

# CONFLICTING COMMUNITY COMMITMENTS: A DIALOGICAL ANALYSIS OF A BRITISH WOMAN'S WORLD WAR II DIARIES

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*Recent developments of the concept of "sense of community" have highlighted the multiplicity of people's senses of community. In this article, the authors introduce the theory of the dialogical self as a means of theorizing the conflicts that can arise between a person's commitments to multiple communities. They ask the question, "When faced with conflicting community commitments, how does a person decide where his or her allegiances lie?" The contribution of the theory of the dialogical self is illustrated through an idiographic analysis of diaries kept by one British woman living through World War II. Conflicting commitments to her home community and to the national community's war effort provoke troubling dilemmas and efforts to resolve them through internal dialogues. Contributions to theory, research, and practice are discussed.*  
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The authors would like to acknowledge financial support from the Nuffield Foundation (SGS/01179/G) and practical support from the Mass-Observation Archive at the University of Sussex. Specifically, we would like to acknowledge the generous help and support of Dorothy Sheridan, Sandra Koa Wing, Ellen Scaife, and Vicky Paine at the Mass-Observation Archive. The research presented has been approved by the Cambridge Psychology Research Ethics Committee at the University of Cambridge (Application no. 2005.11).  
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Belonging to a community brings responsibilities to act in the interests of, and according to the values of, that community. To act as a member of a community means to guide one's own action by the criteria set by the community. However, what happens when one is a member of multiple communities, whose criteria and interests are at odds with one another? How does one decide where one's allegiances lie? We investigate these questions through a qualitative case study of a British woman's sense of community as it appears in diaries that she kept during World War II. She faces conflicting commitments because, on the one hand, her national community calls upon her to contribute to the war effort, while on the other hand, her home community encourages her to protect herself from the adversities of war work. Using the theory of the dialogical self, our analysis illustrates how the conflicting demands of these communities become conflicting thoughts *within* the diarist. We propose that the theory of the dialogical self can contribute to our understanding of "sense of community" by theorizing what it means, psychologically, to be a committed member of a community.

## SENSE OF COMMUNITY

The community psychology concept of the sense of community (SOC) refers to the psychological reality of what it means to a person to be a community member. An important part of having a sense of community is to feel a personal investment in that community (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). This means that the person actively contributes to furthering the community's aims, playing their part as a good community member. Research has shown that people with a higher SOC are more likely to be politically engaged, including being more likely to vote, to work on public problems, to participate in socially and politically relevant events, or to support raising taxes to improve local schools (Chavis & Wandersman, 1990; Davidson & Cotter, 1989, 1993). In sum, a commitment to the community leads them to offer their individual resources and time for the pursuit of the collective interest.

Commitment to a community, however, is complex. Recent developments in SOC research have emphasized its dynamic rather than static nature, pointing toward multiple community commitments, conflict between different senses of community and change in a person's SOC over time (Brodsky & Marx, 2001; Colombo, Mosso, & de Piccoli, 2001; Loomis, Dockett, & Brodsky, 2004). Although early research focused on identifying a single SOC for an individual in a particular setting, Brodsky and Marx (2001) point out that people are simultaneously members of multiple communities, demonstrating that people may have different SOC scores for their different communities. These various communities may well adhere to different values, leading to a person having contradictory senses of community (Colombo, Mosso, & de Piccoli, 2001; Wiesenfeld, 1996). Moreover, these different communities are not wholly insulated from each other, but may interact together. However, there has yet to be a detailed exploration of how such complexities manifest at the level of the individual.

To date, SOC has mainly been approached quantitatively, through research questions about the psychological or behavioral correlates of SOC. Such research makes strong contributions to our knowledge of outcomes, to the relative neglect of processes (Cornish, 2004; García, Giuliani, & Wiesenfeld, 1999). To understand the underlying psychological processes through which a SOC takes shape, we pursue two key research questions: How does a SOC manifest psychologically? Moreover, when

faced with conflicting community commitments, how does a person decide between these commitments? To address these questions, we need a model that theorizes the psychological life of the person-in-context.

## A DIALOGICAL SELF APPROACH

The theory of the dialogical self is a critical response to individualistic conceptions of the self (Hermans, Kempen, & van Loon, 1992). Drawing on James, Mead, and Vygotsky, it maintains that the thought processes and subjectivity of individuals is thoroughly rooted in the community (Hermans, 1996). The basic idea is highly complementary to community psychology: Community psychology studies the individual in the community context, whereas research on the dialogical self focuses upon the community within the individual. Research informed by the theory of the dialogical self has shown how people, through social interaction, internalize the “voices” of other people and groups. A person, for example, may internalize the voice of their mother, father, friends, religious community, or political community. Thus with changes in community context and over time, new voices may be introduced into the dialogical self. Researchers within the dialogical self tradition seek to identify the multiple voices within the dialogical self through a close analysis of the individual’s utterances.

Each voice within the individual speaks from what is termed an *I-position*, and the dialogical self is conceived as a landscape of relatively distinct I-positions, which are in dialogue with one another (Hermans, 1996). In the same way that there are debates between individuals and communities in society, so there are internal dialogues and debates within the dialogical self. Indeed, the process of thinking is taken to be an internal dialogue between I-positions, with the thinker taking up one voice and then another. The landscape of I-positions, which comprises the dialogical self, is therefore systematically related to, but not simply homologous to, the voices of individuals and communities within society. Thus, the debates in society are echoed in the internal dialogues within the thoughts of the individual.

Does echoing one’s community imply that a person has a commitment to that community? Various relationships to the internalized voices of society can be distinguished. A person may describe a community’s position without aligning herself with “them,” or may endorse the community’s values, by speaking from the position of the collective “we.” If an individual simply repeats the voices of others, this is termed *ventriloquation* (Valsiner, 2002). Ventriloquation indicates a very shallow internalization of a voice or discourse. Alternatively, the individual can make the voice of the community his or her own (Bakhtin, 1981, pp. 293–294). In this latter case, the community becomes part of the individual as the individual not only speaks with the words of the community, but actually takes responsibility for those words.

The theory of the dialogical self accords with Cronick’s (2002) recent articulation of the theoretical core of community psychology. Cronick claims that subjectivity, intersubjectivity, community, and their intersection, are the theoretical center of community psychology, and calls for a systematic exploration of these issues. In terms of the dialogical self, subjectivity (the thinking self) is a dialogue that is derived from intersubjectivity (the various relations that the self has with others), and community (the generalized voices and values of the social group of which the person is a part). From this point of view, for a person to act in the interests of the community, we expect

the community to be part of the person. As Cronick (2002) states, "In order for action to be collective, there must be a sense of subjectivity that includes a sense of the intersubjective" (p. 535). For a person to act, as a member of the community, rather than as an individual, the person needs to encompass something of the social relations of which she or he is a part. The dialogical self theorizes precisely this intersubjective part of the individual.

How does the theory of the dialogical self equip us to answer our two questions? First, to study how the community manifests psychologically, the theory directs our attention to the person's stream of thought (James, 1890), to look systematically at which voices arise within the person's thought, and how the person positions herself or himself in relation to these voices. For example, does she or he speak from a position separate from the community, juxtaposing "I" with "them" or does the person speak from the I-position of the community, invoking "we"?

Second, conflicting community commitments can be understood as conflicting voices within the individual. The theory assumes that people participate in many communities, and thus that the individual will internalize the voices of many different, even conflicting, communities. Thus, we suggest, the process of working through conflicting community commitments can be elucidated by examining the internal dialogues and conflicting voices within the individual.

Third, dialogical self theory provides methodological tools for empirical, idiographic studies of shifting senses of self. Here we present a qualitative idiographic case study of the changing SOC that manifests in the extensive diaries kept by a young British woman during World War II. The diarist, whom we shall call "June," is caught between the demands of the national community, which wants her to contribute to the war effort, and the demands of her home community, which wants to protect her from the war.

## **METHOD**

Asking citizens to participate in a war effort, to give up the security and familiarity of their everyday lives is surely one of the most extreme appeals that a community can make to its members. During the early years of World War II, the war seemed to be going in Germany's favor and the British Government was desperate to mobilize its population. The Ministry of Defense initiated a massive propaganda campaign to promote the idea of the national community, and to encourage people to contribute to the national community by getting involved in the war effort. Such heightened stakes bring SOC dilemmas and debates to the fore, and thus comprise an ideal context for this research.

The data for the present study are diaries drawn from the Mass-Observation Archive (Sheridan, Street, & Bloome, 2000). Mass-Observation was established in Britain in 1937 with the aim of creating a "people's anthropology" to redress the relative neglect of the perspective of ordinary people in social science (Bloome, Sheridan, & Street, 1993). Following public appeals by the founders of Mass-Observation, several hundred ordinary people across Britain volunteered to keep daily diaries about their lives and their communities and to respond to regular surveys. Mass-Observation has archived these diaries and survey responses, making them available to interested researchers. Methodologically this is an important point. One of the best ways for qualitative researchers to ensure quality in their research is for other researchers to have access to the primary data (Gillespie, 2005). Any researcher can

gain access to our primary data by contacting the Mass-Observation Archive and requesting the diaries numbered 5323 and 5324.

The Mass-Observation diaries comprise a particularly valuable dataset because they are longitudinal, and thus provide an opportunity to observe in detail how SOC varies day-by-day over the course of years. Most research on SOC has not been able to capture the dynamic nature of a SOC, taking only a cross-sectional snapshot of SOC at a single point in time. Loomis et al. (2004) provide a rare exception, sampling at two points in time, to reveal how changes in context produced changes in SOC. Such research investigates levels of SOC as an outcome. However, if one is interested in theorizing processes, studying one person across multiple points in time is an appropriate strategy. Therefore, in accordance with other research on the dialogical self (e.g., Gillespie, 2006; Hermans, 2001), we have chosen to use an idiographic case study method—that is, to study one person at many points in time. The individual case study method is not used to generalize a finding to a population; instead, it is aimed at testing theory against the objectively perceivable messy complexities of a real case (Mitchell, 1984).

The procedure for selecting June,<sup>1</sup> out of several hundred possible diarists, had two stages. First, we selected all the diarists who had a family member also submitting diaries to Mass-Observation as this gives a second point of view enabling triangulation. Second, out of this subset we selected the pair that had together produced the greatest number of diaries. On these criteria, June and her sister, Bella were selected. Because June wrote significantly more than Bella, we have chosen, to focus upon June, using Bella's diaries for points of triangulation.

### *June's Background and Her Diaries*

In August 1939, just before Britain declared war on Germany, June and her sister responded to Mass-Observation's open request for diarists to write and submit regular diaries and observations. June at the time was 18, and Bella was 25. June continued to submit her diaries to Mass-Observation until the war ended in 1945. These 6 years and 200,000 words of diaries plot, in detail, June's day-to-day relation to the War.

June's approach to writing her diaries is initially guided by her understanding of Mass-Observation's goal of creating "an anthropology of ourselves." A considerable proportion of her diary is written in a reportage style—reporting on other people's behavior, attitudes, and reactions to local, national, and international events. Initially, June is particularly keen to record the changes occurring because of the onset of war, such as details of rationing, shortages, and the arrival of evacuees in her village. Occasionally, she attempts to present more systematic evidence of the impact of war, such as counts of the number of people she observes adhering to government advice to carry gas masks.

However, the pages of June's diaries are also filled with her own opinions, reactions, daily activities, dilemmas, and relationships. As the years of diary writing progress, the diaries become increasingly personal, and reflections on her personal life come to take precedence. These developments in the content of her diary coincide with the mounting changes and challenges she confronts as the war begins to affect her more directly. She uses the diary to work through her conflicting allegiances, thus giving us a window onto her dialogical thought processes.

<sup>1</sup> All names and identifying details have been changed.

When June begins writing the diaries, in 1939, she is living at home, in a small village, with her mother and sister. Her father had died several years previously, but with the help of a hired mechanic, the three women run the family business—a small village garage and shop selling sweets and tobacco (soon to be rationed). In addition to working in the family business, June has an important role in running the home. Several hours of each day are spent in preparing meals for the family, or running errands. June lists rationing, limitations on travel, and blacking out windows at night (so that German bombers could not locate houses) among the main inconveniences caused by the war.

Who are the people whose voices might populate June's dialogical self? June's home community is close knit. Unsurprisingly, most prominent in June's diaries are her mother and sister. Despite the age difference, the sisters' diaries evidence a very close relationship. June also mentions meeting friends from school when, for example, ice skating or visiting the cinema in the nearby town. Although June and her sister mention a number of boyfriends, importantly, these relationships are marked by a feature common to all her relationships in her home community—she has known them for years and is familiar with their background. One apparent exception to this is the friendship that both sisters rapidly develop with their Worker's Educational Association lecturer. In contrast to former lecturers, whom the sisters "worshipped from afar," this lecturer becomes more familiar, stopping by their home regularly before and after lectures, to have dinner or simply sit in his car and talk "for hours." June, as we will see, is quite enamored by the young tutor, and he becomes an influential voice within June's dialogical self.

Besides being a member of her home community, June is also a member of the national community—Britain at war. June's political allegiance leans to the Left. She condemns conservative papers as "negative," preferring to read the *Reynolds News* "to get the Labour point of view" with which she usually agrees. Both her parents were members of the Peace Pledge Union, and although June says she shares her mother's "horror of war," she emphasizes her desire always to access "both sides of the story." Thus, in addition to listening to the BBC (whose programs she often criticizes as "propaganda"), she also, like many others in her community, likes to listen to the German propaganda: "I think one is as true as the other & they are both biased to their own benefit" (survey response, February, 1940). Initially, the national community is quite abstract for June, and not something she identifies with. However, as the analysis will show, June develops an increasing commitment to her national community, which comes into conflict with her commitments to her home community.

A third community that is important for June is what we will call her war-work community. In 1941, June leaves her home community and enters the war-work community, that is, the community of people who, through contributing to the war effort in various ways, has also been uprooted from their home communities. The war-work community is proximal, like the home community. It is not distal like the national community. However, while June's home community is skeptical of the national community, her war-work community espouses the values of the national community, i.e., the importance of everyone contributing to the war effort. Accordingly, as the analysis will show, when June moves from her home community to her war-work community, there is a change in both June's dialogical self and her relation to the national community.

We can now turn our research questions into more concrete empirical questions. To investigate the processes of June's SOC, we ask, "With which community does June

feel compelled to align herself? How does she react to the British Government's request that she contribute to the war effort? Does June position herself with the national community of the war effort, or does she position herself outside of it? How does her sense of commitment to her various communities change over time?" The contradictory demands of her home and war communities enable us to ask, "How does June negotiate between her commitment to the national community and her commitment to her home community? And what factors enter into, and mediate, June's changing sense of community?"

### *Method of Analysis*

The research questions guiding the analysis target the dialogical processes that constitute June's sense of community. To study these processes, we treat the diaries as the externalization of a 'stream of thought' (James, 1890). As the diaries comprise verbal discourse, they can be subjected to a dialogical analysis (Wertsch, 1991) to reveal traces of individual voices and generalized community voices and, most importantly, June's relation to these voices. The dialogical analysis that we conducted had three phases.

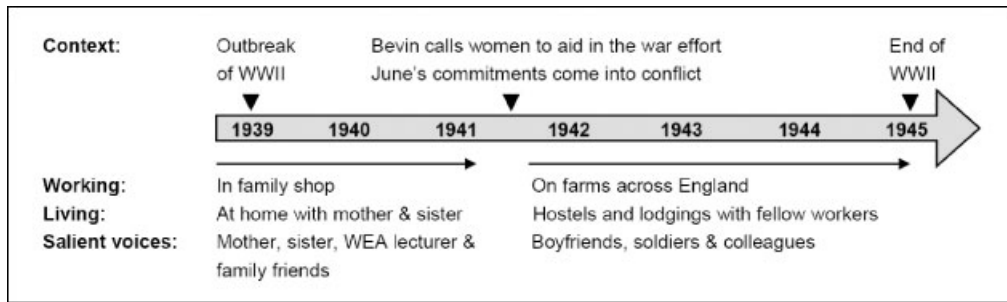
First, we mapped out all the individuals and communities that are given a voice within June's diary (as reported speech, or simply mentioned). June draws upon a great diversity of discourses within her diary (Zittoun, Cornish, Gillespie, & Aveling, 2007) and thus, to trace where these discourses originated, we made significant use of secondary data sources to identify the shared discourses of the time.

Second, we coded June's position in relation to these voices: Who does June position herself alongside and against? This question was pursued by focusing upon June's use of "I," "we," "us," and "them." Often June's positioning is ambiguous, and she slips between different positionings. The analysis gives particular weight to these dialogical knots, seeing them as indicative of June's own internal dialogues.

Third, we analyzed the data longitudinally, searching for patterns in time: Is there a change in how June represents her home community, her war-work community, or the national community? Does June's positioning in relation to these communities change over time? We also examined how June herself reflects on these longitudinal changes, by examining how, in her *present*, she reports her past and future I-positions.

## **ANALYSIS**

The analysis that we present centers on 1941 because in March of that year the Labour Minister Bevin called on women to contribute to the national war effort. This call stimulates an internal dialogue in June that results in her leaving her home community in an effort to avoid being conscripted, while nonetheless becoming part of a community of war workers. Figure 1 summarizes June's communities before and after this transition. The first section of our analysis presents June's relation to the War before Bevin's call. The second section deals with the dialogical tensions that emerge as June elaborates the significance of Bevin's call, and decides where her commitments lie. The third section examines the change in June's commitments once she has left her home community and has joined the war-work community.



**Figure 1.** June's change in community context during World War II.

### *June's Initial Relation to the War*

June succinctly summarizes her initial relation to the war, and the national community of Britain, in her diary entry for New Year's Eve at the end of 1940.<sup>2</sup>

Who is sorry to see the last of this grim & anxious year? We have certainly lived history this year. How we have wondered & puzzled what the news in the next week would bring. I'll admit I thought the war was practically done, with us the vanquished when France went under. For a little while I even felt glad that the war was going to be over. ... How glad I am now that as the last hours of the old year are fading that nothing of the sort happened & I really feel that we have turned the corner & can really win but we must not be impatient. We have got used to being at war now, & the inconveniences of the petty annoyances such as the blackout & rations have become a habit. We don't stir at night when we hear the guns & Nasties [Nazis] now, we have got used to them. (December 31, 1940)

The opening of this excerpt is written in the style of a political or formal speech. June is speaking both with and for the people of Britain when she writes, "we have certainly lived history this year," and "how we have wondered." These are the kinds of utterances she may have heard on the radio, or read in the newspaper, on the approach to New Year's Eve. In these utterances June is most likely ventriloquating the voice of the media. However, a personal voice soon emerges. There is a change of perspective, and June writes, "I'll admit I thought the war was practically done" and "I even felt glad the war was going to be over." These unpatriotic thoughts are attributed to an "I" in the past. Now June firmly rebukes such unpatriotic thoughts: She is glad "that nothing of the sort happened." In this latter sentence, June rejects her previous I-position and sides herself firmly with the "we" of the nation: Her sense of commitment to the national community is resolute. She writes, "we have got used to being at war," "we don't stir at night," and "we have got used to them."

Analyzing June's shifting I-position within this excerpt reveals that her "I" is not stable: It varies from secretly abandoning the national "we" to a New Year's Eve enthusiasm for the national "we." It is this shifting sense of community that is the focus of our analysis.

<sup>2</sup> We have not corrected grammar or spelling in the diary excerpts.

### *Conflicting Senses of Community*

June's relation to the war changes dramatically on the 16th of March 1941 when the Labour Minister Ernest Bevin made a BBC radio broadcast in which he called for women to enter the workforce, to sustain the military and industrial machine, and thus to free men to enter the army. Bevin requested that all women between the ages of 20 and 21 register, so that those either in "non-essential trades" or "unoccupied" could be directed toward relevant war work (Bevin, 1941). June sknew that she would be classified at best in a non-essential trade or at worst unoccupied. June's immediate response is to start considering which of the services that Bevin mentioned would best suit her:

Aft B [Bella, June's sister] & I went for a long walk & discussed Bevin's broadcast. I appear to be in the first age group of woman conscripts to register on April 19th. I am much against the thought of work in a factory as the dirt & noise would send me silly. Land work I dismiss as too hard (not to mention dull & demoralising) The womens forces appear to be as tempting as anything as nursing would make me sick, as the work is so hard, messy & embarrassing. (March 16, 1941)

Bevin's broadcast creates an explosion of possible futures for June. She imagines herself working in a factory, on the land, as a nurse and in the "women's forces." The women's forces, which are June's immediate preference, refer to the Women's Royal Naval Service, the Women's Auxiliary Territorial Service, and the Women's Auxiliary Air Force, who worked both overseas on the frontline and in military establishments in Britain. Her choice is interesting because it is the most dangerous choice.

However, June's choice to be patriotic, by acting in the interests of her national community, is not one that is simply made by June alone. As June discusses her situation, the voices from her home community enter her thoughts, mediating her patriotism, and making her aware of other aspects of the situation. Particularly important, is the voice of June's mother.

This evening Mother went clean off the deep end over the business & we had the biggest row ever.... She seems to dread me going although in a way I do not mind. The war is pretty dull here. I should not join the services if it had not been for this because of the stigma of man-chasing attached to it if one volunteered, & because usually the sort of girl that goes in is what I consider rather brainless, & also Mother would not have let me if I had wanted to. (I never did. It did not occur to me.) ... I know it is really because she is fond of me & is afraid of anything happening to me. She is so anxious for me to get exempt but somehow I don't think I want to. (March 16, 1941)

This excerpt ostensibly reports a "row" between June and her mother, and presents their different perspectives. The dialogical tension is between June's mother and the values she represents, and a less risk-averse I-position with which June aligns herself. June's mother, as she arises in June's writing, gives two main reasons against joining the war effort: first, there is the issue of safety, and second, there is "the stigma of man-chasing." However, the boundary between June's perspective and her

mother's is somewhat fuzzy. June's own perspective encapsulates some of her mother's attitude. Although she opposes the perspective of her mother, she does so in a very hesitating way. She says, "in a way I do not mind," and is far from emphatic in the expression "but somehow I don't think I want to." Moreover, the idea that women who join the women's forces are "rather brainless," associated with the voices of her mother and home community, is an attitude June shares: She writes, "the sort of girl that goes in is what I consider rather brainless." Thus, it is not only her mother who looks down upon the women's forces, but June herself (as revealed by the use of "I") harbors this negative stereotype.

The alternative that is open to June, and espoused by her mother, is that she tries to get "exempt" from war work. Bevin called only on those women who were in "non-essential trades" or "unoccupied." If June were to be in one of the essential trades—such as administration, mining, teaching, or agriculture—she would be exempt from war work. Although initially against this option, her views begin to change and her commitment to the national community fades.

In the days following Bevin's call, June talks to many people in her home community—customers, friends, and relatives—and their voices argue that the only sensible thing to do is to seek exemption. June feels that her "brave & patriotic" impulse is weakening. "Every body else seems so upset about going & its beginning to put me off. B cheerily says she does not mind getting killed, but she objects to coming home with a leg or arm off. I had not thought of that!" (March 20, 1941)

The voices of June's friends and relatives reverberate in her thoughts reminding her of the dangers of war work. Thus not only June's mother, but also her sister and "every body else," enter into June's thoughts, mediating her commitment to the national community.

Some voices within the dialogical self have more power than others. The tipping point in June's commitment to the national community of Britain at war occurs when she meets with her Worker's Educational Association lecturer. This handsome lecturer was a schoolmaster, and June respects his academic authority and values the attention he gives her.

We discussed my capabilities & he thought teaching was about the easiest & with short hours & not likely to be diverted to other war work like many things for girls of 20. He was the most sympathetic person I have come across yet over the business as he also is avoiding militarism for himself. (His motto is every man for himself & let the other fellow win the war) This seems to be me an excellent idea. Teaching I mean [inserted above the text]. He condemned the womens services down to the ground & was most against me going in with "that type of girl."... He really seems very worried about me & is determined to think of some wangle over the business. This rather amuses me as we have been listening to his beautiful pro-war lectures for 6 months & now it comes to the point of helping to win it he is going to let someone else do that. (March 21, 1941)

This excerpt contains a complex dialogical knot. On the one hand, June is clearly influenced by the "sympathetic" schoolmaster, yet she holds her distance from his lack of patriotism. The schoolmaster encourages June to gain exemption by becoming a teacher. In contrast with her earlier response to her mother, June now appears amenable to this unpatriotic idea. Indeed, when she writes,

“he also is avoiding militarism” she is clearly taking up an I-position next to him. However, toward the end of the excerpt, she positions herself apart from the schoolmaster, as she criticizes the hypocrisy of his “beautiful pro-war lectures.”

This dialogical knot seems most entangled in her report of the schoolmaster’s motto, “every man for himself & and let the other fellow win the war.” June’s immediate response is to write the confused sentence: “This seems to be me an excellent idea.” This ungrammatical sentence has three potential meanings. First, it can be read as saying “the motto is an excellent idea.” June becomes aware of this potential interpretation, and adds a correction, inserting above the text, “teaching I mean.” Thus, June tries to make salient the second interpretation, namely, “teaching is an excellent idea.” However, the mere fact that June feels the need to underscore this interpretation reveals the saliency of the first interpretation in her thoughts. In making this correction, June is orienting, again, to her reader, and this time she is trying to avoid appearing unpatriotic in front of her reader. The third potential meaning is simply “this seems to be me”—i.e., the motto describes June. June remains unaware of this reading. However, this reading is in accordance with June’s actions. Regardless of June’s discursive attempts to distance herself from the motto, the fact is that she acts based on the motto.

June’s decision to seek exemption leads her to write to the local education committee, requesting a teaching career, while admitting to her diary that her real motive is to avoid war work. As a back-up plan, she also writes to the Women’s Gardening Organization to tell them that she “adores” gardening and would like a job, though she confesses to her diary: “As a matter of fact I hate gardening” (March 23, 1941). There is a degree of cynicism in these diary entries, and June herself is aware of this. Orienting to the reader she writes, “How we lie for our own safety!” and “Good job not everyone is like us.” Such statements are dialogically complex. June seems to have some guilt about her course of action, and she assumes that her Mass-Observation audience will side with the national community and thus condemn her actions. Accordingly, these statements present a justification; June is lying for her own safety. But more than this, June speaks of “we” and “us” and thus diffuses the act of lying. It is not only June who is lying for her safety, she implies that many others in her home community are also lying, and it is with this cheating “we,” which stands apart from the national “we,” that June is identifying.

June’s “brave & patriotic” spirit has evaporated. She is now willing to do something she says she hates to avoid Bevin’s call. The attitude of self-preservation promoted by her mother and her home community has been internalized by June, and she has made the schoolmaster’s motto her own. Instead of gaining pride through contributing to the war effort, she now seems to get pride for finding ingenious ways of getting exempt. Yet, while positioning herself outside of the national community, a part of June’s dialogical self still identifies with the national community, and thus she *simultaneously* recognizes that, from the point of view of the national community, leaving others to fight the war is selfish.

### ***June Changes Community Context***

Circumstance offers June the opportunity of becoming a gardener, which she accepts because it increases her chance of gaining exemption from war work. Accordingly, June takes the opportunity and leaves home. She initially works in gardening, but as the war progresses she becomes increasingly involved in food production. Within a year, June has changed her job four times and ends up responsible for a large crop of tomatoes.

Community psychology and the theory of the dialogical self share the assumption that if an individual changes community context, then the individual will change. In terms of the dialogical self, entering a new community should alter the configuration of I-positions within the dialogical self (e.g., Bhatia, 2002). Leaving home and becoming a gardener constitutes a significant change of community context for June. She leaves her home community (mother, sister, schoolmaster, and friends) and finds a new war-work community (employers, work-mates, boyfriends, soldiers, and landladies). She moves from being the younger sister at home to being independent and earning a salary. The analysis reveals two changes in June's SOC.

First, June gains a distance from the morality of her home community. From the perspective of her home community, there is a stigma attached to dating soldiers—or “man-chasing.” However, once she is away from her home community, June begins to see dating soldiers in a different light. June enjoys the recognition that she gets from the soldiers and describes her dating as a contribution to the war effort because many of these soldiers may die and they need a morale boost. Unsurprisingly, this new pattern of behavior comes into dialogical conflict with the morality of June's home community. For example, when discussing her dilemma of arranging for two dates while also having a steady boyfriend, she writes:

I shall keep the 2 dates as they seem both nice fellows providing my soldier doesn't turn up on either of these nights! I don't know what is becoming of me. I wouldn't have dreamt of doing this sort of thing at home. I wouldn't have been allowed to for one thing. I don't know if the land [word unclear] is demoralising me. I sometimes think so! Or else the war I know I should not have done it before the war. Oh well I shan't be young for ever & my looks won't last, so now or never. (June 28, 1941)

According to the morality of June's home community, it is improper to date men if one does not know their background. June is not only dating such men, but she is dating them in parallel, and evidently enjoying the attention. As she describes just one of her dating dilemmas, she interrupts herself to reflect upon her actions in a particularly dialogical manner. She writes, “I don't know what is becoming of me...” This train of thought completely steps out of her former concern—how to deal with so many dates—and introduces a moral judgment. In this critical reflection, one can hear the voice of June's mother and the voice of her home community. From the perspective of her home community, June is “man-chasing” and from the perspective of the schoolmaster, she has become “that type of girl.” This is the moral indictment that had, only 3 months earlier, silenced June's desire to contribute to the war effort. Now however, June has an argument that can silence the debate between these conflicting voices. She writes, “Oh well I shan't be young for ever & my looks won't last, so now or never.” This argument manages to circumvent (Josephs & Valsiner, 1998) the traditional morality in a clever way: Rather than reject the morality of the home community outright, it simply argues that this morality is not applicable in the present situation. It implies that once June is no longer young, and when the war is over and June is back in her home community, she will once again embrace that morality. Emphasizing the short-term nature of her deviation makes her change in behavior defensible, while avoiding any serious dialogical conflict with her commitments to her home community.

The second change in June's SOC concerns her relation to the national community. Although June pursued a career in gardening to avoid conscription into war work, the fact is that June finds herself increasingly contributing to the war effort. At the time, agricultural work was a high priority for the British government due to the loss of imports wrought by German U-boats. The British government therefore introduced a propaganda campaign, urging people to consume less imports and to grow more food. Posters encouraged people to "use spades not ships: grow your own food," and to "dig for victory." Consequently, across the country people began digging up their lawns and gardens to plant vegetables. June, having internalized the values associated with the war effort, joins in the effort: "We have set cauliflowers in the beds outside the dining room window & beetroot & carrots in the borders leaving to rockery where tulips have been. Our 'digging for victory' display." (June 30, 1941)

That June puts "digging for victory" in quotation marks indicates that she knows that she is ventriloquating British propaganda. However, the fact that she has made a "display" of her digging for victory, suggests that she has made this slogan her own. This point is supported by the fact that at this time, June was working 50 hours a week growing vegetables—she was digging for victory every day. The pride that June feels in her "display" reveals that the national interest has become her interest and the success of the nation has become her success.

The degree to which June has made the national interest her own interest is particularly apparent in her response to the news that Russia has entered the War:

I am very excited about fighting with Russia & so glad we are to give every help. I so hope it will be as much as we can. I feel "ten times more confident of victory" now. I am sure the country will be united [word unclear] than ever in war effort. Between us with American aid we should do "it." It does not seem 1/2 such a hopeless task as with the USSR neutral & perhaps supplying Germany. It seems great & we must not relax or let the Russians down. (June 25, 1941)

Considering that this diary entry comes just 3 months after June's own cynical attempts to avoid making any contribution to the war effort, this excerpt reveals a dramatically different facet of June's dialogical self. Looking at the uses of "I" and "we" shows clearly that June's "I" is emphatically aligned with the national "we" and even the international Allies' "we." In this instance, June is not willing to "let the other fellow win the war." June is implicated in the "we" who "must not relax." Moreover, she appears to have internalized other propaganda messages seeking to connect the home front with victory on the battlefield—catch phrases such as "Yield not an inch! Waste not a minute!" and "Stand fast, work fast." She clearly perceives her horticultural work as part of the fight. The voice of the national community has become June's own voice. The interests of the national community have become June's own daily interests.

## **DISCUSSION: DIALOGICAL COMMUNITY COMMITMENTS**

In response to our first question, of how SOC manifests psychologically, the analysis has clearly shown that June's community commitments are dialogical. Even while June guides her action by the values of one community, the voices of her other communities are evident. When she has decided to avoid war work, she recognizes that this is

irresponsible from the point of view of the national community in her statement “good job everyone is not like us.” Likewise, when she later acts in ways appropriate within her war-work community, which would have been counter to her home community’s values, she reflects, from the point of view of the home community, “I don’t know what has become of me.” Moreover, while previous research has suggested that people may have multiple and even conflicting senses of community (Brodsky & Marx, 2001; Colombo et al., 2001; Loomis et al., 2004), the present analysis, by introducing the concept of the dialogical self, has shown how a commitment to one community can mediate the individual’s commitment to a second community. For example, June’s commitment to her home community weakens her loyalty to the national community. The voices of her mother, sister, and the handsome schoolmaster, all representing June’s home community, are constitutive of June’s commitment to the national community. Thus, we suggest that it can be misleading to focus upon only one of a person’s senses of community.

Turning to our second research question, namely, how a person decides between conflicting community commitments, we need to consider why some voices have more power or influence than others. Many voices are evident in June’s stream of thought, but what determines the relative influence of these voices?

Our data suggest two factors. First is the *recognition* bestowed in the gaze of others (Honneth, 1996). June’s home community, specifically her mother and the handsome schoolmaster, offers her recognition for avoiding the risks of war work and avoiding associating with “that type of girl.” On the other hand, June’s war-work community endorses the opposite actions, thus setting up a conflicting structure of recognition. The war-work community admires June “digging for victory” in the cold weather, and is accepting of her relations with the soldiers. The pride that June gets from her war-work community is clearly evident: “I must say it is pretty great being a land girl here. Everyone treats us as heroines especially the soldiers. Nothing but admiration is forthcoming from them & the villagers. esp during this cold weather.” (October 29, 1941)

The recognition that she gets from the soldiers and the villagers comes not simply from being hard working, but because that hard work is perceived to be self-sacrifice for the benefit of the national community. Accordingly, the power of various voices within June’s dialogical self can be understood, in part, as a function of the recognition that these voices can offer June.

A second factor contributing to the power of voices within June’s dialogical self seems to be the community’s salience: whether the community is proximal or distant. Community norms, values, and structures of recognition are made salient when they are manifest in the voices of significant individuals with whom one interacts on a regular basis. The attitudes of June’s home community are crystallized in the voice of June’s mother and the handsome schoolmaster. June’s mother, unsurprisingly, has a particular power over June, and June finds it difficult to go against her mother’s wishes in her presence. However, once she is away from her mother’s gaze, she knowingly goes against her mother’s wishes—as illustrated with her intent to continue having fun with men despite her acknowledgement that she would not be allowed to do this at home. The handsome schoolmaster has quite a different power within June’s dialogical self. He was pivotal in her decision to seek exemption. His power seems to stem from June’s intellectual and romantic attachment. During the final months when June was at home, when she had frequent contact with the schoolmaster, her diary makes repeated references to him. However, once June leaves her home community,

she rarely mentions him again. Thus, in both cases, we see how the representatives of the home community lose their power within June's dialogical stream of thought once June ceases to meet them frequently.

As the voice of the home community wanes, the voice of the national community waxes. While June was at home, the national community was little more than a propaganda construction. Being mass mediated, with few immediate representatives, the imagined national community was easy to disregard. However, once June participates in the war-work community by taking up her various horticultural posts, she enters into face-to-face relations with people who she believes espouse the values of the national community. This gives the national community an immediate presence, making the recognition offered by the national community manifest and immediate.

Thus, we suggest that June's negotiation between conflicting community commitments is mediated by the respective salience of these communities. The conflicting demands of the national and the home communities manifest in June's dialogical self when she is in both community contexts, but she aligns herself with the more local and salient set of interests in each case. This factor is closely linked to the previous point about recognition. It is likely that structures of recognition are more powerful if they are proximal rather than distal.

In addressing both of our research questions, we have presented SOC as dynamic. On the one hand, an individual's SOC manifests in dialogical thought processes, within which one can find conflicting voices. On the other hand, the debate between these voices is mediated by the recognition offered and the proximity of the various voices, and thus varies as the individual moves around the social world. However, our emphasis on the dynamic aspect of SOC should not be taken to mean that SOC is so fluid that a person's SOC cannot effectively be characterized in a piece of research. When looked at in broad terms, June's sense of community appears to be highly changeable. Initially, she is committed to the national community, then she is not and she tries to evade war work, while showing considerable commitment to her home community, then she becomes recommitted to the war effort. Do such shifts and changes imply that SOC is completely unstable? We argue that it does not. There is, in fact, considerable stability in June's commitments. Throughout, June is committed *both* to her home community and to her national community. The only thing that changes is which commitment gains ascendance.

## CONTRIBUTIONS TO THEORY, RESEARCH, AND PRACTICE

The present idiographic analysis is limited. Single cases are difficult to generalize from and can be unrepresentative. The present analysis, for example, has been based largely upon a single diary. Accordingly, we cannot claim that June's dilemmas were experienced by other British women. However, we can generalize our analysis to theory (Yin, 2003). We have explicitly brought our case study into dialogue with the concept of SOC and the theory of the dialogical self. On this basis, we advance suggestions for future theory, research, and practice.

First, at a theoretical level, the analysis shows that multiple community commitments can co-exist and interact within the subjectivity of an individual. Sense of community may be crystallized into a single measure, a point on a scale, but when we examine the psychological processes underlying SOC, we find that it is not singular, but dialogical. This finding corroborates Brodsky and Marx (2001). Beneath any SOC

score, we suspect there may be a polyphony of divergent and even conflicting community commitments. Wiesenfeld (1996) has argued that the notion of community has suffered from an overly idealistic notion of the commonality and uniformity of the “we” who make up that community. Our analysis suggests that communities are messy and fragmented because, like June, people are part of many communities. Nobody is a “pure” member of a single community. One is reminded of James’ (1890, p. 294) oft-quoted observation that a person “has as many different social selves as there are distinct groups of persons about whose opinion he cares.” The theory of the dialogical self provides a useful way of apprehending the psychological reality of community, as it explicitly theorizes the intersection of communities within the individual.

Second, this perspective has implications for future research on SOC. It suggests that to thoroughly understand a person’s commitment to a particular community, it is valuable to consider the multiplicity of communities with which they affiliate, and the possible conflicts that might ensue. Considering the two issues of which different groups give a person recognition, and which groups are salient or could become salient, would be a useful way of opening up the multiplicity of potential community commitments. We speculate that conflicting structures of recognition and/or changing community salience may instigate a shift of community allegiance.

In terms of practice, community psychologists, when seeking to mobilize a community, should be aware of the multiple community commitments that a person or a group may have. We have shown that, even when a person is acting as a member of one particular community, the alternative perspective of the person’s other communities remain dialogically alive for the person, providing her with doubts and criticisms of her own action. Thus practitioners, when intervening in a community, should have respect for the diversity of commitments that community members hold. Moreover, multiple community commitments can facilitate critical reflection. For example, June reflects upon her dating soldiers from the perspective of her home community and reflects upon the morality of her home community using new arguments gleaned from her war-work community. Stated more generally, community psychologists may be able to use people’s participation in multiple communities to stimulate critical consciousness, an important goal in community psychology interventions (e.g., Montero, 2000).

Finally, this study contributes to our understanding of the relation between community psychology and the theory of the dialogical self. It is a fundamental principle of community psychology that the person can only be properly understood when considered in her or his context. The theory of the dialogical self approaches this same issue, but from the other direction. According to Hermans (2002), the distinction between what happens within the person and what happens between the person and other people is not absolute. Relations within the dialogical self change the self’s relation to other people and relations to other people change the dialogical self. Thus, there is a deep theoretical complementarity between community psychology and the theory of the dialogical self. Both perspectives are anti-individualist. Community psychology seeks to overcome the individualism of much clinical psychology by focusing upon the context in which a person is located, whereas the theory of the dialogical self counteracts individualism by focusing on the community of voices within the individual. Broadly speaking, this is what we believe the present analysis illustrates. We have seen that June’s diaries are alive with a variety of interacting voices from different communities. The line between the people in June’s community and the

voices that populate June's own thoughts is impossible to draw. June is not just in a community, but the community is in June.

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