



Transitions of bonding: The borders between hidden roots and visible roads in life course

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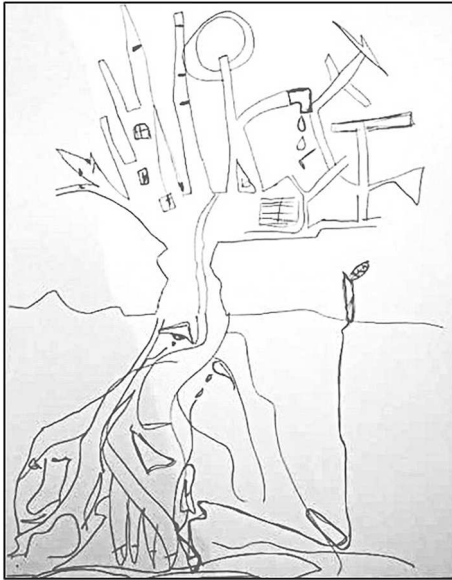
Abstract

The article explores the phenomenon of transition in a particular human passage, which entails two affective processes, the experience of parenting and the transformation of the couple's bond. Transition is analyzed as a field of self-movements and transitional-field-of-the-bject (Hermans and Hermans- Konopka 2010) where new self-positions are co-constructed around oneself and the relationship with 'the other' through sharing meanings. The article describes processes of abandoning self-positions, which entail spatial and temporal movements, opening up possibilities to build a conception towards a communal self. Transition is discussed in terms of the indeterminacy of expanding horizons (Boulanger *International Journal for Dialogical Science*, 10(2), 9–33, 2017a, *International Journal for Dialogical Science*, 10(2), 117–130, 2017b) where uncertainty and semiotic tension are the drives for life experience and self to evolve. The phenomenon defined as tensegrity (Marsico and Tateo *Integrative Psychological Behavior*, 51, 536–556, 2017) enables the process towards new meanings of self and the other. The article elaborates on the life-course addressing the dynamics of actual self-regulation and transgenerational resources as crossing axes (Canevaro 1999).

Keywords Transition · Transgeneration · Indeterminacy · Parenting · Couples

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“Roots and leaves themselves alone are these....

Love-buds put before you and within you whoever you are,

Buds to be unfolded to old terms,

If you bring the warmth of the sun to them they will open and bring form, color, perfume, to you,

If you become the aliment and the wet they will become flowers, fruits, tall branches and trees.”

Walt Whitman 2007, p. 258.

The experience of change and transformations challenge the sense of stability of life. Life trajectories entail continuous cycles of stability-instability that people deal with by actively seeking for states, meanings and feelings of being deep-rooted. From that perspective, if we elaborate a just lived experience or a vital situation in progress as an experience of change or transformation in our lives we also will undergo feelings of surprise and of exceptional events. We usually live those moments having feelings of astonishment caused by unexpected events taken unawares. Transformation is inherent to the process of living in irreversible time but due to our delusion of stability it occurs unwarned most of the time. Probably that blindness explains the mechanistic understanding of transitions (see Boulanger 2017a) trying to distinguish between moments perceived as static objects and in the same way the difficulties to be aware of processes, like roots and leaves alone (Whitman 2007). In his poetry, Whitman manifests an opposition between uniqueness and connection as he refers to life and growth. Buds mean origin, and at the same time renewed process that is connected with the past and the still to come by endless chains.

Like other transitions in lifespan, transgeneration entails uncertainty and ambivalence. Feelings of uncertainty of the future and the search for stability emerge with the subjective experience of temporality and the course of life (Molina, Tapia-Villanueva and Fossa 2017). Ambivalence emerges in the process of making sense of experience

as we deal with the tension between stability and transformation and the presence of seemingly competing meanings projected in the living moments (Abbey 2004). Albeit the transgenerational process is linked with cultural transfer and tradition that refer to shared practices and values by a community, it also entails the feelings of keeping forms of life that are felt as part of the family and the self in an idiosyncratic way.

Together with the meaning construction of experience through the life trajectory, self-construction is a central process, a genuine private experience (Boetsch 2003), which entails narratives, images and feelings constructed in relation with the flow of time and a sense of continuity of life (Chandler 2000). People in ontogeny develop identity in order to make sense of the self. The search for identity in life leads to the entification of aspects of life, the self and the family. According with Valsiner (2000) entification turns dynamic processes into static entities and language depicts processes into implied causal entities (op. cit. p. 7). An example of it is the common sense use of the metaphor of 'roots' to associate with family, bearing senses of underpinning and foundation. These meanings are characterized by static assumptions ignoring the transformation aspects of roots. Roots grow up under the ground out of sight.

To elaborate in transition process we need to refer to Dialogical Self Theory (DST) (Hermans 2002). It focuses on the human experience as a process in space and time with an eminently communicative character. It conceives that the Self is structured on continuous negotiation and dialogue between the individual and the social environment, where self and culture are intertwined with a multiplicity of positions among which dialogical relationships can be established. The dialogical relationships imply movements between different spatial positions in relation with vital situations and with time. This process is part of the systemic organization of the self. Hermans proposes a dynamic model of identity construction that points at the multiplicity and discontinuity of self, taking different approaches with respect to the ideas of unity of the self and abstractness of culture (Hermans and Hermans-Konopka 2010). His proposal articulates the theoretical model with the construction of a personal position repertoire to assessing multivoicedness and dialogicality of the self (Hermans 2002). Considering the DST transitions entail new encounters and new voices that are internalized and made part of the inner space of the self. Self is constructed and re-constructed as a community moving on in dialogical ways dealing with recalled, foreseen or imagined others. This article attempts to reflect upon transitions that take part in bonding creation between I and we, particularly related with the couple's and family's borders.

Exploring and theorizing in the elusive field of transitions, leads us to elaborate in the indeterminacy of human life as we consider its qualities of open boundaries in addition to states of quasi-differentiation (Valsiner 2006) and the perspective of temporality as irreversible time (Bergson 1896/1959). The theoretical approach of cultural psychology is applied to the concept of transition as an emergent process, a border zone in time, a phenomenon of expanding horizons and semiotic mediated process (Marsico 2020; Valsiner 2014). Tensegrity proposed by Marsico and Tateo (2017) as "a system in which the organizing principle of the psyche is not equilibrium and homeostasis rather dynamic tension" (Op. Cit. p. 538) is a dialogical process that also illuminates the reflection.

With the purpose to explore the subjective experience in the transition to parenthood and how it interacts with transitions in the couple's relationship, some participants were

contacted after the birth of their first child. Some single cases will be presented in this article to illustrate the concepts of the analysis.

At the beginning, the article directs attention to the process of transition in identity construction, and considers it as a process of counter-parts negotiation between the usual and the strange.

At the end of the article I will elaborate the indeterminacy quality of these processes taking a theoretical model of crossing axes where tendencies of connection with the past are actualized by the emergent process of the present, the random and the orderless.

The purpose of this article is exploring the phenomenon of transition in a particular human passage, which entails the experience of parenting, namely the birth of the first child. In this process two phenomena of transition that are central in human existence are joined such as the generation of two affective bonds. Two processes are encountered, the construction of a relation with a first son or daughter, the experience of mothering or fathering and the transformation of the couple's bond as an enclosed system to a new dimension an more complex system with new boundaries of the co-parenting and family sub-systems. Both processes are displayed sometimes, as counter dynamics of opposites between a relationship that is mostly symmetrical and reciprocal such as the couple's one and other that is asymmetrical like the relationship with a newborn child, and especially the first one.

Transitions and Identity Construction

People usually define transitions as critical moments in their lives when decisions were taken, or events from which they had learned a lot, or important changes they perceived in personality, worldviews and relationships. All those experiences have to do with the identity construction. People need to feel as a unique being that moves through life and at the same time that belongs to groups, families and couples. Every event felt as transition in life imply particular encounters with others. Especially, affective relations like couples and familiar bonds are central experiences in the process of sense making of the self and identity. The experience of other and otherness undergoes processes of negotiation of meanings, internalization and becoming part of the self. The internalized others represent the community to which the person feels to belong and from there they question the self, reflect it and stimulate it to its redefinition. Belonging at the same time reflects and encourage who I am and who I am becoming. That feeling of belonging is perceived as a shelter of love and protection, which creates bases for assurance and trust for development. The internalized others concern to the past, the acknowledged aspects of life, the routines and the assimilated repertoire of behaviors.

On other hand, the 'other' that intersubjectively constitutes the self is the Alter, considering the ideas of Marková (2006). It represents the one with which the ego negotiates in the search for existence, the strange that may attract, scare or challenge the ego perspective. Considering ego-alter-object as the basic unit of dialogical epistemology proposed by Marková (2006), and the dialogical relations within the self proposed by Valsiner (2002), meaning-construction progresses in a communicational sequence between the self and the environment, and develops through dialogical chains - ego-alter. The ego-alter exchange leads to the construction of the third. It becomes the

object, which entails sign and meaning. In these chains, each object – the third element of the triad – may become a new alter, a new position at dialogue, as a sign that leads to the next construction, other objects in an ongoing continuum. In such way, the other may be people but also circumstances, like a war situation, school environment or illness. It includes collective memories, loyalties and also the distrust, hostile or threatening alter.

The relational process, and the construction of the self with ‘other’ are relevant for identity construction, particularly for social recognition. In family and couple’s relationships one of the main relational processes entails the needs of being cared – *self-centered* – interacting with the feelings of being appealed, to take care – *alter-centered* and the longing to create new possibilities in life. The meanings to negotiate are displayed in experience through situated signs (words, actions and artifacts) between the person and the ‘other’, between the positions that the person takes at the border of any new meeting with the *foreign other*. Consequently the I-other encounter needs multilingualism or the ability to express with different signs and languages, as the relational process is composed of a mess of opinions, beliefs, and judgments that interfere with the single purposes and self-goals. This quality increases community’s openness and creativity, minimizing the self-enclosing and restriction to its own habits and customs. It refers to the course of self and identity construction in a heterogeneous frame (Bajtín 1989[1934–1935]).

Multilingualism, involves ambiguity and vagueness as conditions for dialogicality. And dialogue is the essence of transitions as they entail encounter.

Transition Through Encounter

The following pages address transitions that take place in the construction of human bonds such as the amorous couple and the father-child or mother-child relationship. As stated earlier every transition entails communication but even more the construction of relations that have been defined as central processes of attachment, like couples and parents-child relationships. The attachment system refers to the needs for connection in the seeking for security, and for validation in the searching of feeling esteem (Greenberg and Goldman 2008; Johnsons 2008). A person that engages with other in forming a new relationship, creates at that time new boundaries of the self, that define him/herself and connect with the other, expanding his/er horizons from being single toward being part of a couple and pair, or being part of a new link with a child, a shared aspect or connected aspect of the self. The needs for security and validation move the experience of connection to border construction leading to a transition field of the self. It happens in time and space, letting go what it has been lived or been, to open to a new existence, new way of being toward the future. Also the spatial borders are extended for other to be incorporated for sharing personal self-space. These issues have a big impact in life then people elaborate strategies and meanings to prepare themselves, to anticipate the desired – and even the feared – future or to imagine the possibilities that are coming in the need of advancing how it will be and to get knowledge in order to make good decisions for the moment it will happen. However, often they are little aware of the great effort they make along the process. That process of anticipation entails presence and absence of the other and self-positions in the landscape of the self. The

experience of creating a new intimate relationship challenges hidden, even rejected aspects of the self and possible threatens feelings of security. Unwanted positions that are perceived outside the internal domain may become part of a transitional field of belonging and not-belonging to myself through the experience of encounter, of (Hermans and Hermans-Konopka 2010; Boulanger 2017b).

Transition in the Semiotic Construction Process

The meanings - signs – that people formulate in the present, taking from the past and using to anticipate possible futures participate in transitional processes. The promoter sign enables the range and direction of the construction of possible meanings in the future. The range establishes possibilities within the constraints of the boundaries of the meaning fields. The promoter sign enables to negotiate alternatives, adopting hierarchical levels (e.g. values), being contextualized in the idiosyncratic experience, or triggered by local everyday contexts (Abbey 2005; Valsiner 2004). The semiotic process is a theoretical perspective useful in the analysis of ongoing experience of transition.

To illustrate some of the concepts elaborated in this article a single case may be useful. As stated, some new fathers and mothers were contacted to explore their subjective experiences with the newborn (less than six month) and also with the partner. The participants were men and women that were in a stable couple's relationship, married and aged between 29 and 38 years old. They signed an informed consent, and responded to semi-structured interviews that were audio-recorded and latter transcript to text. Some of their reports will be presented as illustration. One of them, Pedro, 32 years old, Chilean sociologist man, two years married, was interviewed about his experience of being father, after three months of the child birth of his first son. In the following excerpt he talked about the process he was living in the time he was preparing the born of his son.

Next to the confirmation of the pregnancy I felt like a non-real experience. It existed in the speech, but was not expressed in daily consequences. I fluctuated between be aware and forgetting about that process. Thinking about it made the possibility of being a father to arise. When the baby shower came, I had the experience of entering the home stretch and now I'm anxiously waiting for the signals of the mother.

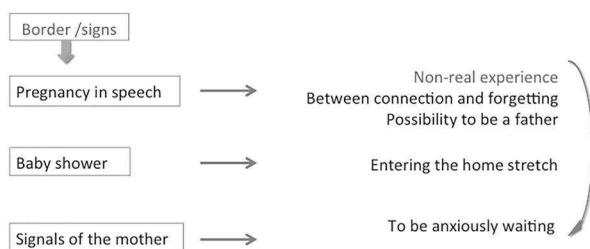
The discourse points at a sign guided experience lived in motion and uncertainty. The signs of pregnancy, the rite of the baby shower, the mother's signs that he was waiting for are used to make sense of the moment and anticipating the unknown future. This brief excerpt shows some signs having the function of promoting transitions as they enable border crossing for experiencing new self-being. The particular sign referred to the pregnancy *in speech* associated with a non-real experience demonstrates its function. To be in speech is opposed to experience in Pedro's narrative.. Here, the experience of the non-real connects with feelings of uncertainty in the transition to the future and its contrast with speech creates ambivalence where life fluctuates between competing meanings about the lived experience at that moment. The

ambivalence of being and not being a father. Pedro struggles with the presence and the absence. It is a wide boundary, using the DST concept of the transitional field of the abject, as an experience felt outside and inside the own life at the same time (Hermans and Hermans-Konopka 2010; Boulanger 2017b). The ambivalence of irreconcilable meanings and the undetermined feelings of openness to the new and unknown also allowed him to deal with the oppositions, to think about and not to think about. As he went through indeterminacy the emergence of the possibilities of being a father arose. The possibilities manifested vaguely and unclearly. The baby shower as a sign enabled a new crossing border toward being *anxiously waiting* (see the following Scheme 1). Again the inclusive opposites present/not present experimented a new quality. Because the absence began to create anxious feelings it is lived in a different way like being unlocked from an enclosed *I*-position while the individual takes a broader perspective to make sense of his experience (see *I*-prison in Hermans and Hermans-Konopka 2010).

Border Experience and Temporal Rupture (Space and Time)

When we look at boundaries in time the phenomenon of rupture becomes an important issue of the process. Zittoun (2007) studying youth transitions stated that these processes follow the experience of ruptures in life. Ruptures could result from changes in cultural context, from an external or personal change of experience, or due to changes in the relationships and interactions, or could come from the persons themselves, their thoughts, their feelings, or their bodies. As I have stated at the beginning of this article a situation experienced as a change in life challenges the sense of stability. It is lived as a rupture and impacts people like turning points experiences, (see points in life trajectory in TEM, Valsiner and Sato 2006) as events that question taken-for-granted routines and definitions and coming into a transitional field experience. The following expression expresses how the entire life of a young woman – Carla – is put at stake with the turning point of the first pregnancy experience.

I have been living it thoroughly, even with moments of stress and worries, with scares about what is coming. It makes me think about my own story, my family, the relationship with my mom, my dad, my childhood life, how my parents have lived it; how they raised me; and how all of it has impacted my life. I think about what I want to change for giving the best to my baby.



Scheme 1 Sign guided experience of transition

Pedro referred to how he lived moments of rupture. The experience of rupture creates a sharpened boundary between the past and the future. The turning point experience is lived as a separating border more than unifying one. The past in this case referred to tradition and what Pedro received from his parents, seems to be placed at counterposition with the new to come, and questions arise about the possibility to connect the lived trajectories with the new ones. In this process the reflecting process elaborates in the need for change. The transition process establishes meaningful relations between past, present, and anticipated positions. Linking is one of the main functions of border construction in transitions. Ruptures in the dialogical-self pushes internal and external movements of transition toward the new in space and the unknown in time (Boulanger 2017c). Let's consider the following statement of Pedro after the birth.

The birth came and I met my son for the first time. The experience was like non-bonding and also to be aware of the beginning of its construction. A strange feeling between not having a story and at the same time to have much in common. Not knowing him and understanding that we will be connected the rest of our lives.

This excerpt is an example of the nature of transition in space and time; it confirms the border zone of rupture “the beginning of the bond construction“ becoming the *place* and *moment* of development, the boundary of a new transition. In this excerpt the *bond* points at the spatial borders to being constructed. There is a connection that will emerge; with the son and several new borders will be created of the father-son relationship, the father-mother relationship, the nuclear family relationship and so on. On other hand, the *story* underlines the temporal dimension, which is not yet lived, the unknown. There is a regulation process of the transformation of the self (Valsiner 2014). The utterance addresses meanings of separation and alliance, of strangeness and familiarity, expressing the ambivalent nature of transitional zone. The birth is a temporal border in which the encounter with the new other (the son) created feelings of constructing a bond and the undetermined experience of having and not having a common story. Novelty emerges while integrating the feelings of not knowing and to be connected the rest of their lives, opened to broader horizons.

The Losses in the Relationship

Ruptures are felt as ends of cycles in life and usually with losses. Most of the time its values are assumed just at the moment of the lost. Habitually the awareness is first an emotional experience with fuzzy feelings among fear, sadness, and also joy and love. Ends and losses are important aspects of transitional process that enable the emergence of the new experiences, meanings and actions. For example, the physical loss for the couple relationship, the loss of sensuality with the partner in the beginning of the experience as co-parents. For Carla it is the experience of being a daughter that ends and the questions to herself arise as resources for the new role of a mother that emerges. She asserted,

Now our priority is a third party, our little son and I must be able to take care and protect him. A new stage of my life is coming. The daughter is left behind. Now I'm mother and it scares me a little how I am going to do it, whether or not I will be well prepared. But I also live it fully assumed. There is no turning back to depend on someone who decides for me, to advise or guide me. That already happened.

The notion of priority acts as a semiotic macroorganizer (Josephs and Valsiner 1998; Molina, Del Rio and Tapia-Villanueva 2015) that brings a cultural norm and lessens ambiguity and flexibility for the new unknown life that is coming. Some of the persons interviewed referred living a dilemma between how much to change and what to keep in the new positions. This is an illusion they create in relation with a process that is mostly movement and the difficulty of accepting the lost and the uncertain. The static views of practices and meanings that can be kept unvarying and changes that can be controlled may have a regulation function to create the feeling of agency for dealing with the grieve of losses and the anxiety of perceiving the flow of irreversible time.

Tensegrity

Marsico and Tateo (2017) proposed to overcome the opposition between stability and continuity of the self through the theoretical proposal of *tensegrity* related with the concept of "tensional integrity" developed by Fuller (1961). Let's consider the following definition of tensegrity:

...we have tried to conceptualize dynamic tension, rather than equilibrium, as the concept that can help to understand the semiotic construction of the Self (Tateo and Marsico 2013). The idea of tension as a constitutive element of systems originates in the design of innovative architectural structures and developed into the concept of "tensegrity", a contraction for "tensional integrity" (Fuller 1961). Tension is not a disruptive force, rather every system is made of sub-parts that are in hierarchical relationships of continuous tension and discontinuous compression called "self-stress". (Marsico and Tateo 2017, p. 546).

Their contribution to the understanding of the self is proposing tensegrity as a complex system of motion, with complementary and opposed driving forces that are relevant for development and integrity of the self. Borders have specific functions in its organization by keeping those forces in movement. Then, it is possible to assume intergenerational transitions implying crossing borders but even more than that, leading to the creation of new ones. As a differentiation process intergenerational process progresses to more complex forms in self organization.

"... we have claimed that the inherent tension of the Self is generated by the fact that experience emerges from the production of a distinction (a border) which immediately co-creates two complementary and opposite fields of meaning. This process is not to be understood as a temporary unbalance that must be overcome or recovered, rather as a continuous dynamic and dialogical movement between and within sub-parts of the system." (Marsico and Tateo 2017, p. 552).

So, how can we illustrate tensegrity in this process? Let's see the following excerpt from the experience of Pedro after the birth of his son.

The experience of responsibility has appeared with great force. Take care of work, because now there is someone of whom I am in charge and a family to take care of. Job stability, economic projection and health become very important aspects. The idea of death has even appeared as something to consider. I am beginning to think, "nothing can happen to me and I have to take care of myself so as not to leave my son and my wife alone". Since the birth I have stopped smoking and I have even done some medical check-ups.

Pedro dealing with the birth of his son experiences the emergence of a new border zone, between "I as responsible" and "I as non-responsible". The tension created makes emerging multiple border signs that enable the process, such as job stability, the economic projection, caring for the son, the family and himself. These signs keep the tension and push the transition forward. Considering the ideas of Marsico and Tateo (2017) these expansive drives and tension borders are systemic mechanisms of *tensegrity* that characterize the quality of the transition of a new structure of the self, a new identity. For instance, the notion of death appears strong in keeping the tension in progress. Together with it, different directionalities are met in the making sense of this moment in life.

The Concept of Emergence and Transmission in Tension

The theoretical contribution of the notion of *tensegrity* proposes a new understanding of development that differs from a psychological equilibrium model. Marsico and Tateo (2017) questioned the mentioned model for offering a static view and for not apprehending the motion quality of borders and transitions. Boulanger (2017a) adheres to this critique as he finds that the idea of self repertoire is an entity notion with clear boundaries. These authors conceptualized transitions not as processes of destabilization and new equilibrium, but of evolutionary tension and new emergence. For Marsico and Tateo self is seen as a dynamic semiotic construction in genetic tension that differs from adapting to changing conditions of environment.

We have used the spatial metaphor for understanding the mind as a scenario of different voices of the self, although in order to overcome the static view of transitions we need to consider the perspective of time. The self endures in irreversible time (Bergson 1913/2001), through consciousness actions that once being experienced become part of the past vanishing forever. Every time that we bring those events to the present moment, we are not dealing with themselves in their original experience, like the Clara's narrative in which she reflects on her original experiences but cannot give clear account of them. But past events are there to be analysed, reflected upon and used as learning for dealing with to new circumstances. So the way the past participates in actual creation and development is becoming part of the environment, in space. It is through memories with their values, beliefs, repertoires, that are situated in individuals' daily objects (letters, clothes, photos, videos), art objects (music, literature, pictures, sculptures, piece of architecture) and so on. The here-and-now experience is lived in

consciousness as a whole, nevertheless as it becomes a past event it can be recalled, re-elaborated and fragmented, losing its quality of an original whole experience.

On other hand, the *spatialization of time* cannot be applied for the process of becoming toward the future. Whenever we consider possibilities for the future, those possibilities are not part of environment. They are not there, as alternatives of choice and for that reason cannot be objectified. Such idea of alternatives objectifies the concept of creation, which as I stated happens as a whole experience, which is indivisible and subjective. The moving self spreads out in the here-and-now and creates emerging options in continual decision (See Fig. 1) (Boulanger 2017d).

Considering the flow of time, X and Y doesn't lie there as possibilities waiting to be chosen. Indeterminacy of transitions in irreversible time points at expectations and anticipations as the not fulfilled moment of life. Expectations and imaginary anticipations, with the experience of preparing and making ready conform a boundary zone of ambiguity between *what is* and what could be. Similarly there are some border signs - the *known* - that are already part of the environment, which enable that process of anticipation. *Building a nest* for Claudia (28th week of pregnancy) and *taking care of work and health* for Pedro signify their action of preparing. Albeit *the unknown* is only in the future, in time and emergence.

Let's see the next testimony of Claudia:

I'm living something new, the emotional experience of being a mother. It is an amorous change of taking responsibility on other person. It is dedicating myself for the development of someone else, like a service, my life at disposition. But more than that I want to contribute with my own participation, to make a personal contribution collaborating for new children and new visions in this world.

Anticipations of I positions, - I as mother, I as new world visions - that express her openness expanding her personal boundaries to a new singular and individual self. The

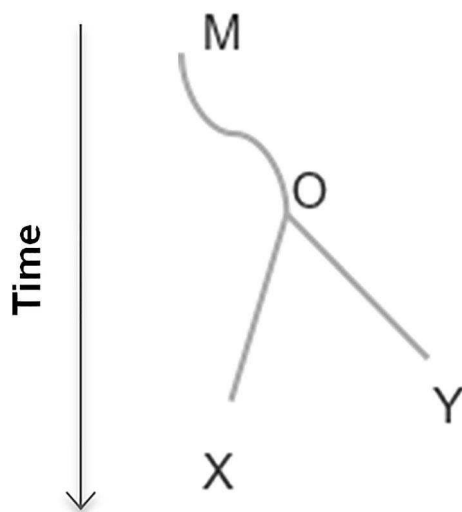


Fig. 1 Path construction (Borrowed from Boulanger 2017d)

dispositions that she is elaborating are relating with generosity, empathy and nurturance. Probably she has lived in the past those positions from a reciprocal place at different moments of her life. In a certain moment of the here-and-now reflection she states, “But more than that...”. The elaboration in thinking expresses an implicit hierarchy emerging a new mind orientation to her own growth, her personal contribution to the world, a creative motive, of transcendence – going beyond her singular experience toward being a member of the world - and integrity. It was manifested in a complementary and constructive perspective from the meanings of responsibility and service. In this very moment of postponing herself in benefit of the health and life of other human being also new possibilities of existence emerge (See the concept of shadow trajectories in Bastos 2016). The fine border between what is – in space and spatialized time – and what’s not – only in time – enables the new own life to emerge, and new existence thoughts and feelings. They are in this fuzzy zone of presence and absence, with spatial options of preparing and emerging options of creating. It is fertility a border in time, in continuous generative action.

Affiliation: The Already There

Affiliation is the quality of bonds that refers to familiar links. Family is the context where relationships are considered the most powerful and strong links in human life. Familiar bonds can be damaged but never destroyed. Those relationships are constructed like endless chains toward the past bridging values and meanings that are shared by generations and influence actual actions and decisions. For instance the wife of Pedro stated – *It has been the most challenging issue that we have lived together, adapting to being parents. For me it was almost automatic putting myself in the mother’s role.* On her part Claudia anticipates her mother’s feelings. The intergenerational transmission of affective and cultural meanings in time brings the past into the actual life and to the future. The role of mother for Claudia is like “already there” before her childbirth. It is like something that she has seen several times. Values, practices, norms and meanings that are felt like available (categorised) for continuing life keeping the familiar learning as a community along time, but at the same time creating boundaries across generations for opening up to transformation (Valsiner 2009). In her case, the intergenerational transfer expresses the need of creating sense of continuity of life and categorization blurs the perception of change and novelty. At the same time it enables the disposition *to adapting to be parents.*

Affiliation as a family chain of affects and meanings, considering the spatial metaphor that it entails, makes possible the belief of enduring thoughts and the own existence beyond the physical disappearance. The sense of transcendence of the own life is constructed with community and is also part of the identity construction (Canevaro 1999). From the perspective of cultural dynamic system as Boulanger (2017c) states, there is a collective memory that provides the conditions for its own reproduction.

Complementarily to the dynamics of affiliation – the power of bonds, traditions and history – it is the present of the couple’s bond construction (Fig. 2). At the extremes of the axe each member is situated in an individual position but at the centre they entail the *nodal point of the family, like a point in transition.* At this point alliance and we-ness

are constructed, with the identity as a couple. It is the crossing point of two axes with tension and compression in between. The tension is generated between the members of the couple and the compression unifies the transgeneration chain. It results in a model of crossing axes of transmission and emergence in the construction of affective bonds.

Indeterminacy is present in the intermediary zones between each generation. The intergenerational transfer develops from the generation of parents to the couple and the children in the move between two intersections form A to B, with the co-influence of two previous generations (the parents of the new father and the parents of the new mother).

In the horizontal axes it is the present experience, the emergence of the unknown and the stranger that comes with different stories, practices and values, bringing to the self the ‘object-other’. This other is not considered an integrative part of the conscious self and could be felt partly as threatening for ontological security. The construction of that bond, taking the theoretical proposal of Hermans and Hermans-Konopka (2010), will imply a transitional zone of the abject, whereas initially the position felt outside the inner landscape of the self, will be situated somewhere in a transitional field where at the same time is experienced as “belonging to myself” and “not belonging to myself.” It implies the emergent process of the present, the random and the orderless. The result of this process is the alliance bond, which defines the couple’s relationship. The bond of alliance in the couple leads to the differentiation of the intergenerational system and flow towards new horizons that is carried by tensegrity. Let’s see the following statements of Claudia:

In this circumstances (of the pregnancy) I don’t feel accompanied (by the husband) but living a process together with him. I’m leaving behind the times without structures for building a nest. I had to take distance from being a daughter and also from the influences of my mother toward being autonomous, due to her

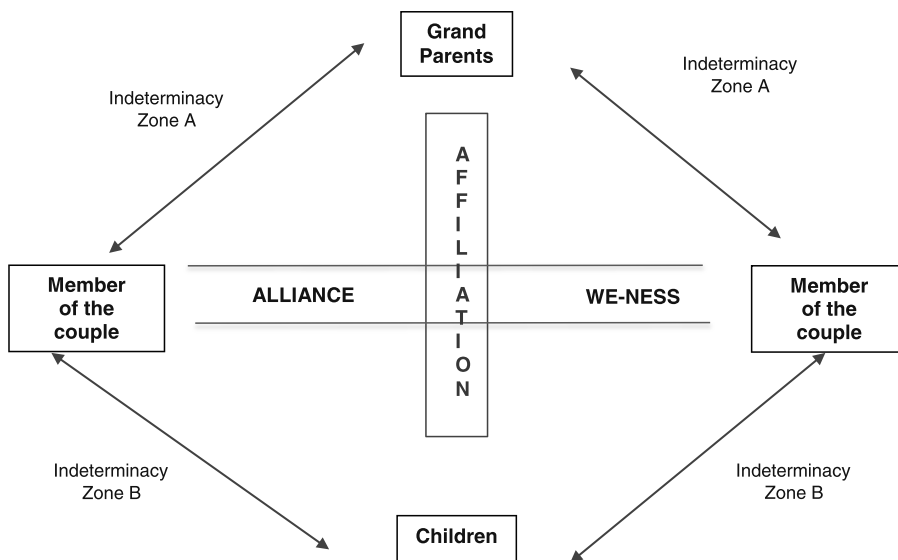


Fig. 2 Crossing axes of transmission and emergence in the construction of affective bonds borrowed from theoretical proposal of Canevaro (1999)

history. But now with Andrés (the husband) we are a family, which means that we are something that goes beyond our selves as individuals.

Claudia is referring to the shared experience of waiting a baby, which is lived at the same time with the experience of becoming a family – *living a process together with him*. There are permeable boundaries between the couple, the parenthood and the family that Claudia and Andrés are constructing but clearer borders from the individual experience of pregnancy – the body experience – and moving to autonomy from her mother. It is noticeable the intergenerational tension. There is a familiar story, influenced by the mother, and a new construction that takes some learning from history and creates others in the encounter of the two individualities of Claudia and Andrés. When she mentions that they go beyond their individualities she is referring to the encounter that leads to openness to new thoughts and practices and make generational change possible in connection with the families of origins' stories and traditions. For her “going beyond” points at the unknown which is the we-ness construction. Their actual experience, their being together in the here and now *is the nodal point of the family construction between tradition and newness*.

The following excerpt shows the dynamic of tensegrity considering the interweaving of tension and compression and the drives of tension that create new borders and new tensions moving the intergenerational process and broadening the field of transition :

My mother is now more a mom, more protective, she cares about my diet and is worried about possible physical risks that I can have. But I have being adapting my relation with them (parents) and learning to set up boundaries, which means making them become part of what we are living but taking care about our spaces (of her and her husband).

Compression is present in the practices and meanings of the more mom, more protective mother, on taking care of own spaces, while the tension emerges as setting boundaries and developing new intergenerational relationships so that the grand parents become part of what they are living.

On the other hand, the construction of the family and the bond with the partner also entails his story:

His mother attempts not bothering. She tries to help on her own way. But for me is difficult setting up boundaries to her. For me it is easier that my mother comes to see the baby than his mother, but I understand that it is important that she becomes part of the process as well. But how can I include her without feeling uncomfortable?

It is referring to the position of the other (the partner) whom initially takes an unwanted position ('object') that is felt outside the internal domain of the self. Through the struggle with the relationship with the mother in law and the reflections about the importance to include her in the process Claudia also elaborates her identity as a couple with Andres – the we-ness – and positions herself in a transitional field from “not-belonging-to-myself” to “belonging to myself”. It is evidenced in the following expression:

In a certain moment I felt more an individual than I feel today. Like he and I had experienced some change. That's why we married, for being we both a team.

Conclusions

This work has attempted to elaborate about the phenomenon of transition as an aspect of development that evolves over the entire life and exploring it in the specific context of the construction of affective bonds that are basic in life such as filial and couples' ones.

In relation to the process of transition the theoretical contributions considered offered a fertile and complex perspective for its understanding as a dynamic process. The temporal and spatial qualities were analysed as theoretical bases to understand how transitions are lived as a subjective experience; the integrity concept sheds lights about how it is displayed as an interplay sequence of drives and energy and; the notion of boundaries provides the distinction of points of restraint to be expanded or crossed but even borders as transitional spaces or bridges.

Hence, the time of pregnancy can be understood as a bridge or a boundary that necessarily distances and also connect with the moment of encounter and integration of a new member to the family creating new bonds and living meaningful identity transformations. The bridge functions in this process apply cultural recourses for carrying out its task, which is guiding toward the opening to and appropriating of new existential realities. Different customs enable this process such as medical checks, the production of images that objectify the process like reproductions of echography that are spread in the social network, the arrangement of the habitat, the celebrations – i.e. baby shower – or the moments spent in thinking and deciding how the labour will be, by whom will it be witnessed and which will be the participation of familiars and friends.

On the other hand, the couple experiences an uneasy process of becoming a couple of parents. Protecting the fragility of a new life in gestation emerges as a biological demand of giving up more self-satisfying states of the romantic couple. The partners assume those demands as natural and meaningful, postponing in this way the intimacy and passionate love of the dyad for give priority to the triad – Now we have the priority of 'other' – This withdrawal is expressed from thoughts to talks, routines and even actions. Nevertheless, at the same time it is a movement that leads to a relevant learning in the stage of young adulthood, having consequences for culture such as going out of egocentric states and addressing others' requirements, perspectives and intentions. From that movement people are connecting mostly community and environment motives. Culture then, enables this process.

The amorous couple is transformed in this process and loses centrality since the preponderance of the new human being that is incorporated, but also due to individual processes lived around the identity construction – *who am I now? And how is it living this new role of father or mother?* These existential questions seem taking greater centrality in the searching of recourses for dealing with these changes. While the question for *who am I in my couple relationship* is taken for granted losing this existential position space in mind.

In contemporary life the amorous couple also experiences important changes. Nowadays It is less stressed by demands of traditional marriage, namely for all life. These changes in shared cultural meanings around the couple's bond have the effect of adding flexibility to that link but also new questionings and meanings around the decision of becoming a couple. New questions will continue to be stated. What keeps a couple with little children united? If it is the construction of intimacy, amorous links, or those related to the shared task of upbringing of children. To this extend two identities of the couple converge in tensegrity; the we-ness as an amorous couple and the other we-ness as a parenting team.

As we have applied different concepts for the understanding of this process of bonds construction and transformations, it progresses through complex mechanisms of movements and emergence.

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