The Dialogic Socialization of Aggression in a Family's Court of Reason and Inquiry

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In a family's "court of reason and inquiry," a quasi-legal institution emerging periodically in ordinary family conversation, moral judgments about individuals and their relationships are heard and discussed. This is an interpretive study of one family's court discourse concerning aggression between two brothers (9 years, 9 months and 11 years, 11 months). It is conducted through an analysis of 10 parental strategies, representing all the turns within a long conversation (194 turns) in which parents took the lead in promoting their younger son's narrative and logical understanding of his offensive action. Toulmin's (1963) theory of logic as "generalized jurisprudence" and Schank and Abelson's (1977) script theory are used as frameworks for the analysis of the microdevelopment of family moral understanding. In judging their son's verbal actions as instigatory, both parents independently concentrated their strategies on his moral intentions, retold and criticized his stories so that he shared responsibility for aggressive outcomes, and criticized his scripts, including norms of action and reasoning. During the dialogue, the mother functioned as a moral-cultural authority and social historian of the relationship, and the father as a language and logic pedagogue and director of the boy's performance. The family's court was found to be an important natural moral training ground for the child's acquisition of reasoning, narrative understanding of aggression, critical thinking, and the arguments used in proving a case.

This is an interpretive study of an unsolicited, audiotaped family conversation that took place following acts of aggression between two brothers (9 years, 9 months and 11 years, 11 months). The work is part of an emerging trend in moral socialization research investigating the means by which family discourse processes contribute to children's moral understanding (Dunn, 1987; Miller & Sperry, 1987; Much & Shweder, 1978; Shweder & Much, 1987). Such discourse is conducted by "moral guardians" who deal with "situations of accountability" involving any departure "from what we consider ordinary, expectable or approvable behavior" (Much & Shweder, 1978, p. 21). When, in the course of ordinary

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conversation, family members make moral judgments about each other or a significant other, a disequilibrium is effected in relationships. Under such conditions we find that a specific species of conversation arises—justice dialogues—devoted to the resolution of claims or judgments through the communication of psychological, cultural, and historical moral criticism. Other researchers have been studying comparable discourse in younger children calling it by different names: morality scripts (Emde, Johnson, & Easterbrooks, 1987); incidents of conflict (Dunn, 1987); moral situations (Edwards, 1987); and situations of accountability (Much & Shweder, 1978; Shweder, Mahaptra, & Miller, 1987).

The Woods, our study family, periodically engage in a form of ordinary conversation that very much resembles the proceedings in a "court." We should emphasize that the Wood's court does not function as such self-consciously. The justice processes conducted there have characteristic objectives, roles, and procedures that are analogous to legal courts. In the family's court, justice is ritually administered: Claims are tried and adjusted, and desserts are awarded. The language used in the court is that of justice, that is, there are statements and interactions signifying accusations, testimony, defenses, cross-examination, prosecution, interim judgments, rules, final judgments, punishments, and so forth. One of the objectives of the court is to render justice within a relationship; another is to teach the language and logic of offensive behaviors.

Justice dialogues have the potential for socializing children both with respect to clarifying understanding of right and wrong as connected to a particular offensive act, but also for developing understanding of what constitutes proof in making a case for claims about this act, and hence *reasoning*. Toulmin (1963) described logic as a "generalized jurisprudence" (p. 7), consisting of pragmatics used to conduct social investigations or inquiries:

> Logic is concerned with the soundness of the claims we make—with the solidity of the grounds we produce to support them, the firmness of the backing we provide for them—or, to change the metaphor, with the sort of *case* we present in defence of our claims. . . . A sound argument, a well-grounded or firmly backed claim, is one which will stand up to criticism, one for which a case can be presented coming up to the standard required if it is to deserve a favourable verdict. How many legal terms find a natural extension here! One may even be tempted to say that our extralegal claims have to be justified, not before Her Majesty's Judges, but before the Court of Reason. (pp. 7–8)

According to Toulmin, the basic layout of arguments in a "Court of Reason" consists of data (D) that lead to a conclusion (C) under the authorization of warrants (W). Warrants, which are generally *implicit*, are "logical bridges" (p. 98) that allow one to argue a step between data and conclusions. Warrants may assume various forms: premises, assumptions, justifications, reasons, beliefs, or any form of presuppositional understanding used to authorize a conclusion. Toulmin further articulated his basic structure of argumentation by establishing

modal qualifiers (Q) and rebuttals (R) that refer, respectively, to the force by which warrants authorize conclusions and the exceptions that could be raised to arguments. Both qualifiers and rebuttals contribute to what Toulmin defined as the backing (B) of the warrant, or "assurances, without which the warrants themselves would possess neither authority nor currency" (p. 103). Among the parental socialization strategies considered in this study, warrants are concerned with cultural rules and principles, historical norms, and standards of reasoning. Thinking jurisprudentially, one should consider data as arguments from facts, that is, the story (evidence, testimony) and warrants as arguments from law, that is, scripts (statutes, principles, precedents). We propose that the court of reason, or the logical criteria for the proof of claims, provides normative standards for arguments in ordinary family justice dialogues as it does in legal contexts.

The objective of both the parents' and the child's arguments to the court was to promote a *narrative understanding* of the conflict. Propositions communicating narrative understanding are the core of arguments whose purpose is to facilitate logically conclusions that are based on data and authorized by warrants. The conclusions sought in justice dialogues are judgments about the guilt and innocence of various parties, and the work of narrative understanding is to facilitate the making of judgments about the rightness and truth of its propositions and hence of its tellers. Justice itself is an organized, rule-governed process in which participants compete for whose narrative understanding of world knowledge is accepted as most probably true, a matter of vital importance because whoever's story is believed or disbelieved has profound implications for blame or innocence as an outcome. The parents' narrative understanding was used as a basis for judging their son's actions and their communications enabled the child to know the data and warrants for parents reaching such conclusions. At the same time, the parents' principal socialization strategy was to develop a point of view within the child's narrative understanding of the aggression in the event, his own self-perspective of his *intentions*.

By moral behavior, we mean "a special perspective of the agent" (Blasi, 1987, p. 84) consisting of an understanding of intentional actions responding to obligations and ideals. In our view, moral socialization involves a parent, representing the authority of obligations and ideals, training this special perspective in the child through strategies (arguments) for creating narrative understanding. In the context of resolving differences and misunderstandings about a class of domain-specific intentions, there are parental opportunities to define and classify the nature of a specific type of aggressive intention. There is little dispute that the young egocentric child is unable to differentiate accidental from intentional acts. This transformation takes place over a number of years, from 2 years of age, if one accepts Dunn's (1987) research as demonstrating the child's initial understanding of intentions, to sometime around 7 to 10 years of age when, according to Piaget's (1965) investigation, subjective responsibility, as opposed to an objective morality of constraint, may be more fully understood and practiced by the

child. Astington (1990) suggested that it is narrative understanding, particularly as provided by school literacy after the age of 4 to 5, that contributes to the growth of the child's understanding of intentionality as a subjective responsibility.

AN INTERPRETIVE STUDY OF THE COURT: A METAPHORIC APPROACH

Sample Family and Dialogue

The Wood family lives in Raleigh, NC and consists of Ingrid and Denis, mother and father, and two sons, Chandler (9 years, 9 months) and Randall (11 years, 11 months). Denis is a professor, and Ingrid, a part-time community service worker, is virtually a full-time mother. The Woods are an example of an "authoritative family," one whose moral communications aim at high control and clear communication (Baumrind, 1973). The authoritative parent tries to be clearly communicative, firm, and consistent in his or her maturity expectations, but at the same time displays warmth and nurturance. The authoritative family as a type may be contrasted with the less effective authoritarian parents who regulate inconsistently and harshly, depending on mood and temperament swings, or, the equally ineffective permissive parents who overprotect and shelter children from any form of unpleasantness, including relevant reality consequences (Baumrind, 1973). This is not to say that the Woods are a "perfect" family in which to study moral socialization, but they do display authoritative communications, routinely make judgments in response to breaches of morality, praise behaviors that they view as exemplary, and criticize those that deserve it. We would add that the Woods depend on their everyday conversation to deal with moral matters: as a secular humanist family, their values are drawn from the critique of life experience primarily, not from any religious beliefs, per se.

It was agreed that the Woods would audiotape themselves at their convenience and in R.J.B.'s absence. Two days of ordinary family conversation were taped and D.W. prepared the transcript. From this record, R.J.B. coded 186 dialogues based on changes of subject and mixes of participants. A dialogue is defined as a continuous and microdevelopmental conversational segment without change of topic or participants. (Pauses were indicated by ellipses, and intonational stress was indicated by underlining.) Of these dialogues, 8 were selected to form the corpus of a larger study of family justice (Beck & Wood, 1990). These dialogues all began with judgments and conflicts of one sort or another and stimulated the appearance of the family's court.

The study presented here is of Dialogue 1, a conversation of 194 turns taking place over a 30-min period involving the entire Wood family. By Riegel's (1979) criterion, the dialogue of this study is a *complex dialogue* in which participants' utterances refer back largely to their opponents' or their own preceding and earlier utterances, and in which there is continuous attention to a theme. This

dialogue was chosen for several reasons. It was the only one dealing with aggression and, of the eight justice dialogues, was the most serious, emotionally involved, and historically important for the family. We are unaware of another comparable text: The length and complexity of the conversation far exceeds any other ordinary language text collected in moral sociolinguistic research, which has used brief samples of discourse of preschool and early elementary school-aged children and their caretakers for the most part. And yet, the Woods reported that this dialogue, although noteworthy for its length, was entirely typical of the recent past (approximately 6 months) in which Randall (the older brother) had been bullying Chandler (the younger brother), who was not only able to engage in focal discussion involving many turns, but was skilled in narrative communication, both in story telling and in the querying and criticism of stories. Moreover, Chandler was capable of making a determined, if not fully mature, argument, calling forth several variations in parental strategies to promote his moral understanding. We suspected that Chandler was in a transitional phase with respect to subjective responsibility. During the dialogue, his parents were heavily demanding in calling for his acknowledgement of his intentions and appeared to assume that he had only marginal awareness of his intentional states during emotionally arousing events; and that, therefore, he needed to learn to reflect upon them and indicate to parents his acceptance of his responsibility for contributing to aggression.

Interpretive Approach

The key to an interpretive study is, of course, a framework that may be used to invoke coherent explanations and images in readers (Clifford & Marcus, 1986). We argue that, in response to social conflict, groups develop cultural institutions to settle differences among their members. When there has been physical conflict and right and wrong are in question, children compete intensely with each other and with parents to be right about what happened (truth) and to be in the right, morally. Mostly, they do so to get or avoid justice. To be right or wrong in a morally relevant situation has such important consequences, potentially physical, social, and psychological, that children argue their judgments forcibly. And this establishes the basic tension involved in deciding what and who is right or wrong, for there are both strong parental pressures for agreement with their points of view, and equally strong needs for children to maintain their own view that they were right, or at least not wrong. As a result, moral discussions are highly contested.

Because of these tensions and contradictions about what actions are right and wrong, and who is right or wrong, we propose that there is a need for groups to develop institutions for resolving such disputational forces in an orderly way. In this dialogue, we hypothesize that a *transitory cultural institution* formed in order to manage, heal, adjust, and teach group differences. The most powerful and universal human method for dealing with societal rights and wrongs is, of

course, a legal court. A court is an orderly, rule-governed institution for deciding who is right and wrong, and its investigative and decision-making discourse processes are occupied with discriminating right and wrong acts, norms, and agencies.

How can a metaphor such as the court be used to develop an interpretive theory? In order to evoke meaning in a text, both for himself or herself and the reader, the hermeneutician needs an interpretive framework to provide an image of the whole. Hirsch (1967), in particular, emphasized that to interpret a text, one should begin by determining genre. Metaphors provide a starting point to a description of the whole. As Stephen Pepper said in a widely cited statement:

> A man desiring to understand the world looks about for a clue to its comprehension. He pitches upon some area of commensense fact and tries [to see] if he cannot understand other areas in terms of this one. This original area becomes then his basic analogy or root metaphor. He describes as best he can the characteristics of this area, or if you will, discriminates its structure. A list of its structural characteristics becomes his basic concepts of explanation and description. (Pepper, quoted in Turner, 1974, p. 26)

"Every metaphor involves [at least] two conceptual contents which function as two simultaneous perspectives or categories in which some entity is viewed" (Kittay, 1987, p. 29). The two conceptual contents are the *topic* and the *vehicle* (see also Richards, 1936, from whom Kittay's position is adapted). The *vehicle* is the semantic field which, for example, in the metaphor, MAN IS A WOLF, is represented by the WOLF, and the *topic* is the semantic field represented by MAN. By selecting, in our study, a set of discriminatory terms representing the vehicle's system, the justice system or court and its parts, we may read the original system, that is, the topic or family discourse processes in those terms. Turner (1974) wrote that the two poles "are best regarded as 'systems of things' . . . multivocal symbols, whole semantic systems, which bring into relation a number of ideas, images, sentiments, values, and stereotypes" (p. 29). Once we imagined the discourse as taking place in a court, it could then be inferred that the discourse had to serve justice processes. In legal contexts, these functions are systemic and well known: to determine truth (to elicit and gather testimony in the form of stories); to apply normative values (to apply law and norms); and to make a case (to argue and counterargue through jurisprudential reasoning). Therefore, an interpretive program for reading the text could be organized by assuming *metaphorically* that the family's discourse was regulated by a distinctive and holistic sociocultural organization. Our interpretations, in fact, were in the service of *proving the court metaphor coherent* in describing and explaining the Woods' discourse processes.

But the application of metaphor in interpretation quickly reveals how the vehicle differs from the topic and so encourages the development of the metaphor

to include additional vehicles through which to view the topic. "The metaphor selects, emphasizes, suppresses and organizes features of the principal subject by implying statements about it that normally apply to the subsidiary subject" (Turner, 1974, p. 30). What the metaphor *suppressed* as well as emphasized, became obvious. The family's discourse processes served distinctive *pedagogic* and *therapeutic* aims (the latter in portions of the dialogue not reported here) as well as *justice* aims. This cued us to search for pedagogic roles as well as jurisprudential roles assumed by speakers in our selected dialogue.

SCRIPT THEORY AND THE COURT OF REASON APPLIED TO A JUSTICE DIALOGUE: DEVELOPING INTERPRETIVE CODES

With the development of the court metaphor we have already conceptualized the genre of our research text, that is, the socio-moral-cultural environment in which the family speeches took place. We now propose a more detailed narrative and jurisprudential framework that may usefully evoke the development of participants' moral understanding in the family's court. Schank and Abelson's (1977) script theory, a way of organizing the distinctive features of world knowledge, and in which "understanding is defined as the fitting of new information into a previously organized view of the world" (p. 422) is particularly relevant to the analysis of justice dialogues of peer conflicts that are rife with misunderstanding on all sides. Repair of the disequilibrium produced in the relationship by aggressive acts can only be resolved in the court by clearing up incomplete understandings, misunderstandings, and attempts to obscure understanding concerning the children's intentionalities and subjective responsibilities. In general, parents want to get children to exchange their "previously organized view of the world" for their own. The strategies and defenses employed to represent understanding by its participants may be viewed as a turn-by-turn creative unfolding of ethically relevant and negotiated knowledge.

Almost all the statements of the research text are classifiable according to the forms of narrative understanding proposed by script theory: *script, story,* and *plan*. "A script, as we use it, is a structure that describes an appropriate sequence of events in a particular context" (Schank & Abelson, 1977, p. 422). Their well-known example is the Restaurant script, which describes culturally appropriate sequences of behaviors in a restaurant. A script is therefore a normative or standardized cultural structure. Understood in relation to Toulmin's (1963) model, a script, when used as part of an argument, is a warrant that allows one to draw conclusions from a story, the latter regarded as data.

"Stories can invoke scripts in various ways. Usually a story is a script with one or more interesting deviations" (Schank & Abelson, 1977, p. 422). Stories, like the narratives taking place within justice dialogues, are reported actions that deviate from script requirements. Whoever is supporting the rightness of the

script (warrant) is compelled to correct the story. One should envision in this study that it is the parent who more frequently applies a script and the child who provides the story, although children apply scripts too.

"Plans are responsible for the deliberate behavior that people exhibit. . . . By finding a plan, an understander can make guesses about the intentions of an action in an unfolding story and use these guesses to make sense of the story" (Schank & Abelson, 1977, p. 428). It is by addressing intentions that the parent hopes to encourage the child's self-examination and self-control. In Toulmin's (1963) sense, intentions may be data or warrants. Intentions may simply be a story (datum) element whose existence it is important to establish in making a proof. But when the meaning and definition of intentions are in dispute, then the parties are addressing the backing of the warrant, that is, the criteria by which the intention is classified and judged. When a parent, after hearing a child's story, chooses to address the child's plans during the problematic event, he or she hopes to activate the child's historical consciousness. The parent's aim is not merely historical understanding, which, however, would be useful in helping the child to account for his or her actions, but to provide guidelines for the future. It is to establish in the child a preparatory (preventative) function, a self-control competency that allows the child to think ahead about the effects that such intentions might cause, and about the cultural and psychological criticism such contemplated effects would entail.

In the following analysis, we first present Chandler's opening story, which triggered the entire dialogue. Our interpretations then focus on Ingrid's responses to his story and its elaborations in her Strategies 1 and 2. This is followed by an analysis of Denis' Strategies 3–10. (Turns or parts of turns are categorized [in italics] according to their function as story, script, or plan.)

Ingrid's Strategies of Aggression Socialization (Strategies 1 and 2)

Chandler's Story

Turn 1. CHANDLER: We were playing tag, movie tag, and I, he, he is down like this, going around like this.
Turn 2. DENIS: Yeah.
Turn 3. CHANDLER: And he's not it and we both say, he thinks he's cool.
Turn 4. DENIS: Yeah.
Turn 5. CHANDLER: And in a little while he's like this and he goes up like this, and he says "West Side Story" [Chandler starts rhythmic clonking on the table] and, um, we say, we both say, "You think you're cool," and he comes over and hits me on the head and says you know that's my favorite movie, which it isn't.

Although the accusation is somewhat confusing, Ingrid can easily discern its main features: (a) Randall made a provocative gesture; (b) Chandler and Lutie, a girl playmate, both said to Randall that he thinks he's cool; (c) Randall made

another provocative gesture; (d) Chandler and Lutie say again: "you think you're cool"; (e) then Randall hits Chandler on the head. What is also apparent to her, and immediately apparent to any competent adult, is that there is no statement which shows any understanding that the speaker acknowledges or makes a connection between saying "cool" twice and Randall's aggressive action.

Strategy 1: Intentions and Rules. After Denis leaves and Ingrid criticizes Chandler's story as "mixed-up" (Turns 6 and 7), she questions Chandler's actions, suggesting he look to his negative intentions for saying "cool."

Turn 8. INGRID: Why were you saying to him he thinks he's cool? Isn't that kind of mean? [*Plan*]
Turn 9. CHANDLER: Because the first time I said it to him, he didn't do anything. [*Story: historical precedent*]
Turn 10. INGRID: Don't say things like that [cool] to him. [*Script: family rule*]
Turn 11. CHANDLER: Why?
Turn 12a. INGRID: I don't mean him to hit you.
Turn 12b. INGRID: Because it's [cool] not nice. [*Script: social standard*]
Turn 13. CHANDLER: Because he thinks he's cool. He does. [*Story*] Because he said he does. [*Story: historical precedent*]
Turn 14. INGRID: Alright, then shutup after you've said it once. [*Script: cultural principle against repetitive name calling*]

In this series, functioning largely as a *judge*, Ingrid consecutively *questioned* Chandler's *intentions* in his use of "cool," *attributed meanness* to his intentions in using the word aggressively, *ruled* that Chandler should stop saying "cool" and comparable language, *sided* with Chandler momentarily, invoked *social standards* in finding both boys wrong, and expanded her rule to *principle* in reiterating her order that Chandler stop using such language. Chandler rebutted Ingrid by citing precedents that his motivation was blameless, because it had not been previously blamed, and because "cool" is a characteristic that Randall attributed to himself.

Ingrid's question, "why were you saying to him he thinks he's cool?" assumed that Chandler's reasoning about his intentions had no valid warrant and indirectly called for him to produce reasons for his behavior. In response to Chandler's unsatisfactory warrant (precedent) in Turns 9, 11, and 13, Ingrid inserted a series of her own warrants, whose purpose was to offer cultural authority in support of her conclusion and which she hoped Chandler would substitute when he contemplated or faced comparable circumstances.

Strategy 2: Scenarios and Intentions. In Turns 34 and 36, Ingrid criticized Chandler's behavior toward Randall by constructing two scenarios based on what she had witnessed him do routinely in the recent past.

1. First, as a *judge* she told him he needed to learn to communicate better in order to improve his reciprocal interactions with his brother.

   Future scenario: I think you should learn, to respond to Randall, and to say things to Randall that will not make him want to hit you. It's a two—

2. Then, as a *witness*, she recounted to Chandler an historical scenario justifying this recommendation for change.

   Historical scenario: I think there is something wrong with the way you say things sometimes. You very often will not answer him when he asks you a question. It is also true that, if you're calling him, you might hurt his feelings or make him angry sometimes, and you have a sense of that. You have a sense that this could make him angry or teasing him or something like that and you need to learn to say things to him that . . . are not the kinds of things that will want to make him want to hit you.

Notice that both of Ingrid's scenarios emphasized the two-way causal reciprocal pattern of the boys' problematic actions with particular attention paid to Chandler's nonnormative communications affecting the boys' relationship. She identified a number of Chandler's actions that were presumed to cause trouble: He doesn't respond to Randall; he says things; he name calls; and, he is aware of what he is doing. All of these points broadened the context of intentions within which this particular name calling fit. Her scenario was being made to reinforce what she understood was already in the boy's awareness at some level. Using a comparative approach, Ingrid also wanted Chandler to understand the relationship between a current particular event (saying "cool") and historical trends (being poorly communicative generally with Randall in the recent past). Seen from Toulmin's (1963) perspective, the mother replaced Chandler's argument with new data and a new conclusion. The new example placed the offensive behavior in the context of its impact on the relationship. Chandler was left to infer her warrant, to wit, that the boy's historical normative performance in the relationship was *why* she thought his manner of saying "cool" was probably offensive in the problematic event. We may compare this approach with Strategy 1 where her warrants were more explicitly communicated.

We turn now to Denis's strategies for improving Chandler's moral understanding of his aggressive role in the troublesome event with Randall. We note particularly that Denis was not present in the conversation when Ingrid tried her approach. Remarkably, both parents attempted, independently, to increase Chandler's awareness of his intentions during the problematic event. Although their objectives were identical, their different methods made for an enlightening comparison.

Denis's Strategies of Aggression Socialization (Strategies 3–10)

Strategy 3: Questioning the Meaning of "Cool" Intentions. Denis's first strategy was designed to understand the meanings Chandler attributed to "cool" and how it might have been offensive.

Turn 122.	DENIS:	[Ingrid leaves] [You said] "You're cool." [*Story: you said in the event "you're cool."*]
Turn 123.	CHANDLER:	Right.
Turn 124.	DENIS:	So, what does that mean? [*Plan*]
Turn 125.	CHANDLER:	[We said:] "You think you're cool," and Randall comes over, and hits me. [*Story*]
Turn 126.	DENIS:	Well, wait a minute now. Okay. Now wait. What did you mean when you said, "You think you're cool?" [*Plan*]
Turn 127.	CHANDLER:	[Hard to make out through the tears.]
Turn 128.	DENIS:	Chandler. Try to answer my question. What do you mean by that? [*Plan*] Were you insulting Randall by saying, "You're cool," like— [*Plan*]

By selecting "cool" from his story, Denis, as *language instructor*, focussed on Chandler's use of language with Randall. Denis's strategy at first was more purely linguistic and pedagogic than Ingrid's. However, the behavior being addressed concerned Chandler's inner meanings about a possibly insulting motive and, comparable to Ingrid's aim, it was an aspect of the boy's intentions to which Denis referred. The father started with a purely definitional question but progressively framed his inquiry to get at the story of the problematic event in which the offensive acts took place. When Denis asked, "so what does that mean [cool]?" his question was oriented to induce Chandler to provide *backing* for his *warrant*. Denis wanted Chandler to reveal how *he classified* the behavior, a fundamental dimension of a warrant's backing according to Toulmin (1963, p. 104). The strategy concluded with Denis's preliminary *hypothesis* or *theory* (put as a question) that the act was *probably* "insulting."

Strategy 4: Comparative Approach: "Cool" Intentions as Insulting Versus Praising. As an extension of Strategy 3, Denis attempted to get Chandler to understand the negative meaning of "cool" through *comparison* with a positive meaning of "cool." Although Turn 128 has been construed as ending the previous strategy, it can also be viewed as the start of a new strategy.

Turn 128.	DENIS:	Chandler. Try to answer my question. What do you mean by that? [*Plan*] Were you insulting Randall by saying, "You're cool," like— [*Plan*]
Turn 129.	CHANDLER:	No, I [tear choke]—
Turn 130.	DENIS:	Were you, were you praising him? [*Plan*]

Turn 131. CHANDLER: No, I was—
Turn 132.   DENIS: Then you were insulting him. I mean to say, to call somebody
                         "cool" is to characterize his behavior, okay? And either you're
                         saying, "Hey, you're really cool. I admire that" or "Yeah, you're
                         cool." So which was it? [*Script: two kinds of "cool"*] It was the
                         latter? [*Probable story*]
Turn 133. CHANDLER: Yeah.
Turn 134.   DENIS: It was the latter version right? It was, "You're cool." [*Probable
                         story*]
Turn 135. CHANDLER: No. That wasn't the point, we, we had even said, "You're cool."
                         [*Story*]

As in the previous strategy, Denis again addressed Chandler's plans. In the
second sentence of Turn 128, Denis asked whether Chandler was insulting Ran-
dall. When Chandler tried to deny his part in the dispute, Denis assumed the role
of *logician* and attempted to prove his point by reversing the good and bad poles
of the action in question: "Were you, were you praising him?" (Turn 130). This
produced a "No, I was [not]" from Chandler. Denis then cut him off by *conclud-
ing* for the boy: "Then you were insulting him." Denis was using an inverted
construction here as an educational technique. Its purpose was both to get
Chandler to *realize* that no, his intention was not to praise, and to infer that it was
insulting. Thus, Denis asked a question concerning one part to which the answer
no was expected, and by *subtraction* or *elimination,* the respondent deduced the
right answer. The father's strategy included teaching Chandler that there were
two basic intentions in using "cool": one communicating praise or admiration and
the other being insulting. Denis's inquiry served to help Chandler *discriminate*
the structure of the warrant's *backing* into good "cool" and bad "cool." In
Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteka's (1969) treatise on rhetoric, they described an
important class of arguments *by comparison*, of which a subclass is *comparisons
in opposition* or simply *contrasts*. Here, Denis's argument provided an example
of this form of comparative argumentation, which used deductive logic (if
not . . . then). The father's aim here was also to get Chandler to agree with his
understanding that Chandler used the bad kind of "cool."

Strategy 5: Interpretation of "Cool" as Intentionally "Insulting." Next,
after determining that Chandler's use of "cool" had nothing to do with the game,
Denis *conclusively* interpreted the reciprocity implications of Chandler's use of
"cool" as intentionally "insulting" (Turns 136–140).

Turn 136.   DENIS: [You said] "You think you're cool," right? [*Story*]
Turn 137. CHANDLER: Yeah and I said that myself two minutes, two minutes before that
                         and he said, "Yes," well, he said, "Yeah," and this time he came
   -                     up and hit me. [*Story*]

Turn 138.   DENIS: I don't even understand this. Does this have some role in the
                         game? "You think you're cool." Is that part of the game? [*Script:
                         game*]
Turn 139. CHANDLER: No.
Turn 140.   DENIS: So you were just insulting him because he was squatting down
                         flipping his fingers, is that right? [*Probable story*]

Denis and Chandler at first reentered the story of the event (Turns 136 and 137).
When Denis attempted to clarify the story in which the offensive act took place,
Chandler responded by telling of his use of "cool" in the event two minutes
earlier. This provoked a misunderstanding: Denis thought this meant that "cool"
was part of the game; Chandler rightfully rejected that interpretation; Denis then
realized that the offensive act took place *during* a game and this led him to
transform and strengthen his hypothesis or theory first made in Strategy 3, that
Chandler *insulted* Randall. As a result, Denis assumed the role of *judge,* finding
Chandler insulted Randall. At the end of this series, Denis introduced his first
definitive interpretation of Chandler's story: Randall made a provocative gesture
which, in turn, caused Chandler to be intentionally insulting. This anticipates
Denis's even more elaborate explanation shortly thereafter in Turn 150. Notice,
however, that Denis's hypothesis here has taken Chandler's point of view in
referring to the *boy's reason* (Randall "squatting/flipping fingers" aggressively)
for calling his brother "cool." Thus, in this stretch of discourse, Denis accepted
that Randall provoked Chandler as part of the explanation.

Strategy 6: Probable Story of the Event.

Turn 150.   DENIS: [Ingrid returns] Okay? He was going, "Yuaah" [Denis mimes
                         this], I can see how he was doing it, okay, and so Chandler says,
                         "Oh, yeah, you're really cool," and Randall didn't respond and
                         Chandler said it three times and then Randall got upset and hit
                         him. [*Probable story*]

With Ingrid now in attendance, Denis summarized Chandler's use of "cool" in
his *probable story* as told in Turn 150. The story, his most elaborate theory and
strongest hypothesis thus far, was presented vividly through dramatic action and
mime, with Denis assuming the voices of Chandler and Randall. Like a *prosecut-
ing attorney,* Denis was constructing a probable story to get at both boys' mo-
tives. Because this story was not based on eyewitnessing, it must have been
synthesized from Chandler's and Randall's witnessing, Ingrid's account of what
the boys said (not reported here), and most importantly, according to Denis, his
normative historical script for the boys' recent relationship. But, his educational
purpose was paramount here, to get Chandler to understand the real "story" (the
meaningful story) of the event. Denis's retold story was formed of a six-part,

cause–effect–cause–effect–cause–effect narrative sequence of probable actions including quoted dialogue and descriptive elements. The reductive causal form of narrative being used here is probably best described as a *plot:*

1. Randall was going "Yuahh" with tongue stuck out to Chandler. Randall is thus positioned as providing the initial cause, as "starting it."
2. As an effect of (1), Chandler called Randall "cool."
3. Randall didn't respond.
4. As an effect of (1) and (3), Chandler said "cool" three times.
5. As an effect of (2) and (4), Randall got upset and hit Chandler.

Denis narratively placed Chandler's instigating actions in a tightly plotted sequence in order that Chandler understand the reciprocal cause–effect logic of the situation; Denis particularly stressed Chandler's role as *coinstigator* in the story, and therefore, his responsibility in bringing the problem about. However, although the father attempted to be perfectly logical in this sequence, he has also slipped into his story the phrase "Randall got upset" (over the name calling). He has emotionally marked the story in favor of Randall's hurt (as an effect), not for Chandler's hurt (as an effect). Denis's positive sympathies for Randall may be hinted at in the phrase in (5): "then Randall got upset and hit him." Although Randall's "getting upset" was a logical outcome (effect) of Chandler's having said "cool" three times, it was also a *final cause,* and possibly Denis's *justification* for Randall's hitting Chandler. Denis has confirmed this interpretation. But, because Denis's aim here was to teach Chandler, must he not portray for him how his actions affect the feelings of others? We have seen that Denis wished very much for Chandler to understand what his *own* responsibility was in the matter. In his commentary, Denis said that he was trying to *balance responsibility:* "Yes, Randall hit Chandler (which very much concerns Ingrid) but what I am trying to demonstrate is how *cause* for this action was equally spread between Chandler and Randall." Consequently, Denis can be seen as taking both boys' positions at various points in this dialogue.

In both Strategies 5 and 6, by representing the offensive actions more precisely, Denis's objective was to clarify Chandler's testimony (*data*). But the father's *warrants* remained implicit. Rather, his meaning was conveyed through saliently represented data depicting Chandler's and Randall's instigatory roles in the event. Here, the father apparently wanted his son to infer the warrant (reason) that such actions were wrong, and come to a new conclusion that such actions should not be in his repertoire.

Strategy 7: Criticism of the Logic of Chandler's "We" Defense. In response to Denis' *probable story* criticism in the previous turn, Chandler mustered a defense: finding a *flaw* in Denis's *story.* The flaw he found was the omission of his friend Lutie. One can easily sense that Chandler was motivated by a sense of

unfairness in reaction to Denis's story in Turn 150 (Strategy 6), and he responded.

Turn 151. CHANDLER: I said we think. We both said, "We think you're cool." [*Story*]

Turn 152. DENIS: Well, I don't know what you think you acquire when you say "we." What's the point of saying "we" instead of "me." You, he should have hit Lutie as well as you, is that what you're saying? [*Script: reasoning*]

Turn 153. CHANDLER: Heck no, but, he didn't understand that, in the fight, that Lutie— [*Story*]

Turn 154. DENIS: Yeah, I'm sure he didn't. [*Story*]

In response to Chandler's "we" defense, that both he *and* Lutie (his friend, a 9-year-old girl) had said "cool," Denis, as a *logician,* tried to teach the boy by drawing the *implications* of his defense. Here Denis applied a *script for reasoning* to Chandler's story. Denis first questioned/detracted from Chandler's use of "we," and asked what was the point of saying "we?" Then the father drew an implication of his own interpreted premise that said: *if* we accept "we," *then* "he should have hit Lutie." Thus, Chandler was exposed to the implications of his own story as extended logically by Denis. Chandler bit on Denis's lure in this case, for he answered in the next turn (Turn 153): "Heck no . . ." (compare Denis's earlier use of a negative construction in Turn 130: "Did you mean to praise him?"). Here, Denis was questioning Chandler's suspected *implicit warrant:* that if "cool" had been offensive, then Randall should have hit both Chandler and his friend Lutie. Denis's approach, then, was to get Chandler to see the logical implications of such an assumption.

Strategy 8: Judgment That "Cool" is a "Problem." Denis next told Chandler that saying "cool" was a "problem" (Turns 156 and 158). Here, Denis was a *judge* explicitly finding from the way Chandler was using "cool," that a script had been violated.

Turn 156. DENIS: Why did you say, "We think you're cool?" [*Plan*]. That's the problem. [*Script*]

Turn 157. INGRID: [Unintelligible].

Turn 158. DENIS: [Unintelligible] That I think is the problem, Chanz. [*Script*] Why did you say, "You're cool," and then repeat it some more times? [*Plan*]

Turn 159. CHANDLER: Well, I didn't say [unintelligible because of tears]. [*Story*]

Denis has interpreted his statements here as designed to get Chandler to confront his intentions in using these words. The problem, said Denis, was the motivation behind Chandler repeatedly calling Randall "cool" in Turn 156. Denis wanted Chandler to know that he *concluded* that there *was* a "problem" with the words

Chandler used: that he was being intentionally provocative. Denis was responding to Chandler's *explicit* warrant that "cool" would be accepted always by Randall because he had accepted it once. In telling Chandler this was a "problem" consisting of the violation of a sanction against repetitious name calling, Denis attempted to substitute his more powerful warrant for Chandler's.

Strategy 9: Cluster of Questions About Chandler's Intentions. As a *language pedagogue* and *moral philosopher*, Denis next asked Chandler a series of *questions* about his meaning of "cool." In this strategy, Denis tried anew to arouse the boy's awareness of his intentions.

Turn 160.   DENIS: Well I don't know what that means? What do you mean by that? What do you, what do you think you mean when you say that Randall thought he was cool. I don't understand what you think that means . . . How is one when one is cool? [*Plans*]

In this strategy, while nominally claiming to misunderstand Chandler's meanings of "cool," Denis was really questioning his son's meanings. He uttered five questions:

1. "I don't know what that means?" Or, I have a question about your intention in using the word.
2. "What do you mean by that?" Or, What is your intention in using the word?
3. "What do you think you mean. . . ?" This question implies that the meaning is not clear in Chandler's understanding.
4. "I don't understand what you think that means." Or, I have a question about your (presumably unclear) understanding. Question 4 is a complex meta-question building upon and assuming all previous questions.
5. "How is one when one is cool?" This was a final direct question to Chandler, calling for a concrete response.

Question 5 is also a philosophical question because of the cultural ambiguity of how "cool" is enacted and asks, in effect, how *the standard itself is constituted*, that is, how may it be determinecd (from Chandler's point of view) that a particular expression of "cool" is an inappropriate usage or an appropriate usage. This final question was the result of Denis realizing that the previous (relatively abstract) questions could not be answered, and called for the boy to present a physical enactment of "cool." In terms of his criticism of Chandler's jurisprudential argument, in Turn 160, Denis employed a cluster of questions that were aimed at Chandler's revealing the backing of his warrant for his usage of "cool."

Strategy 10: Analogy: "Cool" as "Short." After observing Chandler's enactment, Denis criticized his usage of "cool" and tried, as a *language pedagogue*, to teach him by means of yet another strategy: *analogy*.

Turn 161. CHANDLER: [Unintelligible] and stuff like that. [*Script: Chandler's normative expression of action associated with the word "cool"*]

Turn 162.   DENIS: Okay, now cool doesn't have anything to do with that. Okay? [*Script*] In the first place. [Unintelligible] why did you repeat it three times? [*Plan*] What is the point, of characterizing his behavior? [*Plan*] That's like my saying, "You're short," and you don't—you say, "What do you mean when you say, 'You're short'?" So I say, "You're short!" And you still don't say anything. So I say, "You're real short!" And then you fly off and you say, "So what?" And pretty soon we're having a fight about it. [*Script analog: fictional story*]

In this set of turns, Denis initially concentrated on two aspects of Chandler's usage:

1. Why did you repeat it ["cool"] three times? Recall Ingrid's statement in Series 2: "Then shutup after you've said it once!" Thus, both parents have provided the same principle: Repetitive name calling is wrong.
2. To this, Denis added another principle: Characterizing is wrong. Then, as a means of more vividly evoking "characterizing," Denis provided a fictional story in which he substituted "short" for "cool."

In his analogy, Denis amplified understanding of his warrant by dramatizing Chandler's usage of "cool," but the warrant was still implicit and had to be inferred by the boy. As Ingrid did in Strategy 2, Denis generalized his understanding of the problem to one of a *class* of communications that result in fights. All of the parental strategies can be interpreted as oriented to generalizing their son's understanding of the offensive act.

DISCUSSION: NORMALIZATION OF MORAL UNDERSTANDING IN THE SOCIALIZATION OF AGGRESSION

Both script theory and Toulmin's (1963) "Court of Reason" have served to evoke the narrative and logical understanding expressed in these family interactions. All turns could be classified as story, script, or plan and simultaneously expressed data, warrant, or conclusion components of jurisprudential argument. Narrative and jurisprudential understanding appear to be highly integrated in sharing a common discourse. Parents seemed to assume, as do story grammarians, that focus on the protagonist's intentions was the key to understanding the overall meaning of story events (Bruce, 1980; Stein & Trabasso, 1981). Each

parental strategy had the objective of normalizing the child's understanding of the role of his intentional act in the morally problematic event. Parents normalized by contrasting, through reference, their normative views of events, their reality, with their child's views. They also tested and questioned the normative status of their child's views. Normalization therefore served in the training of *reasoning* as well as the administration of justice. As Johnson-Laird (1990) argued: "The mastery of referential language enables individuals to construct and to describe models of possible situations. These abilities are necessary precursors to the development of reasoning" (p. 101). Particularly important is for the child to be able to "construct models that refute conclusions" (p. 102). In this justice dialogue parents offered examples of how they constructed narrative and jurisprudential models in refuting children's conclusions (versions of reality). And, through dialogue, the child practiced defending against these models and produced his own counterexamples to refute parental conclusions. The Woods' court, replete with counterexamples, was truly a "court of reason."

Denis and Ingrid normalized reasoning through narrative understanding by proposing story, historical, analog, and restructured narrative counterexamples to argue the truth of their claims and to induce their son to produce counterexamples rebutting his own story. Parents normalized reasoning by questioning the completeness of the child's *story,* particularly with reference to the key missing element, the intentional act, and by retelling the story (providing counterexamples) to include actions showing that the outcome had mutual and reciprocal causes. They substituted their own *normative historical precedents* for the child's *eyewitnessed reality.* Thus, parents argued that the ways Chandler had acted historically were more predictive of what his actions really were than his own account. Through questions, both parents stimulated Chandler's *autobiographic* historical awareness of the problematic event to promote reflexive self-consciousness (self-normalization) of his intentions toward his brother. Narrative understanding was also normalized through reference to comparative *analog stories* (counterexamples) in which what happened in the story was compared with derogatory but hypothetical scenarios. For example, even in Denis's direct criticism of Chandler's reasoning, he retold the Lutie scenario as a hypothetical course of events so that Chandler could reject the abnormal counterexample.

Ingrid and Denis normalized reasoning further by trying to *prove* themselves right and the child wrong by employing jurisprudentially standard arguments in making a legal case. When parents questioned Chandler's intentionality, their overall jurisprudential purpose was to establish the accuser's malevolent *motive,* and hence guilt. Although the question forms had the appearance of information gathering, they were presumptive, suggestive, and judgmental, and therefore, indicative of the parents' conclusions in the face of the child's inadequate data and warrants. When Ingrid called Chandler's story "mixed up" or when Denis criticized Chandler's reenactment of "cool," their purposes were to make judgments that his story as argument was confused: that his testimony lacked credibil-

ity, and that the boy was not even knowledgeable about the offensive properties of saying "cool." Historical counterexamples were also used jurisprudentially in establishing the *moral character* of the accused. For example, Ingrid's historical scenario established precedents of how Chandler normally (characteristically) acted. This precedent offered weight to the probability of a comparably malevolent motive at the time of the problematic event. In Denis's Strategies 4 and 5, his purpose was not only to establish a definitive intentional act as data, but to suggest a warrant that the boy was, normatively, a tease. Ingrid also made her case by criticizing the way in which her son had applied *norms* to his *argument.* Ingrid offered a counterprinciple (sanction against repetitive name calling) that overruled Chandler's precedent and showed that there were *exceptions* to precedent arguments as warrants for behavior. When Denis criticized Chandler's logic in Strategy 7, he was trying to teach Chandler that there were *exceptions* to fairness principles that mitigated against Chandler using his "we" defense as a warrant for his behavior.

Recovering the child's intentional acts and getting him to admit to them was a very difficult task for these parents. The act itself—subjective, historical, private—was only, at pain, accessible to the parent and may not even have been fully accessible to the child during the dialogue. Therefore, parents must inquire and argue from a normative assumptive perspective about what was *probably* the truth of the matter. They drew largely on historical precedents bearing on the moral character of the child in coming to conclusions. They also seized upon selected acts like "cool" in finding admitted facts they could prosecute. And their son's arguments gave them a chance to pick holes in his logic and generalize assumptions about his probable aggressive intentionality and responsibility on that basis. Their assumptions were composed of a skillful blend of truth, precedent, and reasoning in which they created a thick counterexample of their son's actions, making of him an accused, a guilty party, in contradistinction to his own self-definition as an accuser and victim.

But, consider Chandler's position. He had an eyewitness view of the troublesome events. He knew the so-called intentional act better than his parents. He was there. He knew what he felt. He knew his brother intimately, particularly with respect to the kinds of actions characteristic of their relationship. In response, the parents needed to be masters of the warrant and its backing. Chandler's warrants were attacked directly, if expressed, and elicited, when implicit. The child's backing for warrants was also elicited and criticized. New parental normative warrants were substituted directly for the child's or were left for the boy to infer. Through questions, the child participated in this process by eliciting previously implicit parental warrants. Finally, parents used new conclusions to induce revision of the child's entire argument, including the warrant. Therefore, superior understanding of warrants is the parents' chief strategy in opposing children's superior eyewitnessed data. In promoting successful adjustments to the child's understanding of the backing of warrants, parents and chil-

dren were enabled, potentially, to move to a common assumptive ground. What Denis and Ingrid taught about warrants were not principles and standards alone, although these were proposed as cultural and historical counterexamples, so much as the instruction of *exceptions* to, and *applications* of, well-known principles such as precedent and fairness, to these kinds of morally problematic events.

The parents may be likened to *critics* who used various means to establish the truth of a text. They retold and criticized Chandler's narratives and reasoning. They clarified ambiguities and contradictions in his stories. Like literary critics, they also singled out and instructed the child as to nuances of language of the key actions linked to guilt and responsibility. Therefore, parents constructed views of what was true (the reality on which judgments must be based), assessed the truth constructions of their child, and established what was normatively true, often in the same series of statements. Throughout the trial parents showed how truth was determined. Most importantly, they strategically induced the child to renounce his truth in exchange for theirs. We can think of no other family context in which truth determination, or reality testing, would be conducted on so complex a scale.

Normative discussion, involving a heightened rationality, reasoning, and philosophical level of understanding, was a natural locus for the child to be introduced to what pedagogic theory has called *critical thinking*. In our sample dialogue were included extended arguments containing many examples of cognitive competencies and domains considered part and parcel of critical thinking. Among other kinds of training, the dialogue yielded a bounty of critical thinking practices. We observed the creation and analysis of arguments, the evaluation of actions, and clarification of standards, comparisons of analogous situations, and the clarification of credibility. We also analyzed how parents and children processed each other's critical discourse, how they questioned adroitly and engaged in other Socratic techniques of discussion: by noting similarities and differences between positions; by examining and evaluating properties of each other's arguments, that is, their assumptions, evidence and inferences; by recognizing contradictions and exploring implications and consequences; by using aspects of an opponent's augments against him; by paraphrasing another's argument; by using critical vocabulary to discriminate and contrast right and wrong; and, in general, to build syllogistic arguments in support of one's own position and to refute an adversary's position (adapted, in part, from Paul, Binker, Jensen, & Kreklau, 1987). As Hess and Shipman (1967) concluded, the optimal learning of reasoning requires a parental style involving expressly stated justifications and not an imperative-normative orientation that condenses meaning as part of direct authority. When parents and child engage in a free-ranging Socratic discourse, the potential for the development of the critical thinking skills comprising rationality is greatly facilitated. To develop his reasoning fully, the child needs to be exposed to parental arguments and counterexamples and the opportunity to make his own case in the family's court of reason and inquiry.

It was not until very late in this study that we caught an image of the parents' moral socialization as an intersubjective intervention in the personality of the child. It was not that the child was made moral alone through the socialization of this rationality by learning rules and principles and their exceptions, by the contrast of narrative counterexamples, or by discriminating right from wrong acts, but also by the parent representing in *self terms* the child's situated and judged personality. By interpreting the child's aggressive states of mind, intentions and feelings, the parent has intervened to create an unflattering counterexample of the child's self, to which the child will have to answer. Whereas the parents may have intended this representation to apply to the child's self within the sibling relationship only, Chandler took it personally. He didn't want this attributed, characterized image, paradoxically the same grounds on which his actions toward Randall were criticized. Chandler wished to preserve his own moral self-description. It was as if he were fighting for the right to his own moral self-identification versus his parents' identifications in order to maintain his victim-of-injustice status versus their guilt attributions. Yet, in a justice dialogue, Chandler, at a minimum, had to *answer* his parents' representations of his moral self. At a maximum, from the parents' perspective, Chandler should *agree* that this version accurately characterized his actions, is not supportable, and he should negate it by removing such aggressive actions and comparable actions from his relationship with his brother.

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