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Early childhood *perezhivaniya*

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Our overarching response to this collection of papers on *perezhivanie* is that the great range of topics across the papers makes necessary more specific conference discussions and papers: those which tackle methodological questions; applications; contextualization within various theoretical traditions, fields and professions; lacunae in the research; translation issues; and more. The papers all confirm our understanding that *perezhivanie* is a concept that is important to, and can create a fruitful dialogue between, the fields of cultural psychology and early childhood education. We therefore offer a composite response to those points made in several papers, which help us to think in new ways about our claim that the difference between adult and child *perezhivaniya* is one of degree, not of kind.

Veresov and Fleer's argument that *perezhivanie* as a concept productively contributes to the study of children's development helps us to clarify the fact that our own argument includes a different perspective: We also claim that an understanding of children's development can be of use in the study of *perezhivanie* (the concept and the phenomenon). We are particularly intrigued by Roth and Jornet's emphasis on "the kind of world that becomes possible for human beings, whose social lives are defined by ethics and freedom," in part because this offers an understanding that social lives in early childhood are also defined by ethics and freedom. Furthermore, we too appreciate that emphasizing the phenomenon of prolepsis is essential in developing an understanding of *perezhivanie*, in particular an understanding of the ways that *perezhivaniya* take place in social relations in early childhood and then appear, later in life, to be an individual achievement.

Rey challenges our assumption that *perezhivanie* is a useful concept for developing the field of early childhood education, by challenging its current use in psychology. We are intrigued by his proposal regarding subjectivity and are interested in how this work could challenge and vitalize the concepts of learning and development. The notion that what is at stake is a challenge to the notion of objectivity helps us to contemplate relations between *perezhivanie*; recent interest in intra-active pedagogies in early childhood education, in which materials are understood to be active and performative agents (Lenz Taguchi, 2010); and our longstanding interest in the work of Martin Buber, which we have included in previous discussions of *perezhivanie* through the concept of co-existence (Aspelin & Persson, 2011) from relational pedagogy: "Co-existence is a goal in itself; i.e. meaning is inherent in the relationship" (2011, p. 10).

Clarà's discussion of the difference between Vygotsky's and Vasilyuk's uses of the term *perezhivanie* as experiencing-as-struggle and the meaning that mediates experience-as-struggle makes us wonder if the study of this distinction in early childhood *perezhivaniya* might lead us to note significant differences between adult and early childhood *perezhivaniya*. We are still working to formulate relevant questions from this supposition, but the following are some attempts.

What is the difference between the death of the loved one, for an adult, and the death of a loved one when one is not yet old enough to understand death in the same terms that adults use to understand death? What is the difference between the death of a loved one for an adult and the experience of finding, for the first time, that one's body is breakable, even when one is not knowingly taking a risk, when one is a young child. For instance, when a four year-old person who has just fallen from her bike and is bleeding on her knee, and exclaims with fury and wonder, "I just closed my eyes very quickly. I was still pedaling! I was riding!" then she is, perhaps, facing "a situation that causes her strong pain, suffering, and psychological disruption, (while she) cannot do anything, whether practical or cognitive, to resolve the existential aspects of the situation." Is the semiotic transformation of Vygotsky's *perezhivanie* distinct from *this* special type of activity?

We found that Blunden's introduction was especially useful in complicating our claim that the difference between adult and child *perezhivaniya* is one of degree, not of kind. This paper helped us to formulate several questions about what we have called the "pivot" in *perezhivaniya*, the not other who propels one through the stages: What is the role of the other person needed in *perezhivaniya*? For a young child could this other person be not a therapist, parent (for advice in a crisis), actor or psychoanalyst, but instead someone or even something more diffuse or more variable? Perhaps, just as the young child can actually sever the meaning of horse from a real horse using a stick, the young child can complete the full range of psychological phenomenon associated with *perezhivanie* within a certain relationship with his human and nonhuman environment?

These questions can be addressed in part with a response to Blunden's claim that a child does not have a life-project. We would argue that the young child does indeed have a life-project, although it is the life project of achieving a life-project (and so becoming an adult). We will devote the rest of our allotted space to an elaboration of this argument, although analysis of data that supports our claims is not yet complete and so the argument is just a rough start.

If you ask an academic to introduce herself in a professional capacity she might say: "I am interested in *perezhivanie*." She will then show you this interest by telling you her thoughts about *perezhivanie*. It is the interest itself that is her work. If you ask an artist to introduce himself in a professional capacity he might say: "I make paintings." He will then show you the materials and methods that he uses to make the paintings. It is the process of making that is his work. If you ask a young child to introduce herself she might say: "I have a scrape on my knee because I fell off my bike because I rode with my eyes closed, but I was still pedaling so why did I fall off?" or she might say the shorter version of this story, which is the essence of the story, i.e. who the main character (not not the young child) of the story is: "I am Lotta." She will then show you the actual scrape, how she fell off the bike, and the expression that Lotta wears when she falls off her bike. It appears to us that it is saying "Life stand still here," or the "making of the moment something permanent," that is the work of the young child.

This is to be expected. While the academic is working to be a part of and co-create academia and scholarship, and learning how to do this by doing it (in a zone of proximal development); and while the artist is working to be a part of and co-create art worlds and art, and learning how to do this by doing it; the young child is working to be a part of and co-create human life and a life (her own life), and learning how to do this by doing it. What makes us human is that we are not born knowing how to do these various human activities, including the human activity of creating the aesthetic form of consciousness. What gives the young child a purpose, what she spends most of her time doing if she is lucky enough, is asking: "How do *moments* add up to *lives*?" and answering this question with "matches struck unexpectedly in the dark" (such as her telling of the story of when she/Lotta fell off her bike).

Blunden writes that adults only turn to a professional in the event of our failure to overcome a crisis, and this may be a perfect example of what Vygotsky illustrated with his theory of play: "Superficially, play bears little resemblance to the complex, mediated form of thought and volition it leads to. Only a profound internal analysis makes it possible to determine its course of change and its role in development." (1978, p. 104) The other's service in *perezhivaniya* in early childhood probably does not look anything like the advice of respected adult figures in teenage years, and *perezhivaniya* in early childhood may not resemble processes which allow one to avoid youth suicide or overcome post traumatic stress disorder.

In other words, we are suggesting that we miss early childhood *perezhivaniya* because we are expecting it to look in early childhood as it looks in adulthood, and it does not. As we wrote in our paper, preliminary analysis of data from two studies, one that took place in a preschool and one in an elementary school, has led us to believe that all the stages that take place in adult *perezhivaniya* take place in early childhood *perezhivaniya*, in the same order, but in a different time scale. Like a humming bird whose wings move too fast to be seen in a photograph, but whose

wings can be seen when a film of the bird's flight is played back to the observing human in slow motion, adult observation of early childhood *perezhivaniya* appears to require adults who live their professional lives with young children and who are responsible for raising, educating and caring for these children.

Again, preliminary analysis of this data has led us to believe that adult observation of early childhood *perezhivaniya* is made possible through early childhood teaching. We suspect that this is so because early child teaching occasions an immersion in a child's life project of creating a life project, by people who are experts at, and charged with, remaining committed to the life project of this child. As well as having added artists to our research teams when we study *perezhivaniya* (Ferholt, 2010), we will now, also, be researching alongside early childhood teachers.

The study of early childhood *perezhivaniya* appears to be possible through a form of research that we have come to call *early childhood educational research from within* (Ferholt et al., forthcoming). Early childhood educational research from within is initiated by and for, and is guided by, teachers, and also by children: "If teachers who believe that children are capable and competent, and who therefore listen closely and respectfully to children, participate in such research, then children are indirectly a part of a research team and their voices can potentially influence early childhood education via the academy." (Ferholt et al., forthcoming)

Life must move forward in order for the young child to make it stand still here. Culture, in the form of adult humans and their presence in the environment, which children join and begin to co-create, is literally what keeps life moving forward for young children. This pivot of early childhood *perezhivaniya*, at the dead center of *perezhivaniya* (stage five), can be described with these words: "As long as the firmament of the You is spread over me, the tempests of causality cower at my heels, and the whirl of doom congeals." (Buber, 1970, p. 59)

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