

The SAGE Handbook of  
Social Constructionist  
Practice



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# Generative Dialogues: Creating Resources and Possibilities in Therapy

Dora Fried Schnitman

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a generative perspective in therapy as a means to foster transformation through dialogical creative processes. It will examine how a generative dialogue allows participants, therapists and clients, to create resources and new possibilities together in the face of problems, conflicts, and challenges. Self and relationships are renewed, and a viable and sustainable future emerges. Dialogue, here, is approached as a generative creative process.

How do we foreground generative processes? By using the concept of generative dialogue to refer to the gradual creation of something new in human relationships. Key to that process are generative moments where the subtle and the emergent are discerned and expanded to create new meanings and actions through reciprocal responsiveness in dialogue. An alternative nucleus is formed, one

that can be developed into privileged contexts for interpretation and practice. Inquiries focus on how these moments were, are, or can be generated. What types of dialogic and relational coordination foster the inception of something new emerging and its subsequent consolidation? How does that become a context that keeps new possibilities alive and allows them to effect transformation (Fried Schnitman, 1998, 2002, 2004)?

The construction of futures as part of change requires acting upon current circumstances in order to explore how to access these futures. The possibilities created in generative dialogues become virtual realities which, once created, can be actualized, provided they are sustained by transformative processes. Such processes contribute to actions that lead to existential alternatives and new and diverse realities, as well as forms of living. Emerging generative processes reorient us toward an ecology of creation.

## GENERATIVE PERSPECTIVE AND DIALOGUE

We propose a generative perspective for therapy that relies on the emerging possibilities of dialogue as a platform to construct possible, realizable futures when clients bring problematic or stagnant situations for consultation. Through joint participation, reciprocal inclusion, and responsiveness in dialogue, the participants in therapy (professionals and clients) co-create alternatives to approach the problematic situations. Dialogue is the means and the instrument for this process (Fried Schnitman, 2008, 2015, 2016).

The generative dialogue centers on what participants in therapy can construct, creating unprecedented possibilities, and on the active exploration of how the problematic situations relate to emerging resources and possibilities as new territories in dialogue. It focuses, then, on dialogue's capability to build intersections, forging a path through the emergent resources, the options that become available, and the problems that led to the consultation. The enactment and the progressive implementation of the new possibilities with an eye to a viable future are equally important for a generative dialogue.

Working with the creative potential of dialogue offers a view of the landscape of relational constructionism in action. Generative dialogue expands the process from a problem-centered focus to the creation of new possibilities, increasing the skills of participants and providing them with additional resources to work with what is emerging. One of the first implications of this perspective is that it enables a focus on the future, on incipient possibilities that can be amplified – or non-existent ones that can be created – thus contributing to new client alternatives. Therapists and clients are involved in a generative process and work simultaneously to develop resources in the present while constructing a long-range vision for the future and enacting it as new ways of living. The clients learn to

learn about themselves by clarifying, exploring, and reaching their emerging resources and possibilities through a process that leads to transformations and a viable future.

## DIALOGUE AND GENERATIVITY: CREATIVITY IN DIALOGUE

Dialogue alludes to the co-creation of meanings and joint social actions by, and among, a certain number of participants. A dialogue is a co-constructive, interpersonal process involving diverse voices and resonances in which people jointly create meaning. Dialogical confluences are transformative processes in dialogue that extend over time, for example in therapy, allowing new perspectives, actions and ways of living to emerge (Gergen, 2009).

Bakhtin postulates that when a dialogue occurs, a multi-vocal unit is configured. Each dialogue is unique, according to the author, and takes place in a specific context and time, while meaning emerges from this uniqueness; in each dialogue, diverse voices and dialogues coexist (Bakhtin, 1981, 1986; Morson and Emerson, 1990). Whether these prove coherent or contradictory, generativity will make use of this complexity.

A generative perspective is thus based on dialogue between people and their unique relationship. The responsiveness and attentiveness of participants are features of being in dialogue: participants can express and acknowledge their participation not only through words but also through reciprocal indications of connection, inclusiveness, and participation. Everything in dialogue, not only words but embodied language, tone, intonation, and gestures, is formulated with a purpose and addressed to the other. There is a reciprocal recognition of the other as a dialogue participant.

Bakhtin stresses the capacity of dialogue to create meaning. People address and respond actively to an *other*, addressing their listener with purpose and anticipation. Participants

shape dialogues from the outset and any other party to this dialogue is also taken into account and involved in the formulations. The *other* may be not only another person, but also oneself, another dialogue or the one in progress, a topic, a group.

Dialogues involve multiple dialogues, voices, and projects, with centripetal and centrifugal forces. At the same time, each dialogue is connected to a network of dialogues in context and in time. When the complexity of dialogue is connected with timeline links, every dialogue is both facilitated and limited by these preceding and future links. Some of these links may be distant from the current conversation, others closer. These links intersect and resonate with what was spoken in the near and distant past, creating novel possibilities.

Participants always produce something new and unique in the moment; there are renovated echoes of the past, and at the same time, new contributions in the present. This is conveyed by the particular form of expression and the singularity of the context in which something is formulated, including the dialogue itself.

Besides their connections to the past and present, dialogues also intersect with what might be said in the near and distant future. We can then identify an anticipated future in the current dialogue and establish links with what has not yet been said and what could be said in both a near and distant future. Other links are also feasible between dialogues. A generative perspective actively creates novel networks and links that enable dialogic creativity in the moment and generative confluences over time in order to foster transformative processes. At any point, people may engage in highly diverse and potentially converging (or contradictory) dialogues.

## EMERGING GENERATIVE PROCESSES IN THERAPY

Dialogues and confluences in dialogue are formative processes of selves and social

worlds. In these generative conversations, people are integrally involved in exchanges, interweaving ideas, thoughts, perspectives, and feelings. In and through dialogue, self and relationships emerge and can be modified.

When a therapist meets clients, she enters into a dialogue aware of their specificity and uniqueness, the problems and hopes they bring. She is attentive, responsive, and aware of the client responsiveness in order to work towards constructing a creative and productive dialogic relationship. The generative perspective prioritizes the recognition of the emerging opportunities and innovations unique to each process. By allowing generative moments to be discerned, the participants' new resources and possibilities can then be useful to develop alternatives, new narratives, and learning. We call this an *emerging generative process*.

In this process, therapists and clients actively work together to explore the situation they endeavor to transform. As unprecedented possibilities can be produced in dialogue, participants in a therapy process become more proactive, utilizing their own inquiries and reflections to improve comprehension and action as they occur. In this sense, the participants become creative authors of each single process, focusing on the specific activities that generate new possibilities as working platforms for transformations. This generative capacity of dialogue enables unanticipated possibilities, transforms potentialities into new existential realities, and gives the therapy experience some of the openness and open-endedness associated with learning and creativity.

### 'God has Spoken'

Excerpts from a therapy case illustrate these concepts in action. A student in the Graduate Degree Program on the Generative Perspective and Professional Practice, senior family therapist, and conflict mediator,

Cristina Ruffino, PhD in Psychology,<sup>1</sup> brings this consultation to the class to explore generative dialogues. Daniela (D) had contacted her to request a session, at her psychologist's recommendation. She mentioned that her immediate family regularly contacts her psychologist to complain about her. She is 39-years-old, has been in therapy since age 26, and is taking medication under psychiatric care. She will continue with individual therapy and medication.

At the interview, the family, who also runs a business together, begins to share their problems, mentioning frequent arguments, accusations, and growing animosity towards D. The family is very critical of D; her brother describes her as unbalanced and impulsive. He has come to the interview at his parents' request, but has no expectations that their relationship will change. The father wants to avoid the fighting, and sees D as someone impetuous who makes unnecessary remarks. The mother complains of the overall animosity, that her son is too inflexible and her daughter too emotional. D says that her brother misinterprets everything she says, that they fight constantly and are not on speaking terms. She adds that her father does not understand her. Sometimes she cannot stand herself and has felt increasingly alone and ignored by them, leading her to wish she were dead. She mentions different psychiatric diagnoses (borderline, bipolar, currently depression). She adds that she has attempted suicide several times. Two weeks earlier, in fact, she planned to jump out the window of an apartment the family owns. After writing her suicide letter, she went into the building but could not enter the apartment because the combination lock had been changed.

Therapist: D, how would you explain the failure of such a carefully planned suicide attempt? *[Interested, the T creatively searches for alternatives and presents a question that may lead to possibilities.]*

D: God saved me. *[Responsive, new meaning 'God's voice' and presence has emerged*

*within the framework of a protective relationship.]*

T: (to the family) Do you also believe God saved her?

They nod. *[The family is responsive and convergent.]*

T: D, what does God know about you that made him decide you had to go on living? *[Begins to search for a perspective that draws in self-appreciation, exploring meanings, resources and possibilities.]*

D: I don't know.

T: (to the family) Before we continue discussing the problems you are having, can you tell me what God knows about D, that she doesn't know, that made him decide she had to go on living? *[Respectfully moves from problems to possibilities, including other descriptions that will help D perceive or expand on her perception of herself and on family relations.]*

Each family member – even the brother – mentions different resources and positive contributions D had made to the family or business. In their narratives, they craft an emergent description of both D and of the family relations that was diverse and full of possibilities, moving away from a focus on the mutual accusations and fights. *[Confluences in dialogue, links between different dialogues and contexts and an emerging personal and relational intelligibility.]*

T: (to D): Do you agree with these descriptions? *[Explore whether she recognizes herself in the novel description with resources and the caring and appreciative relationships.]*

D: I do, but I had no idea that my family knew. *[Confluence in meaning, shared intelligibility, crafting of a new identity narrative for D here and in family relationships. Descriptions that acknowledge resources, express appreciation and respect for D, and lay the groundwork for new meanings, resources and personal and relational possibilities.]*

The family maintains these productive modes for two more sessions. In the fourth session, the family reports a fight over business decisions; D wants innovations, but her father and brother do not want to change the business which is very successful. In the discussion of the fight, the brother chides her and

returns to the accusations he had made in previous sessions. When the therapist asks how he thinks that D feels, he says that he does not care, that she could die and stop being a nuisance to the family. D 'explodes' and answers that she cannot take being blamed again and will kill herself, but not fail this time. The therapist proposes individual interviews with D to explore what it was about this accusation by her brother that made her explode when she had retained her composure and balance in the face of previous accusations.

In the individual sessions, the dialogue focuses on her life. Talking about the fight with the brother and how it related to her suicide attempts, D says, 'My brother wants to get rid of me and my father sides with him.'

T: I wonder, what makes you so obedient to your brother? (D does not understand.)

T: How can you stop being the way others describe you? Your brother said you are unbalanced, crazy, and you – who until that moment were doing very well – behaved as he described you. How did you lose sight of the resourceful, balanced person you can also be? [*Inviting D to search for her resources and possibilities.*]

D: I always did my father's bidding. I studied what my father wanted to fit in the family business – not what I wanted to study. [*Responsive and reflexive, shared intelligibility.*]

T: Now that you can see the difference, that you can choose according to your wishes, what would you choose? [*Expanding her possibilities in search of personal and more satisfying options.*]

D: It doesn't matter. It's too late. [*She doubts but is responsive.*]

T: Perhaps you can reconnect with your wishes and explore possibilities in your networks. [*Creative initiative linking dialogues from different contexts and times to foster the client's creativity, resources, possibilities, and life itineraries.*]

Next session:

D: There is one opportunity with a friend from college that interests me related to art that I will explore. [*Responsive, generative dialogues with herself, her interest, her life, and*

*her networks indicate transformative processes and confluences with the therapist towards a viable future.*]

We can see an emerging intelligibility, changes, and a new life emerging for D. The therapist and D work on how D would approach the family with her renewed perspective on herself and her life. In the three final family sessions, the family explores different ways of understanding work. D shares some choices she has made about her life with her family without making or being subjected to any criticism or accusations. She is calm and sure of her decision and wishes to retain her family's support and her share of the company.

In a follow-up conversation one year later, she is doing very well. 'I don't know why I was so insistent on being involved in the family business when there was no room for my resources and the best of myself.' Now, she is living an independent, productive life, studying abroad to become a museum curator, and enjoying her life.

The impact of violent conflict is very painful, and not limited to the persons directly involved. Violent conflict breaks up the very tissue of interpersonal relationships. A generative perspective and its practices for facing crisis and conflict help people to recover their resources and relationships, to reconnect to what has meaning for them, to re-orient their lives, and to restore personal and social integrity. An emphasis on resources and the collaborative construction of alternatives facilitates spaces of recovery and coexistence. When recognized, these survival strategies can be expanded to transform identity and social bonds that go beyond the initial resources and have an impact on personal, relational, and political agendas (Fried Schnitman, 2010).

## WORKING WITHIN THE GENERATIVE PROCESS

When people explain what has led them to consult a therapist, they often provide a

one-dimensional and problematic version of themselves and their circumstances (problem node). The professional must be aware of this; she meets the clients at the interactive moment, and takes their difficulties into account as well as their expectations, resources, and hopes.

As the process advances, the therapist pays attention to how clients can expand on this initial moment, further exploring other contexts of life while being attentive to emerging instances, alternative resources, and novel elements in the dialogue that are not part of the problematic situation or actively creating them. The question is how to make the clients' other voices audible and available to contribute to create new ones that may enrich their possibilities. Whatever emerges from the complexity of dialogue, the links between dialogues, and the diversity that characterizes humans, guides these explorations. By welcoming this diversity and paying attention to the resources that appear, participants can advance towards emerging possibilities and life alternatives.

This dialogic fabric takes the form of a network with the different novel resources and possibilities that emerged in the process; in turn, they are interwoven and synthesized, increasing the productivity and creativity of the process. Clients and therapist engage in a dialogue with confluences and convergences over time when they build a novel intelligibility that contributes resources (i.e., meanings and innovative ways of understanding and acting in specific contexts).

*Generative moments* are variations or minor events occurring in the dialogue that can give way to the creation of new perspectives and possibilities. They may be introduced by client or therapist, or simply emerge in dialogue. The therapist is very attentive to reciprocal responsiveness and will bring these emerging moments into the dialogue. If the clients, in turn, are responsive, and validate and expand on the emerging moment, it can turn into a generative moment, which will be confirmed and expanded further through supplementation and responsiveness in dialogue.

When this occurs, these generative moments articulate new perspectives and actions in the dialogue and the client's life, enabling paths towards transformations. In these cases, generative cycles can be further expanded into diverse areas of the client's life, bringing more opportunities and learning to fruition. New self and relational narrations emerge.

When the *generative cycles* further generate novel, productive meanings and life possibilities, they can develop into a generative matrix. The *generative matrix* combines meanings of the emerging perspectives, values, narratives, and novel actions that enable the transformations of people and their relationships both now and in the future. It promotes more productive, viable futures in relation to what motivated the client to seek therapy.

When opportunities to innovate appear as novelties in the dialogue through these emerging moments and events, the clients also recover or expand resources from their life contexts. Client or therapist can propose incorporating creative processes to build resources or open up possibilities. The resources and possibilities that appear in the process are further interwoven in dialogue, and forge alternative paths. The recognition of these transformations, and reflections on them, give way to new narratives and generative learning for all participants, including the therapist.

An alternative life design is created contextually, in the specifics of each therapy process, transformative and enabling devices are created, opening up a field of study of transformations in which we can discern open networks, wholes that are gradually woven over time and that synthesize heterogeneous circumstances, interactions, or contingent results within the process itself.

## CREATION OF A GENERATIVE PROCESS: A WORKING PLATFORM

The therapist's first generative actions focus on creating a dialogue with clients that



establishes reciprocal responsiveness and a mutually inclusive, trust-based relationship. When the therapist and client acknowledge their reciprocal relationship, they develop an *accepted relational reference*.

In the context of creating this bond, as the generative moments and cycles described above take place, clients feel engaged in a relationship that provides them with a different perspective on themselves. No longer limited to problems or inadequacies, their perspective is thus expanded to encompass resources, possibilities, self-trust, and incipient trust in the process.

In their confluences in dialogue, therapist and clients jointly build a working platform which connects problems with resources and possibilities and gives meaning to the direction the process is taking. The term *working platform* refers to a 'consensus' in dialogue and coordinated actions on the issues at hand. In short, it is a process that connects problems, resources, and possibilities over time in the direction of a viable future, within the framework of a relationship in which participants recognize the other/s as parties in dialogue.

As problems, resources, and possibilities are named and connected during the process, the links between them provide a sense of direction and understanding of how each event relates to the working platform. These possibilities and resources are transformational, helping the client advance towards a possible future and new ways of living. This mutual agreement on the direction they are headed is not the result of the professional applying a certain model or strategy; it is simply part of the same process of creating resources, possibilities, and new forms of living through reciprocal responsiveness and recognition. The working platform provides a domain for the dialogue between participants, a project for what therapy is going to be about, a direction and purposes in context. This is a process that creates a relationship, a framework, a direction, and a sense of relevance that can be expanded or modified as therapy progresses.

During the generative dialogue the reciprocal responsiveness configures virtual *dialogic agreements* (e.g., convergences and confluences) in the therapist–client relationship and clarifies the purpose of each resource or possibility. Along the way, the transformations can be seen in both the perspective of the clients and in their enactment, as their way of living is progressively redesigned. This pragmatic dimension is an integral part of the process.

### ILLUSTRATING THE PROCESS: FROM 'BEING FROZEN' TO GENERATIVITY

The following example illustrates generative processes in training and therapy. A student in the Graduate Degree Program on the Generative Perspective and Professional Practice, Diana Torres, is a Master in Clinical and Family Psychology, and a university professor in Colombia. In searching for her own and her client resources, she presented this case to the group.

#### *First Session: 'Being Frozen'*

Therapist: What brought you to therapy?

N: (looks down and then smiles shyly) I met this girl 2 years ago and well, it's weird, because I only saw her once. I went out with some people from school and she came along. Afterwards, I walked her home, asked her for her number, and she gave it to me. But when I called to ask her out, she said she couldn't that day, and told me she'd call me, but never did. Every day since, I think what would have happened if I had done something different. I know this sounds bad, like I'm sick or psycho. What woman would want to be with me if she knew about this? It's crazy but I can't stop it. I cry constantly, thinking, dreaming about her (sighing). I have to get her out of my head. [*Problem node and hopes.*]

The therapist expands the dialogue into other aspects of N's life (school, work, family relations). N is not working right now. The

youngest of three siblings, he quit school a semester before earning his degree in graphic design. He does not have many friends and spends most of his time in his room crying about everything he wants but hasn't achieved. During the session, he expressed his desire to change. [*Expectations.*]

N: Still at home at my age! I need a change. I need to work, make money, and get a girlfriend. I can't go on like this. (His eyes are brimming with tears. He cracks his knuckles.) [*Expectations.*]

In the therapist's conversation about this case with her colleagues in the generative group, she comments that the client seems stuck. She cannot find any resources on his part that would allow progress in the timing he expects. He is requesting help and has hopes to move on. She fears that it might take longer. She feels trapped because she wants to help him but doesn't know how at the pace he needs. The group comments that she has only described problematic aspects and asks whether N mentioned any resources. The therapist says N mentioned that he likes manga (Japanese comics) but she dismissed it because she could not see it as a resource. The group clarifies that manga is art and suggests she inquire into it and invite N to use manga to draft a proposal for his future in search of openings.

### ***Second Session: Changing. Establishing a Relationship. The Generative Process Begins with Moments, Cycles, and a Working Platform***

T: Talk to me about your art. I want to learn more about manga. (Her tone is inviting and interested.) [*Exploring if art is a resource that might provide possibilities.*]

N: OK, well manga art (sitting up straighter in the chair) is sort of like comics. I love it and I know I'm good at it. I never quit doing manga. I've done a lot with it and I keep getting better.

T: How is it that your voice, posture, and well, your whole attitude changes when you talk about your art? [*The therapist notes the emotion, change in posture, positive tone, and N's continued dedication to his art over time as an emerging moment, and expresses her recognition and interest. She is expanding resources.*]

N: Oh yeah? (blushing and smiling, looking pleased). I hadn't realized that. [*Generative moment.*] It's just something I really like, a place where things flow for me. [*He adds that he recognizes the differences in himself. This generative moment is expanded to newer moments and generative cycles, when he adds that with art, 'things flow'.*]

T: You say that things flow for you through art and I can see that's true. In fact, I was thinking about how some famous actors say similar things. That's what it feels like with you, what do you think? [*She explores his art creatively, discovering new meanings and reaffirming his feelings. Personal and relational emerge beyond failure, loneliness, and isolation. She expands the generative cycles and begins building a working platform that links problems, resources, and possibilities.*]

N: (with enthusiasm). Totally. When I'm with people talking about my art, things flow better and I can get to know people. [*Responsive, N begins an emerging, novel self-narration. The therapist advances on building the working platform further. They are developing a shared intelligibility through confluences in dialogue.*]

T: What would you say to making a manga that is about precisely how you would like your life to be? [*T proposes a timeline that extends beyond his current difficulties into the future.*]

He begins to draw with great care, making a self-portrait filled with light and expressing desires for his future. [*Several generative cycles emerge in the story and later, in his everyday life.*]

### ***Third Session***

T: How did manga become part of your life?

N: (smiling) Well, when I was seven, I saw my brother drawing manga and I've been drawing ever since (his chest swells). [*He proudly responds to the proposal, validating and expanding on it. Manga art is an encompassing resource in his life.*]

This dialogue allowed the therapist to link past, present, and future, since manga art has always been part of his life and is something he plans to do in the future. It is a generative tool that elicits change in the moment and is also a resource for the future. These generative moments and cycles enrich and expand the working platform.

Later, N becomes proactive and productive, initiating an ongoing self-exploration. [*New generative cycles appear and expand the working platform, creating possibilities, such as a job search, new art-related initiatives, new relationships, and an end to crying over times when he felt like a failure, including the incident with the girl two years earlier.*]

### ***Fifth Session: Revelation***

T: (after almost an entire session in which N has not mentioned the girl) I have a question. What allowed you to go the whole session without mentioning the girl? And you know what I think? If I hadn't asked this question, you would not have.

N: (smiling proudly, his eyes shining) I didn't bring her into the session. Truth is, it didn't seem that important, since I'm working on trying to find a job and posting things on my YouTube channel (where he has a cartoon series). She comes to mind from time to time, but she's not as important anymore.

N talked about his art and about changes. He has been sending out his résumé, getting ready for a manga show, and promoting his art. He appears enthusiastic and in high spirits in regards to current and future possibilities, acknowledging them with appreciation and pride. The active exploration and construction of a future with actual changes in his way of living is visible, as are the emotional transformations associated with his new 'realities.'

### ***Seventh Session: Generating New Knowledge and Learning***

T: Let's talk about the fact that you couldn't get this girl out of your head but in the last

session, she didn't come to your mind. If these were different sections or chapters in the book of your life, what title would you give them? [*This metaphor explores what emerged in therapy and has been consolidated as new ways of living.*]

N: The first chapter would be the moment when I came for the first session and I'd call it 'Being frozen'. And I'd call the second chapter in my story 'Changing' because that's the way it feels; I don't get depressed so much, I don't cry, I'm making up for lost time and taking steps to make changes in my life, because I feel better but I want to achieve more. [*Novel resources and possibilities are included in the narrations and reflexive learnings; transformations are part of generatively pondering changes in his life.*]

Although the entire process incorporates a transformation at multiple levels of the self, the client's relationships, resources and ways of living, the enactment of novel possibilities radically changes the motive for seeking therapy, materializing new ways of life.

### ***Therapist Reflections***

Something different emerged within me and for my client in the second session, something I referred to as a 'generative bridge and an outburst of resources.'

N came with his own problem node, and I had my own problem node with respect to the case. I was unable to see that N had resources or that my resources would help him. For me, the outburst of resources came when I received feedback from my colleagues and began relating to the client from the perspective of his resources, giving N the possibility to tell his story and live through a tool that allows things to 'flow' for him, manga art. That is to say, both of us experienced an outburst of resources that triggered change. On the other hand, when the problem node connected to new possibilities and a potential future, a generative bridge emerged. N could return to past situations that used to be problematic or negative and connected to them from another place, in the context of a working platform and enabling nodes. This allowed him to be in touch with his past experiences while also connecting to a potential future.

### ***Follow-Up: Strengthening Generativity***

The therapist reports that she had five additional sessions with N. Besides showing his artwork at two major manga exhibitions, N is building a name for himself in that world, and is much more confident of his capabilities. The issue of the girl he said he was obsessed with is no longer part of the panorama.

N has made a powerful transformation that can be seen in his posture, his expression, and his life narrative, which emphasizes possibilities. He has found creative solutions to his problems and also creatively sought out opportunities. He is earning money. [*A transformed and active life matrix of enacted resources and possibilities has changed his way of life.*]

One year after, he has a formal job at a design company and is working towards establishing a manga art project.

### **THERAPISTS AND CLIENTS: BUILDING FUTURES**

The generative perspective in therapy heeds dialogue's creative resources and possibilities. This approach is future-oriented and distinct because of the emphasis it places on the ability of the professional to be an active participant in dialogue and to respond creatively and innovatively to what emerges through it. For the therapist, that means getting involved in the relational field and developing a practice grounded in creativity, generative research, collaboration, and relational responsibility (McNamee, 2015a, 2015b; McNamee and Gergen, 1998; Morales et al., 2015).

Through dialogue and collaboration, professionals and clients work together to question unresolved and difficult problems and challenges, to assess and co-create emergent resources, and to craft and implement new

possibilities, alternative futures, and novel ways of living. In other words, they address what clients are grappling with from a perspective geared to transformation, and they do so by focusing on the present moment, and not on pre-knowledges. This requires that professionals recognize uniqueness and felt experience, and grasp each person and their specific circumstances. This dialogic approach at once fosters and invites creativity and co-participation giving rise to complex and nonlinear options. Multiple voices are engaged, and limitations and underlying assumptions questioned to enable clients to reauthorize and re-signify their lives.

Through the examples in this article, we see how change is constructed and oriented in dialogue, and problems tied to possibilities for innovations and for reflexive generative learning; new dialogic knowledge is fostered to accompany the process and to expand resources for the sake of transforming participants' lives.

The professional's participation is aesthetic insofar as it reflects the client's particularities and idiosyncrasies, and ethical insofar as it responds to their request and needs.

### **Note**

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