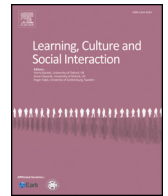




Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

## Learning, Culture and Social Interaction

journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/lcsi](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/lcsi)

Full length article

## Double stimulation “in the wild”: Services for families with children at-risk

Nick Hopwood <sup>a,b,\*</sup>, Belinda Gottschalk <sup>a</sup><sup>a</sup> University of Technology Sydney, Australia<sup>b</sup> Stellenbosch Universiteit/Stellenbosch University, South Africa

## ARTICLE INFO

## Article history:

Received 17 November 2016

Received in revised form 24 January 2017

Accepted 25 January 2017

Available online xxxx

## Keywords:

Double stimulation

Cultural-historical theory

Early intervention

Parenting

Agency

Volition

## ABSTRACT

The concept of double stimulation provides a framework for understanding the promotion of volitional action. In this article the concept is applied “in the wild”, to analyse professional practice in parenting services for parents with young children at risk. We answer questions about (i) how concepts of double stimulation account for features of professional–parent interactions and what new insights are offered by this, and (ii) how double stimulation in the wild relates to the processes specified in a recently articulated model of double stimulation, and wider concepts of expansive learning. Examples of interactions between a professional (nurse) and a new mother illustrate how an absence of auxiliary stimuli may trap parents in conflicted situations. We found that in promoting double stimulation, professionals work simultaneously in two dialectically related fields: getting the parent to act using new auxiliary stimuli and getting them to think differently about the object. Such work may unfold in non-linear and discontinuous fashion and places complex demands on professionals.

© 2017 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

## 1. Introduction

The concept of double stimulation has a continuing presence in contemporary cultural-historical theory (Sannino, 2015b). Contexts where there is no research intervention or experimental set-up have been referred to as “everyday work” or “wild” (Engeström & Sannino, 2012; Hutchins, 1995). The potential of double stimulation in professional practices “in the wild” is promising (see Portes, Smith, Zady, & Del Castillo, 1997; Engeström, Kajamaa, & Nummijoki, 2015; Thorne, 2015), but yet to be fully explored.

The term ‘double stimulation’ refers to a range of phenomena. While these share a common conceptual basis, they manifest in different practical and theoretical arenas, and so some clarification is useful here at the outset. Double stimulation can refer to everyday practices used by people in everyday life to undertake difficult actions (Vygotsky, 1960/1997a, 1960/1997b, 1960/1997c, 1960/1997d). For example a knot in a handkerchief can resolve the conflict between remembering and forgetting. Counting to oneself can help spur people into action when jumping into cold water is conflicted with the motive to stay warm, and alarm clocks can assist the tired person to get out of bed. Here, knots, counting and clocks are culturally available artefacts used to gain control i.e. to accomplish volitional action. Sannino (2015c) refers in such situations to the ‘principle’ of double stimulation: the way in which human behaviour is regulated, with specific connection to volition as a characteristic of higher mental function.

\* Corresponding author at: UTS School of Education, PO Box 123, Broadway, NSW 2007, Australia.

E-mail address: [nick.hopwood@uts.edu.au](mailto:nick.hopwood@uts.edu.au) (N. Hopwood).

Double stimulation has also been used as an experimental *method* to trace the structure of higher mental processes (van der Veer, 2008). A well-known example of this usage involves the ‘waiting experiment’ in which subjects are brought to a room and asked to wait until someone comes to fetch them. The conflict between staying (conforming to the request to wait) and leaving (putting an end to a seemingly useless activity) arises. A clock on the wall can enable subjects to break out of this dilemma, by deciding to leave at a particular time. This example forms the basis of Sannino’s (2015a; Sannino & Laitinen, 2015) recent work, and further details are given below (see Table 1). The aim in this kind of work is to elucidate psychological function by observing how subjects use tools to resolve conflicted situations.

Different again, though resting on the same conceptual foundation, is the use of double stimulation as a basis for formative intervention. Prominent in this guise is work based on the Change Laboratory (Engeström, 2007; Penuel, 2014; Sannino, Engeström, & Lemos, 2016). The Change Laboratory is a process through which tools are provided by researchers (including concepts and representations of activity systems) to change the way people work on a problem. Here double stimulation is used as the basis for efforts that resolve ongoing contradictions at a systemic level, linking to the activity theoretical concept of expansive learning (see also Haapasaari & Kerosuo, 2015).

In this paper our focus is on a further, distinctive notion of double stimulation. We argue double stimulation can function as *the means to promote volitional action* in services where professionals support parents with young children at risk. In other words, we are interested in how double stimulation is used by professionals to help parents gain control in situations where this control is lacking. This does not deviate from the notion of *principle* associated with everyday practices discussed above, which is indeed upheld in our analysis. We use the term ‘means’ simply to emphasise that this is not purely a principle in the ideal (abstract) sense, but is very much concrete, material and embodied in its accomplishment.

This paper draws on observation data from services for parents with young children at risk. The focus is on a home visiting service in Sydney, Australia, to which parents are referred through a general practitioner, community nurse, or other health professional. Home visiting services (also referred to as health visiting or outreach) are a common form of contact between professionals and families with young children. Universal home visiting services involve one or more visits to all (known) mothers close to the time of birth. These assist in identifying families needing additional support due to the presence of one or more risk factors (NSW Health, 2011). The home visiting services studied provided help of this additional kind and involved three or more visits by a nurse to a family’s home. Visits usually lasted 1 to 2 h, and might be one or more weeks apart.

Prior studies of parenting intervention services have shown how questions of motive and conflict are highly pertinent (Hopwood, 2016a, 2016b; Hopwood & Clerke, 2016; Hopwood, Day, & Edwards, 2016; Clerke et al., in press). Parents are referred for specialist help for a number of reasons, including infants’ sleep behaviours, feeding and nutrition, and aggression in toddlers. These can constitute risk factors in themselves, and connect with others pertaining to parental and child mental health, and wider family wellbeing. Many parents presenting to such services describe situations in which they feel helpless, trapped or stuck. This signals the relevance of concepts that specify how to resolve moments where one is unable to take control and pursue new actions. Double stimulation provides precisely such a framework.

The Vygotskian researcher is interested in the use and development of conceptual tools – ideas that change our understanding of a problem and our responses to it. (Hopwood et al., 2016, p. 113)

Following this approach, we explore how ideas introduced by professionals can shift parents’ responses to problems in the course of cooperative work. Consistent with a cultural-historical methodology, this paper studies parents’ actions and behaviours *in motion* (see Vygotsky, 1960/1997a, p. 39). Rather than studying parents’ states prior to and after contact with a service, it traces what develops through interactions as a means to follow the history of changes in parents.

Vygotsky (1960/1997a) argued that all higher mental functions, including volitional action, *rely on* mediation connected with the use of signs as auxiliary devices to solve psychological problems (pp. 60–61). Vygotsky (1997) also noted that these functions may also be oriented towards others’ behaviours, an important point that we return to later. Volitional action is never a direct, unmediated process (Vygotsky, 1960/1997d). Taking control of one’s own behaviour is “a mediated process that is always

**Table 1**  
Sannino’s Vygotskian\* model of double stimulation.(Adapted from Sannino, 2015c).

Phase	Detail	Example from waiting experiment
Apparatus 1: Decision forming	Comprises phases outlined below; at issue is choice of closure path	
1 – Conflict of stimuli	Demands or expectations that pull in opposite directions	Being asked to stay vs. having no purpose in empty room
2 – Conflict of motives	Activated by conflict of stimuli, subject at mercy of motives	Conforming to instruction to wait vs. wanting to leave
3 – Auxiliary motive	Conversion of stimulus to auxiliary motive, subject begins to control her behaviour	Deciding to use clock to make decision
4a – ‘Real’ conflict of stimuli	Occurrence of neutral stimulus confronting subject with signal and meaningful connection	Clock reaches particular time
4b – Closure of conditioned connection	Decision to act in particular way, subject makes decision based on occurrence of external stimulus	Participant decides to leave the experiment
Apparatus 2: Decision implementing	Activation of the conditioned connection	Participant leaves the experiment

\* Sannino interprets connections between aspects of Vygotsky’s texts that are not always explicit, proposing a “Vygotskian” rather than “Vygotsky’s” model.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/4939909>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/4939909>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)