

Adoptee Ancestry Searches: The Intersubjective Space of Self-Integration

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Abstract

The adoptee's ancestry search can function as a dynamic intersubjective space that is vital to self-integration in the psychoanalytic sense. The guiding theoretical question of this paper is: How can contemporary intersubjective psychoanalytic theories describe this intersubjective space? Intersubjective psychoanalytic theory has its roots in philosophical hermeneutics and phenomenology. A case of adoptee ancestry search is presented with the use of these combined theoretical frameworks, showing how new forms of reconsolidation and self-integration may occur as an effect of the search process of working through the adoptee's states of "not knowing," especially in the context of a closed adoption situation. This dynamic process of self-understanding is described in hermeneutic, phenomenological, and intersubjective terms, with the use of examples taken from her ancestry search. The function of third-party empathic witness and testimony is shown to lead to new gains in the adoptee's reconsolidation of memories and her concurrent self-integration.

Keywords: Adoption, Phenomenology, Hermeneutics, Intersubjective Psychoanalysis, Philosophical Counseling, Ancestry Search, Witness, Testimony

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Introduction

I am a philosopher and a philosophical counselor. Philosophical counseling can help clients to bracket their suffering framed as medicalized mental disorders, in favor of finding alternative self-narratives that are supported by existential, phenomenological, or hermeneutic perspectives (Mehuron 2015).

This paper draws on my client's experiences as an adoptee who commenced and completed her genetic ancestry search. I describe how new forms of self-integration may occur as an effect of an ancestry search process that affords working through adoptees' states of "not knowing," especially in the case of a closed adoption situation, such as experienced by Macy.

I use aspects of her search to develop my account of the intersubjective space that affords interpersonal as well as intrapsychic transformational change for those who search. To develop this account, I provide philosophical perspectives drawn from the phenomenological and hermeneutic tradition, enactivist cognition, and from intersubjective psychoanalytic theories. In the following sections, this paper will give a theoretical account of the intersubjective field as a dialogical space of co-created meanings that affords interpersonal as well as intrapsychic transformational change for those who search. These theoretical perspectives show how new forms of reconsolidation and self-integration may occur as an effect of the search process of working through adoptees' states of "not knowing" especially in the case of a closed adoption situation.

First, I give a brief narrative about my client's search. All personal identifiers have been anonymized, to protect the identify of all persons whose experiences are described in the narrative. Figure 1 is a diagram of the discovered DNA relatives, their genetic relationships, and the years in which discovery and communication occurred. It is notable that the intersubjective field that afforded her ancestry discoveries occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown in the United States (2019-2021). These DNA relatives were all able to devote intensive time and communication to each other, because of this unique historical situation.

Macy's Story

Macy is a professional, middle-aged ciswoman, self-identified lesbian, preferring the personal pronoun "she/her/hers." In 1955, she was adopted during the first month of her birth. She knew, from her earliest memories of her parents' honesty with her, that she was adopted. This was a closed adoption, in which the adoption record is completely sealed, and arranged by the parents' local Catholic Archdiocese. In 2015, after both of her adoptive parents had passed away, Macy began a search for her biological parents. She started with the state agencies responsible for keeping her birth records. Her birth certificate did not name her biological mother or father. Letters and phone calls to the archdiocese and to the state requesting the adoption record and birth parents' names were denied. In 2018, Macy began to use the services of AncestryDNA and 23andMe: two for-profit genealogy companies that provide DNA testing and DNA relatives search tools to consumers.

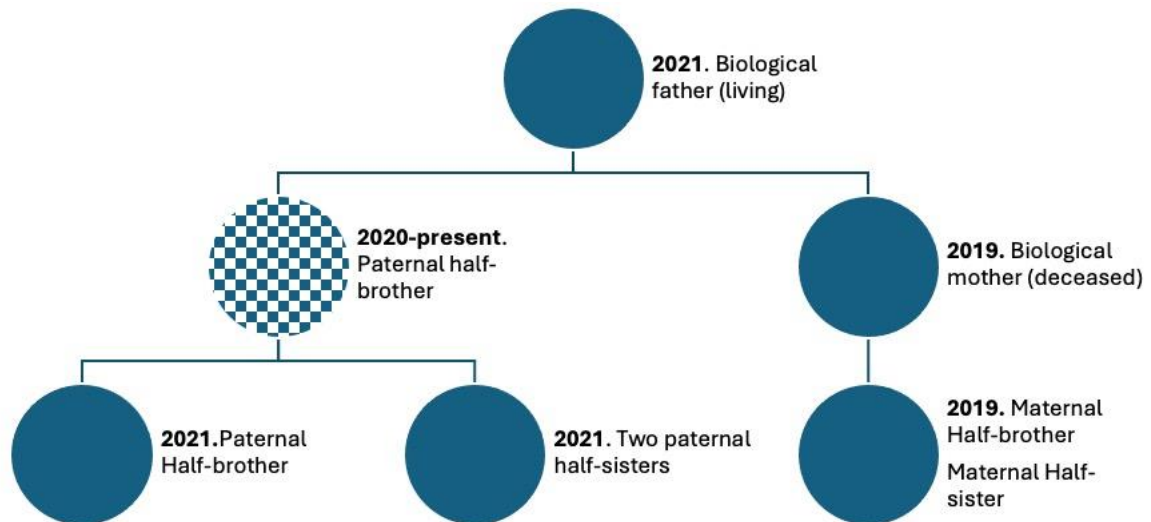


Figure 1. Discovered DNA relatives.

In 2019, Macy's maternal half-sister and her maternal half-brother popped up in AncestryDNA, and they began to correspond. Her maternal half-sister was enthusiastically communicative, sending many photos and stories about their bio-mother. During this time of shared memories and stories, Macy was able to construct meaningful aspects of her bio-mother's life and personality. Eventually, both withdrew from communication.

But Macy had discovered her bio-mother: at the time a college-educated young journalist who was sent by her family out of state to gestate, birth, and to give her up for a closed adoption. No one seemed to know where this had taken place; only that her bio-mother's sternly Roman Catholic family could not accept this birth and had threatened to disown her, sending her away from public view. Next, Macy wanted to discover her bio-father: the man with whom her bio-mother had this stigmatized sexual relationship.

In 2020, a paternal half-brother popped up on AncestryDNA. They began to correspond. He started his search out of his curiosity about the lack of resemblance between himself and his father. Discovering Macy as a paternal relative was the first clue that he might have a bio-father who was not his father of upbringing. Immediately, the communication between Macy and this half-brother was honest and fascinating; his wife included. An intellectual friendship, trust and shared values evolved from their conversations. His wife, an enthusiastic advocate of this search, proved to be a skilled genealogical researcher who was committed to evidence-based conclusions. Macy urged him to submit his saliva sample to 23andMe. He did so, and a paternal half-brother popped up as a DNA relative they both shared.

In 2021, this newly discovered paternal half-brother responded to their inquiries. He was the most enthusiastic communicator of all the half-siblings. He personally introduced Macy and her paternal half-brother (*circa* 2020) to his two sisters (their paternal half-sisters), and to their 92-year-old biological father. After Macy's many time-intensive conversations with all three siblings about this bio-father's life story and their lives with him, all these siblings withdrew from communication. The bio-father, on the other hand, clamored for more attention by Skype and email, but Macy withdrew. She couldn't tolerate his loquacious sexist and racist narcissism. She had found out what she wanted to know: how he and her bio-mother met, under what circumstances, and the nature of the relationship.

Her paternal half-brother (*circa* 2020) and his wife continued communication with this shared bio-father, discovering more genealogical relatives who are distantly related. Her paternal half-brother and his wife (*circa* 2020) affirm her sexuality, respect her professional achievements, and personally relate to her. This remains a meaningful friendship, and occasionally Macy travels to visit them.

Macy articulated the personal significance of these discoveries. She consented to my publication of her statement,

It is as if I am an embodied host to a mysterious jigsaw puzzle that has fallen into place in my soul. Now my soul is gaining depths in new emotional topographies, with many intriguing pathways to explore in a safe and non-threatening, intriguing and beautiful landscape. One could say: I am reconsolidating. (personal communication)

In the following sections I will develop and use the concept of the intersubjective field to interpret Macy's metaphors of the mysterious jigsaw puzzle and emotional topographies as moments of reconsolidation and self-integration.

Phenomenological Contribution to the Intersubjective Field

I contend that an intersubjective field is instituted by a particular dialogical context, couched in a specific time, place, and communicative social dimension. It has phenomenologically synchronic and diachronic dimensions, relative to the context. It is not static; as those dimensions and the context changes, so does the field. This is why I find it notable that Macy's intersubjective field of discovery occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown in the United States. Her discovery happened within a unique context. The lockdown necessitated exclusively virtual exchanges between Macy and others. A phenomenological description of embodied expression is useful to understand how Macy's virtual exchanges were vital and ongoing, despite the absence of literal physical bodies present to one another.

Phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty describes post-Cartesian non-dualistic embodied cognition, emphasizing the physical embodiment of our conscious cognitive experiences and analyzing the ways in which our bodies shape and express our thoughts and how we experience our conscious activities. In *Phenomenology of Perception*, speech is analyzed on the level of bodily behavior. As gesture, it is part of that repertoire of acts by which one lends oneself to the phenomenal world, outlining intentional objects which are apprehended through bodily rather than exclusively cognitive appropriation (Merleau-Ponty 1962, p. 185). In this text, speech and language are analyzed through the complementary domains of individualized gestures and historical, culturally sedimented behaviors. Speech is described as an acoustic use of the body within a field of action culturally and historically inscribed by phonetic and behavioral conventions. It is stylized by emotional and affective values with which it is intrinsically imbued. Through the stylistics of speech, "thought" inhabits the phenomenal world (p. 180-182). The emotional content of speech is its gestural sense taken as style, enacted by the embodied subject.

His parallel discussions about children's processes of language acquisition in *The Primacy of Perception* (Merleau-Ponty 1964a) describes this acquisition in terms of behavioral imitation, but also within a living nexus of affective relations with others. Within this nexus, the instantiation of newly acquired verbal behaviors is instigated along with the child's reciprocal

interactions with others and the child's relation to her own sense of time. Expressiveness is primary in cognitive development; propositional and conceptual meaning is secondary. Generalizing this analysis to adult expressive communication, Merleau-Ponty writes:

In sum, the intellectual elaboration of our experience of the world is constantly supported by the affective elaboration of our inter-human relations. The use of certain linguistic tools is mastered in the play of forces that constitute the subject's relations to his human surroundings. (Merleau-Ponty 1964a, p. 112)

In *Signs* (Merleau-Ponty 1964b) he acknowledges the distinction introduced by linguists of his time, between a given state of a linguistic system (synchronic) and the historical dimension of successive changes which a linguistic system undergoes (diachronic). But he ambiguates the binary abstract distinction implied by linguistic structural analysis. From a phenomenological point of view, the synchronic dimension is ontologically prior as the abstracted present of expressive speech, but this immediacy is existentially dependent on the diachronic dimension of lived experience, which is gesturally expressive, both past and future-directed, and inter-humanly conducted. (Merleau-Ponty 1964b, p. 87). The phenomenological synchronic and diachronic dimensions of the intersubjective field comprise a dynamically reciprocal involvement of oneself and others in the life world. As participants within the intersubjective field, Macy and her DNA relatives *temporized*: catalyzing intersubjective states of recollection, shared meaning, and closure.

This phenomenological account assists us in seeing how virtual dialogue, as part of the intersubjective field, is opened by speech acts that are affective and emotional expressions of speaking subjects. The virtual environment within which Macy's dialogical discoveries occurred is an adequate vehicle, like artistic or musical exchanges, for communicative expression. On Zoom, Macy and her DNA relatives mutually shared affective values such as trust and empathy. These values are reliant on the phenomenological fabric of the intersubjective field. This is exemplified by Macy's reference to new emotional topographies experienced during her search.

In the next section, I offer neurophenomenological and psychoanalytic conceptualizations of how this "not knowing" is a dynamic state that, by intersubjective modulations, can auto-poetically generate self-integration. These conceptualizations of "not knowing" are applied to Macy's experience of such.

Enactivist Cognition Models and Psychoanalytic Contributions to the Intersubjective Field

The enactivist model of cognition is a compatible paradigm to phenomenology, using empirical research to understand the dynamic nature of embodied cognition and to substantiate phenomenological claims about intersubjective communication. Enactivist approaches emphasize the extended, intersubjective, and socially situated nature of cognitive systems. This framework assumes that the mind is embodied, similar to the phenomenological concept of the lived body. Cognitive processes acquire meaning in the lifeworld of embodied action, rather than through a representational mapping or replicated internal model of the world (Gallagher 2017). Cognition is:

. . . not the representation of a pregiven world by a pregiven mind but is rather the enactment of a world and mind on the basis of a history of the variety of actions that being in the world performs. (Varela, Thompson and Rosch 1991, p. 9)

A similar critique is offered by neuroscientist LeDoux, who argues against the static image of the mind/brain entity as organized hierarchically, from simple to complex. In contrast, brain science discoveries of the self-organizing capacities of mind see it as embodied complexity that is dynamic: self-creative or *autopoietic*. Biologically based cognition is orchestrated by self-organizing neurological networks that are foundational to embodied, reflective experience (LeDoux, 1996).

Enactivist approaches draw on the notion of “emergent properties” from systems theory, applying the notion to human cognition. The notion of cognitive emergent properties remains a metaphorical use of concepts that are typically drawn from scientific analysis of dynamic natural systems. Neuroscientists descriptively apply the notion to the case of the self-organizing mind, Properties not found in individuals can emerge in human formations such as economies or politics, so the use of “emergent properties” can be used, at least in a metaphorical sense, to describe new collective human phenomena that are not attributable to individual parts.

Used descriptively, emergent properties of cognition are observable in ordinary situations such as infant language acquisition, free association, and recollection. According to enactivist cognition theory, meanings are more complex than those made by an individual alone. Enactivist philosopher Gallagher states:

On the enactivist view, social cognition is an attunement process that allows me to perceive the other as someone to whom I can respond or with whom I can interact . . . In some cases, a relational understanding is accomplished in the social interaction between two people where some novel shared meaning (or some decision or even some misunderstanding) is instituted in a way that could not be instituted within the single brain of either one of them alone. (Gallagher 2017, p. 15)

Enactivist cognition theory acknowledges that human self-understanding in the life world and the mechanisms adduced by life sciences are circular in hermeneutical and embodied ways (Varela, Thompson and Rosch 1991, p. 11).

The self-organizing capacities that are significant to memory processes are temporal in function. Psychoanalysts LaPlanche and Pontalis (1973), in their interpretation of the Freudian notion of “deferred action,” articulate the psychical temporalizing that occurs between the psychoanalytic patient’s dialogue with her analyst. For example, recollective memory selectively constitutes the sense of its own past, wherein the subject’s sensitivity to specific contextual cues constantly revises the past’s meaning in alignment with current dialogue and projects. This emphasis on belatedly coming to terms with prior experience or early “unknown” memories implies motivational, forward-looking temporizing as well as retrospective modifications of memories previously “unknown” or forgotten. Extrapolating from the psychoanalytic dyad, the subjectively felt “afterwardness” and “belatedness” of remembering are also dependent on intersubjective modes of communication such as the story-telling that happens in a psychologically satisfying ancestry search. The meaningfulness of memory is contingent not only on the physiological causality of the neuromodulatory

system, but also on the intersubjective narrative context within which specific memories unfold and are modified.

Remembrance of the past transforms long-term memory by giving it refreshed, significant meaning and significance. This account is compatible with phenomenology's view of memory as an embodied experience that is dynamically reciprocal in its exchanges with the life world. In this reciprocal involvement, at work are complex pre-reflective, pre-thematic layers of mind as well as reflective, autobiographical, and recollective networks of complexity that are intersubjective as well as intrapsychic. Humans live in an embodied temporal continuum throughout their lifespan that includes all kinds of modes of disruption that will generate, depending on the intersubjective context, different versions of belatedly coming to terms with one's experience.

Trauma and subsequent repression, of central concern to psychoanalysis, can affect one's sense of one's own narrative self and one's own worldly agency. Neuroscience and psychoanalysis agree that in coming to terms with trauma, it is not lived experience in general that undergoes recollective revision, but specifically whatever was impossible, in the traumatic experience, to incorporate into a meaningful experience (Stern 2009). Infantile, preverbal experiences are of central psychoanalytic interest in this regard, especially infantile preverbal traumatic experience.

Relevant to Macy's adoptee predicament, was her inchoate sense of loss of her bio-mother during the first month of her life, leaving a pre-verbal event with meaningless feelings of sadness and anger that remained suppressed throughout her childhood and adult life. Revisions of specific mnemonic traces of partially unassimilated experience are occasioned by later situations that enlist organic or developmental maturation, to allow narrative and emotional reworking of the earlier experience and access to new levels of meaning. On the psychoanalytic view, Macy's early loss requires such narrative reworking, because the trauma is pre-verbal, the result of misrecognition by the relational caregiving situation, in the first place. The infantile need for somatic-symbolic or somatic-linguistic integrations must be fulfilled in later development and through adult intersubjective situations that facilitate post-traumatic integration. Stolorow, a leading intersubjective psychoanalyst, states:

It is in the process of somatic-symbolic integration, the process through which emotional experience comes into language, that the sense of being is born. Linguisticity, somatic affectivity, and attuned relationality are constitutive aspects of the integrative process through which the sense of being takes form. (Stolorow 2010, p. 13)

He argues that there is a temporal dimension to trauma. The latter, he maintains, is incurred by alienation from the fabric of communal being with others in the reciprocities of attunement through dialogue. He describes trauma as a temporal self-state that is frozen into an eternal present, relieved only by the warmth of human dialogical and affective attunement (p. 16). It seems that Macy experienced something like this process of somatic-symbolic integration, by intense dialogue with her DNA family and her deep-level emotional processing of the meaning of these exchanges. She expressed the transformation: "as if I am an embodied host to a mysterious jigsaw puzzle that has fallen into place in my soul."

Given the heavy reliance on story-telling among DNA relatives in an ancestry search, what are the subjective pitfalls in that process? In the next section I discuss the problem of

fabrication that arises in this kind of dialogue which intends to be a truth-telling communal activity.

Problem of Truth-Telling or Fabrication

The distinction between truth and fabrication is relevant to the autopoietic or self-organizing activity at the heart of intersubjective communication, especially as the reconsolidation of old or forgotten memories unfolds. Psychologist Elizabeth Loftus established the mutability of long-term memories, using techniques reliant on narrative methods that succeeded in implanting false memories in healthy-minded human subjects. (Loftus and Pickrell 1995) Her research demonstrates the complexity of confabulation in the context of re-telling memories. Memory reconsolidation is effected both by timely behavioral updates of someone's synaptic signature associated with recall and by narrative updates by re-telling of long-term memories. (Sara 2000; Hall 2013, p. 15) The intersubjective emotional context, whether psychoanalytic, family or community based, is key to the narrative and affective force that instigates the memory reconsolidation. The meaningfulness of memory is contingent not only on the neuromodulatory system, but also on the intersubjective narrative context within which specific memories unfold and are altered. Loftus commented in an interview, "Memory works more like a Wikipedia page: you can go in there and change it, but so can other people" (Specter 2014, p. 44).

On the one hand, Macy's evolving complexity of self-other dialogic exploration with her biological family members illustrates this aspect of intersubjectivity as a dynamic system. Without the responsiveness and co-creation of her bio-family network, Macy would not have had the meaning-making resources to develop a more coherent sense of her past, present and future self. Crucial to this process were the affective states of trust and relational bonding that were co-created by shared interpretive activities. On the other hand, Macy's search contended with her vulnerability to confabulation. The bio-father's son and daughters warned that her bio-father is a notorious confabulist. They testified that they had spent their lives discerning truth from his tall tales. She was fortunate that the wife of her paternal half-brother (*circa* 2020) was skilled at genealogical research, taking no ancestral story at face-value.

Storytelling amongst the field of DNA relatives took Macy into the psychic liminality of imagination versus truth. The intensive affective communication in this intersubjective field shows her intrapsychic vulnerability to confabulation, however unintentional. If her "not knowing" is a dynamic state that, by intersubjective modulations, can auto-poetically generate reconsolidation and self-integration, how would she know whether her emergent sense of self-integration is, or is not based in part or wholly on fabrication?

The notions of the "hermeneutic circle," witness and testimony offer a middle way of interpretation that ameliorates some uncertainty about the recruitment of false memories that might diminish the enrichment of self-identity by means of intersubjective story-telling.

Hermeneutic Interpretation, Witness and Testimony

The term "hermeneutic circle", introduced by Heidegger in the twentieth century to a wider philosophical public (Heidegger 1962), signifies that understanding is achieved by interpretive attention to possible meanings that inform the understanding that we tacitly possess. This tacit dimension is constituted by the historical, interpersonal, and discursive context of the life world. Hermeneutic approaches hold that all knowledge production in any

discipline is possible only on the principle that human beings are interpretive in their being; we are steeped in language, the latter making possible our understanding in all the disciplines. Understanding in any area of social science is an interpretive possibility issuing from the specific discursive and cultural contexts in which humans find themselves.

Philosopher Jürgen Habermas, analyzing the hermeneutic point of view, argues that there is a practical, cognitive interest in communication: consensus among agents in the framework of a self-understanding derived from tradition. He noted that the human sciences, under which he includes psychology and psychoanalysis, pursue the goals of self-reflection and critique of ideology, beyond the empirical-analytic sciences of knowledge-production. (Habermas 1971, p. 310) Scientific methodologies suspend interpretation focused on self and other understanding, to conduct controlled experimentation on human subjects; for example, to discover predictable psychological states. Although there is nothing intrinsically wrong about suspending humanistic interpretation in scientific research, Habermas notes that in doing so, scientific method, when applied by the human sciences, promotes an “objectivist self-understanding of the hermeneutic sciences” that reifies “human value systems and irrational beliefs.” (p. 316) For our purposes, Habermas’ viewpoint cautions us against equating objective interpretations gained by scientific methodologies, with the hermeneutic enterprise of fostering self-understanding that aspires to self-reflection and autonomy.

Loftus’ successful experiments in implanting false memories in healthy-minded human subjects raised our concern about the role of memory fabrication in Macy’s self-identity. But this concern may be misplaced. Her controlled experiments yielded predictable psychological results. But the success of hers, and scientific method in general, may have alienated us from the validity of the truth at issue in interpretive experience. This is the standpoint of hermeneutic philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer, in agreement with Habermas. According to Gadamer, the validity of truth in interpretive experience lies in the claim to the universality of being understood. Being understood is constituted by the actual relationships between people. He states,

Each one is at first a kind of linguistic circle, and these linguistic circles come into contact with each other, merging more and more . . . never without the inner infinity of the dialogue that is in progress between every speaker and his partner. That is the fundamental dimension of hermeneutics. (Gadamer 1976, p. 17)

Gadamer compares hermeneutic interpretation to foreign language translation. Misunderstanding, mistranslation, and nuanced meanings concealed by different linguistic contexts are secondary, but significant factors in translation. The common background of tradition, relational and structural organization, and shared understanding is necessary to the task of translation and provides a veridical basis for it to proceed. Along the way, translation lifts out of the alien content something that upsets readers’ or listeners’ expectations, leading to reorganization and enrichment of our life world (p. 16).

Controlled experiments about memory implantation yield predictive results based on artificial conditions imposed on storytelling and listener reception. In contrast, dialogue within a human community requires a hermeneutic of understanding that takes time, openness to others’ stories and style, and self-disclosure. This way to self and other understanding is not replicable. Hermeneutic understanding is temporal, and resistant to reified uses of language such as propaganda, ideology or well-worn clichés. However, there is no hermeneutic method that can avoid fabrication and bias in the storytelling activity. According to Gadamer,

misunderstanding is built into the hermeneutic circle. But if participants are attentive to understanding self and other, making use of common and alien traditions shared, then fabrication is less a wound to an enriched self-identity, and more a misunderstanding that may be discerned by questioning in a deepening dialogue. Gadamer notes that questioning plays a crucial role in dialogue,

Every assertion is motivated, that is, one can sensibly ask of everything that is said, 'Why do you say that?' And when what is not said is understood along with what is said is an assertion understandable . . . For the motivational background of a question first opens up the realm out of which an answer can be brought and given. (1976, p. 67)

Tradition is not only a source of prejudice and misunderstanding, particularly with respect to self-interpretation, but also a necessary wellspring from which to develop critical and self-reflective judgments. Intersubjective psychoanalysts make use of these hermeneutic insights to critique the psychoanalytic prejudice of the analyst's interpretive superiority to the analysand. Interpretive superiority in psychotherapeutic and psychoanalytic situations is argued to be an obstacle to the meaning-making, reconsolidating process that inheres in open-ended exchanges (Stolorow and Atwood 1996; Orange 2009).

Macy's evolving self-other dialogic exploration with her DNA relatives illustrates this aspect of intersubjectivity as a hermeneutic activity. Without the responsiveness and co-creation of her bio-family network, Macy would not have had the meaning-making resources to develop a more coherent sense of her past, present and future self.

Witnessing and testimony are significant dialogical functions in the case of Macy's adoptee search. These are generative communications, mutually engaged by Macy and her bio-family. By "generative," I mean that without these types of communication in the search, it would atrophy. The search would cease to supply the dynamic interplay that give rise to the affective and cognitive dimensions of Macy's discovery process. These functions also supply another antidote to potential fabrications in the stories told.

Stern's psychoanalytic accounts of the function of witness describes childhood intrapsychic development to rely on the child's capacity to imaginatively listen to herself, through the ears of the other, presumably caregivers. Serving as witness to oneself is from the outset intersubjective. As self-witnessing evolves into the more complex horizons of communication with others, new agentic narrative freedom develops. Stern sees new and refreshed agentic narratives as emergent, co-constructed outcome of the clinical process.

Macy's adoptee predicament acquired a new story, in part clinical, and in part autobiographical. She was able to construct an autobiographical narrative inclusive of the first month of her infancy, with the aid of her maternal half-sister's photos and vivid descriptions of her bio-mother, and her bio-father's testimony to her bio-parents' relationship. Within the psychoanalytic situation, Stern notes, hermeneutics is the art of hearing, eliciting empathy within the situation of mutual understanding (Stern 1991).

I contend that the function of testimony is also significant in the social hermeneutic situation of the adoptee search. Here I take "testimony" as a locution that reports something to an audience. Testimonial locutions among bio-relatives are, in the hermeneutic sense, truth-telling expressions. These may or may not lead to justified true beliefs which are the

lodestone of the sciences and objectivist epistemological ideals. But testimonial locutions are important so far as dialogue between bio-relatives generates a group epistemological endeavor that engages truth-telling in agreements and disagreements over the accuracy of what is reported. Ancestry searches in general seek accurate historical and cultural records that can be the veridical basis of bio-relatives' stories. To accurately understand her bio-father's traumatic history and his relationship with her bio-mother, Macy had to engage his adult children in detailed cross-cutting testimonial conversations to gain multiple perspectives on the veridicality of the bio-father's testimony. Without the rich social epistemological milieu of these bio-relatives, Macy's ancestral narrative would be simplified, and vulnerable to more doubt and speculation. I noted earlier in this paper that Macy's favorite half-brother's wife was a professional researcher whose persistence established verified truths in this bio-family's history.

The function of witnessing and testimony supplied a hermeneutic effect, another emergent property, of expanded story-telling that enlisted Macy's bio-relatives into meaning-making of parts of herself that had gone dark in infancy, inchoately suffering from hermeneutic injustice. This type of injustice, analyzed by philosopher Miranda Fricker, happens when someone has a significant area of their social experience obscured from understanding due to prejudicial flaws in shared resources for social interpretation. (Fricker 2007) Macy's closed adoption wreaked hermeneutic injustice on her self-identity that was remedied in part by the mutual witnessing and testimonies that occurred during her search.

Conclusion: Highly Valued Emergent Properties

I have taken the notion of "emergent property" from the enactivist cognition model and applied it as a metaphor to the notion of intersubjective field in this paper. The affective and cognitive aspects of Macy's discovery are in this sense, emergent properties. Macy and her DNA relatives mutually shared affective values such as trust and empathy. These properties are relational, constituting a collective domain of emotional awareness. As participants within the intersubjective field, Macy and her DNA relatives *temporized*: catalyzing emergent intersubjective states of recollection, shared meaning, and closure. Macy seemed to experience a process of emergent somatic-symbolic integration, by deep-level emotional processing of the meaning of these exchanges with her DNA relatives. The function of witnessing and testimony in expansive story-telling supplied a hermeneutic, emergent property of an enriched shared domain of family meanings. From a normative perspective, moral repair of the agentic self requires the resources of verifiable witness, testimony, as well as other reparative resources such as collective truth-telling and acknowledgment (Walker 2006). In this sense, agentic moral repair emerged as a satisfying part of Macy's self-integration.

I consider reconsolidation and self-integration to be "higher" emergent properties: construed as the most highly valued achievements of her ancestry search. Possibly, these were shared by others who have participated in the process. As a counselor witness to Macy's search, I can testify only to her agentic success, leaving aside the self-states of her bio-relatives.

My application of the dynamic intersubjective field to Macy's adoptee search gives a snapshot of one field pattern that will change over the course of Macy's life. Her field is contextualized by events and possibilities in her ongoing lifespan, and most crucially by how she navigates this open hermeneutic context. The latter will, hopefully, generate her most highly valued agentic ends.

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