

Observation as dialogue, observation of dialogue

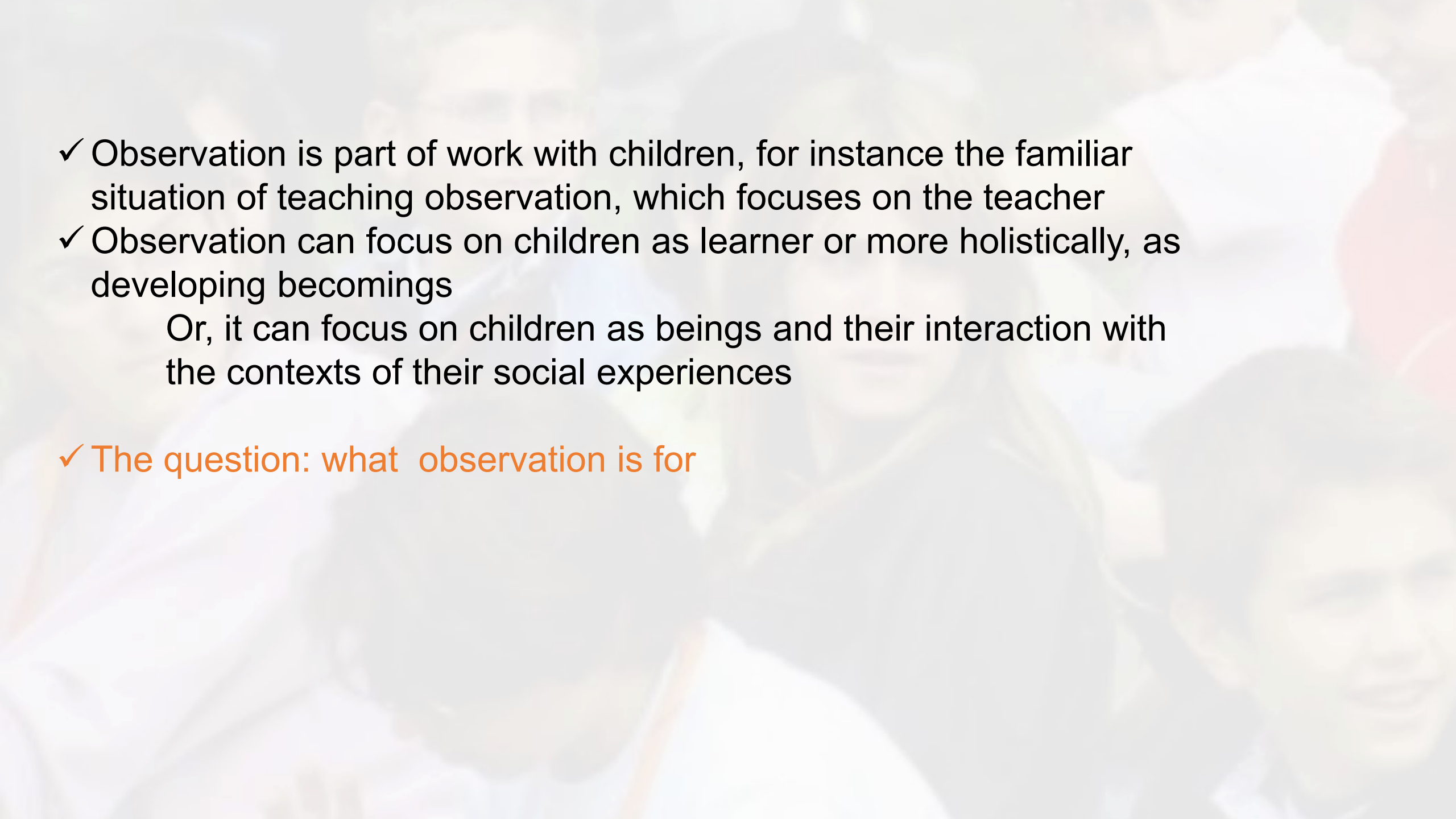
Prof Federico Farini, University of Northampton

for

SPACEX, TE-2, Florence, 11.11.22

A group of children in a classroom setting, looking towards the camera. The image is faded and serves as a background for the text.

Observing children's agency: an ethos

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- ✓ Observation is part of work with children, for instance the familiar situation of teaching observation, which focuses on the teacher
 - ✓ Observation can focus on children as learner or more holistically, as developing beings
 - Or, it can focus on children as beings and their interaction with the contexts of their social experiences

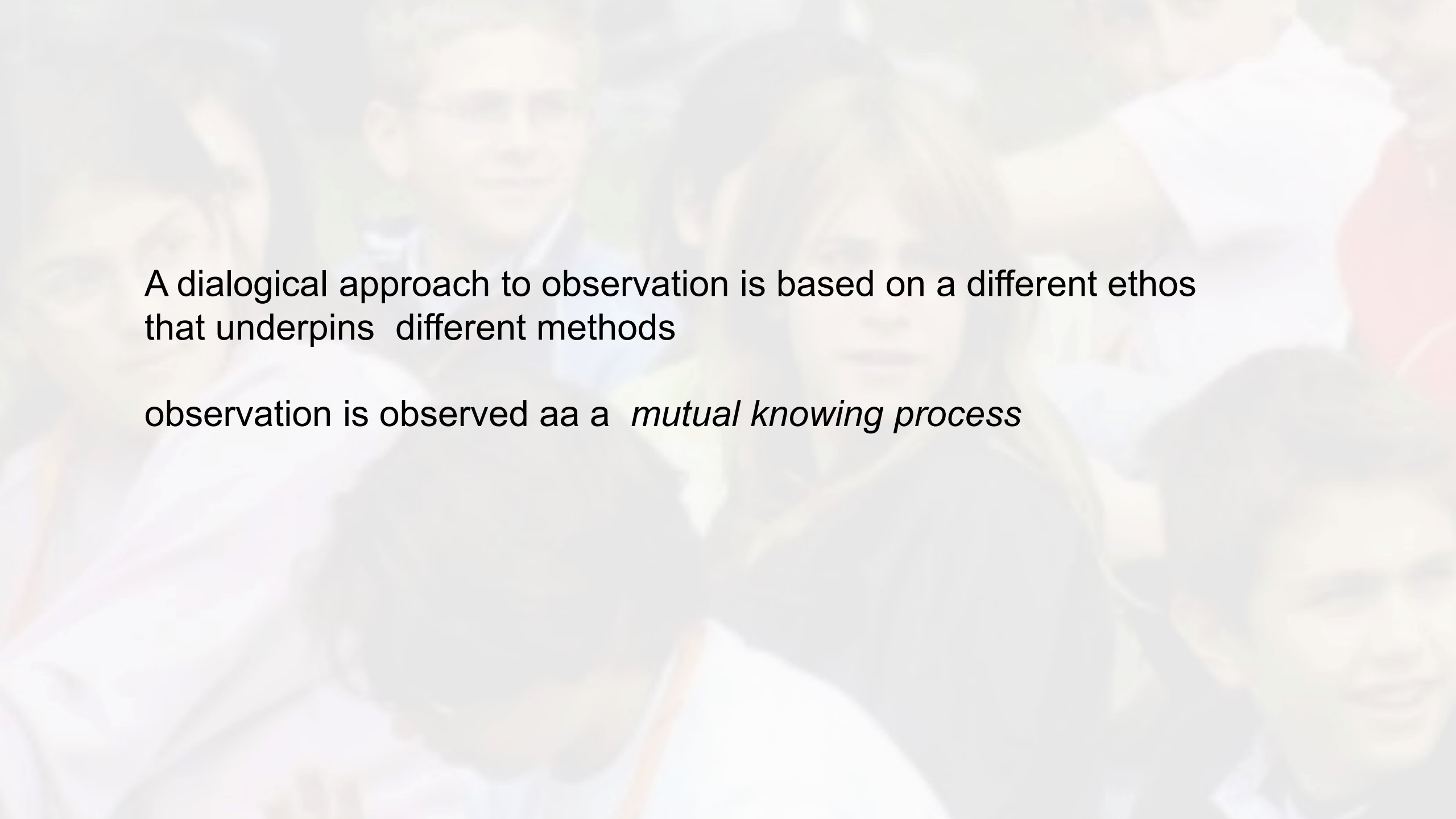
✓ The question: what observation is for



The purpose of observation influences how observation is undertaken

Observation can be used to assess children's position vis-à-vis heteronomous developmental stages; it can be used to measure whether a child matches the ideal image of the 'learning child' or not

Those aims of observation do not allow observation to see agency, because observation is centred on adults' expectations, and children are objects of the evaluating eye



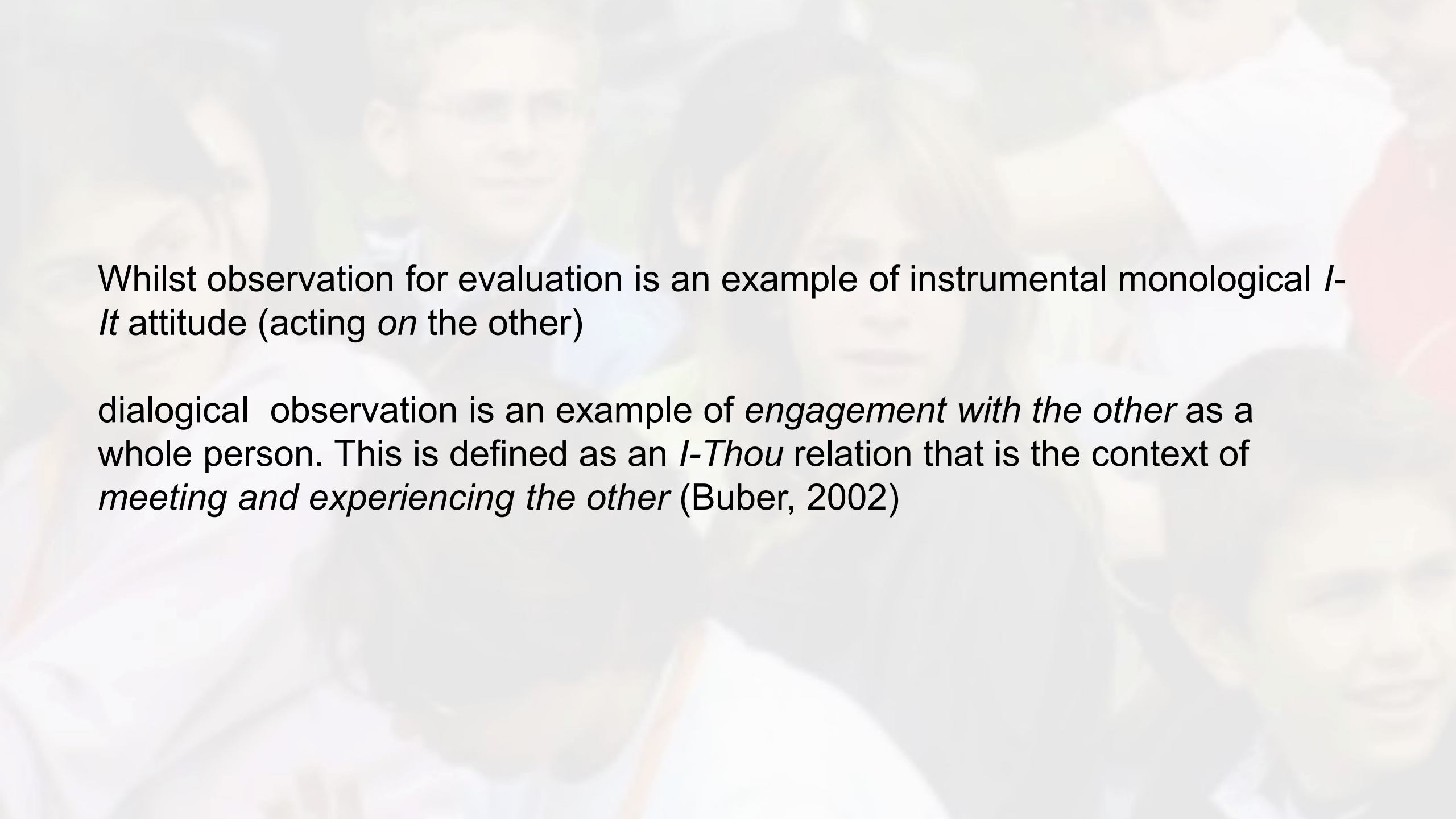
A dialogical approach to observation is based on a different ethos
that underpins different methods

observation is observed as a *mutual knowing process*



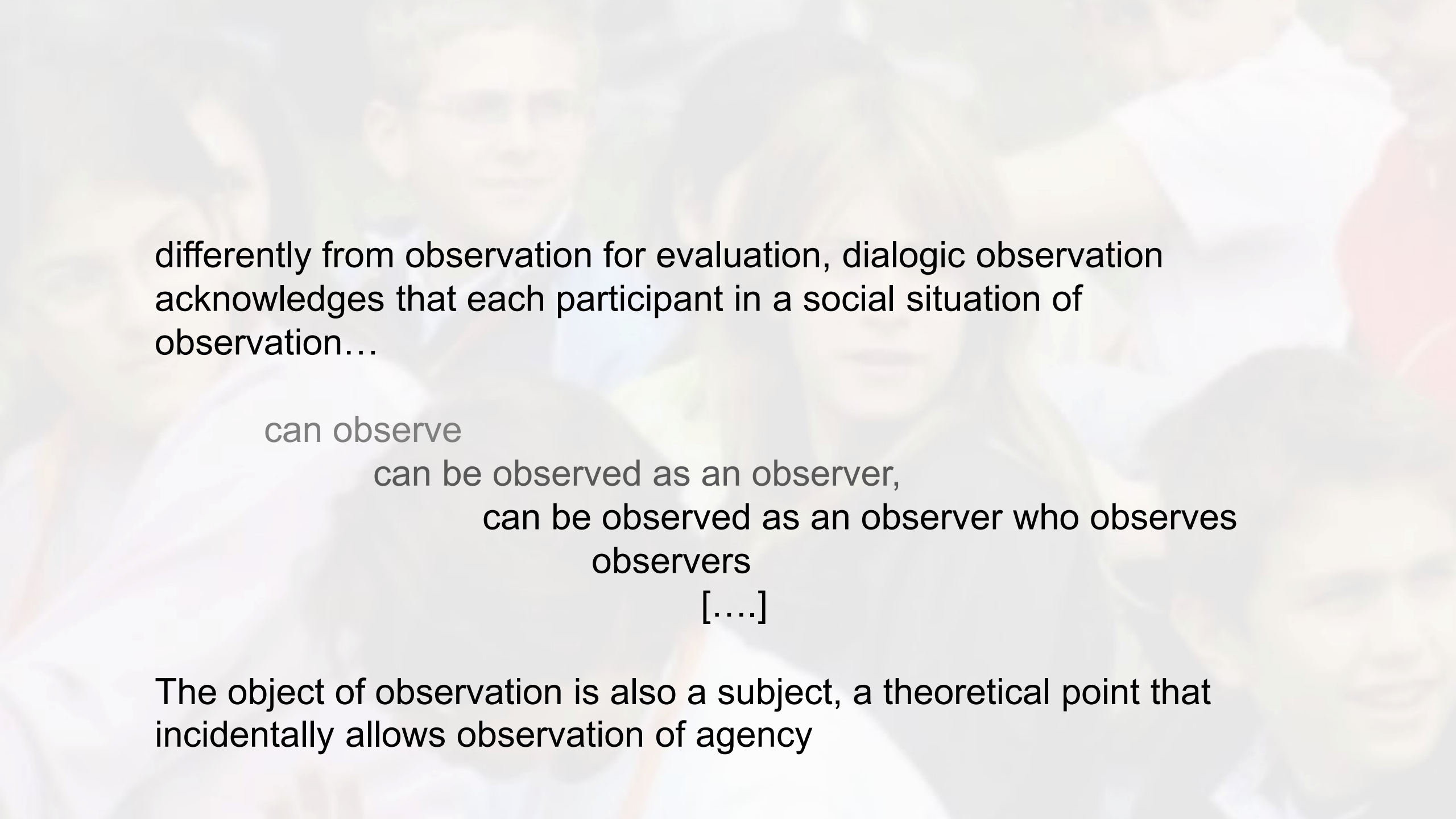
the underpinning idea is that observation is a system of communication rather than a solipsistic act onto objects or objectifies others (Markovà & Linell, 1996)

Observation is a social situation that can be context of dialogue between children and the observers, who co-construct meaning



Whilst observation for evaluation is an example of instrumental monological *I-It* attitude (acting *on* the other)

dialogical observation is an example of *engagement with the other* as a whole person. This is defined as an *I-Thou* relation that is the context of *meeting and experiencing the other* (Buber, 2002)



differently from observation for evaluation, dialogic observation acknowledges that each participant in a social situation of observation...

can observe

can be observed as an observer,

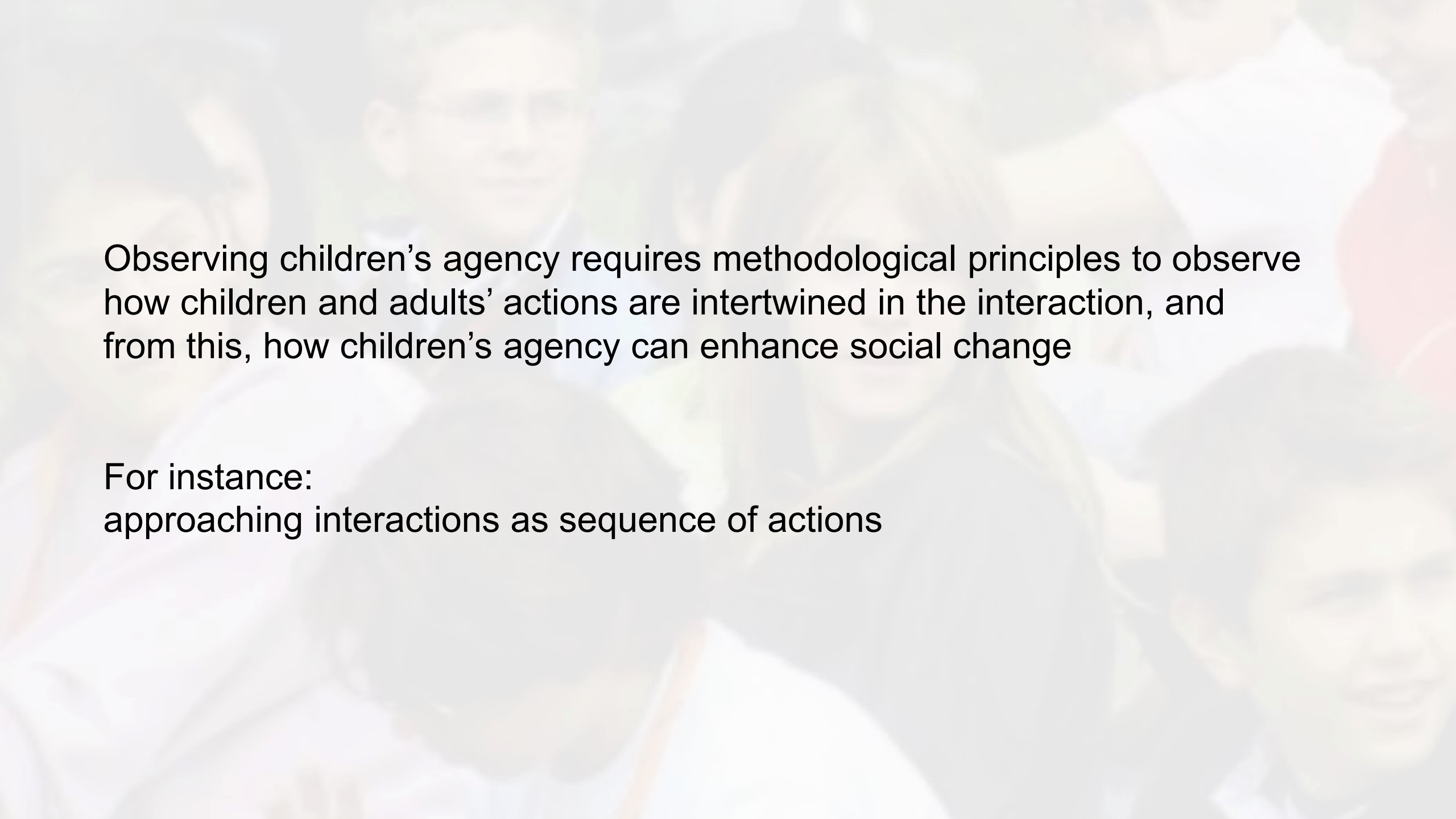
can be observed as an observer who observes
observers

[....]

The object of observation is also a subject, a theoretical point that incidentally allows observation of agency



Observing children's agency: a method



Observing children's agency requires methodological principles to observe how children and adults' actions are intertwined in the interaction, and from this, how children's agency can enhance social change

For instance:
approaching interactions as sequence of actions

the relationship between actions and situations (understood as the context created by previous actions) is *reflexive*

talk has a *retrospective* significance because it displays an understanding of what just occurred

a *prospective* significance, because it always projects what should relevantly happen next (Maynard & Clayman, 1991)

Each statement reflects the speaker's understanding of the ongoing conversation as well as conditioning the local context of the following speaker's (re)action.

Thus, agency can be observed by examining the design of turns and the sequence organisation

- ✓ Turn design displays how children take initiatives and make decisions
- ✓ Sequence organisation displays the reflexivity of interaction: each action reduces the range of possible next actions (Goodwin and Heritage 1990) and each new action is observed against the contexts created by former actions

Observation of agency can be the observation of how children's initiatives are intertwined with their interlocutors' actions and reactions. This interplay measures the space for children's agency

agency is also influenced by the broader social context, or the social structures of interactions. An example of social structure is epistemic authority

Observation of agency can also be observation of the negotiation of epistemic authority in the interplay between children's initiative and adults' action. For instance, children's initiative can be...

- ✓ assessed as performances (downgrading children's rights and responsibilities for knowledge) or
- ✓ recognised as valid knowledge (upgrading children's rights and responsibilities for knowledge)


A group of people, including children and adults, looking towards the camera. The image is faded and serves as a background for the text.

Example: the observation of children's agency



A video-recorded interaction in Genoa

<https://movio.child-up.eu>



yes in my opinion ehm as M2 said
(that's right) because in any case (to
get as sufficient grades) as possible



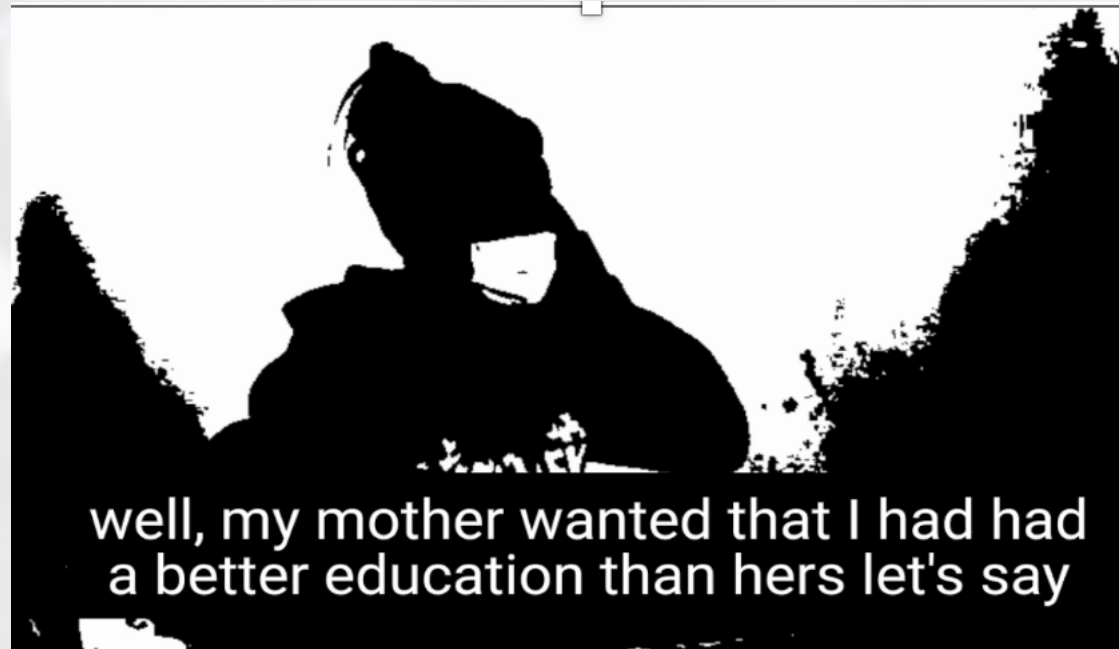
ok what do you want to say?



wait let him explain



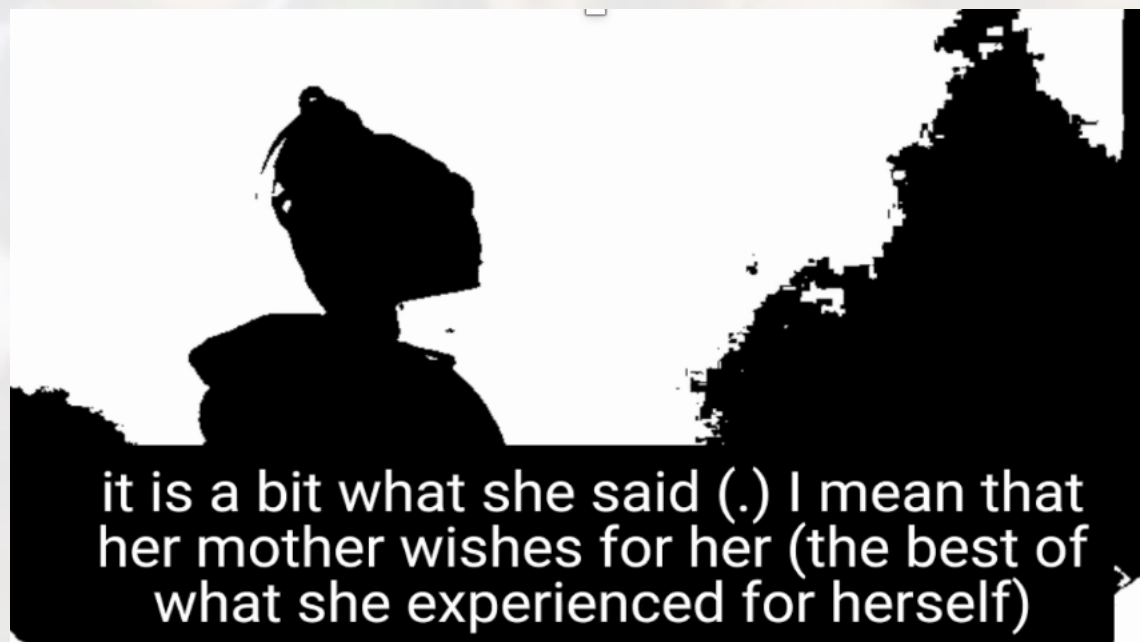
fine, please



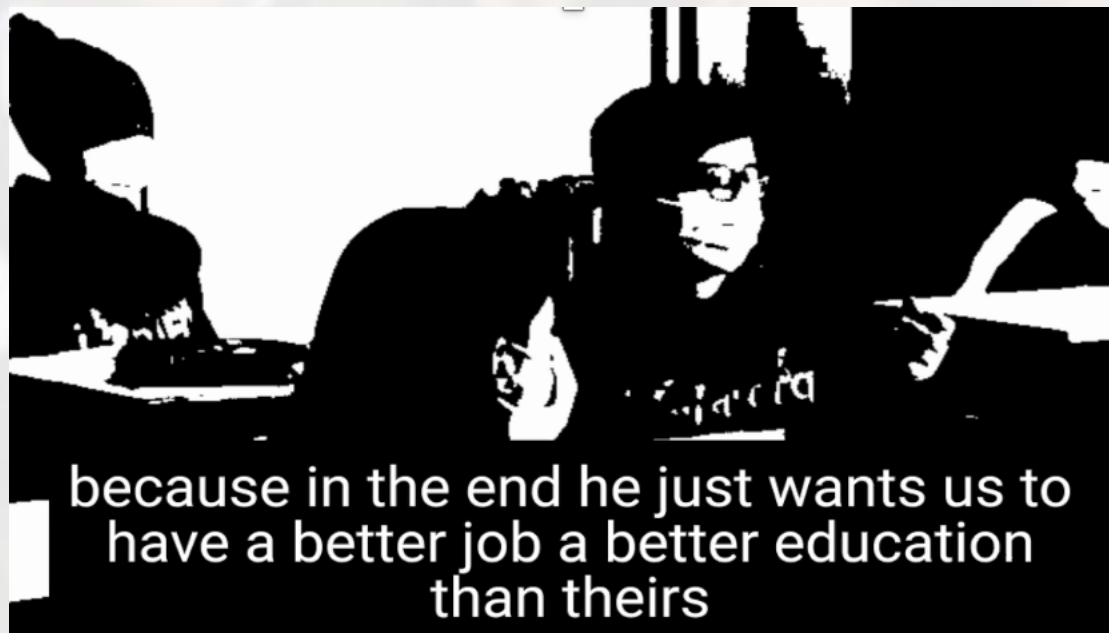
well, my mother wanted that I had had
a better education than hers let's say



in my opinion what M4 says is right
because in any case you can't always
have excellent results



it is a bit what she said (.) I mean that
her mother wishes for her (the best of
what she experienced for herself)



because in the end he just wants us to
have a better job a better education
than theirs



fine then it is very similar to her
thought right? And you who had your
hand raised?



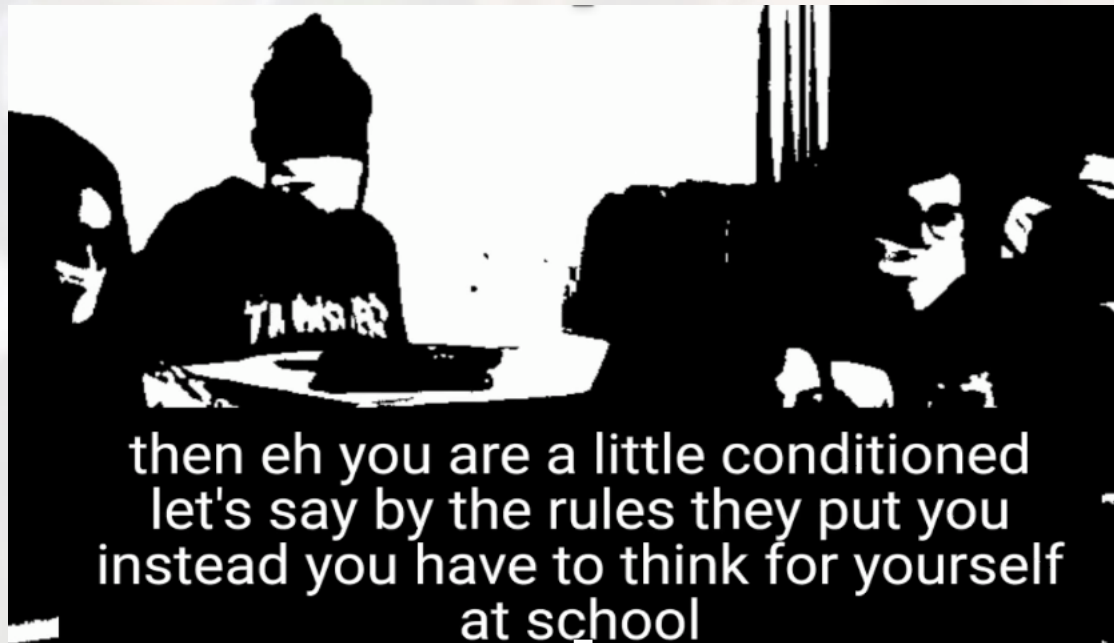
ok here - but compared to what they
said?



also for the parents they were talking
about is it a desire to improve eh?



and your mate says the command is
not good



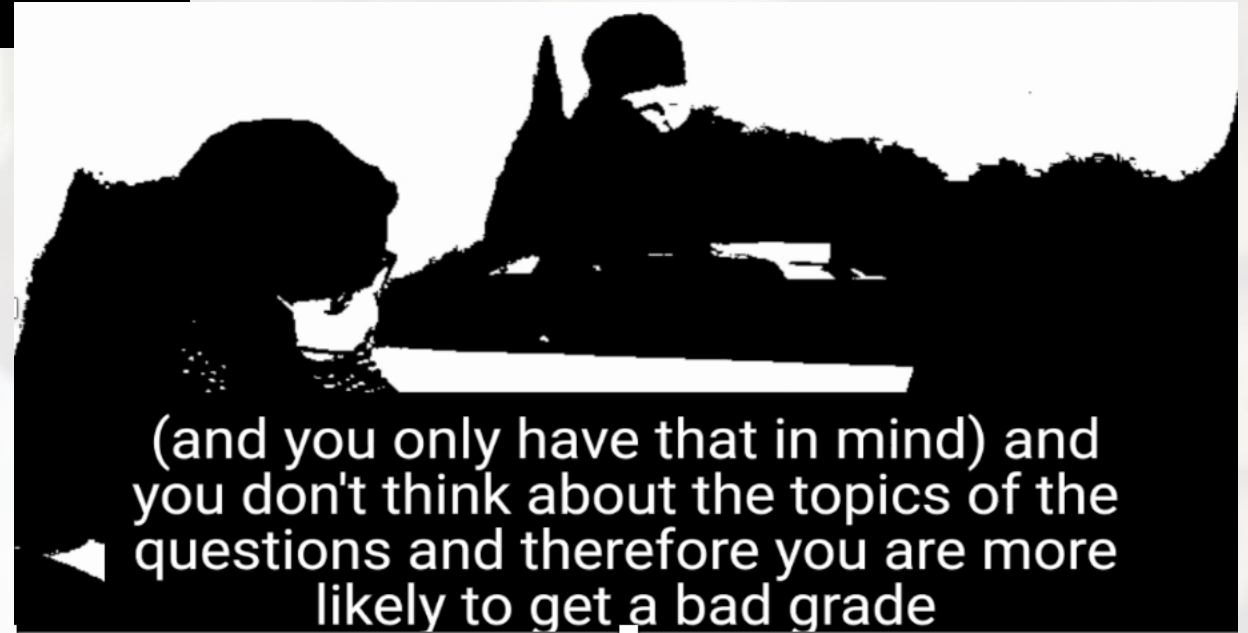
then eh you are a little conditioned
let's say by the rules they put you
instead you have to think for yourself
at school



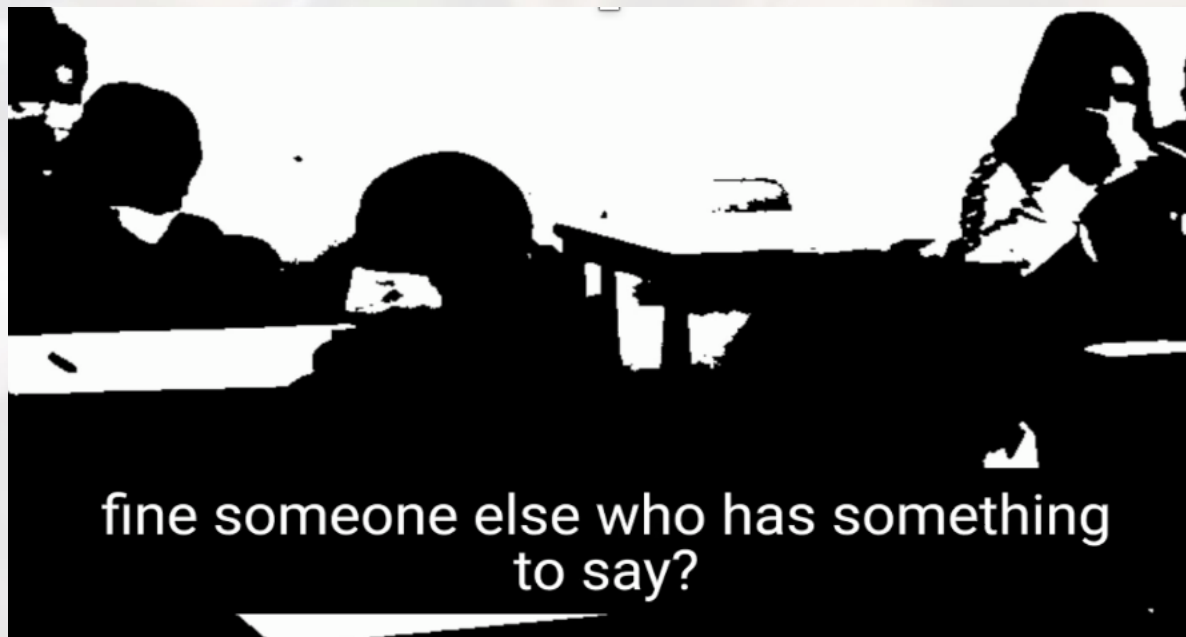
then eh you are a little conditioned
let's say by the rules they put you
instead you have to think for yourself
at school




your father scolds you and punishes
you, you get more anxious and you
can't say things



(and you only have that in mind) and
you don't think about the topics of the
questions and therefore you are more
likely to get a bad grade



fine someone else who has something
to say?



yes in my opinion ehm as M2 said
(that's right) because in any case (to
get as sufficient grades) as possible



Thank you!

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observation of dialogue

federico.farini@northampton.ac.uk