Making Sense: A Study of the Dialogic Nature of Subjectivity in Creative Writing

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Introduction

People integrate disparate events and experiences into ongoing stories in order to make sense of their lives. Stories are constantly used to create an indefinite number of causal and associative links that inform a coherent sense of others and ourselves (McAdams & Pals, 2006). Because conscious mental life is storied in nature, human beings are the story-telling animal (Gottschall & Wilson, 2005). The burgeoning field of narrative psychology confronts the evolved human mind as a dialogical, narrative-making machine. Narrative psychologists seek to understand the unique stories of individuals as well as the elements of a universal story grammar, common to all people across cultures (Miller, 1995). Consciousness, then, that elusive and illusory *narrative center of gravity* (Dennett, 1992), can be understood in terms of the creative stories that we tell ourselves and other people.

This study uses Q methodology (Stephenson, 1982) as a way of interpreting the dialogic, storied nature of the subjective mental life of an individual when he or she writes creatively. This study is exploratory since it does not aim to confirm or disconfirm any one particular hypothesis. Rather, Q methodology is used in this instance to provoke short-story writing in an individual's dialogically functioning mind. Q methodology is also used in this study to provoke scholars' questions about how creativity might be driven by associations of self with imagined others. Q-methodology results were compared to the short stories in order to assess any interesting or surprising findings with regard to theories about dialogical consciousness and creativity. Since this is the first study utilizing Q with creative writing, discussion of the results is broad and speculative. The reasoning underlying such a study follows, via a brief review of the dialogic nature of consciousness with regard to creativity and the multiplicity of self.

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Operant Subjectivity, 2007 (April/July), 30(3/4): 155-175

Multiple Selves

Do I contradict myself?
Very well then I contradict myself.
(I am large, I contain multitudes.)

From Walt Whitman's (1855/2007) *Song of Myself*

A dialogical mind that talks to itself requires voiced self-parts. And indeed, the mind as composite and fragmented is a popular subject in Western arts and sciences. For Freud (1923/1960), this internal composition was tripartite and contentious. He conceptualized three forces (the *I*, the *me*, the *over-I*) competing against one another for supremacy within the human mind. Dostoyevsky (1864/2006), like Freud, believed that there were undesirable parts of the mind that should be sublimated and overcome by brotherly love. Nietzsche (1872/1998), who in many ways prefigured Freud, thought Christianity went too far in sublimating the darker parts of man and that a personality should fully integrate, experience, and celebrate the diversity of various, competing, internal selves. Bakhtin (1930s/1981) who was quite at odds with Freud, nonetheless also viewed subjectivity as composed of three parts (*I-for-myself, I-for-the-other, Other-for-me*). Hegel (1835/1998) saw unity of self as encompassing negation and contradiction and man's progress underlain by three devices (*thesis, antithesis, synthesis*). Jaynes (1976) thought the mind was composed of an *analogue I* and a *metaphor me* (1976). The long history of intellectual and philosophical discourse is comprised of a countless numbers of thinkers who have concerned themselves with the dialogic multiplicity of self. The present study builds upon this work in that it seeks to quantify the creative (*analogue I*) part of an individual's mind as well as the created (*metaphor me*). A common theme among these thinkers' ideas is the notion that consciousness is dialogical and imaginative.

Theory of Mind

Theory of mind (Premack & Woodruff, 1978) offers an explanation as to how consciousness—as a story-making entity—developed as a result of a mind's imaginative, dialogical functioning. Storytelling in particular requires a highly intuitive theory of mind—that ability to imagine the experience and intent of others (Saxe & Powell, 2006). If only for a moment, the self can—to some degree—forget its own concerns and fantasize about what others must be thinking and feeling. The most gifted storytellers—especially actors and writers of fiction—are so good at this kind of characterization that they often admit to feeling that their characters take on a life of their own (Raggatt, 2006). Indeed, many fiction writers say that they have no say about what their characters decide to say or do. Instead, these writers are great role players capable

of taking on different identities. Joyce Carol Oates once said "each angle of vision, each voice, yields a separate writer-self, an alternative Joyce Carol Oates" (as cited in Raggatt, 2006, p. 16). A common revelation of successful storytellers, no matter the medium, is that one is most creative when in a trance-like state of limited self-awareness. Csíkszentmihályi's (1996) work on "flow" also builds upon this notion of limited self-awareness as an important aspect of creativity. Jaynes, in his book, *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind* (1976), was preoccupied with this trance-like state of heightened creative ability. Jaynes looked to this mysterious state of mind as the key to understanding where consciousness came from and how it developed. Jaynes' work on this topic is relevant to this study since it supports the argument that the mind is composed of a creative part and a created part.

Julian Jaynes

Jaynes, whose work continues to provoke and influence current trends in psychology through prominent thinkers like Dennett (1992) and Pinker (1991), believed that ancient people were not conscious when they told stories and made executive decisions. This has interesting implications regarding psychologists' notions about the way the mind functions during artistic creation. If indeed ancient artists and their fictional heroes believed that they were not fully in control of their creative processes and decision-making, this might indicate that there are physiological and/or mental I-positions (Bakhtin, 1930s/1981) which are, to some degree, distinct and separate from awareness during times of heightened creativity.

Jaynes' evidence, in summation, concerns enormous changes in artistic and literary history that occurred around the second millennium BC. Before this time, Jaynes said that literary heroes displayed no executive decision-making. Instead, all decisions were made by the gods. As well, artists who performed these stories consulted the gods for divine inspiration. Clinical evidence regarding schizophrenic hallucinations also supports Jaynes' theory. Jaynes argued that schizophrenic hallucinations are relics of our ancestry. This might indicate that people were once guided by powerful hallucinations and were unaware that these hallucinations originated in their brains.

Jaynes also used what psychologists and neurologists now know about the brain's two hemispheres that are capable of behaving independently. This idea of "the double brain" (Hirstein, 2005) is exemplified in consideration of the fact that speech is entirely represented in the left hemisphere for most people (p. 100) even though the right hemisphere is equally capable of speech. This might indicate that creative language is kept at somewhat of a distance from the

awareness of the left hemisphere.

The Double Brain and Confabulation

Creativity and story-making by distinct parts of the brain, most notably the frontal lobes, is at the heart of studies on "confabulation." Karl Bonhoeffer, a German psychiatrist practicing in the early 1900s, first coined the term for Korsakoff's patients who would often make up impossible tales that they would genuinely believe (Berrios, 1998). Even in light of contrary evidence, these people would adhere to a steadfast belief in their tales. Today, the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (APA, 1994) defines confabulation as "the recitation of imaginary events to fill in gaps in memory" (p. 433). But confabulation is not only prevalent in people suffering from memory problems. It is also especially prevalent in patients with split-brain syndrome, Anton's syndrome (the denial of blindness), Capgras' syndrome (the belief that a loved one is replaced by an impostor), anosognosia for hemiplegia (denial of paralysis), and schizophrenia.

Several studies on confabulation and automaticity since the 1960s reveal the dialogic nature of consciousness in normal people as well. People will confabulate reasons why they like or dislike a professor when the real reasons, such as accent, are unknown (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977). Some insomniacs will confabulate reasons why they can't sleep. They will attribute sleeplessness to stress instead of the real reason, which is poor sleep hygiene and a poor diet (Storms and Nisbett, 1970). Children, who are unaware of the long-term effects of threats by authority, will confabulate reasons why they don't play with a particular toy (Freeman, 1965).

These studies reveal that humans are notoriously unable to have access to certain mental events or processes. Instead, these participants only have access to the resulting behavior or decision that occurred as a result of their unconscious processes. People often make up or hypothesize reasons why they behaved as they did, and choose the most plausible reason. Another part of the brain, which checks and impedes implausible hypotheses in normal people, is absent in people with syndromes that cause them to confabulate. Through these studies on confabulation, it is apparent that there are at least two distinct, complementary parts of the brain that color experience and inform a sense of reality. One part of the brain is creative and is useful for hypothesizing about the world, other people, and even one's self. Another distinct part of the brain checks hypotheses and, in effect, edits out implausible hypotheses and storylines. The creative talent of the best artists and story-tellers may rely on their ability to access the creative part of the brain (through trance-like states such as day-dreaming) without imposition from the editing part of the brain.

This study aims to advance knowledge about the creative and editing parts of the dialogical mind by using Q method as a tool for obtaining behavioral measures of these complementary mind entities. Q method might be helpful in inciting creativity if it can stifle the editing part of the brain while activating the creative part by sparking rumination.

Rumination

Rumination, a pre-requisite for creativity (Verhaeghen, Joorman, & Khan, 2005), is "a class of conscious thoughts that revolve around a common instrumental theme and that recur in the absence of immediate environmental demands requiring the thought" (Martin & Tesser, as cited in Verhaeghen, Joormann, & Khan, 2005, p. 226). Q methodology was used in the present study to provoke such reflection by presenting factor-analysis results to a study participant. Self-reflective rumination occurs when the self serves as the common instrumental theme (Verhaeghen, et al., 2005). Q methodology—by provoking and facilitating a participants' conversation about his or her ideas about self and others reflected in factor analysis results—might be effective in increasing rumination and thereby creativity in artists and writers, as well as in therapists' clients.

The *I* and the *me*

The concept of the interplay between the self parts *I* and a *me* is a synthesis of compatible ideas about consciousness as elucidated by James (1890) and Minksy (1985), among others. Although there were certainly distinct differences between these thinkers' views, a common recurring theme between them regards an automatic self and a thoughtful, volitional self.

James referred to the *I* as the *self-as-knower* and the *me* as the *self-as-known*. Essentially, in James's view, the *I* is the linguistic, ruminating part of the mind that thinks about itself in relation to the world and other people. This capacity is what makes it possible for humans to think about themselves. The *me*, on the other hand, is that part of the self which is thought about. It acts automatically and without reason, language, or thoughtful choice. A helpful illustration of this idea is the common phenomenon concerning memory. Often, when one thinks about past experiences, it is not uncommon for people to envision themselves from a third-person perspective (Hirstein 2005). The third-person, observing entity is the *I*, while the observed self being looked upon is the *me*.

Minksy's (1985) two-tiered reactivation model of reflective awareness builds upon these concepts of the multiple self by naming the older part of the brain the *A Brain*, which directly experiences the world and knows about it without knowing how it knows. All animals are

capable of performing fixed action patterns automatically, and without knowing how or why, because of the *A Brain*. The *B Brain* is the younger, distinctly human and volitional part of the brain that is connected to the *A Brain*. Through a recursive feedback loop (Knight, 2002), the *A Brain* and *B Brain* obtain information from one another. Given the automatic, emotional behavior of the *A Brain* and the reflective, volitional nature of the *B Brain*, it might be that the *self-as-knower* (*I*) referred to by James is represented in the *B Brain*, while the *self-as-known* (*me*) is represented in the *A Brain*.

From Theory to Methodology

At this point, one may begin to wonder how these theories of the dialogic mind relate to empirical investigations of the multiplicity of self with regard to narrative identity and story-telling. Sebanz (2007) provides such an empirical investigation that proposes a sense of self that could have only developed via interaction with the others. While previous research has explored the role of language and collective representation on the development of consciousness, Sebanz focuses on how social interaction facilitated the emergence of a mental self. She uses evidence of the many cognitive processes—from visual perception (Wilson & Knoblich, 2005) to executive functions (Roepstorff & Frith, 2004)—and how they developed and were shaped by the demand characteristics of the social environment. Sebanz believes that self-awareness was shaped by the social environment in such a way that a sense of other people had to arise through interaction before a sense of self could develop. Sebanz's evidence is imperative to this study since it empirically confirms Bakhtin's (1930s/1981) idea that the self is created by a dialogical mind whose inner voices develop after social interaction with others.

The Personality Web Protocol and Q Method

Peter Raggatt's (2006) Personality Web Protocol (PWP) is a useful tool for combining quantitative analysis with narrative technique in order to tease out the multiplicity of *I-positions* (p. 18) in one's mental life. The PWP categorizes a *taxonomy of attachments*, (p. 24)—defined as affectively charged objects or events—via multidimensional scaling (MDS). Raggatt has found that clusters of attachments symbolize often conflicting *I-positions*. The investigators of this study, however, have chosen Q as a preferred method of teasing out *I-positions* since Q methodology can use words instead of numbers to define relationships between conditions of instruction. Dialogical, narrative minds are more likely to think of relationships with words rather than numbers for plotting into a dissimilarity matrix. As well, a full concourse of words might be less readily memorized by the participant than number assignments. As such, an individual is less likely to recall prior responses

further proofing them against a participants' strategizing to obtain certain or optimal results.

Q-methodology studies have thus far not attempted to quantify or study *I* versus *me* differences and various *I-positions* to which Raggatt (2006) refers in creative writing. Q methodology provides a promising way of bringing to light the multifaceted self by arranging the various viewpoints a person holds into uncorrelated factors and by provoking creative story-telling about these factors. Q methodology would be successful at such a feat if characteristics of the *I* and the *me* correlate highly with separate factors. The authors suspected that the *me* would correlate positively with emotional characters and that *I* would correlate positively with reflective characters.

Method

Participant

This study intensively examined a single participant with a Bachelor of Arts English degree who displayed an interest in creative writing and a willingness to write creatively about conditions of instruction in Q sorts. Although it would have been preferable to engage a widely published creative writer as a participant, it was outside of the investigator's resources to do so. The participant signed a consent form explaining that she was free to discontinue participating in this study at any time. Intercorrelations among seven Conditions of Instruction (CoIs) were five fictional character names that she made up and wrote about in four short stories, *I*, and *me*. These intercorrelations were recorded in 28 Q-sort exercises.

Materials

The participant performed Q sorts on her personal computer in the privacy of her own home. The program for presenting and recording the Q sorts is called *I-Spi* (Knight, Doan, & Hamlin, 1995). The *I-Spi* computer program randomly selects 18 adjectives from a pool of 555 self-descriptive characteristics normed for desirability by Anderson (1968). In this program, participants are prompted to sort the 18 adjectives from *most like* to *least like* working inward from the extremes of a quasi-normal distribution with 1, 2, 3, 6, 3, 2, and 1 adjectives sorted into each of seven categories. A complete list of the 504 adjectives used (18 a day for 28 days) and their factor scores are available by request from the first author.

The program presents a screen for each CoI, one at a time. The participant could not move onto subsequent Q sorts until the present one was completed and the *next* button was clicked. When the participant Q sorted each CoI, a screen notifying completion was presented. The program then presented an intercorrelation matrix and

islands of significance (a way of grouping CoI's according to their correlations). This matrix was input into The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS Inc., Version 14.0, 2005) and Microsoft Excel in order to perform factor analyses and analyses of variance. *I-Spi* is free and open for the general public to use. It can be downloaded from the following website: http://psyencelab.com/library/documents. The participant used Microsoft Word to write her short stories and emailed them as attachments to the principal investigator.

Procedure

During the first meeting, the researcher and the participant talked about potential story ideas that the participant would like to continually write about for the duration of the study which would last for 28 days. By the end of the meeting, the participant wrote a short character sketch for five characters that were to be continually involved in the participant's short stories. The participant also decided upon a tentative story line upon which the characters would develop. The principal investigator also discussed the differences between the *I* and *me*, as elaborated in this article's introduction. The participant was then given instructions about how to rank adjectives according to CoIs in the *I-Spi* program. The participant performed a Q sort for each CoI every day for 28 days. At the end of each week, the participant and the researcher discussed what the participant felt that the intercorrelations and factors meant to her. After this discussion, the participant was instructed to write a short story about the characters. Each short story served as an episode in an overall, developing story. The participant generated a total of four short stories.

Results

With 28 Q-sort samples, each consisting of 18 adjectives, there were 504 total adjectives (available upon request from the first author) sorted for each of seven CoIs (character names, *I*, *me*). These data were factor analyzed using principal components analysis and varimax rotation in SPSS. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Factor Analysis Results for 504 Adjectives in 28 Q-sorts

	1	2	3
I	0.80	0.36	0.15
Odette	0.87	0.18	0.24
Victor	0.74	0.27	0.22
Julie	0.74	0.34	-0.28
Benjamin	0.88	0.12	0.17
Harper	0.17	0.12	0.94
me	0.31	0.93	0.14

Factor 1 is clearly the Benjamin, Odette, and *I* factor with Harper and *me* as outliers. *Me* loads by itself on Factor 2 and Harper loads by itself on Factor 3. Interestingly, Julie's loading is negative (but non-significant).

Using mean correlations for each of the two Self conditions with each of the five Character conditions the data were also analyzed with a 2 x 5 within-subject ANOVA (see table 2). The analysis revealed significant main effects for Selfs, $F_{(1,27)} = 96.85$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .78$, for Characters $F_{(4,108)} = 29.32$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .52$, and for the interaction of Selfs x Characters, $F_{(4,108)} = 7.73$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .22$. Figure 1 (next page), representing characters' correlations with *I* and *me*, illustrates significant simple effects for the *I* with Character conditions, $F_{(4,108)} = 50.31$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .65$. Pairwise comparisons with Tukey's *HSD* test showed that Odette = Benjamin > Victor = Julie > Harper.

Table 2: 5 x 2 WS ANOVA Results

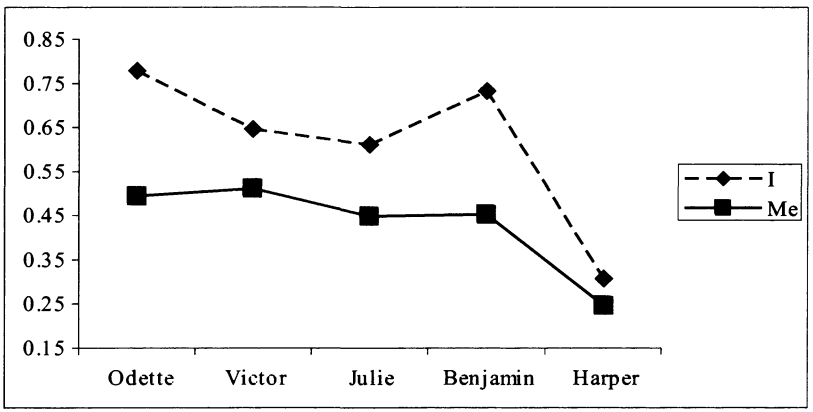
Source	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*p-value*	η_p^2
Selves	2.38	1	2.38	96.85	0	0.78
Error	0.66	27	0.02			
Characters	4.56	4	1.14	29.32	0	0.52
Error	4.2	108	0.04			
Residual	1.58	27	0.06			
Selves x Character	0.52	4	0.13	7.73	0	0.22
Error	1.83	108	0.02			
Total	15.75	279				

The simple effects for the *Me* conditions was also significant $F_{(4,108)} = 8.57$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = 24$ with Odette = Victor = Julie = Benjamin > Harper. Individual comparisons for each of the Characters were also significant (*ps* <.001) for Odette, Victor, Julie, and Benjamin, with *I* > *me*; however, the *I versus me* comparison was not significant for the Harper character ($p = .18$).

Point of View

Two of the most immediate and important questions that literary assessment beg are: whose story is it? And: who is telling the story? (See Appendix A for brief synopses of the four short stories). Both qualitative and quantitative assessment of the participant's four episodes indicate that all four stories are about and told by the author's *I* rather than the author's *me*. Significantly higher correlations with *I* than with *me* for Odette, Victor, Julie, and Benjamin, make sense with regard to the narrator's point of view and style. The narrator's revelations about each character but Harper is essentially much more like *I* than *me* in that the narrator is omniscient and in the third person. The narrator,

Figure 1: Correlation Values for Each Character with* I *and* me *When Averaged Across 28 Days.



for the most part, *talks* about how the characters think and feel rather than *showing* how the characters think and feel. The *I*, or self-as-knower (Hermans, 2006), is the verbal part of the self that carefully considers and makes decisions about thoughts and feelings both of self and others. This is exactly how the narrator behaves.

Discussion

Contrary to *I* narration, an author whose data shows higher character correlations with *me* would be more likely to narrate in the first-person point of view and would *show* how each character feels through actions instead of words. As an example of this style of narration, the narrator says things like, "her eyes . . . say that she is upset". Instead of telling by action alone, this narrator's revelations about each character's actions are verbally and rationally translated to readers. The audience doesn't get to decide for itself how to construct each character based on its own decisions about the characters' actions. Rather, the narrator's dominant *I* constructs each character for the audience.

The quantitative data provokes one to wonder why Harper is the only character that presents no statistically significant difference of correlation with regard to the *I* and *me*. Qualitative analysis helps explain this singular lack of difference in the following way: the narrator spends little time explaining Harper's perspective. Most of what readers learn about Harper comes from Odette and Victor's assessment of Harper's actions and dialogue. This kind of character revelation for Harper is entirely different than the character revelation for the other four characters, whose mental life is explained by the narrator. The narrator spends little to no time explaining Harper's mental life and internal conflict to readers as she does with the other characters. The

author uses Harper as a flat character and device to elaborately construct the mental life of the other characters. In this way, both quantitative assessment of the author's verbal behavior via Q sorting and qualitative analysis of the author's creative writing show that the author feels very little empathy or concern for Harper.

Conflict in the *I* and *me* Difference

Characters with the greatest disparity between *I* and *me* correlations undergo the most internal conflict in the short stories (see Figure 1). Benjamin and Odette have the greatest amount of difference between the author's *I* and *me*. Both Benjamin and Odette's average *I*/*me* difference across the 28 days is 0.28. Julie's average difference is 0.16, Victor's average difference is 0.13, and Harper's average difference is a mere 0.06.

When qualitatively analyzing the narrator's style regarding Benjamin and Odette, it is reasonable to conclude that the narrator seems the most conflicted about these two characters. Unlike all of the other characters besides Harper, Odette—in all four episodes—spends a lot of time and effort in trying to decide certain matters. She is initially uncertain about how to proceed in her conversation with the author in the story. She is uncertain about how Benjamin feels about Julie. She is uncertain about how she herself feels about not being asked out on a date. In sharp contrast, Victor's thoughts and feelings are not nearly as conflicted. For instance, he outright dismisses Odette's concerns about Benjamin.

Much of episode three is dedicated to elaborating Benjamin's daydreams about how he wants to ask Julie out for a date. In the daydream, he remains uncertain about his approach and about Julie's personality. He "didn't know why" he imagined that Julie's apartment smelled like roses. "He guesse[s]" about his position in the daydream, such as why he was waiting for her to leave her apartment building. He changes his mind often about whether or not he should approach her on the street or else wait for her to walk by him in his car. He "wonder[s]" what Julie was thinking and if he should announce himself. In all four stories, quantitative and qualitative analysis reveals internal conflict among Odette and Benjamin that is more prominent than in any of the other characters.

Again, quantitative results of Odette and Benjamin's correlation with *I* and qualitative analysis of the text regarding these characters make sense in terms of one another. Odette and Benjamin have the highest correlation with *I*. The text illuminates qualities similar between *I* and these two characters. For instance, Benjamin and Odette, more than the other characters, spend time talking to themselves about their desires. They are highly verbal and make decisions based on rationality. They spend a lot of time weighing pros and cons. They are reasonable

executors of their actions. Readers, on the other hand, are never aware of Harper's rationality behind her actions. The audience is not permitted to witness her inner dialogue. This explains the low correlation between Harper and *I*. Victor's correlation, which is greater than Harper's but less than Benjamin and Odette's, makes sense in terms of his quick decision making which seems quite abrupt, emphatic and emotion-based, even though he sometimes briefly provides a rationale for his actions. Even when Victor provides a rationale for his actions, such as when he quickly decided to approach Harper, he does so only to other characters. Readers never get a sense that Victor is in any way conflicted and that he precedes more by his emotional *me* than by his more rational *I*.

Odette

Odette had the least amount of deviation from *I*. Over the course of 28 days, Odette stays very much like *I*. There are no great fluctuations from one day to another. Odette does vary a little more with *me* (0.14), but this variance is still less than the other characters' variance values. Using these numbers alone, a reader might predict that Odette will undergo very little change over the course of the four short stories. Initially, this might seem to present a problem because Odette does resolve issues that she was once unsure about. She often changes her mind from uncertainty to certainty. At the end of the fourth episode, for instance, Odette decides for herself that she is not upset about not being asked out on a date at the bookstore. However, what does remain constant is Odette's unerring reliance on careful reflection. She consistently moves from uncertainty to certainty via direction from *I*. In sum, this movement explains both the large difference in *I* and *me* and low standard deviation in her correlations between both *I* and *me*. Interestingly, the participant admitted that she felt she had nowhere left to go after she completed episode 4. This might be because resolutions were resolved among the characters, particularly Odette. Without sufficient conflict to carry the plot (revealed in both the story and the quantitative results), the story is complete.

Victor

Across 28 days, Victor loads on the first factor behind *I*, Odette, and Benjamin at 0.74 (see Table 1). He has the second lowest *I*/*me* difference at 0.28, the third lowest standard deviation at for *I* at 0.14 and for *me* at 0.18. As elucidated above, Victor's relative low *I*/*me* difference explains how he seems to not experience any internal conflict. He abruptly approaches Harper despite Odette's concerns about Harper. Even though it seemed that Victor liked Benjamin, he doesn't consider whether or not it will hurt his feelings if he asked Julie on a date. Victor goes through very little change, which explains his low standard deviation for both *I* and *me*. Although his feelings about Harper change,

he doesn't experience much turmoil or internal change as a result. He continues to behave by feeling rather than rationality.

Julie

Across 28 days, Julie loads on the first factor at 0.74 (see Table 1). Her *I*/*me* difference is the second highest at 0.16. Her standard deviations with *I* and *me* are also the second highest at 0.16 and 0.20, respectively. Julie, like all of the other characters but Harper, is regarded positively by the narrator. The *I*/*me* difference is puzzling because it is not especially clear that she experiences any internal conflict. Readers are not permitted access into her internal dialogue, and are left with Odette and Benjamin's impressions of her actions. Perhaps the *I*/*me* difference is explained by the fact that it is Odette and Benjamin who remained uncertain about her. Odette was unsure about Julie's feelings for Victor, just as Benjamin was unsure about how she would react to his advances. This shows that conflict regarding the *I*/*me* difference might not simply be the result of a character's internal conflict, but instead might be the result of other characters, the narrator, or the writer him or herself remaining uncertain and conflicted about the character in question. The participant was probably conflicted about Julie via Odette and Benjamin's perspectives. The conflict sustains itself by the narrator's position. The narrator stays closer to Odette's and Benjamin's perspectives by spending more time explaining their internal dialogues and by neglecting Julie's internal dialogue

Harper

Across 28 days, Harper loads very positively on the third factor with a value of 0.94 and negatively with Julie at -0.28 (see Table 1). Her average *I*/*me* difference is by far the lowest at 0.06. Her standard deviation with *I* and *me* are the highest at 0.22 and 0.28, respectively. The *I*/*me* difference makes sense with regard to how shallow she appears to be. She is shallow in the sense that the other characters, Odette in particular, believe that Harper makes judgments about others by their wealth and physical appearances. But Harper is also shallow in the sense that she doesn't appear to experience any internal or external conflict. As far as the readers can tell, Harper doesn't go through any change in any of the episodes. After all, Odette remains firm in her negative assessment of Harper at the end of episode 4. Harper's gesture "confirms what Odette had previously thought about her". In this way, Harper serves as a device to propel the internal lives of the other characters. For the most part, readers only get to experience Harper's personality via Odette's and Victor's impressions of her.

Harper's relatively high standard deviation with both *I* and *me* are difficult to comprehend in light of the four episodes. *I* and *me* results regarding daily correlation values for Harper are particularly puzzling.

Harper's standard deviation is the greatest for both *I* and *me* (0.22 and 0.28, respectively). On day 2, Harper's correlation with *me* is –0.68, but on day 3, her correlation with *me* jumps up to a positive 0.63. This leads one to consider *me*'s volatile relation with Harper. *Me* alone loads on the second factor across 28 days with a value of 0.93 (see Table 1). The adjectives that correlated most highly with the second factor are the following: submissive, fearful, not inconsistent, not absent-minded, not hopeful, not excitable, not hot-headed, not argumentative, not selfish, not self-concerned, cooperative, tense, cunning, not satirical, not thorough (See Appendix B for a list of the 40 highest factor-loading adjectives. The full list for all 504 adjectives is available by request from the first author). For the participant, what about Harper is similar to these adjectives on day 2 that is dissimilar for Harper on day 3? Qualitative analysis of the four episodes does not reveal Harper's fluctuations with *I* and *me*. Perhaps the initial fluctuations from day 2 to day 3 reflect Victor and Odette's initial argument about what Harper is really like. Odette thinks Harper is probably unfriendly at first while Victor thinks Harper already likes him. Harper's low correlation with *I* and *me* on the second day might reflect Odette's initial and unchanging point of view, while the high correlation with *I* and *me* on the third day might reflect Harper's initial point of view.

Discussion of Implications

The findings of this study have, we hope, illustrated how Q methodology might be used with creative writing. A fully comprehensive analysis regarding implications from various theoretical orientations and disciplines is not possible within the scope of this paper. Nonetheless, what follows is a speculative discussion about this method's possible future applicability in diverse fields such as behavioral science, literary studies, and counseling. The underlying impetus for such a broad discussion is that these disciplines are linked by their common concern with narrative, imagination, and creativity.

Quantification, Falsifiability and Literary Studies

Barthes' essay *Death of the Author* (1967/1977) provided the first critical argument against using authorial intent and biography in the interpretation of a text. Ever since, debate about whether or not the author is dead or alive has continued to rage among factions in the literary studies community. Interestingly, while arguments like Barthes' in the literary community can be compelling, they are often not supported with testable, falsifiable hypotheses. Empirical, testable data such as is found in this study can hopefully help provide objective, testable information for use as evidence in literary scholarship. In particular, quantitative analysis of the participant's verbal behavior shows how much and how often the author considers aspects of her

identity—her various selves—to be extended into her fictional characters and how these fictional characters relate to real people embedded in a shared culture. Future research can test whether or not the results of this study can be generalized to other authors.

Writing as Aid for Living

McAdams and Pals (2007) have shown how story reconstruction can improve people's lives in a manner similar to Hermans' (2001) theatre reconfigurations. Essentially, they help people identify maladaptive stories and reconstruct them into more helpful ones. Kenneth Burke has also argued that writers are more prepared to deal with emotions that other people might find staggering. Comparing literature to helpful proverbs, Burke asked, "Could the most complex and sophisticated works of art legitimately be considered somewhat 'proverbs writ large?'" (1941, p. 594). He contended that people well- versed in literature are better able to deal with tragedy. Buss (2007) has shown how stories have evolved to help genes survive and replicate. Stories help make sense of chaos, link causes with effects, help people remember information, inform a coherent sense of identity in self and others, and help people project future scenarios. In light of the significance of stories in people's lives, psychologists are responsible for understanding and confronting their structure and function. As this study shows, Q methodology may provide such an avenue for psychologists' questions about the nature of creative story-telling.

Setting *Me* Free

Freud, whose experience with unusual people was of course quite extensive, called the creative writer, "that strange being" (1908/1998, p. 483). Sir Philip Sidney said, "only the poet, disdaining to be tied to any such subjection, lifted up with the vigor of his own invention, doth grow in effect another nature, in making things either better than nature bringeth forth, or, quite anew, for such as never were in nature" (Sydney 1595/1998, p. 137). Whether holy or mad, creative people have long been considered possessed, aloof, and out of touch with reality. Much of Socrates' and Aristotle's dialogues involve claims that artistic inspiration is divine. Creativity has been and still sometimes is considered different and estranged from reason, and—since reason is more likely associated with self than inspiration—creativity is sometimes considered estranged from self. This is why it seems disconnected and of another spiritual realm.

Research, as this study details, has come a long way in making creativity seem less strange and ethereal. If indeed confabulation research holds true for creative thinking (that there is a creator part of the mind that is separate from a destroyer or critical, editing part) and if Jaynes' and Nietzsche's history of art development holds true (that

creativity originated in a part of the brain separate from the logical part), their findings will be quite helpful for people who want to improve their own or others' creative writing ability. With the use of Q methodology, it might be possible to enhance creativity in people by provoking the ruminating function of the brain while temporarily restricting the activity of the editing function of the brain.

Limitations of This Study

Single-subject designs are useful when subjects are limited. Indeed, this study presents such a limitation. The participant in this study had to demonstrate an interest and ability to write imaginative short stories and had to take the time to learn the *I-Spi* software. As well, the participant had to take a considerable amount of time to write four short stories and learn the differences between the *I* and the *me* as elucidated in the introduction section of this study. Although a group-based design might be preferable for this study, to improve external validity, for instance, it would be virtually impossible, given the researcher's current resources and time constraints, to obtain a large group of talented and interested creative writers who have the time and inclination to submit themselves to a four week study that requires a lot of effort and attention.

Critics of this current study's approach should also note that this study is exploratory instead of confirmatory. Following Stephenson's (1980) methodology, this study is meant to provoke scholars' questions about the dialogical nature of consciousness, the *I/me* dichotomy, and the nature of creativity with regard to discourse between *I-positions*. Analyses of Q sort data, discussions with the experimenter, and qualitative analysis of the short stories generate questions and hypotheses about these topics. Future research could focus on confirming, in the aggregate, questions about findings that concern the single participant of this study. In any case, it is unlikely, given the relative newness of a multidisciplinary study such as this one (quantitative analysis of Q sort data in combination with qualitative analysis of creative writing) that many hypotheses about such data currently exist in scientific psychology or in literary scholarship.

Future Investigations

Future research which could spawn from exploratory studies such as this one is virtually limitless. One might study personality differences with regard to *I* and *me* correlation differences using Q methodology when coupled with creative writing. For instance, certain personality types might be more inclined to write from an *I* perspective (rational, omniscient narrator) while other types might be more inclined to write from a *me* perspective (emotional, first person narrator). One might study whether or not rumination and creative writing about Q

methodology results can change a person's maladaptive theatre of voices or foster empathy. For instance, can writing from a formerly disregarded but healthy perspective bring about change in the self? English professors and teachers might use Q as a tool for provoking rumination in students. This kind of research (involving Q methodology and creative writing) might be an early step in one day helping to bridge the gap both in theory making and methodology between the humanities and behavioral sciences. The authors make such a lofty proposition not as a bold assertion, but tentatively as a platform for discussion and future research.

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Appendix A: Synopses of the Four Short Stories

Synopsis of the First Short Story

In the first short story the omniscient narrator introduces all five characters from the third-person point of view in the present tense. The story's rising action begins immediately as Odette and Victor, two young friends, attempt to re-enter a popular author's book signing and reading event at a local bookstore. Benjamin, a peer and employee of the bookstore, helps Odette and Victor get into the crowded event. While in line, Victor and Odette meet Julie. Victor fantasizes about asking her out on a date. He also thinks about asking out another woman who is in

front of them in line. Benjamin develops a romantic interest in Julie, as well. The story ends with Odette wondering what she will say to the author and with Benjamin mustering the courage to speak with the pretty woman at the front of the line.

Synopsis of the Second Short Story

The omniscient narrator's tense changes from the present in the first story to the past in the second short story. This episode begins with Benjamin, Odette, and Julie resuming their conversation in line while Victor leaves to speak with a woman in front of them, despite Odette's warnings to avoid the woman. Victor accidentally bumps into the woman, whose name is Harper. Harper responds harshly. Victor and Harper end up insulting one another. Upon his return to the conversation with Benjamin, Julie, and Odette, he informs Odette that she was right to warn him about Harper. The story ends with Odette wondering about how Harper can be so mean. Harper then approaches Odette.

Synopsis of the Third Short Story

The third short story opens with Benjamin daydreaming about meeting Julie at her apartment and asking her out for a date. Much of the beginning regards details of Benjamin's daydream, which includes his speculations about Julie's personal life and how she might react to his advances. The daydream is interrupted by Odette and Harper's confrontation. Harper and Odette argue about whether or not Harper is a good person. The story ends with Harper walking away as Victor congratulates Odette for speaking her mind. Victor and Odette then get their chance to approach the event's author to get their books signed. Odette overhears Victor's brief conversation with the author. Odette then approaches the author when it's her turn and asks to give him a hug. Victor asks Julie for her phone number.

Synopsis of the Fourth Short Story

The fourth short story opens with Odette giving the author a hug. Odette asks Victor about his interaction with Julie. She is concerned that Victor's date invitation was rude since it took place in front of Benjamin, who also seems to be attracted to Julie. Victor decides it is not rude. Odette feels sympathy for Benjamin as she and Victor thank Benjamin for getting them into the event. Benjamin then berates himself for not asking Julie out sooner, before he lost his chance. As Victor, Odette, and Julie walk to a diner, Odette hangs back and wonders about why Benjamin didn't ask her out, and concludes that Victor is the better catch. She decides that she would date Victor if he weren't her best friend. After much rumination, Odette convinces herself that she is okay with not being asked out by anyone at the bookstore. When Victor,

Odette, and Julie enter the diner, Odette is the only one who notices Harper inside. The two women briefly make eye contact, and the story ends with the Odette failing to mention Harper's presence to Victor and Julie.

Appendix B:

The Greatest Forty Adjective Loadings with Factor Scores

reasonable	−2.5	−1.9	−1.8	insincere	2.4	−0.1	−0.8
smart	−2.0	−0.1	−0.4	rude	2.0	0.7	−1.4
neat	0.3	0.3	−2.0	good-humored	−2.1	0.9	0.0
submissive	1.2	−2.5	0.7	argumentative	0.3	−2.3	−0.4
sophisticated	0.3	0.8	−2.0	worrier	−0.7	−1.1	2.0
lifeless	1.4	1.2	2.2	selfish	1.1	−2.7	0.0
sophisticated	0.2	0.9	−2.1	self-concerned	0.9	−2.4	−1.2
fearful	0.2	−2.4	1.8	narrow-minded	2.4	0.0	0.7
outspoken	−0.4	−0.1	−2.2	sincere	−2.3	0.6	1.1
able	−1.7	1.1	−2.2	self-concerned	1.0	−2.4	−0.6
ill-mannered	2.2	−0.9	1.9	cruel	2.1	0.7	0.2
smart	−2.5	0.8	−1.3	cooperative	−0.6	−2.3	0.4
unethical	2.0	1.5	0.1	forward	−0.8	−0.8	−2.1
kind	−2.4	0.1	0.2	insulting	2.1	0.0	−0.3
inconsistent	1.5	−2.0	1.4	thoughtful	-2.3	0.6	1.1
absent-minded	0.2	−2.3	1.4	strong-minded	-1.6	0.7	-2.1
hopeful	−0.3	−2.1	0.5	tense	0.4	-2.3	0.9
literary	−2.0	0.0	0.0	cunning	1.4	-2.5	-0.7
excitable	−0.1	−2.3	0.4	satirical	-0.6	2.2	-0.6
warm-hearted	−2.2	−0.8	1.1	thorough	-1.7	2.4	0.2
hot-headed	1.3	−2.5	−1.4	snobbish	1.4	0.4	-2.6