



# Making Identity, Proculturation In-between Georgianness and Westernness

Vladimer Lado Gamsakhurdia<sup>1</sup> 

Received: 22 September 2018 / Revised: 26 March 2019 / Accepted: 5 April 2019 /

Published online: 28 May 2019

© Springer Nature Switzerland AG 2019

## Abstract

I present the exploration of two young Georgian females' identity construction in turbulent times full of radical social, cultural, economic, and political changes. Episodic interviews were held with them, and the relevant secondary data analysis was conducted for the better understanding of research context. Study is based on the idea that the self is a dialogical and developmental phenomenon. Development is perceived as an irreversible process, which is rooted in the past and oriented on the future. Respondents' selves develop in-between distinctive social representing processes of Georgianness, which is associated with conservatism, religiosity, and suppression of female sexuality and Westernness, which is related to the sexual freedom, secularism, and individualism. The latter opposition influences decisions on everyday life choices, like how often respondents are obliged to talk with friends and when and with whom are they allowed to have sex. Adaptation to diverse ideas develops through the process of proculturation. Meaning-making processes, which are related to the process of dealing with various contradicting ideas and social representations will be discussed and illustrated. Additionally, wider historical context of the respondents' self's development will be considered. Proculturation is contemplated as a self-centered subjective process of adaptive semiotic mediation of familiar and alien ideas. The latter process is visibly revealed during the subjective construction of the particular version of female respondents' emancipation who reconcile and blend imaginary conservative representation of Georgianness and liberal values to each other. The exploration of respondents' adaptive experiences reveals the power of human imagination and creativity. I argue that proculturation implies the curvilinearization of human development.

**Keywords** Dialogical self theory · Social representation theory · Cultural psychology of semiotic dynamics · Georgia · The self · Identity

---

✉ Vladimer Lado Gamsakhurdia  
ladogamsakhurdia@gmail.com

<sup>1</sup> Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, Tbilisi, Georgia

“It is alright for a woman to be, above all, human. I am a woman first of all.”  
from *The Diary of Anaïs Nin, Vol. I, 1966*

The self and the identities are one of the most complex concepts which appeared at the dawn of psychological science (see James 1890) and have puzzled social scientists ever since (Erikson 1959; Mårtsin 2010; Mead et al. 2015; Owens 2006; Rosa and Valsiner 2018). I assume that the self is an abstract notion which reflects the organization of affective and cognitive processes and knowledge concerning oneself. The self is a wider phenomenon and includes many identities which define his/her position in each particular context (Owens 2006). So, this is to say that the self is a relational system of identities and associated affective and cognitive processes and meanings. Identity and the self are conceived as indissoluble parts of the same systemic process; however, theoretically, the former is subordinated to the latter. The self and the identities will be occasionally used interchangeably as the self is revealed by his/her identities in each particular moment or, more correctly, by the process of identification.

The self should be understood as a developmental process in its nature. Dynamic stability is inherent to the human psyche (Valsiner 2000). The self ensures both the needed level of continuity, on one side, and the reconstructive development, on the other (Hammack 2008). A person develops along with an irreversible timeline and is not able to stop an ongoing time flow even if he/she desires to do so. Each lived moment stays inscribed into the past experience and can never be relived in the same manner as it happens during the first time it is experienced. “The man can never step in the same river” (Heraclitus and Haxton 2003). So, each new moment of life is lived as a unique experience. I assume that any experience has the potential to enrich a human’s meaning system. Any fragment of experience is interpreted and granted meaning by the self in relation to past and future experiences. Interpretations are ultimately subjective. Human subjectivity itself is intentional (Tateo 2016; Valsiner 2003a) and is substantially related to the sociocultural environment. The latter feature is revealed in the dialogical nature of the self.

The self evolves in a dialog with a sociocultural environment. The latter feature was efficiently grasped by dialogical self theory (DST) which has been developing for more than 26 years since its initial proposition by Hubert Hermans (Hermans et al. 1992). According to the classic model, the dialogical self includes internal and external I-positions which are organized hierarchically with meta-positions on the top of the structure. Internal I-positions represent inner unique voices about oneself (I as X) while sociocultural voices are represented by external I-positions “I as my mother thinks I am or should be” (Hermans and Hermans-Konopka 2010; Hermans 1999, 2001; Hermans et al. 2017). The classic version of DST implies a permanent dialog between various I-positions, especially when they contradict each other and there is a need for a constructive solution. Novelties into the dialogical self could be brought by a promoter position<sup>1</sup> (Valsiner 2000, 2014; Valsiner and Cabell 2011). A promoter sign is oftentimes supported by political or social power.

Hermans’s theory contemplates self-modification through dialogical negotiation between internal, external and promoter I-positions and, in this sense, it fits into a developmental perspective. However, it has been indicated recently that it does not involve a temporal dimension—a historical perspective and future expectation/aspirations are out of the sight of DST. As a result, DST still comes to be a timeless approach. Recent developments in the

<sup>1</sup> Which was first elaborated as a promoter sign in the framework of Jaan Valsiner’s *Cultural Psychology of Semiotic Dynamics*.

semiotic self theory indicate the importance of studying the self in an irreversible timeline where the present moment is only the temporary result of the subjective (semiotic) mediation between the past and possible/desired future developments (Gamsakhurdia 2018a; b; Tateo 2014). The time dimension is conveniently possible to grasp by exploring the adaptation to new/alien cultural elements when the self subjectively reconstructs itself in the process of semiotic movement from the past to the future through the irreversible temporal trajectory. The self evolves through the adaptation to the novelties and unfamiliar signs in relation to his/her goals and future expectations. Novelties appear occasionally in the environment by means of cultural diffusion or innovation. The fact of meeting with unfamiliar cultural elements serves as a catalytic condition for the process of subjective self-reconstruction that is the proculturation of the self (Gamsakhurdia 2018a, 2019a).

Proculturation is a specific process that might occur at any moment of the adult life course as people oftentimes meet new ideas in a dynamic contemporary world. This process supposedly results in self-expansion. When people meet unfamiliar ideas, they have to make sense of them and establish their relation to their existing knowledge. Berry-inspired abstract dimensional (acculturation) models would assume that people have to make choices between distinctive cultures (Chirkov 2009; Doucerain et al. 2013) that is an expression of the essentialist and anti-developmental stance which does not reflect the nature of real lived-experiences. Proculturation, on the contrary, is based on the idea of cogenetic development (Tateo 2016) which, among many others, is built on the assumption that opposites actually consist of different sides of the same semiotic entity. Meanings are constructed in the process of semiotic movement counter to opposite meanings which serve the role of Gegenstand (Valsiner 2014). So, this is to say that opposites are being defined in contradiction to each other. Thus, real or imaginary foreign cultural elements should be understood as opposites which provide reference points for the subjective definition of one’s own/familiar identity. Proculturation research is oriented on the exploration of subjective interpretative processes of lived experiences which leads to the curvilinear development of the self (Gamsakhurdia 2019a; b). Curvilinear development is unidimensional; however, it is a multi-layered process which implies the creative mixing of unfamiliar and familiar ideas that result in the creation of new meanings. Proculturation comes to be a process of constructive fusion of unfamiliar ideas and experiences. The self and his/her proculturation comprise the focus of this paper (Fig. 1).

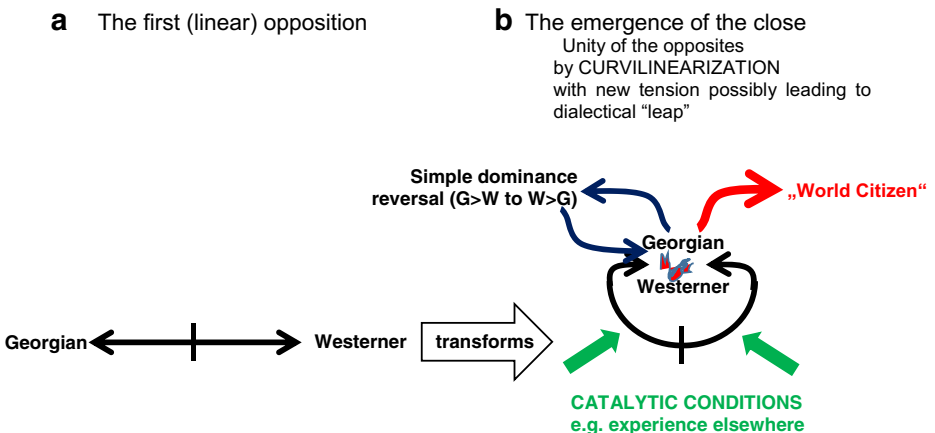


Fig. 1 Curvilinearization of binary linear oppositions (Gamsakhurdia 2019b)

Apparently, not all experiences cause visible changes in the self; however, the latter surely happens at least in a latent way. People make sense of foreign or heritage cultural ideas in one way or another; however, it is hardly possible to totally dismiss or accept any of them (Gamsakhurdia 2018a; b). The self and the identities are continuously being formed through the process of proculturation, occasionally (re)negotiating existing I-positions in relation to novel ideas and experiences and imagined future expectations.

## An Empirical Illustration of Proculturation

This paper explores the regularities of proculturation based on two case studies and related secondary data analysis. Generally, the research methodology for this study was built in accordance with the idea of the methodological cycle (Branco and Valsiner 1997; Valsiner 2017). Valsiner (2017) indicates that every research starts with the researchers' intuitive guess and hypothesis. The main methodological function of the empirical part of the research is to contribute to a better understanding of the interesting phenomena by contributing to the development of related theoretical assumptions and the argument.

This study was based on the assumption of the curvilinearity of human development while subjectively and constructively processing unfamiliar ideas and experiences.

The main purpose of this research is to explore the regularities of the self's proculturation processes.

The following objectives need to be accomplished in order to achieve the main purpose of this investigation:

1. To reveal the main signs defining the research subjects' selves and identities.
2. To identify the main signs/markers which define the foreignness/otherness of cultural elements.
3. To identify the main alien ideas which are meaningful for the research subjects' self development.
4. To explore the nature of the self's interrelation with meaningful alien cultural elements.
5. To explore the experience and meaning of the interrelation with alien elements for the self's development.
6. To identify the life goals of the research subjects.
7. To explore the subtleties of proculturation.
8. To explore the historical context of the respondents' identity-making processes and proculturation in current Georgia (the Republic of).

However, the initially established formal objectives have not confined to the limits of analytical and explorative activities.

Our exploration starts with an assumption that the self is permanently on the move (Bauman 2001; Märtsin 2010; Märtsin and Mahmoud 2012). People are involved not only in a physical movement to new places but also meeting various ideas, lifestyles, traditions, rituals, nationalities and ideologies which fly around anyone who logs into Facebook or just walks out of his/her room and goes in any crowded place which could be full of foreigners (tourists, emigrants, etc.). Cultural diffusion has always been underway but the process has intensified drastically in recent decades. Nowadays, people are better aware of cultural diversity than they have ever been before in any time of history. For example, the idea of

fast-food was predominantly only associated with McDonald's and hamburgers decades ago; however, nowadays you can find sushi, noodles, burritos, shawarma, kebab, tikka-masala, curry, churros, crepes, and many other ethnic foods in diverse fast-food restaurants all over the world, including the Republic of Georgia where our research subjects live. Food is just one example; the same happens in almost all spheres of life. People are exposed to an enormous variety of options in almost any moment or sphere of their lives unless they hide inside their bedrooms forever.

The variety of choices makes life easier, in one way, but complicates things, in another. The fact of having many options might provide a sort of a sense of all-mightiness and even something reminiscent of bliss but, at the same time, it creates additional ambiguity. People may more easily, and with lesser consequences, cope with the array of food; however, a variety of options in values, lifestyles, goals and morality could posit tougher challenges. Contradictions are all over life and might be a cause for disturbance in particular cases; however, ambiguity is a common and inherent condition for humans (Boulanger 2017; Marsico and Tateo 2017). People do not have any other choice but to be in a dialog with various voices which strive to be heard and realized. Contradictions cause tensions between various voices and form tensegrity (Marsico and Tateo 2017) - the dynamic stability of the dialogical self. Tensegrity never goes away completely and is a part of the lives of humans. Tensegrity is sharper and more visible in societies which are undergoing revolutionary transformations in short-term periods. The lives of our research subjects are developing exactly in this way.

### **Description of Cases, Recruitment, and Data Collection Processes**

This paper explores the identity-making processes of two young females, one aged 21 years and one aged 25 years. The purposive sampling method was used (Neuman 2010) for choosing our research subjects. These particular research subjects were chosen as they represent the same age group and are "typical" representatives of their generation as they are not characterized by any specific or outstanding trait. I use the word typical tentatively as all persons are unique in essence. Both of them were born and raised in the post-Soviet era, and their lives have been progressing in a similar general life context. They were raised after Georgia gained independence from the Soviet Union which happened not long before the time of their births. The research subjects grew up in a country which jumped violently from a Communist system to the free market, from isolation to openness, from being part of a huge empire to the citizenship of a small country which was torn apart through the fight for independence and internal conflicts, from an almost completely closed political system into globalization. They have been living in the context of the painful development of a newly reborn country where old traditions and systems were questioned while novel ones had not yet been established. So, they have been living in a turbulent and controversial environment full of various possible life course options and trajectories (Satō et al. 2016).

Tamar<sup>2</sup> - is 21 years old and is a four-year undergraduate student. She lives in Tbilisi, the capital and the largest city of Georgia. She is single and lives in an extended family situation. She has never worked or lived independently. She has never been married or been in a long-term romantic relationship.

---

<sup>2</sup> Both names of the respondents are changed in order to preserve confidentiality. Tamar and Nino are the most popular female names in Georgia.

Nino - is 25 years old and has a master's degree. She lives in Tbilisi, the capital and the largest city of Georgia. She is single. She has never been married. She lives with her parents and her brother. She has three years of working experience.

So, in general, both cases are of the same type. I present an analysis of both of these case studies in the framework of the same paper as they reveal similar regularities of human development; however, we can also look at them from different angles and in a more comprehensive manner.

The two research subjects were recruited by making an open call for respondents for the study of the self's development. The announcement was disseminated at universities and by Facebook public postings. Both of them applied for participation in this study by themselves. They were acquainted with the research goals, procedures and provided informed consent vis-à-vis their participation.

Data were collected by conducting episodic interviews with the respondents. The idea of an episodic interview implies holding a free-flow discussion where an interviewer actively probes into a respondent's personal life story and tries to elicit information on important episodes therein. In this case, an interviewer is more proactive and engaged than during narrative interviews (Flick 2000). The questionnaire consisted of questions about the respondents' selves, their identities and their biographies-life stories, their current or previously held short-term and long-term life goals, important values and life priorities, their experiences of meeting with foreign cultural elements or foreigners, attitudes towards their home country, their expectations about possible future developments in their lives and the wider surrounding society and about femininity and the female role and place in life.

Interviews were conducted and transcribed in the Georgian language which is native for the respondents. The interview with Tamar lasted 81 min. It lasted 85 min with Nino.

Moreover, related secondary data analysis was carried out to get a better understanding of the sociocultural and historical context surrounding the development of the respondents' life course.<sup>3</sup>

## Data Analysis Methods

In general, the framework and procedures of thematic analysis were used (Rennie 2012). At first, the data in the transcripts were *coded* by an open-coding method (Bryman 2004) which implies the identification of the smallest entities of meaningful data. However, an initial search was not fully inductive as it was specifically oriented on the identification and differentiation of the self-related and proculturation-related data. Also, specific focus was made on any data indicating changes in attitudes, goals or self-definition. After the creation of the codes, the author went through the whole data again and grouped codes which were related by their meaning into wider *categories*. At the final stage of the analytical procedure, meaningful relations between categories were identified and grouped into several principal *themes*. After the creation of the themes, they were given names to identify and illustrate their meaning. For example, we have the theme: "Suppression of female sexuality" which reveals one of the main contradictive and sensitive aspects of the research subjects' internal and external negotiations on the way to self-definition.

<sup>3</sup> All activities were conducted by the author(s) of this article.

Moreover, specific data were analyzed using a qualitative content analysis method (Finfgeld-Connett 2014) with a specific focus on the identification of internal and external voices/I-positions which were identified from phrases that involved I, myself, my, mine, me (Gillespie and Cornish 2010) or were implicitly related to the self as is common in the Georgian language. It was crucial to consider the language specifics for the deeper understanding of underlying meanings/references which are not always explicitly expressed in the Georgian language as well as in many other languages (for example, in Georgian, Spanish or Italian you do not need to use a personal pronoun when referring to a person). For example: “I will only have sex if I love someone as I am a decent girl” reveals an I-position: “I as a decent girl.” I-positions were conceived as specific types of codes and grouped based on their similarity in meaning in categories, at first, and then in themes, in the end, as well as all other codes.

Therefore, the data were analyzed in several stages and were explored in their entirety at least three times; however, particular sections of the data; for example, concerning narratives about family life/values or femininity, were reviewed many more times during the data analysis due to their visible significance.

The data scrutiny was oriented on a deeper understanding and the identification of underlying meaning structures and relations in the textual data. The semiotic analysis was conducted in order to identify meaningful relations between identified categories, themes and the wider real-life context.

### **Ethical Consideration**

Each respondent was informed about the details of this study. Each of them provided informed consent vis-à-vis their participation in this project. During the data analysis and discussion, the respondents are referred to by pseudonyms so that the confidentiality of the data and the respondents’ identity have been guaranteed.

## **Results and Discussion**

The life course of both respondents reveals similar characteristics, in general, however; they naturally have particular differences which are also going to be discussed. Therefore, I present Tamar and Nino’s identity-making processes and proculturation in the framework of the same narrative while comparing differences where available.

### **The Self’s Structure and Interrelation with Social Representations**

The main life goals of the respondents are predominantly connected to family life and the related status development—from being a daughter all the way to being a grandmother. The main destined equifinal points (Sato et al. 2009; Satō et al. 2016) are associated with family status transitions—to get married, give a birth to a child, and become a grandmother and mother-in-law in the end. Both respondents are quite educated and are on the way of building their careers. They say that having a successful career is important for them; however, only in order to have enough personal income for being self-sufficient and not to be a burden for their parents or their husbands in the future. A career is not seen as a (main) way for self-affirmation and self-realization. So, this is to say that the respondents do not associate their personal value

with their careers. Tamar, aged 21, explicitly states that she is studying and going to work only for getting money to help herself and her family—she does not even have much interest in her (future) profession nor in working as such. Family visibly comes in the first place in their lists of priorities.

Interestingly, the respondents strive to not be financially dependent on their future husbands; however, even that independence is anticipated as a contribution to the family budget and not as a way for them to have (their own) separate life from their families. Of course, this tendency is not absolute and includes the desire to be able to satisfy some of their own desires (or some whims, possibly) independently and without anyone's help as well. The main point is that they want to work and earn money not in order to confront their husbands/parents but in order to not be forced to ask for money from other members of the family in the case of need. Moreover, they want to be able to help them in the case of necessity. Thus, they want to contribute and be valuable for their current and future families and not to confront or dominate them.

---

Excerpt 1

*"I have a master's degree and am working now. I am quite successful. But I feel unhappy as I am single. My main goal is to have a family, that is what is most important in life. ... Of course, I want to sustain myself even if I get married, I want to freely satisfy some of my needs and I do not want to bother my husband or my mother. However, I would not hesitate to leave my job if my husband needed... A career is secondary as compared to family..."*

*I hate those so-called feminists... European-type girls... who say that they can and should live without men... I want to have a normal family, I do not understand why I should fight against men....<sup>4</sup>*

*I dream to be a mother... I want to have children."*

Nino, 25.

*"I am finishing my degree now and I want to work because my family is poor and I want to help my mother: I want to contribute something to her...."*

*When I get married, I do not want to be in a position to ask for money from my husband. I am not sure if my husband has enough money to take the burden instead of both of us and it will be unfair... so I have to work... to be independent and to contribute to the family... I want to be able to buy whatever I want, without bothering my family.*

*I think I am an independent girl and I want to be independent but not in the European way... I want my husband to be a strong man... I want to be close and rely on him. I am not that manly American girl..."*

Tamar, 21

---

Nino and Tamar both define themselves in opposition to what they imagine is the generalized Western type of girlishness and reveal a meaningful part of the social representing (Valsiner 2003b) process of the Western-type femininity in Georgia. The respondents are of the opinion that European girls are strong/manly (copying men), "too" independent, dominating and more oriented on their career than on family. The latter contradicts the traditional Georgian social representing process of womanliness which sees females as feminine beings whose sacred purpose is to be a mother and a wife—essentially a family protector. Simply saying, respondents make a straw man from Western-type femininity. Here, we can identify a tension between the traditional Georgian social representation of femininity and its sub-alternative social representation (Gillespie 2008) of the European way of being a woman. The former is directly associated with the representation of Georgianness and the latter with Westernness. The selves of the respondents are being constructed in a dialog with those contradicting ideas on femininity.

---

<sup>4</sup> This and other quotations are the respondents' subjective and stereotypical opinions. The role they play in the self's development and how they are constructed is subsequently discussed in this article.



Traditional femininity (Mother, wife) <<<<>>>> Emancipation (Solo player).

Excerpt 1 indicates that the respondents have collaborative and constructive attitudes and also explicitly desire to distance themselves from misandry. The latter is implicitly attributed to Western-type femininity. The following internal meta I-position could be identified: “I as a decent (feminine) woman” which consists of the following lower level sub-I-positions: “I as a mother” and “I as a good wife.” These positions are rooted in conservative family traditions which represent one of the visible markers of Georgianness.

This study shows that particular social representations play a crucial role in the process of the self’s definition. Theoretically, social representation is conceived as the organization of affective and cognitive processes which is being formed through interpersonal communication/dialog and is regarded as a sociocultural phenomenon in its nature (Marková 2003; Markova and Markov 2000; Sammut et al. 2015; Valsiner 2003b). However, I would like to make note that *social representation always reveals itself only through and in the course of personal meaning-making processes as it is only the self which has the agency and the ability for the subjective construction of ideas*. Social representation is enacted only in the mind of the self and oriented on the relation to the interpersonal/intersubjective negotiations which flow at the sociocultural level. I assume that social representation, as much as it has organizing power, serves as a higher-level meta-position inside the self’s structure and plays a meaningful role in internal and external negotiations (Gamsakhurdia 2018a). Those social representations which are more meaningful for our research subjects’ development are densely related to their life goals and priorities.

### Supreme Role of Motherhood

The social representation of motherliness is one of the strongest voices in the Georgian semiotic system. I as a mother is one of the most important positions and is supported by sociocultural external voices and inner (internalized) aspirations. Tamar and Nino both reveal that one of their dreams is to become a mother. The meaningfulness of motherliness is deeply internalized and entrenched as a single girl is not perceived, either by herself or by society (Gamsakhurdia 2017), as a fully functional adult until she has a family with children—even if she is 40+ years old. Having a family without children is still perceived with negative judgment and entails gossip and negative thoughts and feelings. So, becoming and being a mother, and not through their careers, is the main way for our female respondents’ self-realization.

---

Excerpt 2

*“I want to be a mother more than anything else. I love little children playing around. What do we live for, if not for children? That is what we leave behind us. I do not understand those women who say that they do not want children...”*

Nino, 25.

---

The importance of motherliness is visibly embodied in the Georgian language which is a meaningful part of the sociocultural context. For example, the Georgian language includes words like: motherland (not fatherland), the stem/foundation of the house is called motherstem (this is an approximate translation), the Earth is translated in Georgian as mother-earth (translation is again approximate), the word for capital city in Georgian translates as “mother-city”—to name those most commonly used. Moreover, there is an emblematic and very

important statue on Tbilisi's Holy Mountain (called Mtatsminda—literally holy mountain) overlooking the old part of the capital called “Mother of Georgia.” The Mother of Georgia is regarded as a symbol of the capital and of the whole country and underlines the special role of the mother. There is no statue of any male personage matching the importance of the statue of the Mother of Georgia in the country (Fig. 2).

Excerpt 2 reveals that the desire to have children also discloses the inclination to “leave something behind” after death, to leave one's own impact and trace on the Earth. The latter aspiration is an example of self-presentation (Gamsakhurdia 2018b). It also reveals that there is another optional and theoretically possible life trajectory of not having children which is rejected.

Further, it is necessary to indicate that the mother's external voice plays a major role in our respondents' lives. Both of them indicate that they have the strongest bonds with their mothers and regularly share every detail of their lives with them. Their mothers' possible reaction decisively influences their thoughts, feelings and behavior. Nino says that she has a lot of arguments with her mother; however, she is the one who understands her better than anyone else and her position matters more than anyone else's. Noticeably, the mother is more actively involved in the everyday life of girls and she serves like a team coach who pushes her children forward but who can also criticize and rebuke them.

The father's voice is also very important; however, it serves more as a stabilizing factor and a source of mental support. He is less involved in daily mundane discussions and family issues and has less managerial power inside the family, despite being regarded the symbolic ‘head’ of it. Nino's father passed away years ago. She reveals that he was something of a last hope to

**Fig. 2** Statue of the “Mother of Georgia” ([https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kartlis\\_deda.JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kartlis_deda.JPG))



whom she could approach for emotional support anytime. She says that his death removed the main source of stability from her life and since then she more often feels anxiety. Interestingly, his voice is still there in the self and it influences her behavior. She would not like to behave in a way that would have been unacceptable for her father. His voice lively participates during her internal negotiations and his life continues through her even though it is many years since his physical death.

---

Excerpt 3

*"I was very close to my father. I often think about him. I did not talk to him very often, but when I needed him, he was there. Now I am ... My mother is my mother, she has her place. My father was always supporting me, my mother is more critical... pushier... Sometimes you need support, not remarks... but ... When I do something, I always think what he would have thought about it... now maybe even more than when he was alive."*

Tamar, 25.

---

The I-positions that have been revealed so far emphasize the implicit "allegiance" of the respondents to the idea of Georgianness. The high importance of the mother and father's voices, the desire to become a mother oneself and the preference for more feminine roles in life mainly fit with the traditional social representations of Georgianness and womanliness. The meta position "I as a decent woman" is in general the most visible emanation of Georgianness. However, there is more than Georgianness that surrounds the development of the research subjects. The self is being formed in the process of a contradiction between traditional "Georgian" and the newly arrived real or imaginary Western ideas of life.

### Emancipation in a Georgian Way

Despite being quite conservative, the respondents still do not fully match the traditional idea of femininity as they still want to work and have careers. The respondents freely say that they need money and they are going to work to obtain what they want—no doubts or ambiguity is heard there. The respondents make their own choices and feel quite equalized to men. Tamar and Nino are not seeking permission from their families or from their future husbands for any decision they are going to make. These are the signs of their emancipation. The issue that their personal priorities are still associated with family values and femininity does not necessarily mean that they are deprived of their rights or lack awareness of women's rights. Being feminine is their explicit choice and the result of the semiotic mediation of available options.

I assume that Tamar and Nino successfully navigated through the stormy contradictions between imagined modern Western and traditional Georgian social representations vis-à-vis womanliness. In a theoretical sense, the latter two represent an opposition between A and Non-A (Josephs et al. 1999; Valsiner 2014) which leads to the appearance of a new B position. In our case, the B position is created, indeed, and it implies a social representing process of femininity in a specific way: women have equal rights to men and may choose what they want to do in their lives; however, this does not lead to the direct competition with a man's role as our respondents prefer to maintain part of their femininity and reconcile their personal freedom with traditional family values. The specific meaning that they put in their desire to work even strengthens their femininity and family bonds, instead of breaking them, as might have been expected. The particular cases of the respondents show that the idea of women's emancipation is worked through the filter of personal subjectivity and is incorporated in a reconstructed way fusing it with the representation of Georgian femininity through a dialectical synthesis. So, a new fusion is made of all available ideas—the Georgianized way of female emancipation.



prohibition of premarital sex for girls is quite common among various cultures (Cindoglu 1997; Mernissi 1982; Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2005; Zhou 1989).

Restriction on premarital sex for females is widely entrenched in Georgian society and reveals itself even in institutional spaces like hospitals. The language which is used by medical staff emanates the existence of the institution of virginity as they commonly do not assume that an unmarried girl might not be a virgin. In particular cases, it might cause very awkward situations and harm the feelings of those girls who are not virgins but are not married. See Excerpt 4 for an illustration.

---

Excerpt 4

*“When you go to the gynecologist, they need to know if you are a virgin or not because of some differences in procedures for virgins and non-virgins. But, instead of asking if you are a virgin, they are asking if you are married... In my case, I never had a problem because I am a virgin... But I have a friend who has sex with her boyfriend and she was humiliated by that question when she went to the gynecologist... She did not know what to answer... She was not married but she also was not a virgin... She said that she wanted to cry when she was there... Those medics should assume that there are various possibilities and they should be more ethical.”*

Nino, 25.

---

Tamar and Nino are seeking a compromise concerning restrictions on sexuality. They both say that they are against the excessively conservative institution of virginity and are ready to have sexual intercourse with their future husbands before marriage although they are still against having (the multitude of) “light” temporary sexual connections. For example, a one-night stand is virtually totally excluded. The respondents explicitly distance themselves from casual or temporary sexual partnerships which they see as a norm in Europe in their imaginative opinion. The respondents, who are caught between two opposite social representing processes of female sexuality—construct a new hyper-generalized sign (Valsiner 2003a, b, 2014) of “real love” that *overrides both imaginary meaning systems (Georgianness and Westernness) and allows individuals to have sex with real lovers before marriage*. The latter creative process is an example of individual proculturation which implies a subjective modification of the old meaning system in relation to the new (imaginary or real) alien ideas by the self.

Noticeably, real love cannot be expected to happen often. It is regarded as an extraordinary experience, reconciling conservative and liberal views on sexuality into the new social representation. The main sense of real love is its exceptionality which justifies a widening/softening of the moral borders of Georgianness. Reconstruction happens at the subjective (interpretation) level; however, this may possibly result in sociocultural changes through the externalization and interpersonal communication.

---

Excerpt 5

*“I was in a summer camp last summer together with my course mates. I was talking with girls and somebody said that it is normal to kiss your boyfriend... The other girls jumped on her almost aggressively saying that it is not allowed and boys will not respect her after that. What will other people say??? That she will not be able to marry a nice guy if she ruins her reputation... It is not like in Europe here, a Georgian girl cannot make love with her boyfriend. Things are changing, but slowly...*

*I myself am a virgin...I had a boyfriend but... was not sure that it was serious. I may have sex but only if I am sure that he will marry me in the end... I am not so free as European girls are...”*

Nino, 21.

*“I am 25 and I am still a virgin. I have not met the right one yet. As I said, my dream is to have a beautiful family. I have the desire... I want to have sex... but I need to trust a boy, I need to feel that he truly loves me... I cannot have sex if I am not sure that he loves me and is serious about me... I had several relationships when I was kind of close to it but I decided against it in the end... I do not regret that I am a virgin... although it is very difficult to restrain myself... Sometimes, I really feel that I need it, simply physically, to hug, to be close, to merge with someone... but yep... I am waiting for the right one.*

---

*The institute of virginity is a stupid and outdated tradition... I cannot be like those European girls... to fuck with strangers... it is abnormal for me... how do they even do it... ok, I do not know... But I do not like the medieval Georgian norms either: "*

Tamar, 25.

---

Probing into the differences between generations and the consideration of future expectations reveal that there seems to be a difference between the previous and current generations and the general vector of development is mainly directed towards liberalization. Tamar narrates that her mother and her grandmother's first-ever kiss in their lives happened only after their marriage and it was unimaginable to behave otherwise (to kiss or have sex before marriage) in those times. For Tamar and Nino, however, it is ridiculous not to kiss their future husbands.

---

Excerpt 6

*"Our generation is different. After watching all those movies, it is difficult to be the same as our parents were... they did not even know that there was another possibility... It was the only norm for them to be like a puritan. We are nearer to Europe now... It is outdated not to kiss your future husband..."*

Nino, 25.

---

Excerpt 6 indicates that globalization provides information about other possible life trajectories which were unavailable for the generation of our respondents' parents and whose options were significantly limited. Now, however, liberal views associated with the imaginary notion of Europeanization provide alternative ideas.

The respondents reveal that there is another internal oppositional couple of I-positions emanating tension between the social representations of Georgianness and Europeanness: "I as a self-oriented/independent person" vs. "I as a selfless/socially oriented person." Tamar says that she thinks that she should be more selfish than she is at the present moment and in comparison with what is "usual" (expected) in Georgia. The word usual implies things which are typical for Georgianness and emphasizes the importance of communalism. She indicated that she suffered from social obligations which require her to even maintain those friendships and connections which are no longer pleasant and could even be damaging for her. It is not easy for her to cut those ties as it goes against the internalized view on decent behavior and makes her feel awkward. Doubts appear about priorities as she observes through Western movies and sources of mass media that people are freer from the societal burden in the West. The respondents realize that there are other ways of living. The latter process leads to the general proclutative reconstruction of the self which takes the respondents towards liberalization and fusion with imagined Westernness. The strive for self-assertion is not as strong as the previously discussed strive for sexual liberation and is not able to cause meaningful changes in the self for the time being; however, mild internal tension is underway.

Tamar admits that she does not have enough personal freedom and has no choice but to communicate with her peers more often than she would like to. She feels uncomfortable to be obliged to talk with friends too often even when they do not have much to share or discuss with each other. The breaking of such obligations might lead to the negative judgment and deterioration of one's own image. *Georgianness does not encourage individualism, solitude and self-centered reflections.*

---

Excerpt 7

*"I am quite often irritated because I always have to be responsive and not only responsive to my friends and acquaintances almost every day. If I do not call them, they get angry and it is not nice. Why do you not call me? Why do you not pay attention to me? I am really fed up with it but I do not know how to change it."*

Tamar, 21.

---

## Excerpt 8

*"I want to have more control of my life. I want to break up with some friends as it feels awkward... They have become different, we do not have much in common but I still keep in touch with them... I have to... It is not simple... It is not like in the movies... it is real life... These relations are very important here..."*

Tamar, 21.

It is apparent that such a dense communication is not always very meaningful and sometimes possibly becomes even hypocritical; however, the main goal is to maintain a visible connection rather than dig deep into the other's soul. The social representation of friendliness/friendship is one of the meaningful and influential components of Georgianness. According to the respondents' imagination, other nations are not as friendly as Georgians. The general "other" is perceived as colder and less emotional. So, this social representing process of Georgian friendship plays its role during internal negotiations between other social representations and it strengthens allegiance to Georgianness; however, at the price of some personal discomfort.

We can see that proculturation involves the semiotic juggling of a number of social representations and related I-positions that leads to the reconstruction and expansion of the self. Some novelties contribute to visible changes resulting in a formulation of new specific hyper-generalized signs like "real love (which allows sex before marriage)". However, some novelties are not able to make a meaningful impact. Nevertheless, even in that latter case they add additional ambiguity for the self by providing extra options for life trajectories. *The self's development and proculturation flows in the context of the opposition between social representing processes of Georgianness and Westernness.*

### **Georgianness and Westernness in Relation to Religiosity**

Another aspect which is associated with Georgianness and distinguishes it from imagined foreign cultures is Orthodox Christian religiosity. However, the picture is not that clear in this case. Tamar states that the Georgian Church has had a huge influence on society and on the ordinary lives of people for decades (after the 1990s) and Georgianness has become firmly associated with it.

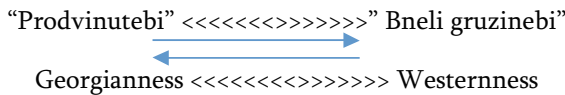
### **Georgianness = Orthodox religion <<<<<>>>> Westernness**

However, she indicates that reversal movements are underway in some parts of society, mainly among the youth who are seeking markers to identify with a more modern identity and distance themselves from the past and the previous generations. Some young people tend to declare that they are atheists in order to associate themselves with more advanced imaginatively Westernized groups. They promote more or less liberal ideas concerning family, sexual life, lifestyle, etc. Not surprisingly, liberal youth groups are not liked by people who are more conservative and follow various aspects of the above described social representation of Georgianness. These two groups have constructed nicknames to signify each other.

Conservative people created a novel social representation of "prodvintebi" to describe liberal groups in a derogative way. Prodvintebi is derived from a Russian word—prodvintie—which literally signifies somebody who is at an advanced stage of something (development in this case); however, among Georgians it is used as pejorative jargon to describe people who have lost their true (Georgian) identity. Prodvintebi implies something similar to the English word—snob. So, conservative people use that word in order to scold those liberal groups and ideas which try to

promote (radical) Western liberal ideas in Georgia in their imaginative way. One of the most visible markers of the social representation of the *prodvintebi* is to have an adversary attitude towards religiosity and religious people in general.

On the other hand, those people who are called *prodvintebi* have their own social representation of Georgianness and religiosity and reckon that any sign of conservatism and religiosity is an outdated remnant from the dark medieval centuries. They strive to explicitly distance themselves from traditionalism by using quite radical vocabulary. In this contradiction to conservatism, the social representation of “*bneli gruzinebi*” is created which approximately means “Georgians from the dark ages or in the darkness.” The jargon “*gruzinebi*” is also derived from the Russian word for Georgians; however, in the form of jargon and with a derogative connotation. In a wider sense, “*bneli gruzinebi*” are associated with religiosity, restrictions on female sexuality and an opposition to liberal views in general.



Respondents define themselves in line with one of these two social representations on: either “I am not *bneli gruzini*” or either “I am not *prodvintebi*.” The former equals to “I as a Westernized Georgian” and the latter is “I as an authentic Georgian.” The attitude towards religiosity is one of the main markers in the process of the definition of allegiance to one or another I-position.

**Curvilinearization of Binary Opposition**

In terms of semiotic cultural psychology, the latter structure could be conceptualized as a /A-Non A/ binary structure which is tensional and leads to the exploration of *Gegenstand* (Valsiner 2014). A and Non-A serve a function of a *Gegenstand* for each other and provide a field of movement and reflection.

In a wider sense, the opposition between Georgianness (A) and Westernness (Non-A) could be resolved by the appearance of a new (B) meaning. B implies the creation of a new way of the definition of the self and the imaginary “other.” I assume that such a new meaning is still in the process of development in our case. However, meaningful signs of it are already identifiable and indicate the appearance of a new fusion: “Mildly Westernized Georgianness.” For example, the previously discussed dialectical synthesis of Georgian and “Western” social representations of womanliness in relation to the new reality of the free market capitalism indicates that the direction of development is set in favor of a creative and adaptational fusion of opposites on the way to the creation of new meaning systems. However, the opposition between Orthodox Christian religiosity (A) and radical anti-religiosity (Non-A) is still unresolved at the moment and is in the search of a constructive solution.

The respondents evaluate themselves from the historical perspective as well.

**Soviet Times and the 1990s as a Historical Reference Point for Self-Definition**

The self-definition of the research subjects involves another opposition which evolves against the contradiction to the older generations which are associated with the “dark” Soviet and post-



Soviet transitional 1990s. The respondents comment on the visible changes in the development of the youth in comparison with the previous “Soviet” cohorts. Tamar definitely describes herself as a part of the new generation which constructs its own identity in opposition to the older people who were raised in the Soviet Union and symbolize the “1990s.”<sup>5</sup> An alternative social representation (Gillespie 2008) of Soviet times and the 1990s serves as a straw man for the definition of the identity of the contemporary youth with which our respondents clearly affiliate themselves. In fact, under the denomination of the 1990s, a much wider period than just a decade is implied—it involves a time span starting somewhere from the early 1980s until the Rose Revolution in Georgia in 2003.

The social representation of the 1990s is purely negative without having any positive aspect. It is associated with chaos, destruction, calamity and the lowest level of life. People from those times are associated with criminal mentality, ineffectiveness and corruption.

In contradiction to the Soviet times and the transitional 1990s, the newer generations are attributed to having more interest in fitness, spiritual practices (Yoga; Meditation; etc.) and are more oriented on their studies and their career. On the contrary, the “Soviet generations” are associated with a criminal mentality, corruption and a repressive system. Generally, Tamar and Nino think that the youth is optimistic and future-oriented. Noticeably, they believe that the newer generations are more and more “Europeanized” and this resonates well with the previously discussed contradiction between Georgianness and Westernness. At the same time, the “Soviet generations” and the 1990s are associated with repressive and poor Soviet times. The youth is anticipated to develop more in a Westernized Georgianness.

---

#### Excerpt 8

*“Our generation it more, how to say... Less people smoke, fewer people dream to become an authoritative criminal... Boys and girls go to the gym... It is not shameful to want to study anymore, I know that it was not very popular in the 1990s from my parents... I am not sure, but I think it is because Europe and the US influence us... And also, we have peace. I do not know but people definitely try to create something and stand in the yards of their houses 24/7 gazing at passers-by...”*

Tamar, 21.

*“After the visa-free regime, many young people go to Europe much more easily and see with their eyes what is better for their life. Younger people are at least trying to do something. They are more oriented on studies and their career... while older people were sinking in nepotism and corruption and were not doing anything...”*

Nino, 25.

---

So, the social representations of (1) Soviets/1990s and (2) the newer generations provide another oppositional couple of reference points for the self’s definition. Tamar and Nino definitely position themselves among new generations and form the “I as modern” I-position (A) against the “I as a person non from the 1990s/Soviets” (Non-A) position. The Soviets/1990s serve as a visible reference point (another Gegenstand essentially) for the self-definition and positioning at the temporal and ideological semiotic maps.

## Conclusions

This paper explores the self and the identity construction of two Georgian females who are living through turbulent times in their homeland, Georgia,<sup>6</sup> which has been undergoing various

<sup>5</sup> A detailed analysis of the historical period of the 1990s or Soviet times exceeds the scope of this article and will be undertaken elsewhere.

<sup>6</sup> The Republic of Georgia.

sociocultural and political ruptures since the declaration of independence from the Soviet Union. The respondents' selves develop in the environment where traditions meet modernization, ideas of social embeddedness meet individualism and traditional family values meet sexual freedom.

The self and the identity are conceived as dynamic and processual phenomena which are being constructed through the mediation of various signs and ideas. We refer to the term *proculturation* to signify the creative mediation of alien ideas which face our respondents during their life course and lead to the person-centered process of self-reconstruction. The respondents' *proculturation* develops through the subjective negotiation of several *emblematic oppositional couples of social representations* in relation to the various temporal/historical and sociocultural reference points. Future expectations and aspirations play as much stronger catalytic role as past experiences for self-definition. Self-construction is a never-ending process, and it was possible to capture only particular moments of the dynamically stable developmental process during our research. I assume that the self drives their lives forward to the future along a motorway full of competing ideas and possible experiences. Any person moves through the available life trajectories by jumping from one bifurcation point to another.

Social representations are understood as dialogical constructions which are created through interpersonal communication (Marková 2003) and represent organizations of affects and cognitive knowledge concerning particular phenomena. However, they are revealed only through the self's agency. So, I assume that social representations are serving as external voices or meta-I-positions inside the dialogical self's structure. Nevertheless, not all social representations are meaningful, only some of them gain decisive power for the self's identification. These *emblematic social representations* typically do not exist in a solitary form and make up oppositional couples with imaginary alternative social representations (Gillespie 2008) which serve as reference points.

Information which flows from abroad by the mass media or through direct meetings may feed in the construction of alternative social representations against which one's own identity is being constructed. In our case studies, several oppositional couples were shown which reveal different defining imaginary ideas of the research subjects' heritage identities (Georgianness) and the other alternative imaginary world (mostly, the imaginary West). I would like to emphasize that we are exploring a person-centered constructive *proculturation* process which is revealed in the self's thought/feelings/actions and by no means aim to describe the characteristics of the culture as a whole. Our aim was to identify those ideas which define and signify our particular respondents' identities and reveal that theoretical mechanism of *proculturation* which underlies self-development while processing unfamiliar ideas from real or imaginary abroad.

Georgianness vs. Westernness >>> Westernized Georgianness

In our respondents' case, two groups of social representations could be distinguished which are opposed to each other and provide a combination of suggestions concerning meaningful (possible) real-life fields. One group of social representations is united under the umbrella of *Georgianness* and includes conservative social representations on: *femininity* and suppressed *female sexuality, family values, motherliness and firm social embeddedness*. *Georgianness* is being formed in opposition to the alternative social representation (Gillespie 2008) of *Westernness* which provides an umbrella for another group of (imagined) social representations on: *female emancipation, sexual freedom, self-centered independence from society and liberal ideas* in general.

In terms of semiotic cultural psychology, the latter two form a binary opposition of A and Non-A and serve as a *Gegenstand* for each other and provide the field of movement for further reflection and meaning-making semiotic activities. These and other imaginary oppositions are being solved in the process of proculturation by a dialectical synthesis and creation of new meanings and hyper-generalized signs which allow a reconciliation of opposites into the fused new forms of meanings.

Tamar and Nino are developing in between those two groups of social representations and form their own choices and ideas through the process of proclutative semiotic activity. In general, they align themselves next to Georgianness; however, critically they reconsider some of its meaningful positions and mix it with some imaginary ideas of Westernness. Tamar and Nino accept the high values of family, motherliness, and femininity; however, they reject the excessively strict restrictions on their sexuality (“institution of virginity”). Nevertheless, at the same time they do not accept the Western liberal norms on sexuality in its entirety. The respondents form a hyper-generalized sign of real love which justifies their right to have sex with their future husbands before marriage although it does not allow them to have occasional temporary (“light”) sexual partnerships—the exceptionality of real love is the necessary condition for premarital sexual intercourse. The latter solution is the result of a subjective reinterpretation of the traditional rules in relation to Western liberal values and provides a particular example of *proculturation*; however, it reveals its universal characteristic >>> *tendency towards the curvilinearization of binary oppositions through human development which is the essence of proculturation*. This process becomes possible by means of the higher mental process of imagination which systematically organizes all meaning-making processes (Gamsakhurdia 2019c).

Proculturation is accompanied by such contextual historical factors as distancing from Soviet times and the 1990s. This aspect reveals itself in the form of another oppositional semiotic couple of social representations. The respondents identified themselves as part of a newer generation which is being formed in opposition to the generations which are associated with the epoch of the 1990s or the earlier Soviet times. The 1990s is not just a numerical decade but a symbolic period which includes the time starting from the early 1980s until 2003–2004 and is signified with chaos, calamity and the lowest level of life. That period is associated with violence, the dominance of criminal mentality and deadlock. On the contrary, the contemporary young generations are believed to be oriented more on their studies, their career, ecological problems and task-oriented optimism. Opposition to the near past is a catalytic factor which strengthens positive sentiments towards the imaginary West and facilitates a more positive construction of the future.

Summing up, proculturation develops through a personal subjective construction of ideas like “real love allows premarital sex,” which is not in full accordance either with Georgianness or the imagined opposing alternative social representation of Westernness, and goes beyond both of them while representing a particular way of adaptation to real-life challenges. Newly constructed hyper-generalized signs and emblematic social representations provide a general framework for thinking, feeling, and actions. In the process of proculturation, new “fusion” identities and hyper-generalized signs were formed like “Westernized Georgianness” by our research subjects. So, the self comes to be a creative and imaginative phenomenon which subjectively transforms oneself by the creation of new meanings through the semiotic mediation of diverse foreign and familiar ideas. *An imaginative dialectical synthesis of opposites is the foundation of proculturation and the self's expansion.*

**Acknowledgments** I want to express huge gratitude to Jaan Valsiner whose suggestions and encouragement has been instrumental for my work. Also, I want to thank Brady Wagoner whose suggestion to refer to the term of alternative social representations helped much in the refinement of the article.

## Compliance with Ethical Standards

**Conflict of Interest** The author declares that he/she has no conflict of interest.

**Informed Consent** Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in this study.

## References

- Bauman, Z. (2001). Identity in the globalizing world. *Social Anthropology*, 9(2), 121–129. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-8676.2001.tb00141.x>.
- Boulanger, D. (2017). Expansion of parents' undetermined experience in socioeducational programs: Extending the dialogical self theory. *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science*, 51(4), 557–569. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12124-017-9403-9>.
- 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. <https://doi.org/10.1177/097133369700900103>.
- Bryman, A. (2004). *Social research methods* (2nd ed.). New York: Oxford University Press Retrieved from <https://www.worldcat.org/title/social-research-methods/oclc/55108074>.
- Chirkov, V. (2009). Critical psychology of acculturation: What do we study and how do we study it, when we investigate acculturation? *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 33(2), 94–105. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2008.12.004>.
- Cindoglu, D. (1997). Virginitiy tests and artificial virginitiy in modern Turkish medicine. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 20(2), 253–261. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0277-5395\(96\)00096-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0277-5395(96)00096-9).
- Doucerein, M., Dere, J., & Ryder, A. G. (2013). Travels in hyper-diversity: Multiculturalism and the contextual assessment of acculturation. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 37(6), 686–699. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2013.09.007>.
- Erikson, E. (1959). *Identity and the life cycle: Selected papers*. New York: International Universities Press Retrieved from <https://www.worldcat.org/title/identity-and-the-life-cycle-selected-papers/oclc/248476>.
- Finfgeld-Connett, D. (2014). Use of content analysis to conduct knowledge-building and theory-generating qualitative systematic reviews. *Qualitative Research*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794113481790>.
- Flick, U. (2000). Episodic interviewing. *Qualitative researching with text, image and sound: A practical handbook for social research*. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781849209731>
- Gamsakhurdia, V. L. (2017). Quest for ethnic identity in the modern world—The Georgian case. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 3(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2017.1309735>
- Gamsakhurdia, V. L. (2018a). Adaptation in a dialogical perspective—from acculturation to proculturation. *Culture and Psychology*, 24(4), 545–559. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354067X18791977>.
- Gamsakhurdia, V. L. (2018b). Constructive urge for self-presentation—mediating between the past and the future. *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science*, 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12124-018-9466-2>
- Gamsakhurdia, V. L. (2019a). Proculturation: Self-reconstruction by making “fusion cocktails” of alien and unfamiliar meanings. *Culture & Psychology*, (in press).
- Gamsakhurdia, V. L. (2019b). Self-expansion through proculturation—semiotic movement towards curvilinear development. In: F. Van Alpen, S. Normann (Ed.), *Cultural psychology in communities: Tensions and transformations* (p. In press). Information Age Publisher.
- Gamsakhurdia, V. L. (2019c). Towards the systematic theory of imagination. *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science*, 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12124-019-09481-8>
- Gillespie, A. (2008). Social representations, alternative representations and semantic barriers. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 38(4), 375–391. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5914.2008.00376.x>.
- Gillespie, A., & Cornish, F. (2010). Intersubjectivity: Towards a dialogical analysis. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 40(1), 19–46. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5914.2009.00419.x>.
- Hammack, P. L. (2008). Narrative and the cultural psychology of identity. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 12(3), 222–247. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1088868308316892>.
- Heraclitus, & Haxton, B. (2003). *Fragments: The collected wisdom of Heraclitus*. Penguin Books.

- Hermans, H. J. M. (1999). Dialogical thinking and self-innovation. *Culture & Psychology*, 5(1), 67–87. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354067X9951004>.
- Hermans, H. J. M. (2001). The dialogical self: Toward a theory of personal and cultural positioning. *Culture & Psychology*, 7(3), 243–281. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354067X0173001>.
- Hermans, H. J. M., & Hermans-Konopka, A. (2010). *Dialogical self theory: Positioning and counter-positioning in a globalizing society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hermans, H. J., Kempen, H. J., & Van Loon, R. J. (1992). The dialogical self: Beyond individualism and rationalism. *American Psychologist*, 47(1), 23–33. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.47.1.23>.
- Hermans, H. J. M., Konopka, A., Oosterwegel, A., & Zomer, P. (2017). Fields of tension in a boundary-crossing world: Towards a democratic organization of the self. *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science*, 51(4), 505–535. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12124-016-9370-6>.
- James, W. (1890). *The principles of psychology*. New York: H. Holt and Company.
- Josephs, I. E., Valsiner, J., & Surgan, S. E. (1999). The process of meaning construction: Dissecting the flow of semiotic activity. In *Action & self-development: Theory and research through the life span* (pp. 257–282). Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452204802.n9>.
- Marková, I. (2003). Dialogicality and social representations: The dynamics of mind. *Contemporary Sociology: a Journal of Reviews*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/009430610503400367>.
- Markova, I., & Markov, I. (2000). AmÈdÈe or how to get rid of it: Social representations from a dialogical perspective. *Culture & Psychology*, 6(4), 419–460. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354067X0064002>.
- Marsico, G., & Tateo, L. (2017). Borders, tensegrity and development in dialogue. *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science*, 51(4), 536–556. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12124-017-9398-2>.
- Mårtsin, M. (2010). Identity in dialogue: Identity as hyper-generalized personal sense. *Theory & Psychology*, 20(3), 436–450. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0959354310363513>.
- Mårtsin, M. (2010). Rupturing otherness: Becoming estonian in the context of contemporary Britain. *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science*, 44(1), 65–81. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12124-009-9109-8>.
- Mårtsin, M., & Mahmoud, H. W. (2012). *Never "at-home"?: Migrants between societies* (pp. 730–746). Oxford: The Oxford Handbook of Culture and Psychology. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195396430.013.0035>.
- Mead, G. H., Morris, C. W. (Charles W., Huebner, D. R., & Joas, H. (2015). *Mind, self, and society*. Retrieved from [https://www.worldcat.org/title/mind-self-and-society-the-definitive-edition/oclc/910978080&referer=brief\\_results](https://www.worldcat.org/title/mind-self-and-society-the-definitive-edition/oclc/910978080&referer=brief_results).
- Memissi, F. (1982). Virginty and patriarchy. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 5(2), 183–191. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0277-5395\(82\)90026-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/0277-5395(82)90026-7).
- Neuman, W. L. (2010). *Social research methods qualitative and quantitative approaches + myresearchkit*. Prentice Hall. Retrieved from <http://www.pearson.com.au/products/M-N-Neuman-Social-Research-Methods-Pearson-New-International-Edition-Qualitative-and-Quantitative-Approaches/9781292020235?R=9781292020235>.
- Owens, T. J. (2006). Self and identity. In *Handbook of social psychology* (pp. 205–232). Springer US. [https://doi.org/10.1007/0-387-36921-X\\_9](https://doi.org/10.1007/0-387-36921-X_9)
- Rennie, D. L. (2012). Qualitative research as methodical hermeneutics. *Psychological Methods*, 17(3), 385–398. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0029250>.
- Rosa A; Valsiner J. (2018). The Cambridge handbook of sociocultural psychology. In A. Rosa & J. Valsiner, (Eds.), Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511611162>
- Sammut, G., Andreouli, E., Gaskell, G., & Valsiner, J. (2015). *The Cambridge handbook of social representations*. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107323650>
- Sato, T., Hidaka, T., & Fukuda, M. (2009). Depicting the dynamics of living the life: The trajectory Equifinality model. In *Dynamic process methodology in the social and developmental sciences* (pp. 217–240). New York, NY: Springer US. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-387-95922-1\\_10](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-387-95922-1_10)
- Satō, T., Mori, N., & Valsiner, J. (2016). *Making of the future: The trajectory equifinality approach in cultural psychology*.
- Shalhoub-Kevorkian, N. (2005). Imposition of virginity testing: A life-saver or a license to kill? *Social Science & Medicine*, 60(6), 1187–1196. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2004.07.015>.
- Tanggaard, L., & Tateo, L. (2018). Unity of the real and the non-real: Imagination in action and talk. *Nordic Psychology*, 70(1), 85–94. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19012276.2017.1362991>.
- Tateo, L. (2014). Beyond the self and the environment: The psychological horizon. In *The catalyzing mind* (pp. 223–237). New York, NY: Springer New York. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4614-8821-7\\_12](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4614-8821-7_12)
- Tateo, L. (2015). Just an illusion? Imagination as higher mental function. *Journal of Psychology & Psychotherapy*, 05(06), 1–6. <https://doi.org/10.4172/2161-0487.1000216>.
- Tateo, L. (2016). Toward a cogenetic cultural psychology. *Culture & Psychology*, 22(3), 433–447. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354067X16645297>.

- Valsiner, J. (2000). *Culture and human development*. Sage Publishing.
- Valsiner, J. (2003a). Culture and its transfer: Ways of creating general knowledge through the study of cultural particulars. *Online Readings in Psychology and Culture*. <https://doi.org/10.9707/2307-0919.1013>.
- Valsiner, J. (2003b). Textes sur les représentations sociales (Enabling a theory of enablement: In search for a theory-method link). *Papers on Social Representations*, 128(12), 1021–5573 Retrieved from <http://www.psr.jku.at/>.
- Valsiner, J. (2014). *An invitation to cultural psychology*. SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Valsiner, J. (2017). *From methodology to methods in human psychology*. Cham: Springer International Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-61064-1>.
- Valsiner, J., & Cabell, K. R. (2011). Self-making through synthesis: Extending dialogical self theory. In H. J. M. Hermans & T. Gieser (Eds.), *Handbook of dialogical self theory* (pp. 82–97). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139030434.007>.
- Weber, M., Gerth, H., Mills, C. W., & Charles, W. (1958). *From Max Weber: Essays in sociology*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Zhou, X. (1989). Virginity and premarital sex in contemporary China. *Feminist Studies*, 15(2), 279–288.

**Publisher's Note** Springer Nature remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.