

# Chapter 13

## Values and Their Ways of Guiding the *Psyche*

Angela Uchoa Branco

Within the realms of art, literature, and philosophy, values and beliefs held by individuals have always played a major role in making sense of human life, what is expressed in people's actions and interactions that knit the very nature of the complicated tales found in cultural narratives. The struggle between right and wrong, impregnated by claims for the prevalence of moral values over the power of dominant selfish values, can be found everywhere, from the Old Testament to Sophocles, from the Bhagavad Gita to Shakespeare, and lies at the basis of the literary success of all commended novels ever written. All powerful cultural narratives confer meanings to human experience in diverse cultural–historical contexts, and their artful quality promotes reflexivity among readers as they portray the relations between actual collective and individual cultural values and beliefs. Hence, we can say that cultural narratives, and the meaning-making processes they activate, in certain ways manage to guide further semiotic elaborations on topics relevant for everyday life experiences, as well as for future cultural practices and actions.

### Human Motivation from a Cultural Perspective

Human motivation no doubt guides human actions as we strive through life troubles and obstacles to achieve, intentionally and non-intentionally, the complex goals that provide meaning to our everyday life. The concept of motivation, then, is central to understand human psyche and its ways of relating to the world, herein including the way we relate to other people, different contexts, as well as to ourselves. The construct of motivation is exceptionally broad and complex (Ryan 2014), since it refers to the emergence, nature, and dynamics of those affective-semiotic signs that ultimately guide our conduct as we interact with others and world events in culturally specific contexts.

---

A.U. Branco (✉)

Institute of Psychology, Universidade de Brasilia, Brasilia 70-900, Brazil  
e-mail: ambranco@terra.com.br

From a cultural psychological approach, motivation is conceived as a hierarchical yet fuzzy dynamic developmental system which encompasses psychological field-constructs such as goal orientations, general beliefs, and, particularly, affect-laden values that continuously change and stabilize the dialogical self-system as time goes by (Branco et al. 2008). Goal orientations (Branco and Valsiner 1997), beliefs, and values are intimately linked to each other, although different degrees of similarity and contradiction are empirically verified and theoretically expected. The motivation system operates in the here and now through goal orientations and, along irreversible time, some particular affective-semiotic fields acquire progressive psychological power, as they become more and more impregnated with feelings and affectivity. Incipient preferences, motives, and tendencies may end up mostly guiding the subject's actions, and providing some stability and coherence to the system as a whole, what results, in a sense of continuity and identity as the individual develops—change—throughout life. However, changes in one's values may still occur at any age due to specific events or experiences (ruptures). Branco et al. (2008) analyze a couple of instances of this nature, demonstrating how radical values change experiences can actually be (see later in this chapter).

As it happens with any other sub-system composing the person's self-system, the motivation system develops along ontogenesis as the person moves through her flux of experiences across varied contexts (mesogenesis) and social interactions (microgenesis). This means that the motivational system emerges and develops within the dynamic of the dialogical self-system, and, in order to understand the issue of values, we need to investigate their emergence, functions, and development, i.e., their ontogenesis. Considering, then, the fundamental part played by the higher dimensions of human motivation—namely human values—I wish to highlight the significance of a specific question: why psychology, as a scientific endeavor, ended up putting this subject aside, as something that would only matter to philosophy or anthropology? To this query I also add a corollary question: why, when mainstream scientific psychology eventually include this subject in its agenda, does it reduce the topic to a nonsensical search for a bunch of discrete, imaginary, fixed, and independent categories inferred from questionnaires, tests, and rating-scales? How is it possible that the so-called scientific psychology fools itself by reducing such complex phenomena into statistics built on the prevalence of a few categories derived from such scales and questionnaires, what definitely does not help making sense of human contextualized actions?

Along this chapter I claim for the necessity of dealing with complex psychological phenomena such as the issue of values and their way to guide individuals' lives. To support this claim, first I bring to the reader's attention some of the major principles and processes that cultural psychology has identified along its theoretical efforts vis-à-vis empirical findings (Bruner 1990; Valsiner 2014). Then, I draw my arguments concerning the emergence and ontogenesis of human values, stressing their fundamental power as specific affective-semiotic hypergeneralized fields co-constructed along the past–present–future time dimension. The goal, therefore, is to elaborate on their ontogenesis and its foremost function of orienting the individual's

actions, as he/she integrates aspects of the past and present in anticipation of the future, moving, in the present, toward the uncertainty of the future.

## **The Mutual Construction of Cultural Practices and Semiotic Fields from a Developmental Dynamic System Approach**

In this section, I highlight a key principle that sustains the theoretical edifice of the cultural psychological approach. Culture (Bruner 1990; Boesch 2012; Cole 1998) encompasses both the sociocultural practices and semiotic activities, the last mostly expressed by what Vygotsky conceptualized as the symbolic dimension of thought and language (Vygotsky 1988). However, we still detect—in the discourse and research practices of many socioculturally orientated theorists that contribute to the scientific literature in the area—a visible tendency to privilege the study of either observable cultural practices, i.e., collective activities (Cole 1998; Engeström et al. 1999; Rogoff 2005), or the dynamics of meaning-making processes revealed in discourse and narratives (Brockmeier 2012; Bruner 1990; Harré and Gillett 1994). It seems that for many theorists the pursuit of those divergent goals could be difficult to reconcile. However, the opposition between the study of observable activities and interpretative analysis of discourse can and should be conceived as an essential task for cultural psychologists, who need to investigate this issue from an inclusive-separation approach (Valsiner and Cairns 1992). As Marková (2014) discusses complementarity conceived as an epistemology of life, along the line proposed by Niels Bohr, she criticizes the exclusive separation approach defended by Cartesian perspectives on scientific knowledge construction. Such perspectives demand clear-cut separations of subject and object and of the opposite poles of the same phenomena. For example, from a Cartesian framework, cooperation and competition are viewed as radical opposing categories, and not as parts of the whole phenomena involving the coordination of human interactions vis-a-vis the attainment of a goal (Branco et al. 2012). Marková (2014) argues for the necessity of taking into account the dualistic nature of any phenomenon, as the matter of light as particle and wave, and she reasons that even though each part needs to be differentiated and analyzed, they still compose a whole with particular qualities. Consequently, the parts of the whole consist of a duality that require being studied in their specificities, but need to be conceptualized as inclusively separated from each other.

In other words, physical and semiotic activities are the two (interacting) sides of the same coin, and they must be conceptualized and studied as the complementary dimensions of the same psychological phenomenon, namely the coconstruction of human development within historically–culturally organized developing contexts. Notwithstanding, some theorists insist on claiming that the ‘true’ pathway to serious investigation in cultural psychology lies exclusively with their own preferences

(Ratner 2002; 2012). By doing so, they reduce the systemic complexity of psychological phenomena to just one particular aspect, instead of recognizing the requirement for an integrated study of the intertwined dimensions of culturally contextualized practices and the ever-active human psyche.

## Human Development from a Systemic Viewpoint

Once recognizing the polarized, twofold nature of the psychological phenomena, the first step to be taken is to approach the study of human development from a systemic and cultural–historical viewpoint. The best way to summarize such systemic and integrated approach to psychology is to acknowledge the mutual, reciprocal constitution of cultural practices, and *processes of meaning coconstruction, i.e., the processes of semiosis* (Lotman 2005; Peirce 1995; Rosa 2007). *This dynamic coconstitution flows along time linking the past, present and future dimensions into a past–present–future dimension: in fact, we act in the present time building upon past experiences, taking into account the present circumstances, and anticipating the immediate and long-term future.* The irreversible time dimension also needs to be approached from microgenesis to ontogenesis, as well as from mesogenesis and from what can be conceived as the cultural–historical time (Rossetti-Ferreira et al. 2002).

The ability to conceive the human psyche as capable to integrate past, present, and anticipated future experiences is a singular human characteristic, and to bear this in mind is crucial to make sense of psychological phenomena. Therefore, the best way to face the challenge regarding the complex dynamics of human development is to consider our object of investigation—the person—as an open system in permanent transactions with all sorts of other surrounding open systems. Such continuous transactions involve other people and different aspects of the contexts, situated at micro-, meso-, and macro-levels, all operating as a complex systemic network characterized by the simultaneous activation of change and stability dynamic processes (Ford and Lerner 1992; Tehlen and Smith 2006).

The general picture of bringing together developmental systems theory and cultural psychology indeed provides an excellent basis for further theoretical exploration. In fact, what defies our creative thinking is to find a way to analyze and account for the complex multi-causality of psychological phenomena. This has to be done, though, in total awareness of the principles of determinism and indeterminism (Fogel et al. 1997), which operate simultaneously along dynamic systems development.

## **Beyond Language and the Redefinition of Semiosis. The Fundamental Power of Affect, or Affectivity, Over Semiotic Processes**

May it be intentional or not, human motivation impels our actions as we go by, although it changes its orientations in different degrees as sociocultural contexts produce their own suggestions, constraints, rules, affordances, requirements, or strict obligations. Frequently, we are surprised by how our goal orientations, and consequent actions, completely switch over from one to another, leading us to unexpected directions. Nonetheless, in any case what prevails—in the affect-cognition unity that steers us around—is the affective tone, or feelings, that back our ongoing decisions. The fact of motivation being a psychological construct laden with potent feelings and emotions is nothing new (Ryan 2014). However, to study and make sense of the affective dimension of human phenomena is immensely more difficult than making sense of cognition and rational thinking, due to the easier access to the last processes (reason, cognition) through the mediation of language. I am far from suggesting that such processes are not impregnated with feelings and emotions; I simply remark the existence of much more research projects targeting language and cognition in comparison with the study of affectivity. Many of such projects rely on the definition of units of analysis which are more prone to be investigated by current well-established methodological tools. After all, science is built on the assumption that there exists a scientific language that must and can be (objectively) shared among peers. Hence, psychological processes such as language, memory, and cognition in general have been vastly investigated by researchers in the context of psychological science (Branco 2006, 2009). On the other hand, practical psychologists dealing with their occupational duties, particularly clinical psychologists, have to face the challenge of investigating the nature of feelings and emotions one way or another, and they conduct their studies trying to give priority to the analysis of the power of drives and emotions, not necessarily with successful results. In short, emotions and feelings in general, i.e., the dimension of affectivity, cannot be easily understood by the use of language—science’s rational knowledge construction celebrated tool. Consequently, the study of affectivity requires much more complex procedures associated with a lot of theoretical convincing interpretation, in order to concede the knowledge resulting from the study with credible scientific status. As feelings and affectivity are progressively acknowledged in psychology as playing a central role in psychological processes as a whole, methodological innovations such as the inclusion of multiple procedures, especially techniques that rely on observations and not just on discursive material, will be fundamental to provide researchers with better tools to analyze and make sense of the sensuous nature of human experiencing.

## Affective-Semiotic Regulation of Psychological Processes

No matter how difficult the task is, it needs to be tackled anyway, and the theoretical constructions advanced by cultural psychology open new venues for the investigation and scientific enquiry of the intermingled nature of the affect-cognition unity, long proposed by Vygotsky theory. The immediate consequence of such endeavor is the conceptualization of semiosis: It can no longer be narrowed down to mostly linguistic phenomena, but, instead, semiotic processes must be seen as processes that have their very roots in human affective experience (Branco and Valsiner 2010). Taking that into account, Valsiner (2014) elaborated a model specifying a hierarchy composed by five levels, consisting of four affective-semiotic fields, from category-like feelings (the specific emotions) to hypergeneralized complex signs, with increasing degree of regulatory power over human psyche and conduct (values). His model, summarized below in Fig. 13.1 after the version published in Valsiner (2014), describes how the affective-semiotic dynamics of psychological functioning is hierarchically organized at five levels, from level zero (physiological excitement, no explicit semiosis yet) to preliminary feelings (level 1, incipient semiosis) to verbally categorized emotions (level 2), to generalized feelings that may turn too difficult to describe (level 3), up to level 4, which lies at the top of the hierarchy and is characterized by hypergeneralized powerful affective-semiotic fields. Such fields—or values—then exert a strong dominance over the other levels and over the individual’s actions and psychological processes, among which perception, interpretation, meaning construction, and expectations regarding the future.


<b>LEVEL 4</b> Hypergeneralized Affective Semiotic Field	One cannot describe it clearly, but feels it is extremely important to one’s life ...	Values, prejudices : hypergeneralized powerful affective signs
		Increased difficulty in verbal referencing to affective signs
<b>LEVEL 3</b> Generalized Categories of Affective Signs	I feel good / bad about this, this is ‘right’ / ‘wrong’ ...	
<b>LEVEL 2</b> Specific Categories of Emotions	Joy Sadness Disgust ...	Feelings labelled as emotions
		Emergence of verbal referencing based on further differentiation of feelings
<b>LEVEL 1</b> General Feeling Tone	Good excitement Discomfort, aversion ...	(Emergence of semiosis)
		Pre-verbal differentiation of feelings based on physiological arousal
<b>LEVEL 0</b> Physiological Level (excitement and inhibition)		(physiological arousal)

Fig. 13.1 Affective-semiotic regulatory model (after Valsiner 2005, 2014)

Examples drawn from everyday life can be helpful to clarify the way affective-semiotic hierarchies work. Imagine a teenage girl with a history of overweight due to her intense appreciation of food. After successive failures to find a boyfriend, and after bullying by family and friends, she starts to visit Web sites which, though intending to promote slenderness, may end up promoting anorexia. After a while, most of her everyday actions are governed by an obsession to be as thin as possible. Even when her current boyfriend complains about her anorexic figure, she does not give into reason and makes sure that all her life choices abide by keeping her awfully skinny shape, never thin enough vis-à-vis her distorted self-image. Her actions, interactions, emotions, and feelings all become subordinate to that hypergeneralized value sign (thinness), which tyrannically commands her psyche.

Another example could be drawn from actual news concerning the increasing wave of terrorism in the West world: How can one explain why some youth born in European countries end up choosing to join radical, fundamentalist ideologies that prescribe murder and self-sacrifice? How do they turn around to adhere to values which not only celebrate the killing of innocent people, but also endear the sacrifice of their own lives as they slaughter these people? Resisting to torture to keep relevant information from the enemy's ears is another powerful example, no matter the moral nature of the specific values held by the unfortunate prisoner. All the examples given above clearly demonstrate the complete dominance of human actions by deeply affect-rooted values, even when those cherished values cost a terrible suffering, including the loss of one's own and others' lives.

## **The Individual as a Complex Dynamic Developmental System: Dialogical Self-System**

The concepts and theory regarding the dialogical self-system have been elaborated by Hermans and colleagues (Hermans 2001, 2002; Hermans and Kempen 1993; Hermans and Hermans-Konopka 2010; Hermans and Salgado 2010) based on the fruitful contributions of George Mead, William James, and Mikail Bakhtin. The dialogical perspective has been advanced by other authors (Andacht and Michel 2005; Bertau 2008; Grossen and Salazar Orvig 2011; Leiman 2002; Raggatt 2010; Richardson 2011; Salgado and Gonçalves 2007) with interesting results, and it comprises, together with cultural psychology, the theoretical foundations of the research projects we have developed at the Laboratory of Microgenesis in Social Interactions, at the University of Brasilia (Branco and Lopes de Oliveira 2012). Some of those projects targeted the development of I/self-positionings in children attending to early childhood educational centers (Roncancio and Branco 2014) and elementary school contexts (Freire 2008; Freire and Branco 2010, in press). To pursue this goal, we draw on some key ideas proposed by three major contributions: the developmental perspective grounded in cultural psychology (Salvatore 2013;

Valsiner 2007, 2014; Zittoun 2006, 2012), Herman's dialogical self-theory, and other theoretical elaborations on the dialogical approach (Bakhtin 1982; Lyra 2010; Marková 2003; Richardson 2011). As mentioned before in this chapter, the dialogical and the cultural theoretical approaches are compatible (Mattos 2013; Mattos and Chaves 2013) because both build upon sociogenesis as their epistemological standpoint, advocating the vital significance of alterity and the dynamic construction of psyche in irreversible time. Cultural psychology's epistemology is rooted in the mutual constitution of personal and collective cultures, meanings, and practices taking place through complex and interconnected inter- and intrapsychological processes governed by a dialogical dynamics. Yet, the same sort of dynamics lies at the core of the dialogical approach to the configuration of self, generating continuous dialogs between I-Positions coconstructed along interpersonal (social) and intrapersonal (psychological) interactions.

Cultural psychology affirms that affective-semiotic psychological phenomena are generated by cultural practices and activities, which simultaneously generates the emergence of meanings that guide and promote such practices and activities, translated in individuals' actions and interactions within specific contexts. Both dimensions—observed actions and semiotic processes—are mutually constitutive, and the continued operation of a constructive, active subject is epistemologically granted. Moreover, in accordance with a systemic approach, cultural psychology presupposes the dynamic quality of the hierarchical configuration and reconfiguration of personal cultural semiotic systems—as the subject moves along irreversible time throughout life experiences within diverse cultural contexts. The experiences lived through by individuals in their developmental trajectory are impregnated by multiple—sometimes contradictory—complex meanings created within sociocultural practices, giving rise to what we designate as the person's dialogical self-system (Branco et al. 2008; Freire and Branco, in press; Roncancio and Branco, in press).

Departing from cultural psychology and from a dialogical perspective, within a developmental system theory framework, we ultimately conceptualize of the dialogical self-system as a dynamic system that undergoes permanent hierarchical configuration and reconfiguration, due to the flux of individual's social encounters and experiences along ontogenesis. The dialogical self-system—DSS—results from dialogical processes located at both interpersonal and intrapersonal levels within specific cultural contexts, which generate multiple 'I/Self-Positionings' along irreversible time, from micro- to ontogenetic time lines. The DSS can be conceived as the constant interplay of its dual aspects: the 'I,' or the agentic aspect of the system, and the 'self,' or the reflexive aspect (Hermans 2001; Mead 1934). The best way to describe or to refer to the DSS, therefore, should be the 'dialogical I/self-system'; however, the abbreviated format designation to the DSS as 'dialogical self' may facilitate the theoretical elaborations within the dialogical paradigm.

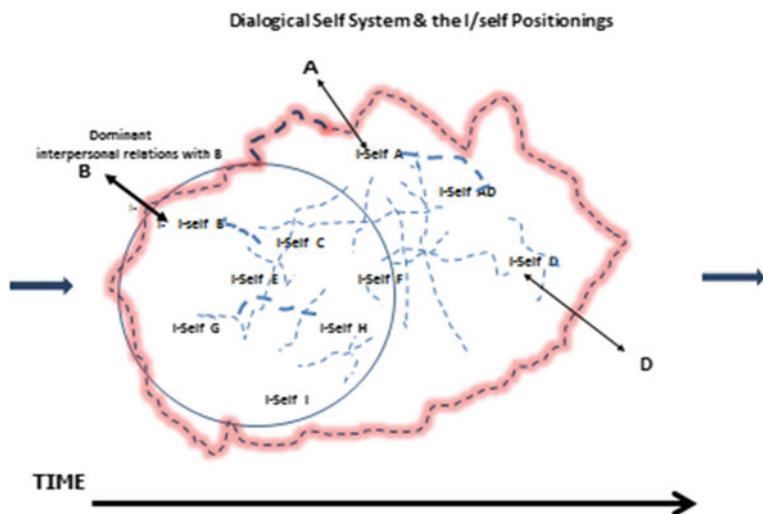
As a dynamic system, the DSS development is characterized by the operation of centrifugal forces consisting of instability, diversification, and change, as well as the action of centripetal forces that provide for the relative stability, integration, and



continuation of the system along time. The components of the system are dynamically organized and linked to each other by multidimensional processes that confer interdependence to the system’s constituents, according to an array of complex interactions between the individual and her contexts. Such interactions occur at both the inter- and intrapsychological levels as the system develops and grants its uniqueness due to its dynamic stability.

The sense of continued oneness, self-awareness, and agency plays a central role in the psyche by providing for the system integration, reflexivity, and willful actions. The DSS, though, shows an extremely important characteristic that is singular to our species: The presence of areas of awareness and non-awareness intermingled in complex and fuzzy ways to produce intentionality and non-intentionality zones. These zones overlap and mix up in such ways that usually defy both self and observer regarding the motives or reasons for specific actions. For instance, a man trying to impress a lady during their first date may very much want to demonstrate his winner profile, but as he is terribly afraid of engaging in any sort of commitment, he may instead scare the woman away with his excessive show off of self-confidence and arrogance. The complexities involved in the interplay and intertwined nature of such zones, though, are beyond the scope of the chapter’s present goals.

As depicted in Fig. 13.2, the major dynamic components of the DSS can be envisioned as *I/self-positionings sustained by specific Affective-Semiotic Fields—ASF*, whose hierarchical organization in terms of dominance over the system continuously change (we will elaborate later on how ASF lie at the origin of a person’s values).



**Fig. 13.2** The dialogical self-system and the *I/self*-positionings (after Branco and Freire 2010) (Obs: the *circle above* circumscribe the dominant affective-semiotic field—ASF)

Figure 13.2 provides a simple picture of the DSS at a certain moment and context. Hence, we have to keep in mind that the dynamic hierarchy of the systemic is in constant organization and reorganization flux. As the DSS changes, it undergoes a dynamics of configuration and reconfiguration throughout development, and the various I/self-positionings linked to affective-semiotic fields are generated through permanent intentional and non-intentional negotiation processes at both inter- and intrapersonal levels, i.e., many negotiation processes happen without the person's awareness.

The plurality of I/self-positionings ('I-Positions' according to Hermans' terminology) grants a dynamics of constant change and the emergence of novel positionings, side by side with the fading away of some positionings and the transformations of others with time. We came up with the concept of 'I/self-positionings' (Branco and Roncancio 2014) to invest the 'I-Position' concept with the necessary dynamics lacking in Hermans' terminology. I/self-positionings, therefore, are clusters of self-related meanings that converge into specific 'positionings' within the system, and they are supported by hypergeneralized affective-semiotic field-like signs highly invested with affect (the ASF). These signs or affective-semiotic fields (ASF), on their turn, play a significant role in mobilizing the dialogical self-system (DSS) throughout the individual's life. Some will prevail, some transform, others disappear as life goes by. Such fields (ASF) are also characterized by a continuous tension due to varied levels of both significance and ambiguity, and derive from internalization and externalization processes (Lawrence and Valsiner 2003) occurring along cultural canalization processes. Culture canalization works by the activation of multiple strategies used to attune the DSS to the context's constraints and demands, while maintaining the system with a sense of self-continuity along ontogenesis. The more affect-laden the cultural messages are, the more effective the internalization process. Next, we discuss an empirical example in order to clarify the way the psychological constructs proposed above can be helpful to make sense of the DSS development. The discussion of the example aims at bringing back to the picture the ontogenesis of values, and their formidable—yet complex—ways of guiding our lives.

## **Affective-Semiotic Fields as Primary Hypergeneralized Signs Lying at the Emergence of Values**

Affective-semiotic fields are coconstructed along child's interactions with social others and internal dialogs. They provide the basis for the I/self-positionings created across child's (or individual's) life experiences and results from affect-laden cultural canalization processes together with the operation of the DSS as an active agent over its own development.

The study of Gisele's DSS development during her transition from preschool to the first grade of elementary school was carried out in Brasilia (Branco and

Roncancio 2014; Roncancio 2015). The study's goal was to analyze children's dialogical self-positionings along that transition, and her case was selected to be discussed as an illustration of the ideas put forth in this chapter. Several procedures were used to achieve the longitudinal research goals since we were aware of the substantial limitations and difficulties of interviewing young children as a source of information. Hence, after a long period of familiarization with children and context, we did intensive observations of ongoing social interactions in both educational contexts along one-year period—six month at preschool and six month at the first grade. Other procedures were used, as semi-structured play contexts, story-telling and playful activities, drawing diaries, informal conversations and interviews with child, parents, and teachers.

Gisele was five years old at the onset of the study. She lived with mom, dad, and older sister Barbara. Sister was the perfect daughter to her parents: The blond blue-eyed girl was considered by family and friends as 'exceptionally beautiful' and 'intelligent.' During the interviews with parents, particularly dad seriously doubted Gisele had a 'normal' intellectual development. Both parents said the girl suffered because she was not as beautiful as her sister, who had taken after their father's fair hair and blue eyes. During the research, Gisele never complained about her darker skin color, hair, or brown eyes; however, she very often referred to her sister as the most beautiful girl in their school. When asked about her own characteristics, particularly during preschool, she at all times emphasized how beautiful she (Gisele) was: She constantly said she was the most beautiful girl of her class—stressing how her peers loved her because she was beautiful and so on. In fact, Gisele was very popular and the leader of play activities, always playing the role of the princess, or the bride, in her preferred kind of pretend play, i.e., fairy tales with wedding ceremonies. This sort of pretend play was enacted by girls with the eventual participation of a few boys, and all peers paid homage to the 'beautiffulness' of princess Gisele. The teacher, also, praised the girl for being beautiful and devoted to her a special fondness.

In short, taking into account all information from the procedures employed, the picture we got of the girl's DSS in development suggested the presence of two powerful affective-semiotic fields, particularly during the preschool period: (1) 'beautiful X not beautiful,' as the dominant one; and (2) 'intelligent X developmentally slow,' as the other. The social others related to each pole of the tensions found in those ASF were, on the one hand, dad, mother, and sister positioning Gisele as a non-beautiful girl, and dad and mother clearly positioning Gisele as developmentally slow; on the other hand, there were her peers and the teacher, at school, who positioned Gisele as beautiful, popular, and smart. Figure 13.3 depicts Gisele's DSS during the last semester of preschool.

Data clearly established Gisele's family values as 'white people are beautiful, you are not white, therefore....' According to mother, she often said she would like to look like her white, blond, blue-eyed sister. But Gisele herself never verbally expressed any tension concerning her beauty within the corresponding ASF. Instead, she insistently created situations and actively pursued praise for her beauty from peers at preschool, granting herself positive feedbacks on her beautiffulness

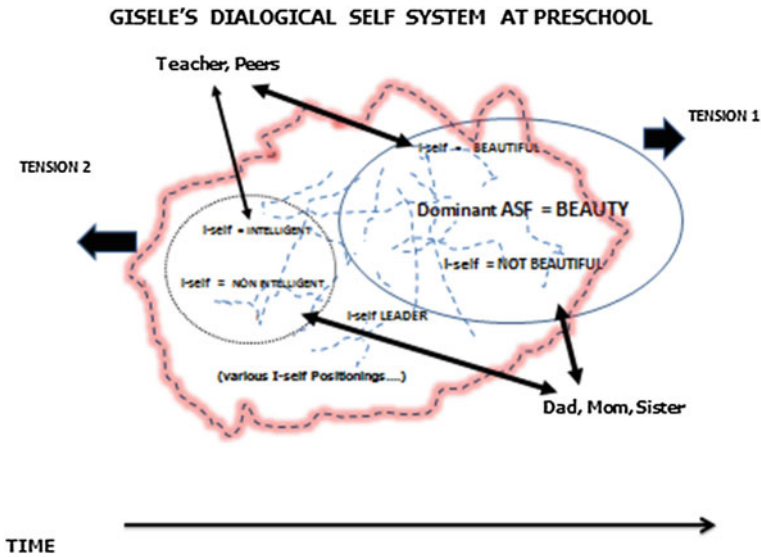
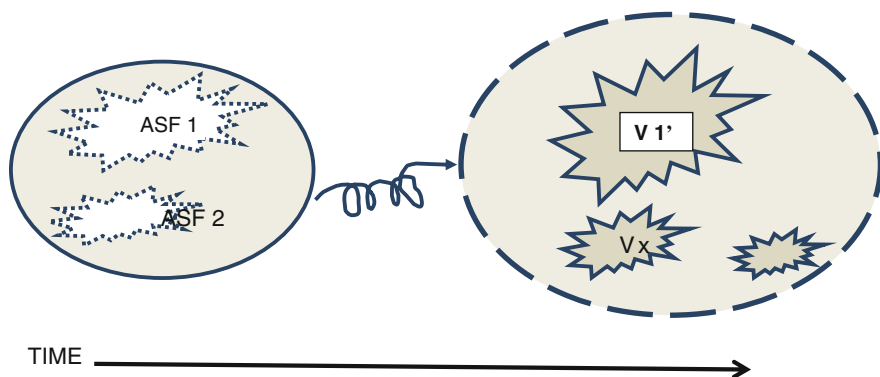


Fig. 13.3 Gisele's DSS during preschool (after Branco and Roncancio 2014)

from them and from teacher. Only when she entered elementary school's first grade did she overtly admitted she was not the most beautiful girl in class: The transition initially made her very sad, and the 'heart-on-tears in its way to school' she drew in her diary could not be more graphic about her sadness. After all, the new context did not provide her with enough space or time to engage in pretend play, and school expectations converged on reading and writing activities. Only little by little did the girl start to enjoy school activities, what happened due to her drawing abilities and how they became very well appreciated by teacher and peers in the new context.

The example above shows that for a period of Gisele's life the affective-semiotic field composed by the two opposite signs—'beautiful versus non-beautiful'—was dominant and guided most of her actions and interactions, particularly during preschool. Then, the field underwent transformations, but the point to be made here is that there is a significant possibility that the ASF of 'beautiffulness' may, eventually, become especially prominent within her DSS, giving rise to powerful affective meanings that, in the future, could turn out as an influential value. If that happens, 'beauty' will operate as an important regulator of Gisele's interpretation of the world, of herself, as well as it will become a major incentive or motivation for the coconstruction and direction of her life trajectory. The analysis of Gisele's DSS, together with the analysis of other participants of the study (Roncancio 2015) and the results of other research projects developed by our team (Freire and Branco 2010, in press; Rengifo-Herrera 2014) then consists of an excellent illustration of what we are presently proposing as a possible pathway to the ontogenesis of values. Figure 13.4 makes a rough draft of the basic idea above suggested:



**Fig. 13.4** Ontogenesis of values

But what would be the major principles of values ontogenesis? Affective-semiotic fields emerge, get empowered, transform, or disappear along ontogenesis. The ASF empowered enough through active internalization processes mobilized by significant others and effective cultural canalization may indeed develop the characteristics of a personal value along life experiences. In other words, ASF are constantly configured as the child's personal culture (subjectivity) transacts with the collective culture, especially with significant social others in specific contexts. Within each ASF, we find particular 'I/self-positionings' grouped together based on relatively similar quality. The permanent configuration and reconfiguration that DSS undergoes through time end up fortifying some particular empowered meanings—organized in clusters we named as affective-semiotic fields—which in different ways guide the developing child's conduct. Gradually and progressively, such ASF provide for the emergence of a hierarchy of values within the DSS along childhood to adolescence to adulthood. The ontogenesis of values, though, follows unique trajectories considering that individuals' development is also unique. In some individuals, values can be identified more clearly from indicators at both *verbal and nonverbal levels*. In others, values may be too weak or too transitory, but then, again, in all cases reconfigurations of the system may occur. New values may emerge, others dissolve, and the system dynamically try to attune to context demands even though preserving those characteristics sensed as fundamental to keep its oneness.

The impressive impact of values over conduct and developmental trajectories can be explained by the way values function as a decisive leading lens through which meaning-making processes operate (Branco 2012; Branco and Valsiner 2012). Perception of the world, in general, and of others' meanings during communication and metacommunication processes are mostly determined by values, hence their power to create interpretive frames for the DSS, based on which the person feels, thinks and acts all the way through life experiences. However, the DSS is also sensitive to significant ongoing events. By now I believe there is no need to remind the reader the dynamic quality of personal values, and their sensitivity to context and experience. Nevertheless, being more resistant to change due

to its deep-rooted affective quality, values play the centripetal role within the open system as it interacts with the world: Their role is to grant a certain degree of stability to the system in order to allow for a sense of self-uniqueness, persistence, or a sense of oneness that invest the 'I' with power to retain a certain degree of control over the DSS. This power is translated in what we acknowledge as the individual's intentionality and will, or the ability to reflect upon and intentionally choose among life possibilities and alternatives. This sense of oneness and relative control is fundamental for the notion of identity across time and context, despite DSS change and development. In the next section, I will bring a couple of empirical evidence concerning the role of values in activating affective-semiotic regulatory processes and devices that enable the person to adapt to radical and/or threatening events, and yet creatively keep a sense of continuity in reconstructed life trajectories.

### **The Intricate Interplay Between Values, Ruptures, and DDS Development**

The coconstruction of individual values occurs at the thin personal-collective cultural border (Marsico et al. 2013). Yet the power of person's experience may configure a clear-cut rupture in his/her life trajectory (Zittoun 2006, 2012). Such ruptures or turning points, then, rearrange the DSS and the emergence of new values comes to dominate and lead the developmental trajectory. The stories of Pedro and Rosanne provide distinct evidence regarding the creativity of DSS in dealing with possible opposite or contradictory values that drive developmental trajectories in totally distinct ways.

Pedro was a 37-year-old man being treated for AIDS. His story came up in an interview carried out within the context of a research project on drug-addicted adolescents and their families (Branco et al. 2008). He developed many health complications due to his illness, which obliged him to completely change his lifestyle, previously dedicated to women hunting, irresponsibility toward family and utter fun. At the time of the interview, he was participating for two years of a program oriented to give support to parents to better deal with adolescents' drug-addiction problems. He confessed the major reason to do that, at first, was the insistence of his own therapist, who believed that a better handling with his 13-year-old son Luiz would be important to improve Pedro's health. According to his narrative, that was his first motivation; but as the time went by, he discovered a brand new 'self,' a new 'I/self-positioning' built upon his love for his son and his other kids (two younger daughters). In one of his emotional narratives, he said:

In the past there was not that kind of respect between father and child, mother and son, no one could tell who the father was, who the mother was (...). Nobody could tell, 'Is this boy my son?' I'm not even sure I ever was a father before...(…) Today I know I am a father,

my kids are mine, I have responsibilities concerning them, I have a commitment to them, they are my children! I changed my behavior so they could change their behavior as well.

In a few words, the emotions derived from his life threatening health condition, and from the feelings of loss of his first born child, together with his new deep love feelings for his kids, all converged into new values that completely changed his life: he transformed his routine, struggled to save his son, and his concerns became devoted to help his kids and promote their happiness. As a result of the father dedication, Luiz gradually improved and finally made explicit to his parents that he would not fall back into drugs.

Rosanne's case was somehow different: Instead of experiencing a rupture and taking on an alternative trajectory, the 25-year-old woman found a way to deal with two compelling yet divergent 'I/self-positionings': being gay and being Catholic. Each positioning was certainly deep rooted in irreconcilable values, permanently promoted by the social others belonging to each community. She also referred to herself as a family girl rose in a good traditional and well-structured family, what was in frontal opposition to the values of the gay community she belonged to. During her narrative (Branco and Madureira 2008), Rosanne craftily described how she created, along life experiences, a third new positioning where her DSS was able to conciliate being happily gay and Catholic at the same time. She ingeniously constructed a missionary 'I/self-positioning' that enabled her to live according to both values, which she explained as the only way to bring the lost souls of the gay community to the embrace of Jesus. She, as a missionary, had lots to do concerning helping those people. In her own words,

Then... I go, like, I approach and start talking with the person, and she starts telling me that she has this and that kind of problem, problems, ...it's kind of curious, you can count on your fingers people that... belong to this group, and don't have any problems with something (...) people that are searching...there are people that are there because they are lost! I see it this way...

The existence of lost people, according to her reasoning, justified her belonging to their community, because it enabled her to approach them and do her Christian duty: bring them to the love of Jesus.

Next, I sum up the most important elaborations put forth in this chapter regarding values and the dialogical self-development:

- (a) The dialogical self, here conceived as the 'dialogical I/self-system,' is a dynamic system in continuous development as it transacts with historical-cultural contexts along irreversible time.
- (b) The affective-semiotic nature of psychological processes integrates affectivity and cognition in a complex unity that can be characterized as the dialogical self-system (DSS).
- (c) Cultural canalization occurs within specific cultural contexts especially through the mediation of significant social others. The presence of high levels of affectivity leads to successful active internalization/externalization

- processes that give rise to affective-semiotic fields (ASF) and dynamic I/self-positionings (DIP) that arise from those fields within the DSS.
- (d) Dynamic I/self-positionings (DSP) are plural, hierarchically organized and in continuous movement as social and cultural contexts change along life experiences.
  - (e) The tensions between affective-semiotic fields—and between corresponding I/self-positionings—operate as an active force to promote the DSS development.
  - (f) Values, as well as prejudices, are hierarchically and dynamically organized within the DSS, and they guide human actions and interactions along life trajectory, keeping a relative stability and sense of continuity that results from their resistance to change, granted by its powerful deep roots within the system.

## The Big Quest: Psychology, Values, and the Way Ahead

In our studies, we emphasize the central role of personal values—conceived as particular affective-semiotic fields empowered through ontogenesis to exert a guiding function over human development, i.e., psyche. We argue that the ontogenesis of the dialogical self-system consists of a promising field for the investigation of the way multiple experiences of varied affective-semiotic qualities contribute to the emergence of novelties and to the relative stability of the self-system along time. In our affective-semiotic approach to cultural psychology, we draw on the complexities of developmental processes related to the dialogical self-system as we search for specific mediators which role is to promote particular life trajectories and the emergence of personal characteristics.

In this book, we relish to find productive elaboration on relevant yet dense matters, among which I would draw the reader's attention to 'Complex ethical actions in social contexts' (Rosa 2016, this volume) and the 'Affective semiosis as the basic human 'stuff'' (Innis 2016, this volume). Briefly stated, my point is to argue that psychology's efforts can no longer distance itself from scientifically facing the issue of how human values develop and orient individuals' and groups' life experiences. Methodological challenges have to be met in order to identify the emergence and development of processes related to the dynamics of goals, expectations, beliefs, and values, as life trajectory unfolds throughout similar, diverse, and often contradictory cultural contexts.

In Marková's (2014) theoretical discussion over the topic of complementarity, she quotes Niels Bohr's words affirming that 'evidence obtained under different conditions cannot be comprehended as a single picture, but must be regarded as complementary in the sense that only the totality of the phenomena exhausts the possible information about the objects' (Bohr 1949, p. 210, in Marková 2014, p. 41). Drawing on the arguments elaborated along this chapter, and the far-reaching



meanings of Bohr's words, some possible venues to investigate the ontogenesis of values can be proposed. They should be built within the frame of longitudinal studies aiming at following individual trajectories from childhood to adolescence to young adulthood, i.e., from early significant affective-semiotic fields—as Gisele's concerns re beauty—all the way up to full blown values, for instance, Rosanne's Christianity. As case studies progress, information can be drawn from diverse procedures, some triggering verbal accounts, others focusing on observations in both natural and semi-experimental contexts, the last creatively constructed to provoke verbal and nonverbal actions that might eventually reveal the operation of subjacent powerful affective-semiotic fields. As I figure at this point, these are some guidelines for research that may prove especially productive for the investigation of the dynamics of values development throughout life trajectories.

To approach this subject in fruitful ways, though, it is essential to acknowledge the centrality of meaning constructive processes and assume a systemic perspective that confronts the complex and dynamic nature of the phenomena, stressing simultaneously historical, sociocultural, and subjective factors. Such a theoretical-methodological approach will then enable researchers to explore the productive tools at our disposal to analyze the intertwined processes lying at the interface of personal and collective cultures, as past, present, and future necessarily meet in our everyday life experiences. In a few words, psychology urgently needs to take the investigation of microgenesis and ontogenesis of values seriously, analyzing the role of mesogenesis through cultural canalization processes taking place at institutions and specific contexts, like family and school. However, assuming sociogenesis as the cornerstone of human development does not justify narrowing down psychological research to the study of observed activities, or the inference of meaning-construction processes: it is necessary that research in psychology takes into account, and creatively investigates, the fundamental role of the subject and the impact of individual's agency over internalization processes.

## References

- Andacht, F., & Michel, M. (2005). A semiotic reflection on self interpretation and identity. *Theory and Psychology, 15*(1), 51–75.
- Bakhtin, M. M. (1982). *The dialogical imagination: Four essays*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.
- Bertau, M.-C. (2008). Voice: A pathway to consciousness as “Social Contact to Oneself”. *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science, 42*, 92–113.
- Boesch, E. (2012). Culture: Result and condition of action. In J. Valsiner (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of cultural psychology* (pp. 347–356). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Branco, A. U. (2006). Crenças e práticas culturais: co-construção e ontogênese de valores sociais. *Revista Pro-Posições (UNICAMP), 17, 2*(50), 139–155.
- Branco, A. U. (2009). Cultural practices, social values, and childhood education. In M. Fleer, M. Hedegaard & J. Tudge (Eds.), *World yearbook of education 2009—childhood studies and the impact of globalization: Policies and practices at global and local levels* (pp. 44–66). London: Routledge.

- Branco, A. U. (2012). Values and sociocultural practices: Pathways to moral development. In J. Valsiner (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of cultural psychology* (pp. 109–132). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Branco, A.U., & Valsiner, J. (1997). Changing methodologies: A co-constructivist study of goal orientations in social interactions. *Psychology and Developing Societies*, 9(1), 35–64.
- Branco, A. U., & Freire, S. (2010). *Dialogical self from a developmental perspective: The role of affective fields in the integration of the system*. Paper presented at the VI International Conference on the Dialogical Self, Athens, Greece, September.
- Branco, A. U., & Lopes de Oliveira, M. C. (2012). *Psicologia, diversidade e cultura da paz na escola*. Porto Alegre: Mediação.
- Branco, A. U., & Madureira, A. (2008). Dialogical self in action: The emergence of self-positions among complex emotional and cultural dimensions. *Estudios de Psicologia*, 29(3), 319–332.
- Branco, A. U., & Roncancio, M. (2014). *Dialogical self development from a cultural psychological perspective: Theoretical and methodological contribution*. Paper presented at the VIII International Conference Dialogical Self, The Hague, Netherlands, August.
- Branco, A. U., & Valsiner, J. (2010). Towards cultural psychology of affective processes: Semiotic regulations of dynamics fields. *Estudios de Psicología*, 31(3), 243–251.
- Branco, A. U., & Valsiner, J. (Eds.). (2012). *Cultural psychology of human values*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishers.
- Branco, A. U., Branco, A. L., & Madureira, A. F. A. (2008). Self-development and the emergence of new I-positions: Emotions and self-dynamics. *Studia Psychologica (Bratislava)*, 8, 23–40.
- Branco, A. U., Palmieri, M. W., & Pinto, R. (2012). Cultural practices and values constructions. In A. U. Branco & J. Valsiner (Eds.), *Cultural psychology of human values* (pp. 31–62). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishers.
- Brockmeier, J. (2012). Narrative scenarios: Toward a culturally thick notion of narrative. In J. Valsiner (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of culture and psychology* (pp. 439–467). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bruner, J. (1990). *Acts of meaning*. London: Harvard University Press.
- Cole, M. (1998). *Cultural psychology: A once and future discipline*. London: Harvard University Press.
- Engeström, Y., Miettinen, R., & Punamäki, R. (1999). *Perspectives on activity theory: Learning in doing-social, cognitive and computational perspectives*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Fogel, A., Lyra, M. C., & Valsiner, J. (Eds.) (1997). *Dynamics and indeterminism in developmental and social processes*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Ford, D. H., & Lerner, R. M. (1992). *Developmental systems theory: An integrative approach*. London: Sage.
- Freire, S. F. (2008). *Concepções dinâmicas de si de crianças em escolarização: uma perspectiva dialógico-desenvolvimental*. Doctoral dissertation, University of Brasília, Brazil.
- Freire, S. F., & Branco, A. U. (2010). *Dynamic self conceptions: New perspectives to study children self development*. Paper presented at the VI International Conference on the Dialogical Self, Athens, Greece, September.
- Freire, S. F., & Branco, A. U. (in press). O self dialógico em desenvolvimento: um estudo sobre as concepções dinâmicas de si em crianças. *Psicologia (USP)*.
- Grossen, M., & Salazar Orvig, A. (2011). Dialogism and dialogicality in the study of the self. *Culture & Psychology*, 17(4), 491–509.
- Harré, R., & Gillett, G. (1994). *The discursive mind*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Hermans, H. (2001). The dialogical self: Toward a theory of personal and cultural positioning. *Culture & Psychology*, 7, 243–281.
- Hermans, H. J. M. (2002). The dialogical self as a society of mind. *Theory and Psychology*, 12(2), 147–160.
- Hermans, H., & Hermans-Konopka, A. (2010). *Dialogical self theory: Positioning and counter-positioning in a globalizing society*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

- Hermans, H., & Kempen, H. (1993). *The dialogical self: Meaning as movement*. San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Hermans, H., & Salgado, J. (2010). The dialogical self as a minisociety. In S. Kirschner & J. Martin (Eds.), *The sociocultural turn in psychology* (pp. 183–204). New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
- Lawrence, J. A., & Valsiner, J. (2003). Making personal sense: An account of basic internalization and externalization process. *Theory and Psychology, 13*(6), 723–752.
- Leiman, M. (2002). Toward semiotic dialogism: The role of sign mediation in the dialogical self. *Theory & Psychology, 12*, 221–235.
- Lotman, J. (2005). On the semiosphere. *Sign Systems Studies, 33*(1), 5–23.
- Lyra, M. C. D. P. (2010). On interaction analysis and dialogical perspective: Emergent patterns of order and relational agency. *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science, 44*, 273–280.
- Marková, I. (2003). *Dialogicality and social representations: The dynamics of mind*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.
- Marková, I. (2014). Complementarity as an epistemology of life. In B. Wagoner, N. Chaudhary & P. Hviid (Eds.), *Cultural psychology and its future: Complementarity in a new key* (pp. 33–50). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.
- Marsico, G., Cabell, K., Valsiner, J., & Kharlamov, N. (2013). Interobjectivity as a border: The fluid dynamics of “betweenness”. In G. Sammut, P. Daanen & F. Moghaddam (Eds.), *Understanding the self and others: Explorations in intersubjectivity and interobjectivity* (pp. 51–65). London: Routledge.
- Mattos, E. (2013). Desenvolvimento do self na transição para a vida adulta: um estudo longitudinal com jovens baianos. *Doctoral dissertation, Federal University of Bahia, Brazil*.
- Mattos, E., & Chaves, A. (2013). The architecture of self-in-motion: Exploring young people’s construction of “becoming”. *Interações, 24*, 106–136.
- Mead, G. H. (1934). *Mind, self, and society*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Peirce, C. S. (1995). *Semiotica*. Sao Paulo: Perspectiva.
- Raggatt, P. T. F. (2010). The dialogical self and thirdness: A semiotic approach to positioning using dialogical triads. *Theory and Psychology, 20*(3), 400–419.
- Ratner, C. (2002). *Cultural psychology: Theory and method*. New York: Plenum.
- Ratner, C. (2012). *Macro cultural psychology: A political philosophy of the mind*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Rengifo-Herrera, F. (2014). *Desenvolvimento de valores sociais na perspectiva da psicologia semiótico-cultural: um estudo com meninos brasileiros e colombianos em contexto lúdico sugestivo de violência*. Doctoral dissertation, University of Brasília.
- Richardson, F. C. (2011). A hermeneutic perspective on dialogical psychology. *Culture & Psychology, 17*(4), 462–472.
- Rogoff, B. (2005). *A natureza cultural do desenvolvimento humano*. Porto Alegre: ArtMed.
- Roncancio, M. (2015). *Dinâmica das significações de si em crianças na perspectiva dialógico-cultural*. Doctoral dissertation, University of Brasília, Brazil.
- Roncancio, M., & Branco, A. U. (2014). *Children’s self-development and the emergence of I-positions during transition from preschool to Elementary school*. Paper presented at the VIII Dialogical Self Conference, August, The Hague, Netherlands.
- Roncancio, M., & Branco, A. U. (in press). Desenvolvimento do Self Dialógico nos Primeiros Anos de Vida: Teoria e Pesquisas. *Psicologia: Teoria e Pesquisa*.
- Rosa, A. (2007) Dramaturgical actuations and symbolic communication: Or how beliefs make up reality. In J. Valsiner & A. Rosa (Eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of sociocultural psychology* (pp. 293–317). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Rossetti-Ferreira, M. C., Amorim, K., Silva, A. P., & Carvalho, A. (2002). *Rede de significações*. Porto Alegre: Artes Médicas.
- Ryan, R. M. (2014). *The Oxford handbook of human motivation*. New York: Oxford University Press.

- Salgado, J., & Gonçalves, M. (2007). The dialogical self: Social, personal and (un) conscious. In J. Valsiner & A. Rosa (Eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of socio-cultural psychology* (pp. 608–624). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Salvatore, S. (2013). The reciprocal inherency of self and context. Notes for a semiotic model of the constitution of experience. *Interacções*, 24, 20–50.
- Tehlen, E., & Smith, L. (2006). Dynamic systems theories. In W. Damon & R. Lerner (Eds.), *Handbook of child psychology: Theoretical models of human development* (6th ed., pp. 258–312). New Jersey: Wiley.
- Valsiner, J. (2005). Soziale und emotionale Entwicklungsaufgaben in kulturellen context. In J. Asendorpf & H. Rauh (Eds.), *Enzyklopadie der psychologie* (Vol. 3). Soziale, emotionale und Persönlichkeitsentwicklung. Göttingen: Hogrefe.
- Valsiner, J. (2007). *Culture in minds and societies: Foundations of cultural psychology*. New Delhi: Sage.
- Valsiner, J. (2014). *An invitation to cultural psychology*. London: Sage.
- Valsiner, J., & Cairns, R. (1992) Theoretical perspectives on conflict and development. In C. V. Shantz & W. W. Hartup (Eds.), *Conflict in child and adolescent development*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1988). *Thought and language*. London: Cambridge University Press.
- Zittoun, T. (2006). *Transitions: Development through symbolic resources*. Greenwich, CT: Information Age.
- Zittoun, T. (2012). On the emergence of the subject. *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Sciences*, 46, 259–273.