

# Temporality as the co-construction of couple relationship: The regulation of experiential time

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## Abstract

A study of temporality in human encounters and specifically in amorous relationships is presented. The article aims to analyze subjective and experiential time, focusing on the relationships and the difficulties involved. A review of the theoretical and phenomenological understanding of temporality that gives rise to the Chronogenesis model is made. The authors describe time processing in a couple's experience through an analysis of fictional literature and clinical vignettes. Moments of dialogue are addressed to focus on the relationship as an emergent process, the co-construction of the relationship, "weness," and a sense of future possibilities in which the partners reposition and negotiate.

## Keywords

Temporality, relationship, meaning-making, intersubjectivity

## Introduction

The study of temporality in couple relationships refers to the field of relational processes. The ongoing quality of the experience of temporality addresses the aspects of a relationship not usually discussed in therapeutic settings. These aspects refer to transformation as a feature of psychological experience (Valsiner, 2008). The contributions of theories such as duration (Bergson, 1896/1959) and Dasein (Heidegger, 1962) have pointed to a temporality that differs from clock time; it is life according to Bergson and existence according to Heidegger. The notion of

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temporality is essentially human and cultural and implies attitudes and ways of being in the world in relation to others and the environment. The authors focus on the experience of being as a phenomenon that is culturally constructed through social exchanges and semiotic mediation. The article explores the way in which temporality as a phenomenon of self-construction is immersed into the development of relationships, specifically amorous couples. Clinical vignettes and fictional literature are analyzed. The present study was performed from a constructivist, evolutive, and cultural perspective, considering the Chronogenesis model (Sato & Valsiner, 2010) and using a qualitative method.

## Background

Temporality is a matter of cultural and historical psychology. Human experience occurs through continuous construction of the self in terms of others and in relation to the surrounding world. The borders and transitions of temporality are eminently dialogical and genetic instead of static in nature (Simão, Silva, & Valsiner, 2015). The study of temporality has attracted interest throughout human history. The Greek culture distinguished between different forms of time. Aion (Αἰών), described an eternal time, Chronos (κρόνος), a chronological linear time, and Kairos (καιρός), a subjective time. Kairos, therefore, brings meaningfulness to the relationship between time and experience. Kairos refers to meaningful life and opportune events, with no definable time (Boscolo & Bertrando, 1996; Couzens Hoy, 2009).

The current article focuses on the analysis of human encounter and therefore, Kairos is a central concept. Human existence occurs within a boundary, a liminal space between the just known and the next unknown (Abbey, 2015). It is a moment in between such boundary that varies within time-scale schedules according to how it is experienced. Kairos occurs in time of transition, as it provides the opportunity for transformation and living beyond schedules or measurable units of time. Kairos is the time of encounter, revealing life to the players within the moment. Kairos exists within all human encounters, as this situation requires receptivity and response.

The theory of Dasein proposed by Heidegger conceives the concept of time as it refers to the experience of existing or being-in-the-world, exclusive to humans. Dasein addresses the ontological structure of existence, the presence of being that affects all future acts and the interpretation of the past (Basia & Henderikus, 2015; Heidegger, 1962). Dasein refers to the authentic I-world encounter in which the world is a tool for the living and the source of experiences. Dasein is not individual but a coexistence, being-with-one-another, implying that meaningfulness is fluid and changes moment-to-moment with encounters with others. While Heidegger was not particularly focused on the individual self, being-in-the-world is personal in its specificity (Cornejo & Olivares, 2015).

Bergson (1896/1959) posited that subjective time is the basis for the human-world relationship. Experience occurs within subjective consciousness and the experience of time assumes a holistic organization. In Dureé, there is a flow of

interlaced durational units that cannot be disentangled. Understanding of these units can be achieved through conscious reflection (Vedeler, 2015). This understanding separates Bergson from Heidegger who focused on the living experience as the act of being and not feelings or experience of the self. In Bergson's (1896/1959) words: "There comes a time when the memory (...) is embedded so well in perception that we cannot say where perception ends and where memory begins" (p. 301). The connection is expressed in the present experience as a whole and is contingent on and inseparable from the living moment.

Temporality gives distinctiveness to every experience, making them unique and unrepeatable. The theories of *dasein* and *durée* place temporality at the core of the processes by which individuals construct a sense of self and of their lives, within the context of the world and others.

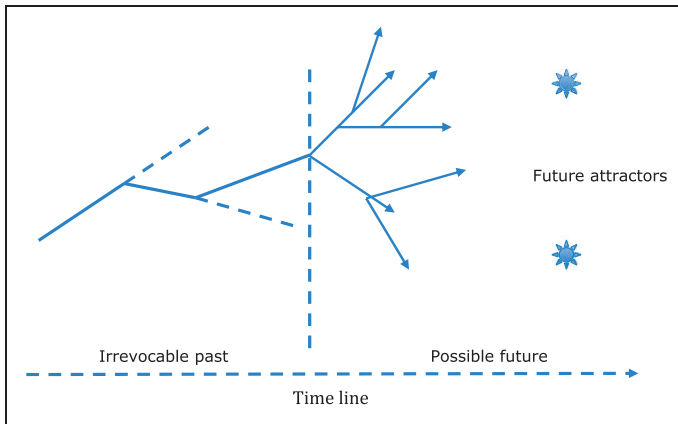
### *The Chronogenesis model*

Chronogenesis, proposed by Sato and Valsiner (2010), highlights the centrality of time in human life. Chronogenesis considers everyday experiences through processes of ruptures and emergent new options. Chronogenesis is derived from the words *chrono* (time) and *genesis* (creation) and theorizes that temporality is co-constructed with another in the here-and-now through continual decisions regarding the future. It assumes directionality of experience, where meanings and memories are organized to pre-adapt for the future.

The 'just being' is actually eternal becomingcreation of novelty. James Mark Baldwin (1906) called it persistent imitationimitation of what we see in ways that go beyond what we see. We create new ways of looking at the world, we behave in new ways, and we seek out experiences that we find meaningfulas solid bases for 'where we are' as well as situations for new adventures. (Sato & Valsiner, 2010, pp. 83)

Sato and Valsiner considered the notions of irreversibility of time (Bergson, 1896/1959) and being-in-the-world (Heidegger, 1962) to propose the Chronogenesis Model, focusing on the directionality of experience. The possibilities of the future impact the present through imagined attractors that influence and provide directionality to each present moment (Figure 1). For example, cohabitating entails future attractors with a range of possibilities disposing couples to organize rituals and share a perspective that supports the union.

Time irreversibility (Sato & Valsiner, 2010) is experienced as sequences of transformation and stability and recursive cycles of change and permanence. The notion of becoming is explained as "...continually created, annihilated and created again" (West-Pavlov, 2013, p. 51) (in a constant balance between autopoiesis and entropy). Stability entails momentary snapshots of transitions leading to continual transformation. Therefore, stability can be attributed more to the imagination and semiotic regulation than to actual experience. Imagination is the ability to modify one's relationship with the world, understanding the past, and replacing



**Figure 1.** Self Chronogenesis Model (Sato & Valsiner, 2010).

the unknown—the future—with possibilities and actionable ideas (Valsiner, 2014; Zittoun et al., 2015).

Feelings of uncertainty arise when transitions in life are acknowledged, such as moments of choices or incidents in life's trajectory (Sato, Hidaka, & Fukuda, 2009; Zittoun, 2007). A transition in life entails a rupture with experiences of the past and a present that generates new directions for the future. Surprise, admiration, creative impulse and crisis lead to transitions. The experience of time involves the process of self-evaluation within the context of one's own life and within relationships with others, through a meaning-making process.

Semiotic mediation is a regulatory process within the experience of temporality (Zittoun et al., 2015). Every action of consciousness involves the experience of temporality. According to Sato and Valsiner (2010), irreversibility involves a non-linear timeline; only the past is a single trajectory. The future, however, provides a variety of potential courses (see Figure 1). Both reality (the past) and imagination (the future) combine in the self-construction process (Valsiner, 2000). Between the irreversible past and the possibilities of the future is the here-and-now encounter with one's self and with others. Consider the following statement:

A present then, as contrasted with the abstraction of mere passage, is not a piece cut out anywhere from the temporal dimension of uniformly passing reality. Its chief reference is to the emergent event, that is, to the occurrence of something which is more than the processes that have led up to it and which by its change, continuance, or disappearance, adds to later passages a content they would not otherwise have possessed. (Mead, 1932, p. 52)

For Mead, the present moment is a unique period of time that defines and helps to develop the self and reality. An upcoming event necessitates a transformation in the path of becoming. The asymmetry between the present and the near past leads to

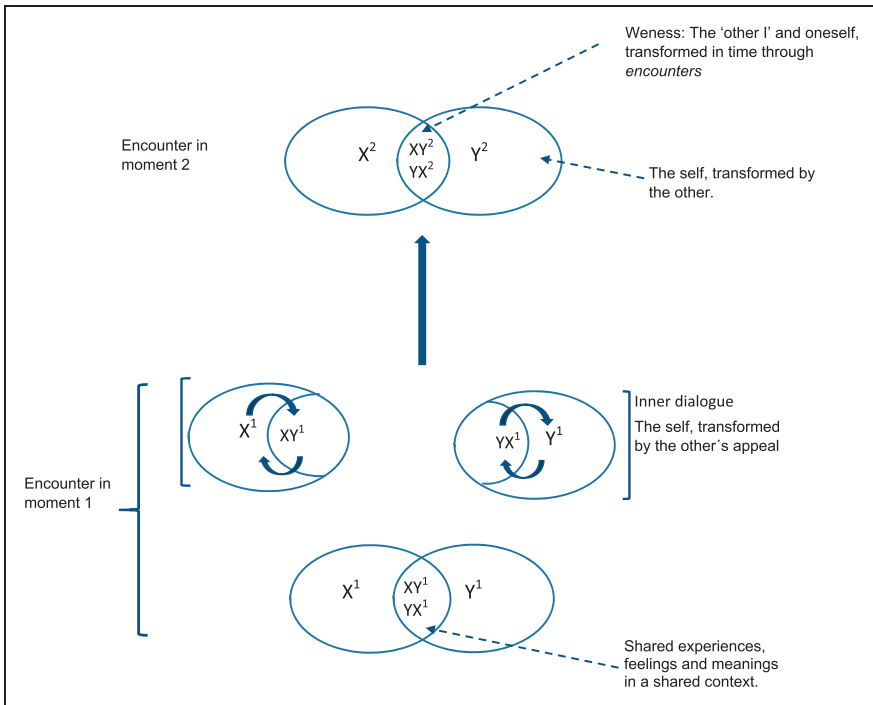
tension (Molina & Del Río, 2008; Molina, Del Río, & Tapia-Villanueva, 2015) that arises when different subjective positions are met. The past is understood as accomplishments, losses, or failures, while the future is perceived with confidence or fear but mainly uncertainty. Every present moment arrives with the challenge of creating meanings at the border of the past and the future, which is driven by tension. In order to maintain a sense of stability and manage tension in daily life, uncertainty is often avoided. The avoidance of uncertainty leads one to lose sight of processes and transitions (Valsiner, 2000, 2002).

High personal impact experiences affect the temporal dimension of life (Abbey, 2004; Zittoun, 2007). In unpredictable situations, the expectations for the future and the known past become meaningless through the prism of the new situation. The previously existing relation between past, present and future is broken (Zittoun et al., 2015). Meaning construction strategies manifest to restore sense in life trajectory by creating more flexibility in future expectations and constructing temporal meanings based on actual experience (Abbey, 2004).

## **Temporality in couple relationships**

The focus on subjective temporality addresses the existential nature of experience. By definition, subjectivity insinuates “other.” Thus, chronogenesis presumes an intersubjective phenomenon, which progresses through encounters with outer and inner others (Simão, 2015). In this viewpoint, couple’s relationship can be understood within a self/other framework. The sociologist Albert Schutz (1970), addressing intersubjectivity, proposed that a phenomenological perspective must consider an encounter in time as an immediate experience of the “other” that arises in a communicative environment and allows for understanding and consent. There are two intersubjective foci from which each individual experiences his/herself in a particular situation: “the other” and the whole. Considering Schutz’s view, action and mutual understanding within a couple entails the observation of the shared experiencing of the “us,” or the “we-experience.” The self-position that formulates the meaning of “the other” from one’s own perspective was labeled the “other-I” by Schutz. The “other-I” challenges the understanding of the self. The “other-I” is the concept of the other internalized together with culture through the context of many encounters. From the “other-I” perspective, I, you and the culture co-construct a new identity termed “weness” (see Figure 2) (Tapia & Molina, 2016). In the construction of “weness,” the other becomes an “experienced other” (Valsiner, 2014).

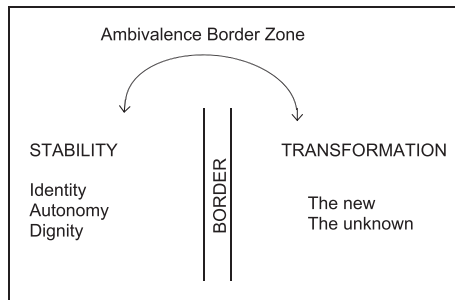
The relationship dynamics of mutuality and reciprocity can be understood within the context of temporality. The dialogical encounter includes the processes of deriving meaning and construction of the self and “weness” and as such can be used for study. Close relationships are developed through ruptures, transitions, recalling of the past and anticipation for the future. Uncertainty is inherent to experience and is magnified by the unpredictability of being with another (space) in relation to the expectancies of the future (time). There is a need to manage



**Figure 2.** Intersubjective model for intimate relationships and the dialogical co-construction of "weness" in time.

uncertainty, which leads to regulatory actions carried out through chronogenesis, as the couple co-constructs moment to moment in the realm of "weness."

Individuals develop meaningful strategies to alleviate the tensions inherent to temporality so as to more effectively cope with the complexity, uncertainty and unpredictability of life and death (Abbey, 2004; Tapia, Poulsen, Armijo, Pereira, & Sotomayor, 2009; Zittoun et al., 2015). Within the context of the cultural perspective—a "shared affective symbolization of a context that builds the relationship between those who share the same context" (Ruggieri & Gorrese, 2015, p.319)—human bonds are developed by socially exchanged or shared meanings and constraints in a constant negotiation between the self and the "weness." The regulation of emotional needs involves strategies that include the co-construction of common beliefs but also of the self as distinct from the other. There is a continuous border between "I" and "We," and between "now" (what-it-is) and "next" (what-could-be). Successfully coping with these borders entails the development of trust and loyalty in the foreign, the new and the mysterious. Couples may create a temporal perspective of stability and certainty (state perspective) or of change and motion, in the context of the relationship between the individuals or more especially between the couple and their context—spatial and temporal (Tapia et al., 2009).

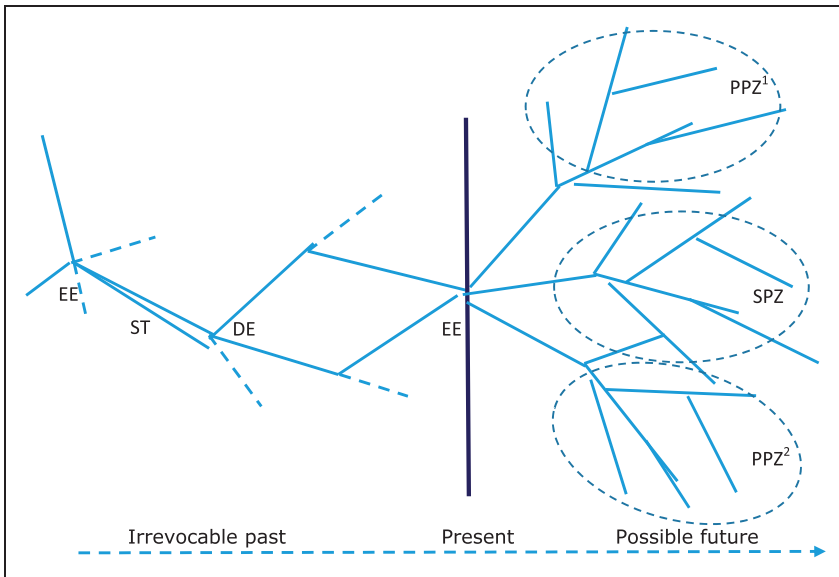


**Figure 3.** The ambivalence border zone of the intimacy encounter.

Intimacy and passionate love are experienced at a border between stability and impermanence that creates anxiety about merging and losing identity or sameness; an existential anxiety could arise, related to the fear of nothingness or even death, in which different ways of being can be experienced including the loss of the self. The experience of being is at the same moment at stake (Heidegger, 1962). Partners within an intimate relationship must regulate the border between the conservation and the loss of personal identity and the stress of uncertainty. This conflict is experienced as a simultaneous feeling of “being” and “stop-being” creating both clarity and confusion, allowing the relationship to progress (Schnarch, 1991; Tapia, 2007).

Bonds are established in a border zone of stability and change where both partners strive toward the goal of intimacy, passion and loving desire (Figure 3). The uncertain and emergent nature of love within a relationship includes unknown, risky and giddy aspects. Encounters with the “other” require flexibility in the acceptance of differences, the impossibility of total identification with the other and the inability to forecast the future. Crises may follow the loss of certainty and stability. The ambivalent border of certainty/un-certainty is semiotically regulated and often supported by abstraction and generalization. The meanings of couple, romance, loyalty, marriage, family and others are cultural devices that enable alternative ways of connection and understanding to solve crises and aid in the coping with the anxiety of being in transition. Conversely, crises can also arise from the monotony and routineness of the relationship, which can lead to the loss of novelty and passion (Tapia et al., 2009).

Different personal stances interact within a relationship and also the partners together co-construct a shared temporality and a common trajectory (Figure 4). A negotiation between times of transformation and abstract times (time-free) of stability takes place. It is abstract by virtue of situational needs to deny the ongoing nature of experience and creating meanings around state of affairs (Sato et al., 2009). Tensions arise in relationships throughout daily-life interactions in which each partner faces the other’s potentially differing position. Tension motivates creativity, growth and development. However, when difference is felt as threat, it leads to either escalation or stagnation within the relationship. Some studies (Gottman, 1999; Tapia et al., 2009) argue that it is not conflict that negatively



**Figure 4.** Chronogenesis of encounters.

EE: encounter experience; ST: shared trajectory; DE: divergence experience; PPZ: personal possibilities zone; SPZ: shared possibilities zone.

affects a relationship, but rather dysfunctional patterns of gridlock and stagnation. In such cases, interactions become rigid and repetitive, characterized by emotional disconnection, inability to communicate and move forward. Temporality of stagnation hinders possibilities within the relationship. Conflict within a relationship can be understood in terms of temporality regulation strategies. For example, the difficulties in dealing with uncertainty can lead to overcome the tension through static notions like personality structure, adhered values or actions with everlasting effects as attempts of evading transition.

The question that arises is how differences in temporalities between individuals in a relationship are regulated. It seems unlikely that two ontogenies could be aligned or in harmony, and therefore, it is necessary for couples to use resources provided by uncertainty to live in the present. Even when life is governed by the social demands of an objective time of “the agenda,” private lives are immersed in something that happens in its own time.

## Temporality and conflict in literature

The theoretical concepts presented have inspired the approach for studying the experience of temporality in couple relationships. The aim is addressing how temporality is elaborated in dialogue and how this experience facilitates the negotiation that takes place. The following is an excerpt from the story “What we talk about



when we talk about love” by Raymond Carver (1981). It is a dialogue between a heterosexual couple (Duane and Holly). The text is told from the perspective of the man, Duane:

“—Holly, you’re still a proud woman” I go. “You’re still number one. Come on Holly.”

She shakes her head. “Something’s died in me,” she goes. “It took a long time for it to do it. But it’s dead. You’ve killed something, just like you took an axe to it. Everything is dirt now.”

She finishes her drink. Then she begins to cry. I make to hug her. But it’s not good.

Within the dialogue, chronogenesis unfolds as a co-construction of an impending break-up. The use of the word “still” demonstrates that Duane is expressing himself in a temporality of the past in the present, while Holly uses the word “died” demonstrating her temporality perspective of what is gone. The dialogue suggests links between past, present and future. The past is re-constructed (imagined at the present) and refers to moments that once were open to possibilities that were not taken and are no longer available. The mismatch of temporality hinders intersubjectivity to develop within the dialogue. It also is interfered by the inclusion of a third; the number one implies position in a ranking in relation with a third person.

A temporality of a non-changing condition is also expressed through the term “proud” which refers to an individual state, particularly a personality quality, as a time-free perspective (Sato et al., 2009). Duane uses the term to avoid the ongoing moment. On the contrary, Holly comes from the perspective of the present, while letting go of the past.

The dialogue continues from the perspective of Duane as narrator:

She walks up and down the room (...) Holly goes, “You’ve gone outside the marriage. It’s trust that you killed.”

I get down on my knees and I start to beg. But I’m thinking on Juanita. This is awful.

I don’t know what’s going to happen to me or to anyone else in the world.

I go, “Holly, honey, I love you.”

Duane refers to a future where hope seems frail, leading to a loss of meaning and despair. The past, present and future momentarily lose a meaningful connection for both Duane and Holly. Duane loses a connection with himself, with Holly, and Juanita. There is no longer a “weness” as a couple. There is no longer a connection with self, or the world. Here, blurred spatial borders meet with the tensions of temporal borders leading to the confusion of the present, the refuge in the past of Juanita and bewilderment for the future.

Holly wipes her eyes. She goes, “Fix me a drink. This one’s too watery. (...) I’m moving to Nevada.”

(...) She sets her lips and gives me her special look.

Drinking's funny. When I look back on it, all of our important decisions have been figured out when we were drinking.

I don't have anything to say. I feel all out of words inside. I give her the glass and sit down in the chair. I drink my drink and think it's not ever going to be the same.

The above scene demonstrates the experience of a border where vital events burst into consciousness, and then are explored and recognized, producing imbalance and pushing for change. Actions and instruments are semiotic strategies that allow to focus on the moment through the qualities of the scene.

In the dialogue between Duane and Holly, two distinct temporalities are evident. There is a present of the past (the reference to the moment of dialogue) and the here-and-now present (the narrative). Our analysis is focused on that present of the past assuming the distance of it. Duane uses memories of drinking as a regulatory strategy. The memories are brought from the past and assembled with new value and new meaning from the perspective of the moment of the interaction.

Duane fears the future as a reaction to Holly's decision to leave. He is paralyzed and has nothing to say. With the words, "Things are not ever going to be the same," Duane expresses a sense of hopelessness as he becomes aware of an anticipated loss of the couple's identity and "weness."

(...) But things here were going downhill fast. We just didn't have the heart for it anymore.

I stopped cleaning the pool. It filled up with green gick (...) I didn't fix any more faucets or lay any more tiles or do any of the touch-up painting. Well the truth is we were both hitting it pretty hard.

Holly wasn't registering the guests right, either. She was charging too much or else not collecting what she should (...). But we had stopped caring, and that's the fact. We knew our days were numbered. We had fouled our lives and we were getting ready for a shake-up.

The excerpt above describes the experience of an irreversible past with the understanding of an ongoing process of impairment. The past, marked by neglect and uncaring, is strongly expressed through metaphors in which time is experienced as fading and lost. The actual moment of the breaking of the relationship is regulated through feelings of abandonment, foulness and dirtiness, turning the temporality towards transition. The past is elaborated through the possibilities of what Duane and/or Holly should have done. Meanings are elaborated to clarify the moment, re-signifying the past and creating certainty at the present through terms such as "that's the fact."

At this moment in the story, intersubjectivity progresses. The expression, "we had fouled our lives and we were getting ready for a shake-up" is marked with temporality expressed as the past "fouled" and the uncertain future "getting ready for." The narrative exposes the intersubjectivity of processing an irrevocable

moment—“We knew our days were numbered.” It is a moment shared as a couple, a shared temporality, that acknowledges the passage of time, and a transition to an unknown life, denoting *kairos* as the quality of temporality.

The story continues:

Then that Saturday morning we woke up after a night of rehashing the situation. We opened our eyes and turned in bed to take a good look of each other. We both knew it then. We'd reach the end of something, and the questioning was to find out where new to start. (Carver, Pos 301–350 of 1968)

The above passage signifies a synthesis with the understanding of a new beginning and the emergence of the possibility of new opportunities for the future. The loss of the relationship signifies transition. In one statement, both the past and the future are joined, with a border between endings and beginnings. Furthermore, the passage characterizes the present experience as a temporary break “we reached the end of something” and a transformation, “where new to start.” The present is not only temporally situated but is also spatially situated (where). The relationship ends with intersubjectivity “We both knew it then.”

## **Temporality in case analyses**

Two partner situations are presented below in which the Chronogenesis model proves useful.

John (41) and Gina (40) consulted a counselor due to conflicts experienced during the previous year. The couple has been married for 15 years and have two children. Gina perceived John as increasingly intolerant, distant and aggressive, while John complained that Gina was dependent and passive. When asked about their problems, John stated:

I ran out of patience, I also urge and criticize her. She does not dare to make decisions. If I do not switch on the engine, there's no sexuality. I'm tired of always being the one who proposes new things to do. That makes me feel lonely.

Gina remarked:

He asks me to do things but it is difficult for me to handle them. I like when he encourages me but he is intense and demanding. He projects himself while I live just in the present and I can hardly follow his activity. In fact, I would like to follow what he proposed, but if I do, it will not be as he wishes.

The Chronogenesis model provides a perspective in understanding the problems faced by John and Gina as they fail to work out their differences. Within their dialogue, there are references to time related to moving/non-moving concepts

related to decision making, proposing new things to do and switching on an engine. Gina describes her husband as “projecting himself,” while she “lives just in the present.” The term “just,” qualifies the meaning as a restrained present, a present that has difficulties in projecting the future. It is evident in the expressions “I can hardly follow” and “difficult to handle.” Within the relationship, there is tension between two different temporalities. John projects himself into the future, while Gina is living in the present. The uncoupling of the temporalities leads to John feeling alone and Gina feeling a need for John’s support as a way to connect.

Differences between the individual temporal dispositions have led to tension that may seem irreconcilable and pushed the relation to co-construct beyond social practices related to the meanings of gender roles: The proposing male and the dependent female. The here and now of the dialogue is a scenario for negotiation. While the tension may be uncomfortable, it provides the energy to work towards goals as a couple. Therefore, the asymmetry in temporalities can be a point for negotiation and transformation in the co-construction of relationship meanings, and not necessarily conflict or dysfunction.

The following are excerpts from a conversation that took place during therapy session with a married couple. Bill (35) and Amy (32) sought counseling because they had become distant and were struggling with insecurities about their future.

Bill: There have been issues going on for years. It hurt you a lot when I did not arrive home the other day. I can understand it now when I place myself in your situation.

Amy: I thought this was going to happen, that I would feel relieved if I look you could see me.

Bill: I realized that I abandoned you. It was more painful for you because I went out and returned, and then left again. I gave you hope and pain and that action damaged you.

Amy: Yes, that caused me harm.

In this first exchange, Bill establishes a point of reference of personal time by stating that there had been “issues going on for years.” It is a reference to irreversible time.

There is then a convergence of temporality. First, Bill refers to the present, “understand now” which is confirmed by Amy. Intersubjectivity is also expressed as both Bill and Amy refer to past situations as being harmful for Amy.

The conversation continues with each taking either the role victim or victimizer with feelings of pain and implied guilt, respectively.

Bill: The painful issues remained and have grown. I left again because I felt the need to escape.

Amy: I realize now why I got so angry when he returned. I thought that things would be different, but they were the same. Now I understand my mistrust. I need to be on guard because I’m hurt.

This exchange implies a change in temporality. Bill uses the term “escape” to establish a temporal and spatial boundary in their trajectory as a couple. Amy uses the phrase, “when he returned” which introduces another border in the couple’s trajectory and leads to new insight by understanding “why I got so angry.” The conversation takes place in the present and reflects on a harmful past, that doesn’t end, a continuous past-in-present. Temporalities of the individuals converge with Bill’s phrase “going on for years” and Amy’s phrase, “they were the same.”

Bill: Instinctively I want to protect you. But I have no energy. So many times we promised to rectify our issues and so many times we have done nothing. We keep hitting the same wall. What would be different now? When the storm ceases, rags ends, and then we make a commitment and again it vanishes with time. And we fall back into a routine. We’re patching a wound, but not deeply cleaning it.

Uncertainty usually offers possibilities for the future. But the question, “what would be different now?,” addresses demands to the present. Constraints are established by utterances of “no energy,” “done nothing” and “the same wall.” The present in this case is a point of time where hope and expectations were placed but were not fulfilled.

In the dialogue between Bill and Amy, there are references to the past and to the present. However, references to the future are missing. The absence of references to the future implies despair. According to chronogenesis, the past–present–future relationship in the dialogue is condensed and diffuse in the following statement: “So many times we have done nothing. We keep hitting the same wall.” The past returns and continues into an unchanged future. There is a repetitive past and a sense of a collapsed future. Bill and Amy live reflecting on the past and not looking toward the future. The present is stagnant and the couple feels stranded in time.

## Conclusions

The current manuscript explores relationships in the context of existence and becoming. The analysis aimed to grasp the experience of relationships as an emergent process in which higher psychological functions such as will and intention are used towards the co-construction of the identity of “weness” and an understanding of paths and possibilities for life and conflict resolution. In the illustration presented, Duane and Holly may redefine their identity by reflecting on what they were as a couple (a marriage) and speculate upon the trajectory to live forward. John and Gina, on the other hand, co-constructed their identity as a couple at the border of cultural expectancies. This process of co-construction allows re-positioning of the present and experiencing the emergence of a new future.

Understanding the role of culture in temporality involves exploring how social practices operate in the border of the encounter with other and the next moment. The coupling process is a trajectory of encounters in which temporality means the

emergence of new meaning and sense at the present so as to adapt to the future. The tension and asymmetry of interactions offer resources provided by uncertainty to negotiation. Temporality thus constitutes a relevant unit for therapy. A phenomenon that characterizes process, change and the dynamics involved in the interactive phenomenon of psychotherapy. The regulatory mechanisms can be applied as highly meaningful tools for psychological elaboration and personal resources for the negotiation of personal positions in the search for shared understanding.

The transient nature of experience is a crucial aspect of temporality. When it is considered by therapeutic theory, temporal integration is facilitated. And temporality takes part in healing, encountering and problem solving. When there is a dialogue between past, present and future, the search for new meaning and especially the option to re-negotiate relationships in gridlock situations is promoted.

Focusing on the exploration of temporality has led to the emergence of spatiality as a related dimension. Thus, the uncertainty of temporality coexists with a spatial uncertainty in relation to others, as Duane says, "I do not know what's going to happen to me or anyone else in the world." Spatiality is a dimension for further exploration within the therapeutic context. Time and space constitute complementary dimensions within the same process of negotiation between self and "weness."

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### Author biographies

**María Elisa Molina** is currently a professor and researcher at the Psychology Faculty of Universidad del Desarrollo in Chile. She leads a team of research of relational processes, the Unit of couple therapy. She did her PhD research work in Santiago Chile at the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile. Her dissertation was on Semiotic approach to therapeutic dialogues among mothers of sexually abused children. Her research interest is on relational and dialogical processes from a perspective of uncertain and culturally regulated systems, temporality of emergent processes and semiotic mediation. Her approach entails a constructivist and evolutive paradigm to address a cultural, relational and dialogical self. Her main fields of applied knowledge are the therapeutic and clinical encounter, the phenomenon of passionate love, family and couple's relations.

**Luis Tapia-Villanueva†**, was a medical doctor and psychiatrist graduated at the Universidad de Chile. He had worked as a family and couple therapist for years and as a clinical supervisor in post graduated programs at the Instituto Chileno de Terapia Familiar ICHTF. Along his professional development he did research and teaching at different formation institutions, which included therapeutic formation in systemic therapy and psychodrama therapy. During the last decade he had worked as a researcher and professor at the Faculty of Psychology of the Universidad del Desarrollo, Chile, creating the Unit of Research in Couple Therapy (in 2005), which he led until his decease. His research focus was on uncertain, cultural and emotional regulation processes from a systemic perspective and the implications for couple relationships. The main areas of his contribution were about passionate love, conflict and resolution dimensions in couple's relations and the therapeutic process.



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**Pablo Fossa** is currently a researcher and professor at the Psychology Faculty of Universidad del Desarrollo in Chile. He did his master formation at this University and obtained his PhD degree at Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile. His dissertations was on weakening moments of therapeutic bond from microgenetic perspective and on expressive dimension of inner language in human experience. At the present he is a member of the Unit of Research in Couple Therapy and his research is related with cognitive mechanisms and semiotic processes in the field of psychotherapy and relational dynamics.