra temporal meaning of unconditional value of necessity. It frees human consciousness, thought and imagination for new potentialities (Bakhtin 1984, p. 49).

A carnivalesque form of humor, such as exaggerated incongruity, clowning, teasing, and embodied play episodes, is recognizable in research of children’s humor (Lensmire 2000; White 2013). Bearing this in mind, we will turn to the living bodies of children to help us explore the corporeality of the self. There is something completely absorbing in watching children play, and although many adults may be less spontaneous and improvisational, they do not, in fact, cease to be embodied beings. White points to the presence of the carnivalesque as an important indication of well-being in Early Childhood Centers: “Its joy was in its unpredictability and potential for ambiguity and surprise” (White 2013, p. 12). This is also affecting and affected by the teacher’s role: “In recognizing carnivalesque as the domain of the child, teachers can also see their necessary role as ‘outsider’ in peer-based learning: as a necessary subject of authority and essential source of alienation and otherhood from the underground culture of the child” (ibid, p. 13). Bakhtin argues for outside-ness; when the other remains outside, “he can essentially enrich the event of my life” (2010, p. 88).

The history of carnival may give us a deeper insight into the complexity of the embodied self. Medieval carnival has exercised an enormous influence on European culture as a whole. The carnival belonged to the people and everybody was included, even the marginalized. It was a celebration of the moment’s freedom from authority and its forced truth. “The Carnival was the true feast of time, becoming, change and renewal;” it was based on a dichotomy model with two worlds and two truths

(Bakhtin 2009, p. 10). The official world was characterized by power, authority, and a simple unified language. The carnival aimed to create a healthier and richer life through laughter, loopholes and renewal. Bakhtin depicts the carnival as a social event allowing a critique of the current socio-cultural situation to be expressed. The carnival was the *threshold*, the catalyst opening to the possibility of true dialogue. The carnivalesque, Gardiner (1996) suggests, may heal the dualistic split between nature and culture, mind and body, self and other.

Characteristic for the Renaissance was the acknowledgement of laughter as a positive and creative principle. People were rather suspicious of all seriousness as they were accustomed to the connection between the open and free truth and laughter. The seriousness in the medieval age was about fear, weakness, lies, and hypocrisy. But they managed to find loopholes and possibilities for escape in the carnival and feasts. Then laughter could win over moral fear. This laughter created a new unofficial truth and was the foundation for the new self-awareness of the Renaissance “with the expression of a new free and critical *historical* consciousness” (Bakhtin 2009, p. 73). How does this translate into organization theory as it is applied to educational organizations?

The Polyphonic Organizations

In a final move, we graft an unrelated concept; educational organizations, to the string of Bakhtinian concepts we discussed above. For the transplanted theories to work, they need a transitional construct that is more “native” to educational scholarship. We selected the organization theory, because it has a fully developed presence within the educational discourse, is easily understood by practitioners and scholars alike. It also has the advantage of being actionable, for an organization is an object of direct intervention by leaders of such organizations and other interested parties. Over the years, we have developed a good understanding of the instruments and mechanisms of some interventions. We therefore take a relatively small move and create the notion of polyphonic organizations, applicable to education.

The interpretive framework offered here has several implications for educational organizations, such as early childhood centers. First, we will have to rethink human development in terms of fostering the capacity for inner and external dialogicality. We suspend the idea of the unitary, coherent self. Rather, maturity means the ability to maintain one’s inner dialogue and engage in dialogical relations with others, it should not mean closing down all but one voice. Educators can benefit from being keenly aware of the lack of polyphony in the room, of children who may be discouraged to entertain the voices of others through their play and school work. Through the children’s way to be here-and-now, we may reconnect to our own bodies and to the world in a healthier way, which can also help to open our minds to dialogue. Play and dialogue are activities based on flexibility and improvisation, otherwise it is no fun. Dialogue and play are going its own way. Actually, we are played by the dialogue and the play (Gadamer 1989).

A reconnection to the whole body may provide the basis for a new understanding of organizational cultures. An organizational culture can be described as “an

integrated pattern of human behavior, thought, speech, action and artefacts that determine what is acceptable or unacceptable” (Shields 2007, p. 95). Polyphony indicates a more fragmentary view of organizations “where identities are constantly taking shape along with the flow of discourse” (Sullivan and McCarthy 2008, p. 539). The polyphonic organization is characterized by a specific use of language, never neutral but filled with values and ideologies. In a polyphonic organization, there is hope for agreement or fruitful disagreement and thus dialogue can give new insight and understanding.

Much of educational institutions for small children revolve around organizing and controlling children’s bodies and bodily functions, both for reasons of safety and proper socialization. However, we also can make the case where these rules should be suspended, and even inverted, in the context of carnival-like occurrences, both planned and improvised. We often aim for stable organizations in general because an organization is, by definition, a way to make life more stable and predictable. The problem is that we tend to relate to others as stable and internally coherent, and we tend to view our organizations in a similar way—as stable and coherent, or at least gravitating toward coherency. Shotter (2008) points out how language and communication are part of creating social groups, including the bodily effects. He suggests that we look to Bakhtin’s account of polyphonic organizations rather than to what we tend to idealize as stable organizations in a well-organized world.

If we are to start using the theoretical framework of Bakhtin, the most important lesson of carnival is that to engage in dialogue we need a special mode of existence. However, carnival is but one case of a more general principle: we do not live in *one* world. Rather, time and space can be experienced differently; we can slip in and out of a number of discrete modes of existence, and we need to re-imagine our bodies in order to deal with each other dialogically. Carnival is only one such mode, and no organization can operate in it constantly.

Not all organizations are polyphonic, and fidelity to the main message, to the mission, seems to be a virtue in many organizations. Questioning and open listening can bring new aspects to light and make dialogical meetings possible. Weick (2002a) maintains that improvisational organizations are more sustainable. Furthermore: “The improvisation that lies behind significant innovation is more social, more emergent, and more successful at the ongoing management of paradox” (Weick 2002b, p. 176). To encourage the polyphonic embodied self, teachers’ listening, imagination and improvisation are important in responding to the children on their terms, as unique selves. The polyphonic embodied self seem to be important to organizational cultures.

“Monologue pretends to be the ultimate word” (Bakhtin 2009, p. 293), and *monologism*, as opposed to polyphony, describes a message consisting of only one voice, the monological voice. Sullivan and McCarthy build on Bakhtin’s writings on polyphony aiming “to develop a more dialogical approach to organizational processes [...] to question authorship in organizations that will help mark and extend the boundaries of polyphony in organizational studies” (ibid, p. 527). Some voices lend the organization more authority than others (ibid, p. 526). Sullivan and McCarthy point to the multiplicity of voices in ideas, and how the passing of themes through different voices sound different (ibid, p. 528). Polyphony underlines the

need for communication and polyphony in organizations, thus supporting our point about dialogic relations being basic to leadership in educational organizations.

If we are to provide opportunities for dialogic growth for children, we will have to revise the view of an organization as stable and coherent. Rather, a wise leader will attempt to manage several shifting modes of existence. We of course need rules and procedures, but we also need to welcome situations where we break the rules and question procedures; the situations of carnival. We can embrace temporary chaos and encourage staff to both maintain order and let go of the reins. Teachers and leaders can develop the capacity to distinguish the unproductive permanent chaos from the productive carnivalesque, temporary chaos. The latter has its own rules, often quite different from the normal world.

The polyphonic embodied self captures the complexity of improvisational and dialogic organizations, and can potentially be more sustainable as well as supporting of a democratic policy for social justice. Bakhtin emphasized the concept of carnivalization as a celebration of dialogue and society. It is neither realistic nor desirable to maintain carnival at all times. But neither should we forget that the developing self needs loopholes, breaks, and shared experiences. Carnavalesque zones or loopholes set people free and motivate them to participate. Bakhtin's logic is simple: let everyday life break down to enhance the likelihood that dialogue will occur. Dialogue is the endpoint in itself, and also what marks good relations. Educational organizations may prefer to develop, not reduce, both inner and carnivalesque dialogicality among and within children, as well as encourage polyphony and deemphasize integrity as a developmental value.

Open-ended dialogues can provide new understandings, answers and questions of the complexity of relations in organizational cultures. Renewal and transformation do not occur spontaneously, but must be prepared within social formation over time and events, opening spaces of opportunities—precisely like loopholes. The point is to sometimes be able to look at the carnival sense of life, which is hostile to any sort of conclusiveness; “all endings are merely new beginnings” (Bakhtin 1984, p. 165). Educational organizations will benefit from being in a state of flux, allowing intuition, spontaneity, and improvisation, and thus helping teachers to evolve pedagogical tact and judgement or *virtuosity* to address children's need for development towards an unknown future (van Manen 1991; Biesta 2014).

How to Transplant a Theory

What we observed from our case may or may not be applicable to others. Nevertheless, we have found that there are some advantages to transplanting a theory to another context, and will suggest some rules: (i) The transplantation should respond to an authentic need within the applied field; it needs to fill a genuine gap. (ii) One way to make a theory more adapted to transplantation is to metaphorize it, that is, to expand the meanings of each key concept beyond that originally intended by the author. (iii) One must respect the integrity of the transplanted theory where integrity of each concept and the connections among dependent concepts are concerned. For example, if Bakhtin links dialogue, carnival, and body, we need to consider

the entire set, rather than pick and choose. (iv) One can safely ignore the authorial concept where the field of application is concerned, while respecting it in formulating inter-conceptual relations. (v) One needs to find transitional concepts that are already established in the target field, and that can be modified with the transplanted theory in mind.

Our case shows that transplanting a theory is an imperfect and messy business. It has advantages and disadvantages, and it is not clear in which cases the former outweigh the latter. The result may be fresh, but like all theories, the new one will have to be validated by both examining its internal coherence, and eventually by empirical studies. Yet theory transplantation is also potentially very enriching and may save theorists tremendous work. Transplanted theories also open the possibility of transdisciplinary dialogue.

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