

Cultural Construction of the Self: A Dialogical and Narrative Approach

Research Theme & Article Overview

Article Title	Author(s)	Key Concepts & Objectives
The Dialogical Self	Hermans (2001)	<p>Self as a set of "I-positions" shaped by cultural voices</p> <p>To propose a new theoretical model of the self—the dialogical self—that accounts for the interaction between personal and cultural voices within an individual. Hermans aims to challenge traditional, unitary concepts of self by introducing the idea of "I-positions" that engage in internal dialogues shaped by cultural context.</p>
Funds of Identity	Esteban-Guitart & Moll (2014)	<p>Identity shaped by cultural knowledge and resources</p> <p>To expand the "Funds of Knowledge" framework by introducing "Funds of Identity", emphasizing that individuals draw from personal, cultural, and familial resources to build their identities. The authors aim to make these resources visible and valuable, especially in educational settings.</p>
Narrative as Cultural Memory	Brockmeier (2002)	<p>Memory and forgetting as culturally embedded narratives</p> <p>To explore how narrative functions as a mechanism of cultural memory—how we remember and forget not as isolated individuals, but through social, linguistic, and historical structures. Brockmeier seeks to redefine memory as an active, cultural, and meaning-making process.</p>
Critical Reflexivity	Goodman (2014)	<p>Self-awareness through reflexive multicultural learning</p> <p>To examine how critical reflexivity—the process of examining one's own cultural identity, bias, and privilege—can be fostered in psychology students through multicultural education and reflective practices. Goodman wants to show how this process enhances empathy and self-awareness in future psychologists.</p>

Study Design

1. Hermans (2001) – The Dialogical Self

This is a conceptual and theoretical paper. Hermans does not conduct an empirical study but instead proposes a model based on interdisciplinary literature. His design includes:

- Philosophical reflection (Bakhtin's dialogism)
- Integration of narrative psychology and semiotics
- Case examples to illustrate theoretical concepts (e.g., roles like "I-as-believer" or "I-as-student")
- Emphasis on self as a multi-voiced system, constructed in interaction with cultural others

No experimental data; instead, the study builds a comprehensive theoretical framework.

2. Esteban-Guitart & Moll (2014) – Funds of Identity

This study uses a qualitative, ethnographic design grounded in the "Funds of Knowledge" approach. It includes:

- Fieldwork in schools, observing students and teachers
- Student-created artifacts (drawings, collages, family photos) as identity representations
- Interviews and classroom activities to explore how cultural resources inform identity
- An inductive, interpretive analysis of cultural patterns in students' lives

The design is participatory and contextual, making identity visible through real-life interactions and artifacts.

3. Brockmeier (2002) – Remembering and Forgetting

This is another theoretical and interpretive paper, grounded in:

- Narrative analysis and discourse theory
- Examination of autobiographical memory, literature, and cultural texts (e.g., memorials, oral history)
- Philosophical and sociocultural framing of memory as a narrative and cultural act

There's no direct data collection, but the design is textual and theoretical, using examples to argue how memory is formed and forgotten in cultural contexts.

4. Goodman (2014) – Critical Reflexivity through Multicultural Education

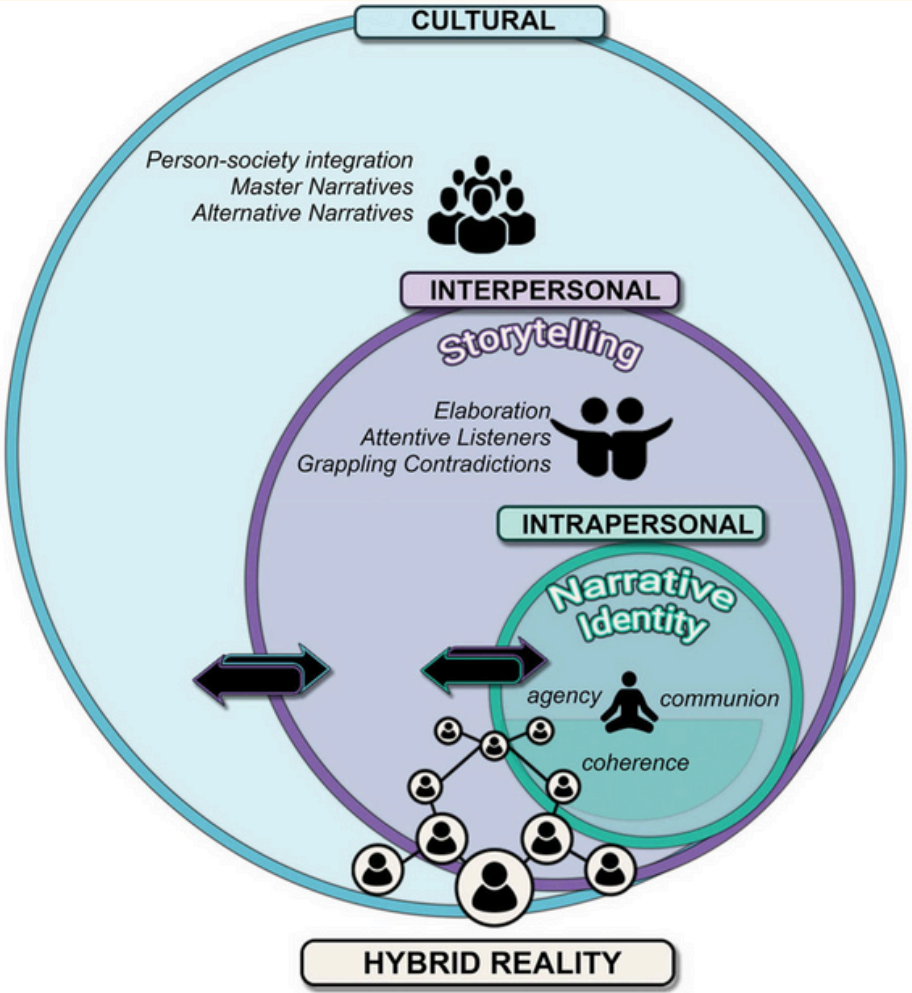
This article is based on qualitative classroom research in a multicultural psychology course. It includes:

- Student reflection journals collected throughout the semester
- Narrative analysis of students' evolving understanding of culture, identity, and privilege
- Use of critical pedagogy (inspired by Freire) and intersectionality theory
- Reflexive coding of students' narratives to identify themes like empathy, positionality, cultural humility

The study is practice-based and pedagogical, using students' own voices as primary data.

Methods & Approaches

Article	Methodology	Contribution
Hermans	Theoretical model; dialogical and narrative theory	Shows how culture dialogues within the self
Esteban-Guitart & Moll	Ethnographic case studies	Emphasizes daily life as a source of identity
Brockmeier	Narrative and discourse analysis	Frames memory as a culturally filtered narration
Goodman	Student reflections; qualitative classroom research	Highlights reflexivity in identity formation



Results & Discussion

- Hermans (2001): Self consists of “I-as-believer,” “I-as-student,” and similar positions in dialogue with cultural voices.
- Esteban-Guitart & Moll (2014): Items like photos, cooking traditions, and family rituals serve as identity anchors.
- Brockmeier (2002): Remembering and forgetting are cultural and political actions guided by narrative.
- Goodman (2014): Reflexivity enables students to examine biases and understand their cultural positions.

Discussion:
These studies present the self not as a fixed, individualistic entity but as a dynamic, multilayered, and culturally shaped structure. Each individual is continuously engaged in a dialogue with their cultural environment.

Conclusions

Hermans (2001) – The Dialogical Self

The self should be understood as a dynamic, dialogical system of multiple "I-positions" that interact with each other and with cultural voices. This model provides a more flexible and realistic view of identity, especially in multicultural and globalized contexts. The dialogical self framework allows psychologists to better address identity complexity, inner conflict, and cultural positioning.

Esteban-Guitart & Moll (2014) – Funds of Identity

People’s identities are deeply rooted in daily practices, cultural traditions, and social experiences. When educators acknowledge and incorporate students’ cultural resources into the classroom, it promotes stronger self-concepts and more inclusive education. The “Funds of Identity” model shows that identity is built from meaningful connections between individuals and their sociocultural worlds.

Brockmeier (2002) – Remembering and Forgetting: Narrative as Cultural Memory Conclusion:

Memory is not a passive recording of facts, but an active, narrative, and cultural process. What we remember—and what we forget—is shaped by social discourse, cultural values, and historical context. Personal identity is inseparable from the cultural narratives that frame our experiences.

Goodman (2014) – Critical Reflexivity in Multicultural Education

Critical reflexivity is essential for developing culturally competent, empathetic, and ethical psychologists. By engaging with their own positionality, students can better understand social inequalities and become more effective in diverse environments. Reflexivity is not a skill to master once, but an ongoing personal and professional commitment.

Personal Reflection

Working on this final project was more than an academic assignment; it was a journey of self-discovery. Each essay spoke to me not just as a student, but as a person navigating cultural, emotional, and intellectual transitions.

As I read Hermans’s dialogic theory of the self, I felt seen. I often carry different “voices” within me: the voice of the girl raised in a culturally traditional family, the voice of the curious psychology student trained in Western academia, and the voice of the believer searching for spiritual meaning. These voices do not always agree, and this surprises me. Hermans helped me see this internal dialogue not as a weakness or conflict, but as an asset; a natural part of being a culturally situated person.

With Esteban-Guitart & Moll’s Funds of Identity, I was reminded that even the simplest things, like hearing my grandmother sing a lullaby or looking at the teacups on our kitchen table, carry deep emotional and cultural meaning. These are not just memories; they are the building blocks of who I am. It was incredibly affirming to realize that these personal elements are valid sources of psychological identity. Brockmeier’s work on narrative memory made me think about the stories passed down in my family. I remembered that some painful events were never spoken of, while others were told over and over like sacred stories. This article helped me understand that remembering and forgetting are both cultural decisions, shaped by collective survival, emotion, and even silence. Finally, Goodman’s emphasis on critical reflexivity challenged me. I realized that understanding others requires me to constantly examine my own assumptions and privileges. As someone who wants to be a counselor, this article reminded me that empathy is not automatic; it must be nurtured through awareness, discomfort, and growth. This latest work helped me not only connect the dots between theory and life, but also understand myself more deeply. I now see psychology not only as a science of the mind, but also as a lens through which to explore culture, emotion, and personal meaning. I hope to carry these insights with me as a student, a future therapist, and a believer in the transformative power of dialogue and thought.

References

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