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# A Theory of Proculturation

Development of the  
self through intercultural  
communication

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## Series Editor's Preface: *Proculturation* —The Universal Core of Human Development

The unity of adhering to social norms while simultaneously violating them is the universal feature of human living. This is not a paradox but an inevitable dynamic of the never-ending process of personal and societal innovation. We need norms in order to transcend them, and we need to transcend them in order to develop. Development entails overcoming previous order in favour of a newly constructed one. That order attains a normative status—only to be broken down and turned into another reconstructed form.

This is the key to understanding the processes of human migration. Lado Gamsakhurdia's theory of *proculturation* is a very recent development—the result of the last 5 years—and is one of the most promising theoretical innovations in the field of cultural psychology (Valsiner, 2019). While being new, it has solid historical roots. The efforts of the American developmentalist James Mark Baldwin are notable as the intellectual basis for the new theory. Set up as a system of developmental logic in the time when non-developmental classical logic was the “gold standard” for sciences (1906–1915), Baldwin attempted to find out how a new understanding of the social world emerges in ontogeny. This meant constant attention to the processes of emergence of new forms—not something that psychology had already then failed to consider. Deviating from that mainstream ontological stance of looking at psychological phenomena as these are, Baldwin undertook a search for a conceptual system that could explain their emergence, and Baldwin's work gave a push for advancement in developmental psychologies of Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky (Valsiner, 2009). For example, Piaget's central mechanism of progressing equilibration (*equilibration majorante*) maps precisely upon the basic ideas of the *proculturation* theory. While striving towards a new equilibrium, we move away from the previous one.

Baldwin's, Piaget's, and Vygotsky's developmental ideas had limited impact on the field of social psychology that became prominent in the second half of the twentieth century in the North American context. The idea of migration to a new society as a social innovation that goes beyond the social norms of the receiving society would not fit into the premises of social psychology. Hence, the “development-blindness” of cross-cultural psychology harboured the focus on different versions of

the acculturation perspectives. The persons who move from one society to another would create a hybrid of their background and the social expectations of the receiving society. As a result—societies develop. This is no novelty—but what usually goes unnoticed is the role of the “invading Others” in that development. This can happen at different levels of social power. The movement of ordinary migrants—temporary (guest workers or students going to a foreign country) or permanent (refugees and immigrants)—is a sub-class of all invaders. They are the migrants of inferior social power—coming from their background society to a new one positions them on the bottom of the social power hierarchy within the recipient society.

It is important not to forget the other side of the same phenomenon—the migration of the powerful. They belong to the same general class of “invading Others”—but they are the powerful ones who gain political control (as conquistadors or occupiers) or take over economic power (multinational corporations). They arrive in a new society at the top of its power hierarchy. Their solid social power guarantees them the right to set up norms to which the conquered majority populace needs to assimilate. The particular colonial power that has conquered a foreign society demands from the latter assimilation to its newly brought in social norms and rituals. The politically powerful immigrant social system becomes “the society” that demands compliance. The invading conqueror takes over the social power and enforces the rules to which compliance is demanded—and assimilation is expected. The axiomatic basis of the assimilation idea is the social power of some (“We” or “I”—in the case of kings and dictators) that prescribes to others (“They”) the conduct of unquestioning obedience. It is the picture of acculturation theory in reverse—some conquerors of Europe in the form of an emperor may change the social norm system from above, demanding that the new system be accepted as enforced.

Yet even emperors fail. In the open systemic cases, the axiomatic base of assimilation is untenable. The history of human societies is characterized by constant movement. People are relocating from one community to another, and every person inevitably moves along from one age state to the next on one's personal life course. How would migrants to another society feel as they establish themselves in their new life contexts? What do the natives in these contexts feel as the “outsiders” come in to potentially become the dominant force among the “insiders”. Or—how would a person assimilate into the context of retirement after a lifetime of work? Do they merely accept the “desired rest” status—or strive further towards new objectives?

The social psychology of issues of migration has been dominated by the idea that migrants adjust to the conditions of the society into which they move, accept its hegemonic status, and assimilate into it. The *axiom of assimilation* has been the cornerstone of looking at the issues of migration. At the common sense level, this seemed to make sense. It is here where the new theory of proculturation is based on axiomatic change. The axiom of assimilation becomes replaced by the axiom of innovation. The change of focus from *acculturation* to *proculturation* is not merely a change of labels. Behind this is the transformation from a closed-ended to open-ended general perspective. What started from a narrow question in cross-cultural psychology—how do migrants adjust to the society into which they move?—becomes generalized into viewing the process of proculturation as a general feature of human development.

The current—second—book by Lado Gamsakhurdia constitutes a further advancement of the new theory of proculturation that was started in *Semiotic Construction of the Self in Multicultural Societies* (Gamsakhurdia, 2021; Valsiner, 2021). The focus of investigation changes with the new theory—no longer do we look at the adaptation of the incoming migrants to the society where they enter, but instead—the focus is on how the migration processes feed forward into the new society. Of course, that process at first is confronted by the demands for assimilation to the current society, but these demands necessarily fail. Behind the seeming processes of assimilation—as observed from the outsiders' point of view—are processes of development of new ways of being while preserving the core of the society of origin.

Why would efforts by hegemonic social powers to assimilate migrants necessarily fail? A consistently developmental perspective has a simple explanation—any development entails innovation beyond the previously established states of affairs. Like all post-biological systems, human beings are dependent upon exchanges with their environments to maintain themselves and develop further. In open systems, the innovation is beyond the previously existing forms. For example—the worldwide proliferation of new ethnic restaurants in major metropolitan areas is a simple case visible to everybody and taste-able in practice. If proculturation were *not* the case and the whole history of migration in the world were to occur by rules of assimilation by the in-migrants to the recipient hegemonic society, then all the culinary creativity of Indian, Thai, Vietnamese, Chinese, and other master cooks in New York would be dedicated to the cooking of American food. A hamburger cooked by a Thai cook would be a good example of assimilation, while opening a restaurant to serve Thai food would indicate development beyond the fast-food traditions of North America. Furthermore, the proliferation of ethnic restaurants often becomes loved by the descendants of the migrants on the *Mayflower* since 1620, and even by native people of that vast continent. The culinary culture of the hegemonic society is transformed thanks to immigrants. Psychological systems are living systems, the major characteristic of which is the relentless transformation of themselves into a new form.

As Gamsakhurdia elaborates in this book, the developmental look at dynamics of meetings of people from different societies restructure their selves as they move between societies. Surely the incoming persons—migrants—are put under social conformity pressures to adapt to the existing social order. Yet they are ready to resist and—more importantly—set up their own new self-systems that selectively combine features of their background society with those of their new societal expectations. Existing acculturation theories cannot explain this. This leads to the new proculturation theory, within which particular tactics of moving towards the futures are elaborated. The systemic approach in this book allows the readers to contemplate the world where they themselves are migrants.



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# Chapter 1

## Introduction: Towards a Developmental and Systemic Understanding of Intercultural Mental Dynamics



This book aims to take a step further towards constructing the developmental theoretical model of intercultural dynamics. We start our consideration by recognising that contemporary intercultural psychology faces the necessity to overcome methodological and conceptual reductionism of mainstream acculturation research tradition, which considers mental states and cultural elements as static ontological entities and is essentially non-developmental (Gamsakhurdia, 2018, 2019a). In our quest to reflect the developmental features, we get inspiration from classic and contemporary anthropological studies of the dynamics of cultural diffusion, which provide an interesting basis for understanding how people make sense of unfamiliar foreign data. However, Bartlettian and Moscovician views cover only certain parts/level of intercultural mental dynamics, and it is necessary to advance towards the more comprehensive reflection of the holistic and systemic organisation of the self and cultures interrelationship.

The systemic understanding (Drack et al., 2007; Von Bertalanffy, 1950, 1986) of intercultural dynamics requires consideration and definition of particular fundamental theoretical concepts/questions like “development”, “culture” and self’s relation to culture. The latter three terms are broadly used in psychology; however, their meaning remains ambiguous. Moreover, different scholarly traditions represent those concepts in a different way as their understanding is directly related to the character of the paradigmatic representation of the self and mental processes. Notably, the complete review of developmental approaches exceeds the scope of this book, so I will concentrate on the fundamental aspects of “development” mainly taking the perspective from cultural psychology (Rosa & Valsiner, 2018; Shweder, 1991) while referring to other approaches only as long as it will be needed for the proper illustration of the broader theoretical context of concept construction.

“Development” is among the most widespread psychological terms, and it is a standard to have a specific MSc or PhD program in human development in many western or eastern universities. Numerous handbooks on “human development” are concentrated on exploring the processes of growth and decay of particular physical

and cognitive abilities and social skills. However, as Valsiner (2005) neatly noted, the study of the *development* process is often replaced by the exploration of its *outcomes*. It is often forgotten that development is not a particular field of study but a fundamental feature of mental systems as each psychic process evolves through *irreversible development* (Valsiner, 2014). In a sense, whole psychology and all its subfields should be considered “developmental”.

“Development” is directly related to the time flow and is commonly defined as the process of change and growth (*DEVELOPMENT* meaning in the *Cambridge English Dictionary*, n.d.). Also, It is associated with progress in political and economic sciences (*Economic development* | *Britannica*, n.d.). However, psychologists are aware that certain developments may lead not only to positive changes but also to the mental regress or failures of various forms in particular circumstances (e.g. physical trauma or deprivation of a healthy social environment may lead to certain mental disorders). Besides, cultural development might imply failing or losing certain elements (rituals or certain craftsmanship might be lost). So, the main “essence” of development is not progress but “change” which might evolve towards any direction, and on certain occasions, its (positive or negative) value might be even ambiguous.

Therefore, I will take the following definition of the term as an orienteer: “Development entails some kind of change across time that may lead to qualitatively new organisational levels of the organism. Development is a life long process from conception to death—and as such constitutes a historical phenomenon” (Valsiner, 2005). Human development involves the process of biological, social, individual and sociocultural-contextual changes that are interrelated and meaningful for individuals’ and societies’ functioning.

## Considering Dynamics of Change

Changes throughout human development are imminent, continuous and irreversible as people get modified all the time all over their life course. Humans may change if they travel, experience novelties or even if they never leave their bedroom as developments at the physical, social and cultural level are inevitable and represent a fundamental feature of mental systems. Changes might be of various kinds and may concern parameters like age, weight, height, vision, identities, values, norms, goals, social statuses, social roles, the meaning of artefacts, et cetera. People are meaning-making creatures who inevitably and continuously make sense of those changes which happen all the time. As people grow, they get more experiences, and various changes unfolding in their lives play a more or less significant role depending on their meaning for selves. Therefore, it is essential to specifically consider the meaning of “change” and its role in understanding intercultural dynamics and consider ways for its further elaboration.

However, to begin with, we should highlight the significance of understanding the concept “adaptation” and its relation to “change” as the definition of the former

influences the latter's conceptualisation. Cambridge dictionary defines adaptation as "the process in which a living thing changes slightly over time to be able to continue to exist in a particular environment, or a change like this" (*ADAPTATION*|*meaning in the Cambridge English Dictionary*, n.d.). According to the latter definition, adaptation comes to be understood as a change made in response to the alteration happening in the environment in order to cope with the latter and sustain oneself. It is conceived as a defensive reaction against external changes and is mainly defined in a negativistic sense. So, adaptation is represented as "change" that unfolds in response to the "change" that theoretically creates an endless chain of modifications. However, coming from this classic perspective, adaptational change is not expected unless provoked externally and is not proactive.

Adaptational challenges could be of various kinds. I assume that in the case of humans, we need to highlight that people need to adapt not only to changes occurring in the external physical environment but also to internal physical modifications, like illness, ageing, feelings, et cetera. Besides, people need to adapt to the occasional changes in their social positioning in the frame of societal structure. In addition, people continuously adapt to changes in the surrounding social environments as other people and their lives also change continually, and we have no other choice but to adjust to them and even anticipate changes in "others". As a response to our change, others also adapt to us. Subsequently, we need to adapt to the others' responses to our adaptations, so people engage in the infinite sequence of interrelated transformations and changes.

However, people simultaneously adapt not only to factual and present realities but to imaginary mental constructions. All humans need to make sense of and adjust not only to what they are in the present day but also to what they are not, what/where they might have been in case of certain developments or in case of making different choices in the past, what they were but are not anymore, what they are becoming in near and long-term futures and, also, what they will never be (Gamsakhurdia, 2019b; Satō et al., 2016).

Besides, sometimes people move across diverse and different social and (sub) cultural contexts that posit immediate and drastic challenges for adaptation. For example, immigration results in changes of numerous kinds as a person undergoes various novel experiences, takes a totally new social status in the foreign societal structure and, on the other hand, loses his former standing in homeland society, getting a new social positioning (everywhere). An immigrant might occasionally think about what might have happened to him if she/he never immigrated or have had immigrated in some other place. Additionally, immigrants might consider the plurality of possible ways for further action and development, for example, the possibility of returning to the homeland or remaining in the current place or moving to another foreign country and so forth.

So, adaptation implies the process of making sense of and living with not only actual developments in the present time but to the numerous imaginary scenarios that might have happened is probable or hardly can ever happen. Changes might occur in various temporal and spatial dimensions of the socioculturally coordinated process of self-construction, and people continuously face the need to adapt to the

interrelated modifications inside and outside of their minds and bodies. The self is being constructed in multidimensional temporal and spatial imaginary mental “universe”.

### ***Considering Evolutionary Undercurrents of “Change” and “Adaptation”***

“Adaptation” is often understood in the framework of Darwinian evolutionary theory and his famous idea of “natural selection” (Darwin, 2004). According to the latter, only those species survive throughout the phylogenetic course that reveals adaptive features in existing environmental conditions. So, if conditions change in the environment, only those individuals/groups will survive with appropriate features or manage to construct them in time. Whereas those groups that do not have traits fitting the modified environments will be sooner or later get extinct. The Darwinian approach might be accurate to reflect evolutionary dynamics among animals, but it is not of humans as it does not take into consideration higher (semiotic) mental abilities and complex communicative practices that are available only for people.<sup>1</sup> The Darwinian model does not reflect much on the possibility of intrasocietal and intersocietal diffusion of innovative and adaptable ideas from one group/person to another that might also allow survival. Besides, the classic evolutionary approaches downplayed the significance of the ability of particular singular discoveries by individuals throughout their ontogenetic course of development. So, the model of “natural selection” might neatly reflect the logic of developments at the macro-sociological level; yet, global changes are built on the individual level of developments that require particular consideration.

Here we need to refer to the perspective of cultural psychology of semiotic dynamics, according to which it is an individual who acts on and creatively reacts in response to the environmental changes in each real-life situation (Valsiner, 2014), not the abstract notion of “species”, “culture” or “groups”. Microgenetic developments during ontogenesis are what create the basis for phylogenetic dynamics. In the case of humans, efficient results are achieved by those who ceaselessly attempt to find solutions beyond existing and positively conditioned schemes (Baldwin, 1892; Valsiner, 2000, 2017). Unlike any other animal, some people seek ways of progress and better solutions even when existing mental configurations work fine, allowing satisfaction of biological drives, and innovative activity is not required for survival. Such tireless strive for innovation, accomplishment and perfection even without immediate and explicit external reinforcement increases the chances of humanity to survive by means of changing inborn tendencies when needed; however, it might also lead to disastrous results, like contemporary climate crisis due to the excessive economic activities.

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<sup>1</sup>As far as we know for the moment.



Utmost importantly, a particular moment of discovery is always achieved in a specific moment by the individual; however, it is often based on social wisdom/basis (Valsiner & Van Der Veer, 2000). On the other hand, it gets spread among others, people and groups. Members of any society observe particular individuals' conduct in changing environmental context, and those who construct and follow options that occur to be more efficient will survive in the end. However, considering that people might sometimes behave irrationally, it is never guaranteed that people will always make rational and efficient choices. There are many historical examples of affectively charged self-harming behaviours that people conduct in the name of national identities, religious purposes, cults or love – for example, Jana Dark or “doomsday cult” of the 1970s in the USA.

Utmost importantly, people respond not only to changes that have already happened in the environment but also to anticipated transformations that have not happened yet. People are oriented on constructing reality and their environment instead of passively waiting for developments in their surroundings. Reality is built at the symbolic border of possible and impossible. “I” is constructed in relation to “other”, and the “other” is defined in relation to “me”. So, adaptations are not a discrete or temporary process but rather a continuous activity that is co-genetically (Herbst, 1976; Tateo, 2018) constructed.

The Darwinian framework is a classic example of reductionistic sociocentric theoretical diffusion of individuals into broader society, which has dominated social science for centuries. However, cultural psychology, which (re)appeared in the 1980s, tries to reactivate theoretical explorations on the individuals and culture's bilateral relations while the self is considered the subject of meaning-making dynamics (Rosa & Valsiner, 2018; Shweder, 1984, 1991). Thus, on the way to our attempt to contribute to the elaboration of developmental and (inter)cultural psychological models, firstly, we need to return to the roots of psychology to find original paths of its development (Valsiner, 2012). Besides, developmental psychology could benefit by taking inspiration from studies in embryology and biology, which have systemic character and allow the holistic representation of developmental processes (Drack et al., 2007; Von Bertalanffy, 1950).

### ***James Mark Baldwin's “Organic Selection” and Its Meaning for the Understanding Mental Dynamics***

James Mark Baldwin was among the most significant authors of American psychology in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He was among the most prominent psychologists of his time and played an essential role in the foundation of developmental psychology by being the predecessor of various ideas, which were subsequently developed in the form of particular concepts by Lev Vygotsky and Jean Piaget (Valsiner, 2012). For example, Piaget's terms cognitive assimilation and accommodation are inspired by Baldwinian theory. Unfortunately, his role was

forgotten until he was recently rediscovered in the 1980s by developmental science, and later it actively entered into the frame of cultural psychological developmental theory (Gamsakhurdia, 2021; Marsico & Calandrini, 2020; Valsiner, 2012, 2017).

Baldwin offered a theoretical approach called “organic selection” in the late nineteenth century that was oriented to reflect evolutionary innovations evolving at the intersection of individual and sociological levels of development. According to him, people are driven by the desire to achieve pleasure and avoid displeasure. Therefore, only those activities that bring joy and do not lead to pain are maintained. The latter idea was not very original as Eduard Thorndike and other scholars with Pavlovian behaviouristic orientation also shared it. However, Baldwin’s original contribution was that his model reflected the systemic and developmental nature of humans and social environments’ relation. Baldwin was among the pioneers who recognised the social basis of personality construction and in that sense preceded Vygotsky and Pier Janet, and, unlike Pavlov-inspired behaviourists who proposed mechanic model reckoning individual as a product who was unilaterally defined by social influence (reinforcement or conditioning), Baldwin thought that people could engage in bilateral interaction with their environments.

Co-genetic constructive development and interaction between individuals and the social environment are possible by two forms of learning from the environment that people are capable of from the very early period of toddlerhood. According to Baldwin’s theory of “organic selection”, children (and later adults too) observe other people’s actions and their efficiency, attempting to learn how to conduct their own actions through these observations. In those terms, Baldwin was the first to highlight the significance of learning through social observation, which Albert Bandura later famously (re)elaborated based on experimental data; however, Bandura’s social learning theory is much more reductionist, unlike “organic election”, as the latter distinguished two forms of social observation that he labels as “imitation” (Baldwin, 1892; Valsiner, 2000).

First, children sometimes almost entirely copy other people’s efficient behaviour that brings pleasure, and, in that case, behavioural patterns are transferred from generation to generation unalterably. Notably, if people only could completely unalterably imitate others’ behaviours, humanity would never have achieved significant progress. However, Baldwin also distinguished the second form of learning, which he defined as *persistent imitation* that implies *reconstructive* learning of observed human conduct. *Persistent imitation* means that children start from imitating others and afterwards continue to imitate themselves while repeating that behaviour over and over again in the search for the ideal form of performance of particular conduct. Through the search for perfect forms of imitating, new forms of understanding and acting are constructed and internalised. Persistent imitation involves subjective interpretation and processing of observed experiences.

Once newly created behaviours are reconstructively learned and internalised, people start to perform them and thus, externalise (Valsiner, 2014) back into the environment. Externalised performances subsequently get imitated by others unalterably, or reconstructively, and, therefore, novelty gets passed or further reconstructed continuously through sociocultural interaction. As a result, some patterns

of human conduct are preserved, whereas others are innovated in the course of the socioculturally coordinated ontogenetic level of development. When a child or adult passively or persistently imitates observed actions of others, it becomes visible to others. So, others observe when someone imitates them and also others. People also notice how others reflect and back-react when they imitate them. Furthermore, a person follows other people's imitative actions of his own actions and replicates (directly or reconstructively) them back, creating an unfinishable circle of imitations and reactions (Baldwin, 1892; Valsiner, 2017).

So, people are engaged in the continuous interaction with each other, providing and getting social suggestions passed further by others to others unalterably or reconstructively that conditions dynamic evolutionary stability of sociocultural systems. The subject is considered the basis of meaning-making and creative interpretations and the maintenance of cultural traits; however, societal suggestions inspire its agentivity. The never-ending circularity of two types of Baldwinian imitation of social suggestions and their subjective interpretations is the reason for simultaneously interindividual variety and similarity. The Baldwinian notion of "circularity of reactions" conceptually links individual and sociocultural levels of meaning-making to each other (Gamsakhurdia, 2020b; Valsiner, 2017).

Baldwinian ideas were further developed in the frame of Vygotsky's approach, who conceived individual creativity impossible without historically constructed ways of cultural scaffolding (Vygotsky, 1994). According to Vygotsky, a child initially has to establish social communication with other people before she/he manages to develop internal speech and thinking. He assumes that internal dialogue/thinking becomes possible only after objectifying oneself among other social objects. There should be "other" to be able to form "me". So, relationality is considered as the basis for the appearance of "I", and the self could be constructed only by mediating through culture. Furthermore, as soon as inner speech appears, the interaction process becomes bilateral and circular. So, individuals and broader society feed each other with old and new suggestions and co-construct one another, continuously and irreversibly changing one another (Valsiner, 2000).

Interestingly, according to Baldwin, people's pursuit for pleasure and avoidance of displeasure are not conceptualised as the process of enforcing particular behaviours through "trial and error", as children and adults actually never stop trying to search for ideal forms of specific conduct even when current forms of behaviour are efficient. People are proactive and strive for further advancement in perfection for again and again getting pleasure. Once a particular form of behaviour is mastered and habituated, its appeal gradually decreases, and people seek further elaboration of their conduct to freshen their sense of pleasure. This leads to the persistent strive for better and better forms of imitating others and their own activities, which leads to innovations. So, instead of "trial and error", people actually follow the "try, try and try even more" model of functioning.

Thus, according to the model of "organic selection", external conditioning might be a significant factor; however, it does not set a limit to the innovations in the (re) construction and stabilisation of various forms of behaviour, thinking, or feelings as people have potential and strive to go beyond already known/experienced

reinforcement. It makes the Baldwinian model of behaviour construction fundamentally developmental and different from other socioculturally sensitive models, which place excessive and even decisive importance on social influence. Baldwin's ideas are simple; however, they have fundamental significance for building a developmental theoretical model of mental functioning.

Notably, Baldwin's "organic selection" obviously requires further elaboration; however, even at its initial classic form, it provides the essential conceptual linking of phylogenetic and ontogenetic levels of development. For our purposes, I would emphasise that Baldwin's "organic selection" distinguishes the importance of social guidance of individuals; however, it does not reduce the latter to the former that makes evident that cultural and personal levels of functioning are interdependent and co-constructive. It allows conceptual escape from dominant bidimensional models of acculturation and also theories on cultural diffusion (they are discussed in Chaps. 4 and 5) which have one significant commonality – they both make an excessive accent on the sociological level of analysis. In contrast, individual processes and their relation to social and cultural dynamics are less attended. The Baldwinian model makes it evident that a developmental and a more systemic approach is needed to understand better how particular microgenetic processes unfold in the context of the broader sociocultural dynamics. So, despite being a 100 years old, Baldwin's framework aged well and is currently as contemporary as ever.

## **Considering Particular Fundamental Conceptual Features of "Development"**

### ***Future-Orientedness***

From the very moment of their conception, a person moves in the direction of the future as a "whole" involving lower cognitive functions, higher mental processes, affections, and physiological processes. However, the direction of various developmental processes might be different, involving progressive or regressive movements. It is widely recognised that basic lower cognitive functions (attention; memory; decision-making; etc.) and physical abilities (reaction speed, sight, etc.) are basically formed by the pubertal age and reach their prime somewhere at the age of 18–25 years when they start the unfortunate process of declining. However, higher mental functions (imagination meaning-making, identity construction, etc.) and sociocultural phenomena might go through the potentially endless course of semiotic recycling instead of declining. Some people achieve a higher level of wisdom through continuous contemplation and reflection on past experiences and possibilities in their senior age. The imaginative process of self-definition and social identification can potentially evolve further towards the future until physical death or significant failure of fundamental higher mental functions.

Human development is teleological and is always directed towards becoming something else than a person is at the moment. People construct goals, project them onto the future and follow them moment-to-moment basis throughout their lives. The development comes to be a process of constant movement away from the past and present towards not-yet-known and not-yet-performed realms in the context of numerous what-if situations and possibilities of development (Satō et al., 2016; Valsiner, 2014). Thinking, feeling and conduct in the present are dependent on expectations, anticipations and goals. However, directionality does not imply the straightforward conditioning of the present by the expectations or goals. Instead, the latter plays the role of a catalytic determining factor of meaning-making. The future always remains uncertain up to some level, and its essence becomes apparent only when it becomes present. The appeal and anticipation of the upcoming developments drive human conduct and meaning-making processes.

The “future” is structured in several temporal zones. Vygotsky famously distinguished the zone of proximal development (ZPD) to signify the level of progress that is not achieved yet; however, it is in the reach of grasp and can be anticipated by the individuals (Vygotsky, 1994). Moreover, ZPD can be completed in case of external help and suggestions and, therefore, reveals humans’ dependability on the social environment (Valsiner & Van Der Veer, 2014). Interestingly, Vygotsky’s approach not only concerned lower mental functions like mental reasoning and decision-making but was also reflecting higher mental processes as imagination and creativity that evolve through anticipation.

Recently were proposed additional temporal dimensions that signify projections beyond ZPD. For example, Spear Ellinwood (n.d.) illustrated the existence of the sequence of ZPDs that the person could anticipate. As a result, she distinguished the concept of the distal zone of development (ZDD) that is not in the immediate proximity development; however; it can be reached after developing through several ZPDs. Additionally, the conceptualisation of another temporal dimension signifying a distant future where long-term and global life goals are projected and might never be achieved was proposed. Objectives projected on the far end represent culturally coordinated orienteers that guide people in their lives and provide them with the reason and sense for living and the appeal of the future. Following Vygotskian tradition, Gamsakhurdia (2019, b, c; 2020b) named temporal space that is projected far in the distant future as the zone of distant development, and to avoid the confusion with Spear-Ellinwood’s concept, it could be denominated as ZDD2.<sup>2</sup> The meaningful difference between ZDD1 and ZDD2 is that the former is anticipated as the consecutive continuance of ZPDs and covers mainly lower mental functions (e.g. intellect or decision-making) and short-term practical goals. In contrast, the ZDD2 refers to the socioculturally constructed objectives or role models (e.g. the goal to become a legendary sportsman or hero) that are not perceived in the approximate

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<sup>2</sup>Similar idea is considered by Luca Tateo who elaborates on the concept of “semiotic horizon” from semiotic-philosophical perspective; however, as I aim to stay in the frame of Vygotskian terminology and achieve conceptual continuity with Spear-Ellinwood’s approach, I tend to use the concept of “zone of distant development”.

reach and are extremely hard or even impossible to achieve. Thus, there is a blurred and undefined time gap between ZDD1 and ZDD2.

Past experiences are obviously highly significant, and we by no means aim to downplay their role in the self-construction and human development. Personal experiences and historically constructed social representations play an essential role in building selfhood, social roles/positioning, guiding orienteers and dreams projected on the future. However, personal reconstructive perception adds specific flavour to cultural guidance. Therefore, past and future co-constructively participate in the construction of selfhood in the present time.

### ***Structural Dynamics of Causality and Hierarchical Organisation***

Valsiner (2005) distinguished nodal and field-like forms of descriptions of structure. Representation of agents and environment as different nodes with clear boundaries leads to their conceptual ontologisation. Nodal representation implies that different agents are engaged in a causal relationship where Factor *A* (single-handedly) causes the result *B*. Determiners can be internal or external. For example, personal traits or attitudes could be considered an internal factor, whereas cultural norms are external.

From a nodal perspective, cultural factors/elements could be represented as an independent variable that can unilaterally define individuals' or groups' actions. In these terms, a person who leaves their homeland and moves to a foreign environment should be expected to be entirely redefined in accordance with the local framework under the direct influence of a different independent variable. Redefinition might imply a change of identity, values, norms and other sorts of preferences. However, searching for the correlational relations between only particular factors without considering other relevant factors' significance and qualitative aspects of the environment or an individual might be misleading even from the nodal perspective.

On the other hand, a field-like description of the structure is represented as "The other—through fields that may be differentially structured and may entail directionality through the utilisation of vectors related with different parts of the field" (Valsiner, 2005). It implies that an agent (person) is part of the local/native society/culture and continuously defines oneself within its fuzzy boundaries. At the same time, the sociocultural system is present in and embodied through the self and, on the other hand, is part of the broader global meaning structure. If we consider selves as parts of the wider fields, it is impossible to consider cultural meaning systems as an independent variable as they do not exist or operate beyond humans' imagination. Instead, there should be a distinguished global field of meanings inside of which particular cultures and individuals are delineated by fuzzy and continuously changing symbolic borders. So, when a person moves abroad, she/he does not simply replace one independent variable with another but travel across the field

populated by different subfields that are simultaneously connected and divided by symbolic boundaries. Thus, field-like representation of selves and cultures excludes their essentialisation and highlights developmental continuity.

Taking field-like description as the basis, I consider different cultures as parts of the broader global system of semiotic fields whose boundaries are changeable through continuous semiotic negotiations. Each person is part of this global system and tentatively belongs to the particular subsystems. Moving from one subsystem (culture) to another leads to the reconfiguration of not only the former or the latter but the whole global system as well as an individual herself/himself. For example, when a person moves from Georgia to Spain, it causes changes in themselves, local community, people back in the homeland and the entire world through causing the semiotic and communicative “effect of the butterfly”.

Furthermore, particular phenomena hold more weight/power than others inside any culture. A particular element’s hierarchical place might change. Immigration or other forms of intercultural dynamics lead to the occurrence in an environment that might have different hierarchical order of norms, values or forms of thinking and feeling.

### ***Innovation and Irreversibility***

Developmental creatures are open systems at their core and function through interaction with their environments (Valsiner, 2000). The system’s openness implies indissoluble relationality and exposure to experiences that leave an irrevocable print on humans and societies. “One cannot enter in the same river twice” (Heraclitus & Haxton, 2003). As a result, people continuously get changed as they get new information, experiences and feedback from the external environment. Lived experiences become part of explicit or implicit memories, and their meaning/impact could not be erased or reversed as life goes on ahead unstopably. The irreversibility of human development highlights the importance of avoiding the ontologisation of mental phenomena along with the necessity of making the focus on the reflection of the process of “becoming” of mental phenomena instead of focusing on outcomes.

To explore intercultural dynamics, the idea of the irreversibility of human development has crucial theoretical implications. The main inference is recognising the impossibility of freeing oneself from native cultural knowledge and experiences obtained while living there or in any other place. When a person meets a new “culture”, she/he occurs in a position where his/her heritage culture continues to be represented in his self-structure as a voice and she/he simultaneously becomes exposed to the pressure of guidance from foreign cultural influence. So, an immigrant or even just a traveller when she/he occurs abroad or encounters foreign cultural elements in any other way gets involved in the triadic relational structure<sup>3</sup>,

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<sup>3</sup>In multicultural environments this structure might involve more dimensions.

which consists of the self, heritage cultural promoter signs/voices and foreign cultural promoter signs/voices. The latter two become represented in the self-structure and compete for domination.

Human development evolves through the emergence of novel forms of synthesis of elements transforming the existing configuration of personal and social systems into something new in light of new reconstructive ideas, significations and/or novel experiences. In some instances, transformation might be provoked by either rupturing stressful experiences/events or participating in illuminative novel practices that make existing cultural meaning systems non-sustainable. An example of the former could be the experience of immigration and life in a foreign environment. However, novel experiences are not necessary to be dramatic as sometimes meaningful minor experiences, or even the resignification routine practices may catalyse qualitative changes in persons' or groups' self-perception. For example, a person might have a highly appreciated and interesting job for years that may make him/her eventually bored of it, leading to the redefinition of oneself as a more adventurous person and provoking search for other ways of self-expression or vocation. Therefore, the psychologist's focus should be placed not so much on temporary outcomes but also on the mechanisms that lead to those outcomes. Any upshot is temporary as development is an open-ended and continuous process.

### *Considering “Differentiation”*

Differentiation is considered an indissoluble part of development (Werner & Garside, 1957). “Wherever development occurs, it proceeds from a state of relative globality and lack of differentiation to a state of increasing differentiation, articulation, and hierarchic integration” (Werner, 1957). However, as Valsiner indicates, the process of differentiation is coupled with the countermovement of dedifferentiation that further feeds in the field-like representation of mental systems that are constantly reconstructed and have blurry borders. Differentiation implies the further distinction of subparts in existent components of structures and could be considered the form of transformation.

While offering the concept of differentiation, Heinz Werner was concentrated on the process of perception and language; however, we need to consider the idea of differentiation and undifferentiation in terms of intercultural dynamics (see Chap. 5), where that term might be relevant. An immigrant occurs in a different field with different hierarchical values/norms and sociocultural identity structures. When a person moves abroad or occurs in a foreign cultural environment in any other way, she/he inevitably gets new knowledge and experiences. To say it simply, individuals' knowledge systems get enriched by adding new categories that might lead to different results depending on the nature of semiotic mediation.



## The Structure of the Book

*The second chapter* elaborates the cultural psychological theory of self-construction, which identifies subtleties of individuals and culture's interrelation. I consider the self as the subject of the intercultural dynamics; however, it operates only under the coordination of sociocultural context. The proper understanding of self-construction is crucial for adequately comprehending adaptive experiences in any environment, including immigration.

*The third chapter* offers the consideration of acculturation research tradition and is specifically concentrated on the critical analysis of bidimensional acculturation models. Theoretical and methodological issues related to the mainstream acculturation studies are identified, and ways for their solution are considered.

*The fourth chapter* takes the reader on the journey of exploring anthropological studies of intercultural dynamics. In particular, cultural evolutionism, diffusionism and social representation theory (SRT) are considered. The stronger and weaker points of each of these directions and prospects of their usage are discussed.

*The fifth chapter* considers the significance of elaborating the concept of proculturation, among other terms related to intercultural dynamics. Theoretical subtleties and implications of the introduction of the concept of "proculturation" are discussed in detail. Besides, particular adaptive semiotic tactics constructed during the mediation of phenomenological intercultural experiences and their meaning for self-construction and self-representation are considered. The revelation of the range of semiotic tactics opens doors for further exploration and the definition of comprehensive classification of various forms of semiotic mediation in future.

*The sixth chapter* provides final conclusions and highlights a systemic understanding of intercultural dynamics from the perspective of the proculturnative approach.

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## Chapter 2

# Considering the Systemic and Culturally Sensitive Model of the Self-Structure



The self and culture are omnipresent concepts in social sciences; however, there has never been complete agreement on their meaning and understanding among scholars of various theoretical orientations. There are available multiple conceptions of these terms, which accent on particular aspects of human functioning, while the self and culture are predominantly (at least implicitly) considered conceptually separated entities engaged in a causal relationship by traditional personality and cross-cultural psychologists (Gamsakhurdia, 2020c). Today, it still remains a challenge to elaborate a systemic model of the self, culture and their interrelationship. The primary purpose of this chapter is precisely to contribute in this direction. I will discuss the main views on the self and culture and elaborate on the systemic and developmental conception of humans' mental system's dynamic stability. The consideration of self's systemic relation to "culture" is essential for understanding individuals' development through intercultural dynamics.

The self is often understood synonymously to personality. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, it is defined as "the union of elements (such as body, emotions, thoughts, and sensations) that constitute the individuality and identity of a person" and "an individual's typical character or behaviour" (*Self* |definition of self by Merriam-Webster, n.d.), while Cambridge dictionary represents "self" as: "who a person is, including the qualities such as personality and ability that make one person different from another" (*SELF*|meaning in the Cambridge English Dictionary, n.d.). According to Encyclopaedia Britannica, "self" is explicitly equalised to identity/identification or "the 'I' as experienced by an individual" (*Self*|Britannica, n.d.). Through these slightly different but complementary definitions, we could identify a shared conception of self that is understood as something that indicates "who/what/how I am" or "who/what/how a person is" in its entirety, including traits, cognitive processes, emotions and behaviour and is stable through time and space. These definitions are widely perceived as self-evidently correct; however, they leave crucial questions without reflection. Utmost importantly, none of these definitions considers how the self's internal structure is organised and how

it is related to the external world. They neither assume the possibility of personal change representing the self as it is and will be and so represent non-developmental theoretical models. This chapter suggests going beyond the static representation of the self and considering some of those classic and recent approaches, which allow us to understand the dynamics of mental systems better.

The mainstream of scientific psychology follows Cartesian views according to which the self is understood as something detached from the material body and is equalised to the mind (soul) or the entirety of conscious and unconscious processes in psychology. The factor of “bodily processes” is mainly represented in the context of genetic conditioning of certain personal traits or abilities. According to Britannica, “In modern psychology, the notion of the self has replaced earlier conceptions of the soul” (*Self*|Britannica, n.d.). The “self” could be distinguished from “persona” as the former is defined as self’s perception of oneself (Baumeister, 1999), whereas the latter is understood as external people’s view of a person (The Self|Encyclopedia.com, 2022).

A significant part of contemporary personality psychology is self-centred, and there is a whole body of research on self-concepts that explore various forms of self-evaluation (Hammack, 2008; Owens, 2006). For example, according to George Kelly’s cognitivistic theory, the self-system consists of views and schemata about oneself. The latter view has roots in John Lock’s philosophy. Thus, mainstream psychologists believe the self remains to be understood as self-centred and conceptually separated from its own environment, material world and agency revealed through “typical behaviour” and “individuality”. The vivid illustration of the mainstream Cartesian views is the personality trait psychology (e.g. big-5 factor model), which seeks to identify individuals’ traits that are ascribed to people and are used to predict their thinking/feelings/behaviour (Deary, 2009; John & Srivastava, 1999) notwithstanding social, cultural and situational variability. So, personal traits are considered as independent variables that have decisive significance for human conduct.

Notably, the most crucial implicit assumption that we can detect through those definitions of the self that we mentioned so far is that a person is represented as a sum of particular characteristics/qualities that constitute its identity and define its behaviour in mainstream personality psychology. We can see that the shadow of the Democritian atomistic and reductionistic representation of a person underlies the whole history of the development of scientific psychology ever since Wundt’s experimental search of the minor units of the psyche. Even much more progressive Jamesian pluralistic self<sup>1</sup> as well as more recent cognitive scientist Marvin Minsky’s

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<sup>1</sup>Interestingly, William James’s split “self” into several components. James divided the self into I-subject, the reflective observer and the me-object observed by the former. He distinguished three sorts of “me” – biological (bodily and material substance), social (various social groups’ opinions on the “me”) and spiritual (moral and normative system of “me”). Interestingly, various forms of “social me-s” might be constructed depending on the situational and contextual variability. James thought that “I” was responsible for the continuity of the identity of the self (James, 1890). He actually briefly recognised the possibility of changes in the self; however, the question of dynamics

idea of the self as a “society of mind” that involves loosely related independent elements or, to say otherwise, “me-s” represents the person as something internally fragmented, leaving the relation between those fragments less elaborated.

Oddly enough, Cartesian mainstream scientific psychology, which involved “personality trait psychologies”, behaviourism and cognitive psychology (not to confuse with cognitive anthropology) did not pay much attention to the question of cultural influence and higher mental functions underlying self-construction. The behaviouristic direction was and still is interested in various direct or mediated schemes of external conditioning, whereas cognitive psychologists became excessively interested in information processing mechanisms and, as Costal indicated, basically maintained behaviouristic S-R model by replacing stimuli with “information” while “response” with “reply” (Costall, 2004). Cognitivist psychology lost its initial goal to study meaning-making processes and became overly invested in learning lower mental functions and their quantitative characteristics (Bruner, 1990).

Moreover, personality trait theories of various kinds have methodological issues as they are basically considering humans’ traits as something conceptually and phenomenologically independent (from each other), stable in space and time and autonomous of cross-situational and cross-cultural variability. The big-5 factor model, Aisenk’s model, MMPI or any other popular personal trait theory ignores the possibility of changes throughout the human life-course as if they were unaware of the existence of developmental or social psychologies. The latter stance was widely criticised as deductions based on quantitative surveys are not appropriately consolidated (Gamsakhurdia, 2020b; Shweder, 1979; Valsiner, 2017a). Besides, constructs created in English-speaking western countries are often extrapolated and used worldwide only after their simple validation (arranging back translation is usually reckoned sufficient procedure for making research instruments valid in non-western countries). Additionally, quantitative surveys have a problem generalising data from groups to individuals, and therefore, their practical significance is highly questionable (Fisher et al., 2018). As a result, so-called hard psychologists are often constructing “psychological fallacies” and scientific artefacts lacking culturally sensitive (ecological) validity (James, 1890; Valsiner, 2017a).

The significance of cultural factors for self-construction should seem obvious; however, in fact, that is not always clear for many significant/mainstream psychological schools of thought. At the dawn of psychological science, Wundt’s *Volkerpsychologie* particularly highlighted the importance of collective cultural processes for constructing higher mental processes (Kalmar, 1987); however, his ideas were shortly forgotten as scientific psychology became concentrated on lower mental functions (Gamsakhurdia, 2020d; Valsiner, 2012). Behaviourist and cognitivist psychologists<sup>2</sup> consider culture an automatically functioning system consisting of schemata or models conditioning particular responses/behaviour on particular

of a person remained not very well elaborated in his theory. Besides, “I-s” relation to those opinions which are external was left unattended.

<sup>2</sup>Not to confuse with cognitive anthropology.

stimuli/information. There is no place for intentionality (free will), meaning-making, mediation or imagination in the latter view. In the cognitivist and behaviouristic psychological world, people are represented as mechanical machines which function through simple unilateral causal determination and are driven either by external stimuli and enforcement or internal cognitive schemata (Gamsakhurdia, 2020b).

Interestingly, mainstream western psychologists (except psychoanalysts and Riversian and Bartletian Cambridge groups of psychologists) were predominantly ignoring developments in cultural anthropology, which explored indigenous models of self-construction worldwide. “Acultural atmosphere” in psychological science was interfered with by the appearance of cross-cultural psychology, which was constructed under the organisational umbrella of social psychology in the late 1960s. Cross-cultural psychology is characterised by fundamental similarity to classic cultural anthropological explorations as they both treat culture as an independent supra-individual variable (similar to Durkheim’s *sui generis*) that influences individuals’ thinking, feelings and behaviours. These disciplines are oriented on the identification of cultural styles or tendencies that direct humans’ mental activities. However, cross-cultural psychologists and classic cultural anthropologists have significant differences in their methodological approach as the former uses predominantly quantitative surveys, whereas the latter concentrates on ethnographic explorations.

Cross-cultural psychologists follow the Democritian stance and assume that cultures are characterised by various traits that constitute particular orientations (e.g. collectivism-individualism) that are considered as conceptually distinct variables/entities and represent independent orthogonal dimensions. Cultural orientations assumedly direct the conduct of members of the cultural group. Therefore, cross-cultural psychologists tend to conduct surveys to measure the level of spread of particular traits/tendencies in various societies and compare their scores, whereas cultural anthropologists consider culture a holistic symbolic system and search for its “thick description”.<sup>3</sup> Cultural anthropologists and cross-cultural psychologists pay less attention to individual variety and are predominantly oriented on studying supra-individual phenomena. Both of these directions (except particular directions like cognitive cultural model’s school and other psychoanthropological directions remaining at the sidelines of cultural anthropology) remain in the frame of Cartesian dualism, which distinguishes internal mental and external symbolic worlds from each other. Therefore, neither of these disciplines thoroughly answers a challenge to conceptualise how cultures and individuals relate with each other to allow the continuance of identities despite ever-continuing dynamic development.

<sup>3</sup>However, certain group of cultural anthropologists proposed to get rid of the term “culture” as they consider it instrument of oppression; however, that direction of thinking is not dominant and does not have much relevance for our discussion as we are interested in symbolic system’s role in self-construction despite its denomination, so I will restrain myself from its further discussion due to the lack of space of this book.

I assume that it is necessary to (re)build bridges between various human sciences to arrive at the systemic conceptualisation of the workings of mental systems. Scientific psychology could and need to be enriched by insights obtained in neighbouring disciplines of anthropology, history and biology to relate internal meaning-systems and external symbolic systems in a developmental and non-mechanistic way.

## **Towards Systemic Semiotic Model of the Self**

### *The Cultural Basis of Self*

Firstly, it is required to reconsider the understanding of “culture” to allow us to conceptualise its dynamic and bilateral relations with individuals and reflect its role in self-construction. It is easier to start dialectic consideration by indicating what culture is not: culture should not be considered as something essential that is given per se as it does not have a biological basis. The latter statement is not new and has been widely accepted sometime since the middle of the twentieth century across social sciences; however, despite widely regarding “cultures” as a social construction, it still often is represented as a stable and bounded phenomenon. So, despite denying its biological basis, many scholars still consider culture as an ontological entity, at least implicitly (Gamsakhurdia, 2020b). The probable reason for the latter is that the pseudo-essentialist understanding of culture is firmly engrained in the history of societal studies. We can find similar views in philosophy, sociology, cultural anthropology and psychology.

One of the founding fathers of sociology, Emile Durkheim, represented culture as sui generis with agency ability (Moscovici, 1998). The latter view also has roots in the medieval German philosopher Gottfried Herder’s idea of “people’s soul” that considers individuals and cultures as isomorphic entities (Lindholm, 2007). In nineteenth-century Germany and Switzerland, scholars of *Volkerpsychologie* (people’s psychology) also conceived culture as the result of collective activities without clear elaboration of individuals role in its functioning (Kalmar, 1987; Valsiner, 2012). The logical consequence of conceptual “essentialisation” and ontologisation of culture is that it is viewed as an entity that defines individuals’ thinking, feelings and behaviour unilaterally, or, to say it otherwise, a person comes to be an emanation of the broader entity.

Mainstream cultural anthropologists and cross-cultural psychologists hardly ever consider individuals’ role in the cultural dynamics and implicitly consider them as passive elements that are mixed into the broader social whole. The culmination of such a line of thinking is probably the famous and well-elaborated classic theory of Erving Goffman that assumes that people act according to assigned roles and related societal expectations (Gamsakhurdia, 2019b; Goffman, 1999). According to such an approach, it is a culture with the ability of agency, not an individual. People are considered marionettes directed by cultural orientations/



models/roles; however, the question is, if it really is so? If a person had not had the ability of subjective agency, then who created those meaningful artefacts that constitute culture? Who stands behind the meanings assigned to various symbols, or why and by whom are particular objects left out of the symbolic boundaries without signification if everything itself is signified without idiosyncratic forms of meaning-making? And, why are there so many different individual characters among any cultural group?

Interestingly, at the declarative level, the uniqueness of individuals is widely celebrated in social sciences. We can remember that most psychology handbooks indicate the uniqueness of each human being, after all. At the same time, cross-cultural scholars consider “culture” as something that can sweep out distinctive ways of self-construction. The latter view contradicts the pluralistic reality of social or individual mental dynamics, which is characterised by countless interpersonal and inter-contextual variability. So, it is sadly paradoxical that mainstream scientific psychologists tend to jump towards radically opposite views seeking simple answers to complicated questions, either neglecting cultural factors as statistical noise or defining them as the independent variable.

Interest in interindividual variability was back only after the appearance of the new wave of cultural psychologists and psychological anthropologists by the end of the twentieth century (Shweder, 1984, 1991). Valsiner (2014) indicates that belonging to a particular culture could not directly define the traits or characteristics of its bearers as “culture” is not an ontological entity and does not have agency ability. Besides, neither of the cultures is (internally) coherent nor homogeneous and can neither function wholly isolated from other cultures. Cultures involve different social representations and beliefs that compete for dominance (Farr, 1998). A similar limited variety of ideas concerning the significant fields of life is spread (e.g. higher value of family or on the opposite lower appreciation of family values are present in most societies) worldwide (Gamsakhurdia, 2020b); however, different communities grant different symbolic weight to particular positions at the expense of others, making people feel them differently.

The intercultural difference is always relative and is often felt/experienced exaggeratedly. A newborn child gets introduced to the plurality of ideas and gets acquainted with the meanings of certain objects throughout her enculturation. Any meaningful object is signified in relation to other objects which are signified differently. When a child receives information about her own name, then she/he understands that she/he is not someone else and other names are not hers. Each signification implies what something is or should be and what it is not and should not be. The plurality of representations is unavoidable as meaning-making dialectics inevitably result in the plurality of significations as X can exist only in relation to non-X. For example, suppose in a particular culture it is expected that a boy must wear trousers. In that case, those who do not wear trousers might not (not necessarily) be identified as boys and may be perceived as representatives of some other gender. While those who dress boys in dresses are regarded as deviations or outsiders. So, any person becomes acquainted with contradicting ideas that are defined in relation to each other. Any person is aware that there exist not only those interpretations and

significations that occur in their culture but also those which are different in relation to the former.

According to Vygotskian cultural-historical psychology, “culture” is defined as the wholeness of artefacts constructed through mediation (Cole, 1996; Vygotsky, 1994). Objects become parts of culture only if members of society signify it. Nonsignified elements do not belong to the symbolic system and could be considered part of nature. Cultural tools play a crucial role in transmitting the meanings of particular artefacts from generation to generation. A child gets acquainted with native culture through the usage and mediation of particular devices which are given to them by elders. According to Vygotsky, internal dialogue and meaning systems are formed only after establishing social interaction scaffolded by other people. Interaction with the environment is the predicate of the first-ever meaning-making act in any person’s life. Notably, the cultural-historical psychological stance on culture is similar to Geertzian’s understanding that culture is a symbolic system; however, it is much more nuanced in psychological mechanisms. Nevertheless, a better understanding of the mechanism that allows interindividual variety requires further elaboration of semiotic processes underlying sociocultural dynamics is needed.

Personal meaning could not be formed without relating to “others”, and their opinions, as well as “other”, could not be defined unless related to “I/me”. A child enculturates and develops higher-order thinking only when exposed to external scaffolding; however, at the same time, she/he always adds her own flavour to meaning-making. Jaan Valsiner (2017a, b) highlights that people never fully accept interpretations of events or experiences which are externally provided. Children or adults *always* idiosyncratically make sense of any element or process and reconstructively store or retrieve memories. Reconstructive internalisation of socially coordinated and imaginative externalisation of idiosyncratic interpretations is the basis of intra-cultural variety and social dynamics. Adults subsequently externalise and share their personal interpretations of cultural experiences with other members of society. So, at first glance, there comes to be formed two-meaning systems – individual/peculiar and common/shared, which were even labelled as subjective and objective cultures by Ernst Boesch (Josephs, 2002). However, in fact, those “two cultures” are parts of the same whole and operate simultaneously. Culture becomes continuously constructed and reconstructed through the totality of individual and socially coordinated interactive meaning-making processes and could be defined as the systemically organised unity of semiotic processes/elements.

### ***Semiotic Cultural Dynamics of Self-Construction***

Each cultural element represents a semiotic entity that is involved in a dynamic triadic structure that allows meaningful linking of historically constructed and socially shared symbolic systems to idiosyncratic subjective meaning structures (Gamsakhurdia, 2020b). Semiotic triad involves (1) an object that might be a material entity or a particular lived experience (processual experience), (2) historically

made and socially shared meanings assigned to that object/lived experience and (3) idiosyncratic “interpretant” of the object in Charles Peirce’s terms that implies a personal valuation of an element. Moreover, “interpretant” also includes the valuation of the socially assigned meaning to the perceived object/experience. Thus, “interpretant” represents individuals’ subjective position and personal signification of lived experiences and other artefacts. The triadic structure ensures the dynamic and dialectic relating of personal and societal meaning systems. So, culture could be understood as the processual system that involves individual units in its holistic structure; however, people maintain to be agentic subjects who drive the process. Or to say it otherwise, humans are part of the cultural system and are partly conditioned by numerous external factors; however, they are never fully absorbed or swept by supra-individual structures.

Externalisation inevitably follows internalisation and is an inherent part of semi-otic dynamics, and its existence is the necessary precondition that leads to the construction of sociocultural systems (Valsiner, 2007). If people did not tend to express their internal representations, fine art, science or any other artefact presented in the environment would not have existed. People share and exchange their knowledge, experience and internal representations representing subjectively interpreted versions of lived experiences or information/meanings that a person gets from “others”. Externalisation ensures the circulation and sharing of experiences between people.

Besides, as Gamsakhurdia (2019a) argued, the self intentionally strives for self-representation in the external environment by imaginatively constructing and inserting novel signs to leave their own trace in the environment. Seeking externalisation and self-presentation is another aspect of higher mental dynamics that makes individuals’ relation with culture bilateral and circular. The tendency for self-presentation is one of the main drivers of innovations.

### *Considering Dialogical Self-Structure*

It is a challenge to conceptualise the self-structure to make it possible to conceptually represent culture in the self and the self in the culture. The dialogical self theory, which was introduced in the 1990s, represents a significant step forward in this direction. Dutch psychologist Hubert Hermans proposed the idea of dialogical self, which has roots in Bakhtinian philological tradition and G. H. Mead’s symbolic interactionism. According to dialogical self theory (DST), the self is a polyphonic structure that includes various positions concerning the “I” that is denominated as “I-positions” (Hermans, 2001). Recently, Gamsakhurdia (2020a) highlighted that it is crucial to distinguish voices from positions as the former represents and vocalises real or imaginary agents in the self-structure, while positions are representations that are ascribed to and belong to those voices. Each voice might have a position or not concerning the “I” and all meaningful (material or immaterial) objects or experiences that she/he undergoes (Gamsakhurdia, 2020b). Some of those positions are

internal and represent persons' opinions about oneself, while some are external and vocalise positions of close others or broader society. Social and cultural voices are among those external elements which are an indissoluble part of the self. Therefore, these representations of external voices make the self pluralistic and heterogeneous.

However, Gamsakhurdia (2020b) indicated that not all voices have positions concerning everything. Some voices are relevant only concerning specific topics and are silent concerning others. For example, a university lecturer's voice could be active when reading certain materials and considering relevant subject-related topics; however, their voice might be silent when they gossiped with their friends about weekend party-related plans. So, voices are activated situationally, and some of them are occasionally silent.

Notably, not all interactions are dialogical (Gamsakhurdia, 2021; Valsiner, 2013). The power structure and political factors/conditions sometimes might make dialogue impossible. For example, even inside the family structure, parents might establish monological relations with their children as spouses with each other. Monological relations might also be set inside self-structure as certain positions might dominate over others and silence them. Politically powerful external voices and positions tend to take the dominant position and silence oppositional voices. Valsiner (2014) calls such societally backed voices promoters.

Notably, external positions are never "purely" external, resulting from the mixture of real experiences and subjective interpretations. A person hears authentic voices and accurate ("objective data") positions throughout lived experiences; however, she/he always perceives, stores and subjectively remembers them. So, external position is the emanation of the dynamic linkage between internal and external universes of meanings. On the other hand, internal (I)positions are also defined in relation to information that is got from the external environment from childhood. Thus, it comes that meanings of internal and external positions are indissolubly related and dependent on each other. Idiosyncratic interpretations are never entirely objective, but they are neither fully detached from reality nor actual data (if a person is healthy).

Interestingly, I-positioning processes may lead to the ambiguity that is not an alien experience for any person. Tensegrity might be formed by forming various tensional configurations of positions (Marsico & Tateo, 2017). Firstly, the (I)position itself might be unclear, vague and diffusive if it is constructed at the pleromatic level of mediation. Pleromatic levels of mediation are being formed when the semiosis becomes hyper-generalised and is imbued by strong feelings. Another form of pleromatisation happens when a person does not have enough sensational information and does not manage to schematise and categorise sensual data. In both cases of pleromatisation, the self experiences ambiguity and vague feelings, which might be related either to positive or negative emotions (Valsiner, 2014).

Furthermore, various voices and positions compete with each other and fight for dominance inside the self-structure. In some instances, the plurality of contradicting positions' clashes might lead to tensions, chaos, internal conflicts and anxiety and maybe even dissociate the self-structure unless people find ways to reconcile and organise competing semiotic blocks efficiently.

## *Hierarchy and Temporality*

The hierarchical organisation is the basis of self-structure stability and continuity that is prearranged by prioritising particular positions at the expense of others. Certain positions get a higher hierarchical position in each self-structure and define its identity and what is often called personal traits/features. For example, I-position “I as a Christian” might dominate over other positions among religious people and define their lifestyle and many decisions in everyday life (e.g. what to eat or to have or not have sexual intercourse during fasting periods). Or a position like “I-emotional” might lead to emotionally expressive behaviour. The competition between different positions never ends, and their dynamic configuration might get changed throughout irreversible human development.

Each new experience stimulates novel idiosyncratic interpretations of ongoing and past experiences that gradually changes the self-structure. Self-transformation is not always dramatic, obviously, as a healthy person requires continuous identity maintenance. Thus, developmental modifications are gradual and subtler unless a person is exposed to some rupturing and dramatic experience. Thus, the self lives in dynamic stability and is often likened to the river (Tateo & Marsico, 2013; Valsiner, 2014) that is always in motion; however, its bed maintains overall structure and identity.

Notably, the hierarchy of the self-structure is not rigidly fixed but intransitive (Valsiner, 2000). None of the positions holds an absolutely dominant position over the entire self-structure. Certain positions might be dominant over particular positions but be dominated by some other positions. Or certain positions might be prevalent in the specific context and might be silenced in different situations (Gamsakhurdia, 2020b). For example, when a husband plans a date with his wife, her voice may be very active throughout his internal dialogue and vocalise her positions and anticipations; however, that same voice might be silent when working on a task at work.

Furthermore, the self functions and evolves in relation to three temporal dimensions. The past undoubtedly is a crucial foundation strongly influencing how a person defines oneself in each particular moment of life. However, as it is widely known, past experiences are neither objectively stored nor unalterably retrieved from the memory as memories about the lived experiences are dynamically stored and reconstructively remembered when they are evoked. Moreover, the meaning of the past depends on the nature of its interpretation in the present. So, past experiences cannot unilaterally direct and define feelings or thoughts in the present time (Bartlett, 1932; Wagoner, 2013).

People’s phenomenological activities and experiences are always intentional and goal-oriented (Gallagher & Zahavi, 2012). Intentionality implies “aboutness”. Any conduct is about and directed about something. The present moment is transient, momentary and oriented towards the future. The anticipation of future developments moves and directs mental activities in the present and influences the interpretation of the memories (Gamsakhurdia, 2019a, 2020b). Intentions and goals are

constructed starting from early childhood throughout the whole life. Culturally promoted goals and dreams become critical drives for individuals' conduct after their internalisation. Humans mental activities are conditioned by long-term and short-term goals, which influence their priorities in the present. However, some goals are more central, while others are less important.

The interpretation of past experiences and the nature of remembering can be changed in light of new understandings/interpretations constructed in the present and modifying future-oriented priorities. Undoubtedly, (past) lived experiences and information stored in memory have crucial significance; however, not later than when higher mental functions and human intentionality are fully formed, the meaning of "past" can be changed as it becomes co-dependent future-oriented anticipations. So, dynamic memories and anticipations/intentions co-construct interpretations in each moment of the present time. Thus, memory defines and is defined by intentions simultaneously.

## Conclusions

Systemic organisation and structural dynamics of self-construction are considered in this chapter. However, firstly, atomistic, essentialised and static representations of the self by mainstream psychological schools of thought are critically considered. The self is represented as a dialogical and developmental phenomenon that consists of socioculturally coordinated positions and functions through dialectic relating to its environment. I-positions and self-structure, in general, are constructed through idiosyncratic interpretation of socioculturally constructed experiences and positions and are built at the crossroads of individual and social positioning. It is assumed that different positions and social representations compete with each other for dominance inside self-structures and broader society. Dynamic stability of the self-structure is ensured by the hierarchical organisation of I-positions and social representations. The self is considered as an intentional creature that is being continuously constructed through three temporal dimensions – past<>present<>future. Finally, the self is viewed as a dynamic phenomenon that is in a continuous process of becoming.

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## Chapter 3

# Critical Consideration of Theoretical Features of Major Bidimensional Models of Acculturation



Intercultural communication and interest in foreign cultures are as old as time as communication with foreigners is an indissoluble part of the history of all societies. The reasons leading to intercultural interactions could be variable, including trade interests, war campaigns, migration, marriages, et cetera. Some of the oldest descriptions and considerations of alien cultures belong to Herodotus, Plato, Homero works and are written in many people's mythologies. Ancient empires had elaborated different approaches to deal with foreigners inside or outside their borders. For example, the Persian Empire was the most tolerant of ancient powers that did not distinguish much between people with different religions and cultural traditions. Legendary Babylonian emperor Hammurabi tried to peacefully reconcile and assimilate people of different ethnicities who populated his vast empire. While Romans built their rule on the idea of citizenship, paying less attention to individuals' ethnic origin (however, non-Romans were deprived of many rights). However, not all ancient countries were so "liberal" as, for example, ancient Greeks called foreigners Barbarians and treated them as almost lower species. Ironically enough, despite thousands of years of development, contemporary intercultural psychology has not gone far from the ancient world as we still do not have conclusive conceptual models of the meaning of people's relationships with foreigners for their mental dynamics. This chapter will critically consider mainstream conceptual approaches to the effects of intercultural communication and indicate possible ways of their development.

Rates of intercultural dynamics have been increasingly rising since the big geographic discoveries which were made in the fifteenth century. Technological advancements and the appearance of more accessible ways for transportation and communication facilitated the intensification of social mobility and movement across countries and continents. Social mobility peaked in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, which brought the extreme intensification of globalisation and migration that led to the previously unseen rates of dynamics of cross-cultural communication all over the world. Such developments posit challenges for social

scientists to understand how social mobility influences humans' lives and what are its psychological consequences for groups and individuals.

The significant development that marks intercultural communication is the meeting with an alien element. The definition of the alienness of the object/subject requires particular consideration as it could be understood in various ways. By many, interaction with a foreign culture is deemed as communication with an unfamiliar element or, to say otherwise, as familiarisation of unfamiliar (Moscovici, 1988). However, I assume that the "cultural alienness" does not necessarily mean that the element is unknown or unfamiliar; on the opposite, a foreign element might be perceived as very familiar and well-known. The latter is especially true in the contemporary globalised world. A traveller might find that some elements in "other" cultures are similar to his native ones, whereas some other elements are different. Obviously, none of the existing communities is neither exact copy of each other nor completely different. Besides, any group's culture is internally heterogeneous. Thus, all groups are somehow similar and somehow different (culturally). For example, Georgian and Armenian cultures have more similarities than differences, including crucial values like familism and emphasise on social embeddedness; however, different ethnic identification makes their relationship intercultural full of neighbourly rivalry.

So, communication could be qualified as intercultural if a meeting<sup>1</sup> occurs with the familiar or unfamiliar cultural aspects belonging to the group with different ethnic and/or national identities. However, the fact of having distinctive social/collective identities is the conceptual requirement that makes different people's relations intercultural, not the differences in contents of their cultures. Therefore, the conceptualisation of the effects of intercultural communication ought to be indissolubly connected with the consideration of subtleties of collective identity construction and sociocultural boundaries.

## **Acculturation: Considering the Mainstream of Cross-Cultural Psychological Studies of Intercultural Dynamics<sup>2</sup>**

Several concepts and approaches to intercultural communication could be identified that were widely used by mainstream psychologists and anthropologists. The most widely used term among them is "acculturation" that requires particular consideration. It was coined and firstly mentioned in far 1881 by John Wesley in the report for the US Bureau of American ethnography (*Acculturation - New World Encyclopedia*, n.d.). "Acculturation" has been defined in various ways; however,

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<sup>1</sup> Under "meeting" I do not mean only physical encounter but the interaction of any sort, including those happening by means of various technological mediums.

<sup>2</sup> Comprehensive meta-analytical review of acculturation research is beyond of the goals of this chapter; however, we will selectively distinguish and consider dominant approaches in the acculturation studies and consider their axiomatic theoretical framing.

Redfield et al.'s definition (1936) remains among the most widely referred to and accepted in cultural anthropology and, even more so, in cross-cultural psychology.

Acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups (Redfield et al., 1936).

Redfield et al.'s definition set the tone for generations of acculturation researchers as it provides a neatly defined and simplistic framework for exploring intercultural relations. However, the convenience of simplicity outweighed the significant flaws of that approach. Gamsakhurdia (2018) criticised Redfield et al.'s definition and associated acculturation research mainstream for the following reasons:

1. Redfield et al. consider cultures as entities that have the ability of agency and can interact with each other as wholes. Such an approach is an example of creating psychological fallacy as the concept is mistakenly equalised to the phenomenon that it signifies. Redfield et al.'s definition has essentialistic connotations and represents culture as if it was subject and had its own mind, thoughts, feelings and the ability to act independently. However, in fact, culture is not an important thing but is the abstract concept, which is constructed to grasp the systemic processual phenomenon that includes a continuously constructed symbolic system of meanings and artefacts through which it is embodied. However, it does not have a mental or physical body of its own beyond humans' signification. The cultural system is people's creation and is built when they make sense of natural or man-made objects (artefacts) and reconstructively pass them from generation to generation.
2. Redfield et al.'s definition implicitly assumes the possibility of the isolated existence of bounded cultures. It is based on the assumptions that cultures function independently from each other and only interact on certain occasions for the time being. So, it comes that symbolic borders between different communities are implicitly conceptualised as an ontological phenomenon and as if they were actual walls. The latter implicit assumption further consolidates the theoretically essentialist representation of cultures.
3. According to Redfield et al.'s definition, cultures are considered totally alien to each other before their encounter – as if the information about others never spreads across cultures. Indeed, there might really occur cases when one society meets a totally unfamiliar community; however, such occurrence would be rather an exception than the rule. In many cases, intercultural communication at the sociological level continues through generations and centuries. And, once a relationship is established between various groups, it might be weakened (or strengthened), but it never entirely disappears (its historical trace at least) from collective memory/knowledge. So, historicity and the fact of cultural diffusion should be considered as an essential part of intercultural relations.

Furthermore, Redfield et al.'s definition does not explicitly distinguish and elaborate on the individual level of intercultural relations and does not clarify such terms as “change” and “adaptation”. Each of these terms requires particular consideration.

It took around 30 years (after Redfield et al.'s definition) for someone to notice the necessity of reflection on an individual level of analysis of acculturation. Theodore Graves (1967) introduced the concept of "psychological acculturation" to signify changes that occur in the individual psyche. "Psychological acculturation" is mentioned by many authors and is always given in articles along with general definitions of acculturation; however, it is rarely in the focus of acculturation researchers studied and remains mostly ignored. "Psychological acculturation" was basically lost in the more extensive body of sociological acculturation studies.

Besides, the logic of the composition of the concept "psychological acculturation" is telling itself as it uses the word "psychological" to denote individual-level processes, therefore, implying that "acculturation" (at the sociological level) is not psychological/mental as such that is puzzling to say the least. The depsychologisation of any level of intercultural dynamics is extremely reductionistic as it depreciates the role of the individual in the social dynamics. Therefore, it seems that it is necessary to reconsider the conceptualisation not only of the field of individuals' intercultural experiences but the entire understanding of intercultural mental dynamics. Therefore, I assume that introducing the specific term for the denomination of individual-level processes is important for the semiotic healing of "acculturation", which will signify solely sociological level processes, however, without the conceptual dementalisation of sociocultural dynamics. Therefore, we propose introducing the proacculturative approach that would highlight developments at the personal level of intercultural dynamics. It will be discussed in detail in the following chapters; however, we still need to continue considering other aspects of acculturation research in this chapter before making the next step.

### ***Considering "Acculturation's" Relation to "Adaptation"***

Berry (2005, 2010) distinguishes "acculturation" from "adaptation". He defines acculturation as the entirety of "reactive" patterns a person chooses while engaging with foreign culture. Adaptation then is represented as a result of the usage of a particular acculturative orientation. Adaptation is expected to be more or less efficient (positive) depending on immigrants' acculturation orientation efficiency. So, "acculturation orientation" is conceptualised as a variable that is expected to be related to the "adaptive outcome". One of the most common examples of adaptive parameters is acculturative stress and the perception of well-being. For over a hundred years, social and cross-cultural psychologists have been searching for the acculturation strategy that would lead to more efficient adaptive results.

However, I assume that decision to distinguish "adaptation" from "acculturation" is questionable, and it even contradicts Redfield et al.'s definition of acculturation that is broadly set as a golden standard. According to Redfield et al.'s definition, acculturation includes the effect ("changes") that happens after intercultural interaction. So, if acculturation is the effect of the process, then what is left for "adaptation" to signify? And, if acculturation signifies just "orientation" of choice and does

not include “effects” of intercultural experience, then how it is distinct from “attitudes”? On the other hand, if acculturation simply is an effect, then the process/experience of intercultural interaction itself remains non-signified. Seemingly, it would be wise to properly reconsider the relationship between those concepts to signify phenomenological experiences of intercultural dynamics and their effects systematically.

According to the Cambridge English language dictionary, adaptation is defined as follows: “the process in which a living thing changes slightly over time to be able to continue to exist in a particular environment...”. The latter definition indicates the process of change that occurs through the individual’s interaction with their environment. So, “adaptation” can be understood as the process of adjusting to the environment, whether native or foreign. Obviously, changes in the environment occurring during interaction with foreign cultural elements could also be classified as the process of adaptation to the latter. So, I propose to conceive acculturation as nothing else but a specific form or mode of intercultural adaptation which cannot be conceptually separated as an independent variable from its effects. It is a continuous process where particular effects are momentary snapshots of an irreversible life-course.

## **Considering Bidimensional Model of Acculturation Orientations**

The acculturation process could be classified into unidimensional or bidimensional frameworks. Unidimensional frame implies the existence of one and unified adaptation process consisting of various elements and factors. The latter means that acculturation towards foreign culture at the same time involves changes in the relationship with own culture; however, those processes are understood as one unidimensional developmental process that could not be distinguished from each other. However, the unidimensional model has hardly ever been used as bidimensional approaches dominated intercultural psychology in recent decades. Bidimensional approaches imply the existence of orthogonal dimensions which are not dependent on each other. The score on one dimension is calculated independently from another dimension. Each dimension has two poles on its continuum and, therefore, might allow the formation of four forms of acculturation. There were created numerous versions of bidimensional models signifying each of four dimensions differently.

One of the first attempts of bidimensional conceptualisation of immigrants’ experiences belongs to legendary social psychologists Thomas and Znaniecki (1918). They studied Polish immigrants living in Chicago, USA, and deduced that acculturation orientations depend on the presence of such personality features as fear and curiosity. Therefore, they assumed that people might be high or low in fear or interest, which would define their relation to a foreign culture. For example, he defined people with a low level of fear and high curiosity as “Bohemian

personalities” who would actively communicate with foreigners. On the other hand, people high in fear and low in curiosity are the “Philistine type” and would, on the opposite, tend to distance themselves from strangers and conservatively preserve their own cultural traditions. The third type distinguished by Thomas and Znaniecki represents personalities with balanced fear and curiosity who would not be afraid of changes but tend to control them (Thomas & Znaniecki, 1918).

There were many more attempts to build a bidimensional model of acculturation since Thomas and Znaniecki’s first deed, for example, Eisenstadt (1952), Herman (1961), Taft (1953), Richardson (1957), Aellen and Lambert (1969), Ichheiser (1949), Saruk and Gulutsan (1970) and Zak (1973). As Rudmin (2003) noted, different authors unfortunately ignored each others’ work and were reinventing bidimensional models again and again with insignificant differences. However, none of them could compare in prominence with John Berry’s fourfold model that first appeared in the early 1970s and gradually obtained dominance in acculturation research. You can hardly find any article on acculturation published in prominent traditional scientific journals like “journal for cross-cultural psychology” and “International Journal of Intercultural Relations” that would not be based on Berry’s model or at least in a constructive dialogue with it. As a result, at the present moment, we have an unfortunate picture where there are many dead and one dominant bidimensional acculturation theory that requires particular consideration.<sup>3</sup>

Berry clarifies that acculturation orientations include cognitive, affective and behavioural patterns, which are regarded as separate variables. So, starting from the very definition of acculturation content, the leader of mainstream acculturation research reveals reductionistic views on mental systems and proposes an atomistic representation of its structure and components. Furthermore, he assumes that it is possible to study one aspect of higher mental activities independently from another and implements his views in his research, making an excessive accent on identifying changes in attitudes about the behavioural patterns among immigrants.

As the main focus of acculturation research, Berry makes the question whether immigrants or ethnic minorities choose to maintain or abandon/reject the possibility of using native cultural and/or foreign cultural elements, like language, food, behavioural habits, rituals, et cetera. Based on the choice made concerning foreign and native cultures, one of four possible choices is expected to happen:

If the immigrants prefer to maintain native cultural elements and avoid using foreign cultural elements, then we are having the case of *separation*. The latter acculturation orientation assumedly leads to the isolation of immigrant groups from the cultural majority. An example of such development could be found in immigrants’ getos in various European countries (i.e. Malmo, Sweden or China towns in the USA).

The case when immigrants completely replace native cultural elements by using elements belonging to the foreign culture is labelled as *assimilation*. In Berry’s

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<sup>3</sup>For further more detailed critical consideration of acculturation research history, see Rudmin (2003, 2009).

terms, assimilation leads to the complete absorption of one culture by another. Notably, some scholars use “assimilation” and “acculturation” synonymously; however, I use these terms according to Berry’s definitions, which have been increasingly influential in intercultural psychology since the 1970s.

If immigrants abandon native cultural elements and at the same time reject foreign cultural elements, then we are having a case of *Marginalisation*. Marginals are seen to be distanced from any familiar and unfamiliar culture and tend to stop using elements belonging to them.

*Integrative* orientation implies the case when immigrants are positively oriented towards both native and foreign cultures. Berry assumes that those people, who choose to integrate, tend to maintain their native cultural elements and at the same time accept (altogether) foreign culture.

Berry’s theory has an interesting fate as it is either wholly accepted or harshly criticised. Those who take his approach are vigorously piling data to search for the most popular acculturation orientations among various groups. The latter group of researchers has not achieved significant theoretical advancement as they rarely offer theoretical elaboration of massive quantitative empirical data beyond the search for the most efficient acculturation orientations and their relation to mental health and well-being. However, there appeared several strands of important critique that questioned Berry’s model’s sustainability and adequacy.

### ***Berry’s Bidimensional Model’s Empirical Impossibility***

As Rudmin (2003) assumed, mainstream (bidimensional) cross-cultural psychological views on acculturation are seemingly influenced by a western liberal-democratic ideology that highlights people’s right to choose their destiny; however, abstract sociopolitical ideals do not comprehensively reflect subtleties of developmental dynamics of humans’ mental systems. Berry’s model was criticised due to improper calculations and invalid interpretation of data. Weinreich (1998) criticised it for its inefficiency in identifying differences between different groups/individuals. Montreuil and Bourhis (2001) studied attitudes of majority groups towards ethnic minorities and found out that the correlation between the desire to segregate and assimilate was 0.6 ( $n = 637$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ) that simply cannot be true if the fourfold model has been adequate. Such a high positive correlation between oppositional dimensions is conceptually impossible unless improperly defined and built on unreasonable theoretical assumptions. Van de Vijver et al. (1999) also indicated that the fourfold model measures processes evolving at the unidimensional model.

Rudmin continues this critical line stating that “integration” is on the one end of the continuum whereas assimilation, separation and marginalisation are on the other end of the unidimensional processual model: “Once respondents agree to the integration items—and respondents almost always agree to integration items even if they lack acculturative experience or knowledge of the two cultures in question—they should disagree with the other acculturation scales. This is why Berry et al.

(1977, pp. 132–133) could operationalise an integration measure using Likert items from other acculturation constructs as negatively keyed questions about integration”. Thus, it seems that the Bidimensional model does not have an empirical basis.

Zick et al. (2001) attempted to reconsider that formalist model reformulating bidimensional approach into the unidimensional model, defining one of its ends as multicultural integration and another as non-integration. However, as we will see through the following chapters, even the latter model is wrong as it is phenomenologically impossible to follow the path of non-integration.

Berry’s model implies the possibility of making a conscious choice in favour of or against native or foreign cultures at the individual and group levels that seem to contradict common sense as no person can reject the process of experiencing. He implies that it is possible to reject or accept culture as a whole and measures people’s conduct by studying their attitudes about the desire to use or not particular cultural elements, like language and food. Cultural experience is not a dish that a person can reject to make sense of (Gamsakhurdia, 2018).

Moreover, a statistical review of acculturation data results shows that data obtained on assimilation and separation scales does not reveal a negative correlation and fails to show divergent validity (Rudmin, 2006). Marginalisation and distancing from the host and native cultures are even more impossible due to the same reasons mentioned concerning separation and assimilation. Integration orientation is the last of four and most fantastic. Berry assumes that it is possible to preserve native culture and at the same time accept new one without their hybridisation. If the latter assumption was valid, then a person must have had isolated space in their mind for each of those cultures that do not seem realistic.

Furthermore, the conception of acculturation orientations is derived from the highly atomistic representation of “culture” on the one hand and its objectified essentialisation on another. However, the Cultural system is more than just a sum of independent ontological entities and should be considered a holistic system that changes as a whole if one of its elements gets modified. Cognitive, affective and behavioural components of mental systems should be regarded as the components of the whole (Gestalt) system, not separate entities.

Additionally, there are several other issues related to Berry’s approach: (1) failing to maintain particular behaviours does not mean that the native culture could disappear from its bearer’s mind without a trace. Each experience plays a role in human development, and its meaning can be reconsidered; however, its influence could not be erased entirely as past experiences continue to serve as reference points for meaning-making in the present. (2) Even if a person abandons particular behavioural patterns, it does not necessarily mean that she/he abandoned values and norms altogether that were associated with that particular form of conduct. Change in the external behaviour does not necessarily mean equal change in the internal meaning system. People might behave differently under the external influence or various other reasons. (3) Even if a person abandons a particular or even several behavioural elements, that by no means imply that she/he can entirely free himself from the entire cultural system. For example, if an immigrant decides not to use the native language anymore and even if she/he forgets how to speak on it, it would not



mean that she/he completely rejects his own culture as long as she/he maintains allegiance at the level of ethnocultural identification.

Gamsakhurdia (2018, 2020a, b) claims that none of the acculturation orientations that Berry defines is viable. Even if immigrants desire to assimilate to foreign culture, leaving previous experiences behind and being reborn as a new person will never be possible. Instead, he will arrive at a particular form of a syncretic mixture of different cultures. The goal to be separated from a host or majority culture is also non-realistic as immigrants live in a foreign space and cannot avoid experiencing and relating to it unless they lock themselves in their homes and switch any communication mediums. Each immigrant interacts and gets influenced by host culture despite his own attitude towards it.

Furthermore, Berry recognises that attitudes should be distinguished from actual behaviour; however, strangely, he states that attitudes are positively correlated with behaviour and so implicitly deems it logical to equalise those two terms in meaning. The latter implies that if one measures attitudes, then she/he can make judgments/deductions concerning behaviour that seems to be an extremely bold statement. Unfortunately, though, Berry did not provide data to consolidate his claim and got criticised for that. Probably, no anthropologist would accept Berry's abstract scales without properly assessing people's authentic behavioural performances (Rudmin, 2009; Waldram, 2009). Boski (2008) also indicated that Berry's studies could not provide insights on real acculturative experiences as they only measure people's (tentative) desires without exploring their experiences.

Besides, human conduct strongly depends on the political context, power structure in the majority society and counterpart groups' attitudes concerning acculturation to foreign and immigrant groups. To mention some factors/possibilities of development, if the powerful political elite desires to forcefully assimilate or segregate immigrant or minority groups, then the attitudes of those groups would have less impact on their behaviour. On the other hand, if the majority cultural group is prevailed by nationalistic sentiment and segregational attitudes, then minorities will have fewer stimuli and opportunities to assimilate even if they wanted to. In comparison, a country like Canada that officially has a multicultural policy provides residents with more free choice, as all groups are allowed to maintain their own traditions peacefully or interact with each other by their choice.

Geographical factors also influence actual behaviour, as if a specific minority group is physically distanced from the majority, then they will have difficulties even if they strive for integration/assimilation to the majority society, for example, an isolated Armenian ethnocultural minority/community living in the high mountains of the Samtskhe-Javakheti region that is not very well connected with other parts of Georgia, who simply do not have practical means for learning the Georgian language (the language of the majority) despite what is their desire. So, the measurement of attitudes cannot provide a comprehensive picture of intercultural dynamics. Berry's model's flaws are direct implications of the reductionistic and antiholistic theoretical underpinnings on which it is based. Therefore, Berry's acculturation orientation should either be redefined as attitude studies or enriched by comprehensive ethnographic data.

To make a step towards a more holistic understanding of acculturation, we need to restart considering the nature of persons' relations with cultures in general and foreign cultures in particular. Intergroup communication should be regarded as intercultural only in case if people are meeting cultural elements belonging and representing foreign ethnocultural groupness. Otherwise, it would become possible to define any meeting with any unfamiliar element as acculturation, leading to the unbearable abstractness and hyper-generalisation of the concept. So, ethnic identity negotiation is crucial for understanding and defining intercultural interactions and should be placed at the centre of acculturative and proculturative explorations. Ethnocultural identities and those cultural elements that signify it form a normative framework that coordinates humans' higher mental dynamics. The nature of native ethnocultural identity structure and its relation to the foreign communities influences how the process of adaptation in immigration evolves.

Notably, change in particular behaviour patterns does not tell us much about self-transformation unless we find out the meaning of those changes for self-perception and ethnocultural identification. A person might change various values, and behavioural styles, however, remain affectively attached and loyal to native identity. On the other hand, a person might lose loyalty towards native culture and community but maintain its traditions. Changes in particular cultural practices do not directly define a change in identity. For example, consider the case of a female immigrant from Georgia living in Germany who got local citizenship after years of living there and reidentified herself as German. Despite becoming German, she regularly cooks/eats traditional Georgian dishes; however, as long as not all required ingredients are available in local markets, she has no other choice but to use available products and create a "Germanised" version of Georgian food. For example, she uses cheese Gouda instead of Sulguni to prepare the traditional Georgian dish Khachapuri. Besides, she somehow but not completely follows traditional conservative norms (e.g. higher appreciation of social embeddedness) internalised while living in Georgia. Native cultural practices are transformed under the influence of the local German context, where her personal freedom of choice is much more appreciated than it would have happened in her homeland. We can see that she creates novel cultural forms which are neither wholly native nor completely German. So, even though she/he got citizenship in Germany and redefined herself as German, she still carries with her particular native cultural elements, in a new idiosyncratically reconstructed form, though.

I assume that according to Berry's fourfold framework, the latter example would be defined as the case of integration as a person maintains the native culture and also accepts some local/host elements; however, that would not be correct theoretical framing as a person is not actually able to maintain two cultures in mind in parallel unalterably accepting them but rather makes choices concerning particular elements and practices, resignifies and/or blends them and creates a new unique cultural form, simultaneously transforming ethnic belonging and own "self" that becomes neither integrated nor assimilated nor marginalised/separated in Berry's sense. She neither accepts full Germanness, neither maintains full Georgianness, nor rejects any of them but rather navigates among available practices and semiotic resources

and develops a new form of selfhood and conduct beyond all previously existing understandings and (cultural) practices. The possible variety of forms of individual developments is vast, and Berry's fourfold model cannot reflect them, making the need for more developmental theoretical modelling of intercultural relating obvious (See Chap. 6 for the consideration of the alternative proacculturative approach).

Furthermore, different cultural groupness has different hierarchical structure of preferences, values and norms. So, not all cultural elements have equal "semiotic weight" for defining acculturation orientation and ethnocultural identification. A certain cultural element might be crucial for one group but meaningless for others. For example, native language mastery plays a pivotal role in determining Basqueness as the country is literally named as "people who speak Basque" (Euskal Herria) or, to say otherwise, the region of the Basque language. So, speaking their language is crucial for the definition of a particular person's Basqueness. However, the picture is different for Swiss who have several official languages, and the most authentic local language, Romansh, is almost "dead". Therefore, if we would like to identify the acculturation orientation of immigrant Basque people, we would have to specifically be interested in whether they maintain their heritage language or not as it will be a decisive element for understanding their adaptive strategy; however, in the case of Swiss immigrants, scholars should check the dynamics related to some other values than (native) language. Rudmin (2009) also indicates that certain cultures might have very specific preferences which distinguish them from other immigrant groups. For example, Iranians living in Norway treat it very important to celebrate the spring equinox. So, to investigate immigrants' acculturative orientations properly, it is necessary to take an emic methodological stance and elaborate indigenous methodological approaches taking into consideration specific features of particular groups' ethnocultural identificational structure.

### ***Considering Scientific Stereotypes Related to Immigrant's Status***

The acculturation research arena is flooded by searches for the effects of various acculturation orientations to find the best one among them. It is widely believed that immigrants are a problematic group characterised by issues in mental health, whereas acculturation orientation is considered as a way to fight their problems related to immigration. Unfortunately, for the moment, the classic approach is to identify the level of stress (and related parameters like "well-being") of immigrants by administering formal self-report questionnaires when they are already living in a foreign country without the possibility of exploring their background in the home country. Besides, stress's correlation levels to particular acculturation orientations are also measured to identify the "best one". However, as long as these data are taken out of historical context, they do not have much value and, unfortunately, are used for invalid deductions. People might have different paths and reasons for immigration. Some move because they seek better working conditions, some flee from war, some are political refugees, some seek better education and others might

follow their dreams of various kinds. Certain immigrants never travelled before, while some might have travelled a lot and are much more aware of possible developments. Immigration for some people might be a great relief, while it might be a genuinely stressful experience for some. Even if an immigrant is under stress, it does not necessarily mean that she/he is in that condition because of moving abroad or because of the nature of her intercultural relations.

I assume that the representation of immigrants as a priori problematic people in comparison to the cultural majority has an ethnocentric flavour and reminds the time when western empires tried to “civilise” “primitive tribes” in the “third world”. However, some immigrants actually could potentially contribute to the dynamic development of host societies by bringing with them specific knowledge, experiences and working power. For example, one of the most famous immigrants was Albert Einstein in his late adulthood, who fled from Hitler’s Germany to the USA, and I do not think that regarding him as deficient would have been adequate. Therefore, it is necessary to have a more person-centred approach and avoid homogenised representation of immigrant groups.

So, to explore the level of the stressfulness of immigration experiences, it is necessary to elaborate on a comprehensive methodological approach to identify developmental dynamics in the historical context. Data obtained concerning the stress levels in the immigrant group should be compared with the stress level data that they had while they were in their homeland or at least with the level of stress of those groups which still live in their homeland. Moreover, immigrants’ stress levels should also be compared to those in host societies or cultural majorities. If there is no significant divergence between immigrant groups and host/majority societies stress levels, then immigration should not be considered as a factor leading to higher stress levels. And, if immigrants and their fellows who live in their homeland do not have divergent stress levels of stress, then immigration could not be considered a factor related to stress levels either. Thus, methodological design oriented on sociological measurement of intercultural dynamics should necessarily involve comparative-developmental and historical dimensions.

Interestingly, our theoretical critics are consolidated by Rudmin’s (2001, 2003, 2009) reviews of a massive body of acculturation data that shows that none of the acculturation orientations is firmly related to stress. According to Rudmin (2001), Berry and his associates claim that integration is the most efficient orientation and related to less stress is not grounded in proper statistical data.

Interestingly, the stress in immigration could be driven by feelings unrelated to intercultural relations, and not all feelings result from the cultural learning process. Sometimes, the lack of what is already learnt and well-known could be the reason for grief. For example, the feeling of *nostalgia* and missing native places, people and (inability to replicate and repeat) experiences in the homeland might cause sadness in many people. Sometimes, even complete assimilation in the host/majority culture might not erase those purely subjective nostalgic feelings as humans are not computers that are able to delete some files and continue functioning as if they had never existed.

Overall, the conceptual separation of stress and acculturation orientations as variables is another sign of reductionism and atomistic fragmentation of the psyche.

Even if we imagine that they are adequately operationalised, two separate variables should not be considered operational independently of holistic person, their background, experiential context and surrounding sociocultural ambience.

### ***Domain Specificity***

Arends-Toth and Van de Vijver (2008) showed that immigrants tend to make different choices concerning using various cultural elements in multiple situations or domains of life. For example, immigrants might prefer to speak in the host society's official language while being in public spaces or at work; however, they tend to speak in their heritage language while at home with family. In addition, various social or political factors might influence choice in favour or against particular cultural elements in various situations.

The importance of domain specificity seems apparent; however, it leads to atomisation and ontologisation of particular elements and considers them detached from the systemic process of self-construction and ethnic identification. Even if people "maintain" a particular heritage cultural element in a particular situation, it does not tell us that its meaning and content are utterly unaltered from what it was while immigrants lived in their homeland. For example, suppose an immigrant prefers to speak in a native language at home (not in public spaces). In that case, it does not mean that even the language knowledge or the character of practice of its usage is maintained without modification or its meaning for speakers remains unchanged. The usage of native language mostly is part of the routine for people living in the homeland; however, in immigration, especially if it is used only on a special occasion(s) at home, it might become a part of almost sacred ritual and obtain additional emotional value.

So, domain specificity is an essential factor to consider while exploring the effects of intercultural dynamics; however, it should be considered as an additional field where meaning-making dynamics are revealed.

### ***Considering the Plurality of Multicultural Communicational Context***

In the conceptual world of mainstream acculturation research dominated by Berry's model, clear and firm borders were implied between homogenous and unified cultures. According to Berry's fourfold theory, different groups mechanically reject or borrow cultural elements from each other without their reconsideration or resignification. Thus, cultural elements are perceived as ontological entities.

Besides, acculturation is perceived as a process between two isolated social agents as if there was no one else around involved in the process in any form. However, the real-world picture is much more complicated. Mainstream

acculturation research is based on the nation state idea coming from the French revolution that initiated the assimilation of groups living in France. “Nation state” homogenises all people under the legal umbrella of common citizenship. It led to the forceful assimilation of many cultural minorities and languages into the great French nation. For example, Breton and Basque languages are almost extinct in France for now. Nation state celebrates uniformity under one flag and represents the nation as a personal actor in relation to other sociopolitical agents. However, nation-building attempts were primarily present only in western states, and even there were not always successful; consequently, the multicultural reality is the norm today.

So, it is necessary to distinguish national and ethnic identities from each other as the former refers to allegiance to formal citizenship, whereas the latter signifies ethnocultural belonging. Mainstream acculturation research never clearly made the distinction between these two that makes their claims methodologically unsolid. For example, it would be totally misleading to study immigrants from Ukraine in the USA without enquiring about their regional, ethnic, religious, language and overall cultural background. Some might represent Armenian, Georgian, Jewish, Russian Azeri Polish or some other Ethno group. The ethnocultural identity of any individual and group should be necessarily considered as an important factor in any research on intercultural interaction and national identity.

Furthermore, for intercultural communication to occur, it is not always necessary for a person to immigrate. Most societies are multi-ethnic and multicultural, so many people inevitably engage in intercultural relations with representatives of various cultural groups. For citizens of huge multicultural megapolises like Toronto, Canada and New York, USA, intercultural interaction might be a part of their everyday lives. In addition, many people with mixed ethnocultural ancestry interact with representatives of a variety of other groups inside their families. I assume that in multicultural contexts, the consideration of subtleties of ethnocultural identification is crucial for better understanding the nature of intercultural dynamics.

A multicultural environment where people face many cultures that are in occasional contact with each other cannot operate in a bidimensional framework as choosing in favour of assimilation, separation, marginalisation and integration does not seem theoretically or empirically possible. For example, people cannot assimilate into the majority/host culture without totally ignoring the impact of interaction with other minorities. Thus, multicultural environments instead form multidimensional and multilayered processes of creating a semiotic melting pot full of multicultural ingredients.

## Conclusions

Major acculturation research approaches are critically considered in this chapter. In particular, John Berry’s acculturation orientation theory and Arendt-Toth’s Van de Vijver’s domain-sensitive model are discussed as they represent the most popular

and dominating approaches in acculturation research. Methodological and empirical inconsistencies while making deductions during studies based on the bidimensional acculturational model are identified, and particular ways for their correction are indicated. Bidimensional modelling of immigrant's adaptive experiences leads to the non-developmental, essentialised, atomistic and fragmented conceptual representation of intercultural mental dynamics. It is argued that as long as historicity (historical particularism) and sensitivity to indigenous local cultural contexts represent the fundamental feature of intercultural developmental dynamics, direct cross-cultural comparison becomes conceptually problematic.

Besides, Berry's approach is criticised for making excessive accents on social attitudes at the expense of ignoring the sense-making of phenomenological experiences. Furthermore, this chapter highlights that in multicultural societies, people engage simultaneously with many (more than two) cultures that make adaptive processes multidimensional that could not be reflected in bidimensional models. Finally, it is argued that bidimensional acculturative models do not reflect the idiosyncratic ontogenetic level of development. The latter is irreversible and so unidimensional. Moreover, Berry's fourfold model is statistically not grounded as qualitatively opposite acculturative orientations are not negatively correlated (Rudmin, 2009).

The significance of domain-specificity for intercultural research is recognised in this chapter; however, it is emphasised that it is crucial to identify the meaning of particular conduct that is maintained, transformed or abandoned in a specific context. There is no sense in domain-specific knowledge about immigrant behaviour unless we understand their meaning as a particular form of conduct might be maintained; however, it may get a different meaning. The meaning of particular action reveals if its native cultural signification is maintained or further transformed. I assume that immigrant experiences inevitably change the original meaning and emotional values of particular native cultural practices, whether people maintain them or abandon them.

This chapter highlights that culture is an abstract concept that should not be confusingly regarded as a phenomenon with the ability of agency. Interconnectedness and heterogeneity of cultural fields are particularly emphasised. I argue that cultures should be conceptualised not as bounded, homogeneous and essentialised entities but rather as systematically organised heterogeneous entirety of meaning-making processes and man-made artefacts, the symbolic borders of which are blurred and overlap. It is the self who acts, constructs and drives mental dynamics that happen in relation to the cultural context but is not wholly defined by it. Therefore, an individual immigrant semiotically navigates between home and host (or more) symbolic systems, not abstract "cultures".

Finally, the elaboration of unidimensional, relational/cultural and conceptually developmental modelling of ontogenetic intercultural adaptive experiences is suggested.

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## Chapter 4

# Considering Anthropsychological Models of Intercultural Dynamics and Cultural Evolution



The question of the origin of cultural differences has remained crucial in social sciences since the later nineteenth century. The roots of the first cross-cultural ethnography could be traced to the Torres strait expeditions famously held by a legendary group of scholars from Cambridge University led by Haddon at the crossroads of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Haddon's group involved such significant figures as Rivers, Myers and McDougal (Wagoner, 2017). First explorers were primarily driven by the wild stereotypical hypothesis of their time and aimed to check if non-western indigenous communities' cognitive and physical abilities were meaningfully different from western Europeans. For example, Rivers famously identified that certain non-westerners had different optic illusions comparably to westerners; besides, Rivers and his contemporaries were also interested in explaining cultural differences' origin (Bock, 1999; Lindholm, 2007). Interestingly, studies on cultural origin/evolution of intergroup differences were simultaneously one of the first attempts to conceptualise intercultural dynamics.

Early cultural evolutionists followed the idea of developmental hierarchy and uniformity of the stages of evolution worldwide. Cultural evolutionism assumes the existence of various phases of cultural progression and upward development mobility. Lewis Morgan, James Frazer and Eduard Taylor claimed that various communities are at a different level of development; however, they will inevitably go through the same path of evolution; just some do it earlier whereas others later (Lindholm, 2007; Wagoner, 2017). For example, Haddon (1895) provided a particular teleological view on the cultural evolution of art by assuming that communities gradually move from figurative representation of natural objects towards abstract geometrical forms/patterns. So, symbolic representation was considered a higher level of thinking than figurative representation.

Furthermore, cultural evolutionists thought that cultural evolution is driven by the accumulation of minor inventions made by individuals; however, they did not elaborate on a particular interplay mechanism between individual and collective levels of functioning. Interestingly, most cultural evolutionists were called armchair

anthropologists as they never conducted on-site research on their own and mainly used second-hand data obtained by others (religious missionaries, administrative reports, et cetera). The lack of emic perspective probably was one of the reasons for armchair anthropologists' narrow ethnocentrism. Besides, cultural evolutionism completely ignored the role of intercultural communication for cultural development.

Ethnocentric cultural evolutionism was contested by diffusionism, which was initially formed by German authors like B. F. Graebner, C. F. W. Schmidt and Friedrich Ratzel. It was also prevalent among Cambridge psychologists like W. H. R. Rivers and Fredrik Bartlet. According to the diffusionist view, communities do not evolve independently but rather through the diffusion of ideas across groups. Changes occurring in cultures are considered as a result of the sharing of cultural elements through groups. The diffusion of ideas might occur due to various reasons like wars/occupation, trade, travel, migration, et cetera. Rivers' diffusionism was developed after conducting several fieldworks in various sites like Melanesia, Australia and India. He fairly downplays the role of individual creativity and represents intercultural diffusion as a mechanical process of spreading ideas and technology. Rivers' model aligns with the Durkheimian theory of collective representations, highlighting society's supremacy and determinative power over its subjects.

Interestingly, unlike cultural evolutionism, diffusionism does not consider cultural change as an accumulation of minor personal inventions and unilinear movement towards higher development steps. According to Rivers, evolution does not necessarily mean progress or the addition of new ideas and technologies, as he also considered it possible to lose certain cultural elements. His assumptions were consolidated by discoveries made in the south pacific, where certain groups devolved as they lost skills to build canoes, bows and arrows (Rivers, 1912). So, in particular circumstances, cultural development and intercultural dynamics might lead any group to regress to the earlier steps of development or lose certain practices. The direction of development could be defined by various environmental, economic, social and political factors.

Furthermore, Rivers (1914) made a significant observation that cultures are not homogeneous and involve competing values, norms and rituals. According to him, new cultural elements come from foreign communities and may coexist or get mixed with local values. For example, among Melanesian society, Rivers discovered various ways of dealing with deceased people. Rivers' diffusionism laid the ground for the elaboration of the developmental theory of intercultural dynamics. However, regrettably, Rivers' progressive ideas were shortly ignored by mainstream intercultural psychologists who were more appealed by bidimensional quantitative models (which are critically considered in the previous chapter). Nevertheless, there were some exceptional minds like Fredrik Bartlet who further elaborated diffusionist theoretical contemplations despite the increasing prevalence of "quantitative spirits" in psychology and created the Cambridge University wing of diffusionism.

## Considering Bartlet's Diffusionism

Bartlet attempted to elaborate theories regarding individuals and cultures as interdependent phenomena and argued for a systemic approach in psychology. He emphasised that persons and cultures function in relation to the broader diffusive intercultural context through which they operate. Bartlet distinguished three forms of cultural diffusion: *Borrowing*, *intercommunication* and *contact*. *Intercommunication* implies a situation when neighbouring societies have regular interaction with one another and represent the most common form of diffusion as almost all communities have neighbours and inevitably interact with them. *Intercommunication* leads to the gradual and steady interflow of ideas and technologies between neighbouring cultures and beyond, and it could be considered as part of the everyday life of many people. Unfortunately, Bartlet did not elaborate much on the meaning of intercommunicative communication for individuals' mental functioning through relating to sociocultural development. Further development of the understanding of the *intercommunicative* mode of cultural diffusion from a systemic cultural psychological perspective will be discussed under the framework of *proculturation* (see Chap. 6).

Diffusion through *contact* implies the situation when a cultural group immigrates to a new country and settles there, leading to significant communications between hosts and newcomers. The outcome of such contact could vary depending on factors like the size of immigrants' and host groups, their representation and expectations concerning each other if any of the groups is perceived more superior, political/military power of each group, et cetera. For example, immigrants' and host groups might establish subordinate relations when one of them is dominant, whereas so-called comradeship becomes possible when they perceive each other as equal. Assumedly, comradeship leads to the blending of cultures in contact, whereas the domination of a particular group might result in the absorption of the subordinated group.

Bartlet assumes that there are different layers of change in each society, and some of them might change without impacting others. He assumes that for communities, it is easier to adopt technological novelties, whereas changes in language and even more so in social structure and collective representations such as values, norms and habits may meet stronger (local) resistance. Therefore, Bartlet assumes that changes due to the diffusion of technology or language might not have any impact on deeper cultural layers as values and norms. I believe that the representation of culture as a phenomenon that consists of independent layers contradicts a systemic approach that Bartlet aims to follow. Changes in one layer cannot go without making a catalytic impact on other layers as they are all part of the same holistic system.

Notably, *contact* and *intercommunication* modes of cultural diffusion both reflect possible developments at the sociological level; however, the third form of diffusion *borrowing* refers to individuals. *Borrowing* implies the case when the individual travels in a country where she/he learns about foreign cultural elements and brings information back to his/her homeland after returning there. According to Bartlet, an

individual traveller decides which part to adopt and which reject all by himself/herself. When a traveller returns to their homeland, she/he brings new knowledge and habits and introduces them to his fellow compatriots. Thus, a new subculture might be formed due to borrowing and the introduction of foreign cultural elements. However, Bartlet's elaboration of how individuals relate to foreign culture and how the traveller obtains extraneous cultural elements were fairly general and required further theoretical elaboration. For example, *borrowing* does not explain the impact of adopting particular foreign elements on the individual self-structure. Besides, Bartlet neither elaborated much on immigrant individuals' influence on host cultures.

Furthermore, by highlighting that each newly introduced element is perceived depending on local cultural tendencies in any community, Bartlet offered one of the first attempts to construct anthropological and indigenous psychologies. However, Bartlet's position concerning the individual's ability to singlehandedly decide which elements to adopt and which to reject in a foreign culture based on their interests reminds of bidimensional accultural models, which assume that people have the magic power of controlling external environments' influence on them. The individual's agency is doubtless; yet, we should reiterate that people operate under the influence of many factors like, for example, political structure and relevant groups' attitudes towards each other. By granting magical powers to individuals, he "essentialises" cultural elements representing them as external ontological entities and leaves the complexity of intercultural dialectics and individuals' developmental dynamics evolving through relating to their sociocultural environment(s) less attended. Therefore, I assume Bartlet's model of cultural dynamics remains semi-systemic.

### ***How Do People Process Foreign Elements?***

According to Bartlet, cultural transformation evolves through *assimilation*, *elaboration-simplification*, the *retention of unimportant details* and *social construction*. The first three processes are oriented to conserving heritage culture and might be presented simultaneously or in sequence, whereas social construction is directed towards transformation. *Retention of unimportant details* is the simplest form of diffusion; however, it might take more or less extreme forms.

According to Bartlet, *assimilation* (not to confuse with one of Berry's acculturation strategies) leads to the linking and incorporation of foreign elements in the heritage cultural scheme. It means the appropriation of the foreign element as to make it acceptable and adjustable to existing cultural tendencies. Bartlet considers the case of New Granada, where local people adopted Christianity; however, Christian rituals were mixed with ancient local beliefs and became their representative. So, the acceptance of foreign rituals does not always imply a complete replacement of local beliefs but instead might lead to their specific coexistence.

*Elaboration* might happen independently of *simplification* or may precede it. In some instances, they could be considered as parts of the same process. Elaboration implies the differentiation and further sophistication of an element. For example,

local people might add new ingredients to the adopted ritual. This could also mean the increased number of specific operations and the complexity of cultural elements. An example of further elaboration is the particular arrangement of orthodox Christian services (which initially were foreign) in Georgia that led to the inclusion of unique folk polyphonic singing and songs that could not be seen during the service of any other orthodox Christian church in the world.

*Simplification* implies the gradual elimination of non-essential components and aspects of the foreign cultural element. As a result of simplification, it is possible that only one sign remotely reminding the initial element might be left in the picture. The famous example of simplification is Haddon's study on the diffusion of ornaments, where he showed that when the picture of an elephant was spread from one group to another, it gradually was transformed, and, finally, only head and tail were maintained in its illustration.

*Elaboration* and *simplification* of cultural elements could lead to constructing symbols that might not resemble the source of meanings they convey. Extreme simplification or expansion might lead to semiotic hypergeneralisation of meanings that might make them verbally incomprehensible and, in particular, may gain intense affective charge and value. In instances of radical simplification and hypergeneralisation, cultural elements get symbolic form and might obtain extremely abstract signification different from the original concrete meaning.

Bartlet attempts to take a developmental stance on the question of cultural development and introduces future temporal dimensions. Interestingly, according to Bartletian diffusionism, social construction evolves not so much through individual progressive discoveries but mainly by creating novel cultural forms through mixing foreign cultural elements with local ingredients. *Social constructiveness* develops through intercultural and intracultural dialogues and is considered as the primary mechanism allowing cultural innovation. The assumption of the possibility of a creative mixture of different ideas makes Bartlet's model significantly distinctive from classic diffusionism and cultural evolutionism. We should reiterate that unlike classic diffusionism and cultural evolutionism, cultural change through Bartletian *social construction* might not always be progressive.

Bartlet's principles of *elaboration/simplification*, *retention of unimportant elements and assimilation* are conservative and past-oriented, while the *social constructivist* tendency is creative and is projected towards the future. However, I assume it will be more appropriate to reconsider the division between the past and the future and conservation and transformation. The assumption of the possibility of unalterable preservation of diffused elements makes sense only if we assume that components of cultures are ontological entities; however, as we know, it is not the case (see Chaps. 2 and 6 and also, Valsiner, 2014). Cultural elements are bits of a continuous process that are being (re)constructed by humans throughout their irreversible development. Adults and even small children almost always reconstructively perceive information that they get from the environment and add their personal valuation and interpretations to it (Baldwin, 1892; Valsiner, 2014; Vygotsky, 1994).

Moreover, people externalise once subjectively internalised cultural elements back into the environment and contribute to cultural transformation. So, conservation

of cultural elements is impossible without simultaneous reconstruction as all higher mental processes are fundamentally constructive. So, the introduction of a new diffused element leads to the changes of its perception comparably to how it was perceived in the source society and provoked transformations in the recipient individuals and their community.

Furthermore, the rigid distinction between past orientation from future orientation as if they could operate independently of one another contradicts fundamental phenomenological aspects of humans' semiotic dynamics. People are intentional creatures and are fundamentally future-oriented (Gallagher & Zahavi, 2012); however, past experiences and cultural knowledge also play an essential role in constructing future goals. Thus, past and future dimensions are linked in the moment of meaning-making (Gamsakhurdia, 2019a, b, c).

Notably, Bartlet assumes that community acts as one when dealing with a foreign cultural element as soon as the latter is dropped in the community. Thus, the only form of expected intra-group variety that he mentions is the possibility of forming the subcultural group around the new cultural idea that other group members might confront. However, in fact, no group might be homogeneous before or after the appearance of the foreign cultural idea.

## Cultural Diffusion Through Social Representing Processes

Diffusionist ideas were also addressed by Serge Moscovici, who further developed a theory on (inter)cultural dynamics. Moscovici, as well as Bartlet and unlike Lucien Levy-Brule, thought that "primitive" people do not differ qualitatively in development in comparison to western nations. They thought that illogical and irrational thinking is present in any society (including the west), and in that regard, there is no qualitative difference between western and non-western cultures. Assumedly, rational or irrational modes of thinking are defined by environmental challenges, existing adaptational needs, educational background, cultural experience and group and personal interests. Rationalism characterises only particular groups and only in very specific situations and circumstances, like scientists or other specific professional groups, whereas the general public is not always logical. Bartlet famously noted that you should not compare ordinary members of "primitive" groups to Kant. So, it would be natural to assume that the foreign cultural elements might be perceived differently by various subgroups of the recipient society after the cultural contact.

Moscovici highlighted the heterogeneity of social representations in any community and culture throughout the content analysis of the French press. According to Moscovici, social representations are conceived as organised systems of knowledge and practices which are socially coordinated. He famously analysed the ways of representation of psychoanalysis in France and identified three distinctive communicative/representing styles which were defined by communicators ideological background and political interests. Psychoanalysis was still a new and foreign concept in those times, so its representation could tell about intercultural dynamics'

particular features. It also shows that foreign ideas should not necessarily have nationality as psychoanalysis, despite being born in Vienna, was/is a global phenomenon.

Liberal newspapers' representation of psychoanalysis was relatively neutral and allowed its readers to make their own judgements themselves. Wagoner (2017) indicates that Liberal newspapers, in line with their ideological platform, attempted to establish *comradeship* type relations with their readers and did not impose any opinions on them. Catholic and communist press, on the other hand, were more directive and attempted to set their own ideological agenda for their readers. Catholic press *propagates* psychoanalysis by accenting the therapeutic aspects of psychoanalysis relating it to the confessions made at church; however, they ignored the importance of libido that is an essential component of Freud's theory. Communists chose the most authoritarian approach and constructed the most "aggressive" *propaganda*. Communists divided the world into the dichotomy of bourgeoisie/capitalist west and socialist parts and directly associated psychoanalysis with the former – psychoanalysis' association with the capitalist west its demonisation for communists. Neither communists nor Catholics paid much attention to the actual content of the psychoanalytic theory as they were interested in the further promotion of their own ideology and, therefore, made an accent on those components that they could use for their own purposes. So, it could be deduced that each group comes from their own priorities and interests and selectively highlights or ignores particular aspects of alien cultural elements.

Interestingly, Moscovician understanding of social representations made a significant step forward comparably to Durkheim's collective representations as much as the former recognised the possibility of the plurality of views inside any community. In comparison, Durkheim's collective representations were conceived as relatively static without the possibility of transformation. Moscovici, on the opposite, attempted precisely to elaborate on the dynamic nature of social representations and assumed that intracultural, intercultural and intergroup relations might be the key to understanding cultural development. As a result, Moscovici's approach is labelled as "genetic social psychology", and Wagoner (2017) even offered to consider it as a "contemporary diffusionist approach".

Moscovici's exploration of how scientific ideas are received and processed by the general non-scientific public illustrated that novel cultural elements might be constructed in a certain subgroup of society, while the recipient's role might occur in other groups of the same community. In his framework, laypeople are conceptualised as significantly different comparably to the professional, scientific community who possess specific knowledge, understanding and affections concerning the novel technical concepts. So technically, from the perspective of social representation theory (SRT), there is not much difference between processing foreign cultural elements and the new/unknown alien element constructed by the member of the own ethnocultural group.

Moscovici distinguishes two forms of processing that might be used to familiarise unfamiliar cultural elements *anchoring* and *objectification*. The former somehow reminds Piaget's understanding of cognitive assimilation. During anchoring,



the unknown part is incorporated into the existing knowledge system or is used to represent existing beliefs, values and norms. *Anchoring* links new elements with already familiar symbols and practices in line with groups future-oriented projections (Bauer & Gaskell, 1999). An example of *anchoring* would be the association of psychoanalytic therapy with the practice of religious confession or friendly conversation. Through *anchoring* recipient group might selectively ignore those aspects of the foreign element that does not fit in their own context; that is precisely what the Catholic press did while ignoring the concept of libido in psychoanalysis. Thus, anchoring is often used to strengthen the recipient culture's internal coherence. Wagoner (2017) associates *anchoring* to "conceptual mapping where one concept is metaphorically understood through another". Sayings like "life is a journey" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) is a vivid example of anchoring and conceptual mapping and "adds wider social dynamics of the process" (Wagoner, 2017).

Furthermore, *objectification* signifies the process of concretisation of abstract concepts by making them tangible for human perception. *Objectification* in its function is similar to Piaget's cognitive *accommodation*; however, it covers much concrete spectrum of (processual) phenomena. It is selective as well as *anchoring* and may emphasise only specific features during alien/foreign cultural elements' social representation. For example, Moscovici's study showed that research subjects represented psychoanalysis as *depth* psychology which implicated conceptual division of the psyche into the conscious and unconscious, accessible and inaccessible, visible and nonvisible parts, etc., whereas content beyond the topological model of the psyche, like the decisive role of libido or aggression, was conveniently and selectively ignored by the Catholic press.

*Objectification* implies the representation or projection of ideas through verbal naming, by embodying through objects, images or other semiotic signs ("representamen"). It makes unfamiliar and abstract ideas concrete and familiar. "Objectification saturates the unfamiliarity with reality, turns into the very essence of reality" (Moscovici, 2000). *Objectification* is specifically applicable when foreign elements are so alien that it becomes challenging to understand them and frame them in the recipient culture's terms.

### ***Considering Social Representations from the Perspective of Cultural Psychology of Semiotic Dynamics***

"Genetic social psychology" is more widely known as social representation theory (SRT) (Sammur et al., 2015) which is basically a theory about social cognition and reflects subtleties of the information processing system. When Moscovici considers the processes of "familiarisation of unfamiliar", his goal is to understand how people identify, classify and "translate" unknown materials on their own "languages of thinking". *Anchoring* and *objectification* in their classic sense are oriented on removing "cognitive tension" related to linguistic or conceptual entropy by

“conceptual mapping” of unfamiliar information in own knowledge systems or objectifying them through available symbolic resources.<sup>1</sup> However, SRT, as well as Bartlett’s principles of cultural diffusion and conventionalisation, are sociocentred, and they did not elaborate much on the meaning of interaction with foreign elements for self-construction and transformation at the individual level. The last challenge stands ahead of us up to now.

Interestingly, Wagoner (2017) indicates that social representation is not only a concept but also percept and defines the nature of the perception of an unfamiliar object. However, suppose the social representation is considered as something that determines the nature of perception. In that case, it comes implicitly represented as an independent variable that directs groups’ perception and unfamiliar data processing. In the latter case, social representation is indirectly essentialised as an ontological entity. This aspect adds to the theoretical issues that reveal the sociological bias of SRT that does not reflect much on the possibility of subjective and idiosyncratic dimensions of sense-making. It is common among psychologists and anthropologists of cognitive orientation to have replaced the initial goal of studying relational meaning-making dynamics with exploring information processing (Bruner, 1990).

However, a more comprehensive and developmental understanding of lower and higher mental functions calls for distinguishing information processing from the semiotic process of meaning-making. The former represents the automatised process and equalises humans to computers. In comparison, meaning-making is related to considering the affective value of any object and the interpretation of new information’s meaning for the “perceptor<sup>2</sup>”. I assume social representations present socially coordinated versions of interpretations in the form of percepts that may guide and push individuals towards particular forms of anchoring or objectification; however, they are never able to define the meaningfully and affective valence of the perceived material for the individual as people’s sense-making depends on personal experiences and also future projections that are always somehow personal.

Furthermore, from the perspective of cultural psychology of semiotic dynamics, it is crucial to link individual and social levels of representing that come possible in the case of conceiving social representations as complexes of semiotic signs (Valsiner, 2013). Instead of conceptually static “social representation(s)”, we should consider the dynamic processes of “social representing” that is being constructed through a triadic semiotic structure involving person, “others” and objects. Children are born into a world full of historically constructed representations of particular artefacts (material and immaterial objects, practices, values and norms) coordinated by various community subgroups. However, children internalise those representations reconstructively and form idiosyncratic meaning systems. Personal interpretations are subsequently externalised and socially suggested to others leading to the endless cycle of interpretations that are embodied through symbolic and ritualistic performances and crystallised as social representations (Gamsakhurdia, 2020). The

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<sup>1</sup> See wider discussion on the usage of symbolic resources in Zittoun (2018).

<sup>2</sup> A person who perceives.

variety of different interpretations is precisely what leads to what Moscovici calls “cognitive polyphasia” (Duveen, 2007; Farr, 1998; Moscovici, 1998), that is, a heterogeneous plurality of social representations.

People need to know what kind of views are accepted as correct and regarded as unacceptable to be able to orientate in their social environments. Social representations define normative maps and orienteers for members of society required for the higher mental processes to function (Brinkmann, 2017). The variety of social representations concerning various phenomena creates a tensional environment as it might be puzzling for groups and individuals. To achieve relative clarity pertaining to moral questions, people hierarchically arrange different versions of representation by prioritising some of them at the expense of others. However, the competition between contradicting ideas never stops as members of any society continuously negotiate opposite representations.

Prioritisation of particular views is directly related to the question of ethnocultural identification. Essential moral beliefs are often marking and signifying common groupness. For example, social embeddedness and specific understanding of dignity serve as ethnonational markers for Georgians (Gamsakhurdia, 2017) and other cultural groups in the Caucasus region. Social representations that are highly prioritised might be just one or a few, and any new idea related to them coming from abroad directly gets involved in the process of ethnocultural identification. Meeting with significant foreign ideas requires sense-making with higher mental function and could not be reduced to the lower cognitive information processing. However, not all foreign social representations are symbolic markers of ethnocultural identities, and so, some of them might be processed through automatised lower mental functions. Thus, intercultural dynamics could not be considered only as the diffusion process of ideas without considering the meaning of foreign cultural elements’ leading to the creation of novel cultural forms and their transformative effects, which they obtain for the recipient groups and particular individuals.

Objectification, as well as anchourisation, serves the purpose of identification and categorisation of information. These processes might be conscious or unconscious. From the perspective of the psychology of semiotic dynamics, both anchourisation and objectification and Bartletian principles of cultural diffusion could be considered the processes which are evolving at the second and the third mediational levels,<sup>3</sup> which imply rational processing of information and concepts. However, none of these processes covers the first psychophysiological or the fourth hyper-generalised levels of mediating as during the former there is not accessible enough verbal information for its schematisation, whereas, during the latter, ideas are experienced as so abstract and affective that people are unable to map them through verbal concepts.

However, on the other hand, objectification could also serve as the circumventing but incomplete bridge between hyper-generalised and affectively powerfully charged ideas and rational mediational levels in particular cases. For example,

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<sup>3</sup> See for the consideration of cultural psychological model of semiotic mediation in Valsiner (2014).

Valsiner (2014) considers “love” as one of the most common hyper-generalised semiotic signs in the western world despite that it could not be defined or articulated verbally but rather is felt by many fairly clearly (hopefully). None of the scientific definitions of it (as the chemical process or working product of hormonal dynamics) could manage to reflect the romantic sentiments associated with the idea of “love” in its entirety, and, often, it is regarded as irrational or non-existent despite being experienced and felt as overwhelming by many western people. As long as love becomes defined in chemical and physiological terms, it predominantly loses its affective power for those who accept and internalise that reasoning. However, rationalising does not work for all people as “love” sometimes overrides/overwhelms rational sense and might lead to irrational actions.

The loss of the power of “love” is also often associated with time, as when time goes, partners become less affectionate due to the habituation to each other and get more and more rational that makes them able to schematise/classify rationally the previously unnoticed features of their love mates. So, as soon anchorisation happens, hyper-generalised sign gets eliminated; however, that does not necessarily occur after objectification. On the contrary, the latter might even add to the irrational sentimental power of hyper-generalised concepts. For example, “love” is often objectified by the image of the heart that metaphorically locates it in the most crucial part of the human body and is associated with “blood” and “fire” historically (in western countries at least). However, objectification of “love” through the picturesque image of the human heart does not make it easier to define verbally; neither lessens its affective charge, more probably “love-related” sentiments might even rise higher when a person in love sees the image of the heart. So, objectification might be considered as a particular form of embodiment of hyper-generalised feelings that might strengthen or weaken its affective power.

I assume that when a person meets foreign or alien cultural ideas, she/he might be unable to anchor or objectify them only by those symbolic means that are available through heritage culture due to its extreme unfamiliarity. When people cannot anchor or objectify perceived information, they are more dependent on the symbolic resources and interpretations provided by the relevant foreign or professional/scientific group. Besides, in particular cases, objectification through images may be totally meaningless for the understanding of the phenomena in consideration due to its alienness. For example, COVID-19 was objectified through its microscopic image that was provided by the scientific community, and it remains to be the main representamen of that virus even after 2 years of its unfortunate appearance. However, the objectified image of COVID-19 does not add much to its understanding for laypeople. In such cases, objectification may even sharpen the sense of alienness of the perceived object.

Furthermore, the example mentioned above of the objectification of COVID-19 by the scientific community also reveals how dependent the general public might be on its elites and specific professional groups. People depend on the available information and, therefore, on those who control the flow of information. Certain groups who sit at the driver’s seat of communicational campaigns of various sorts have the ability to promote certain social representations among the members of their group

as it was done by communists, Catholic Church and liberal press, according to Moscovici's research. Valsiner (2013) specifically considered social representations as higher-order sign complexes that promote certain positions supported by the politically powerful groups. The foreign group might impose specific ideas if it has enough political power or/and prestige. So, it is essential to highlight those negotiations of social representations is not always dialogical.

Interestingly, in another branch of global cognitivism, namely, in cognitive anthropology, the local conceptual counterpart of social representations was formed in the "cultural models" school. "Cultural models" and social representations are considered culturally coordinated and organised knowledge and orienteers concerning particular fields of life (Quinn, 1987; Strauss & Quinn, 1997). Thus, for example, Naomi Strauss & Quinn (1997) famously described a cultural model of marriage in the USA that can be freely regarded as a social representation of marriage. However, what makes SRT unique comparably to the cultural model's notion is the elaboration of particular mechanisms of cultural dynamics through diffusion.

Notably, the concepts of anchoring or objectification do not have any use for understanding the meaning of those processes in each particular case of meaning-making unless considering broader dynamics of the entire normative system of a person and a culture in the context of which those processes actually evolve. Therefore, information processing should always be considered in the context of higher mental functions and underlying cultural semiotics related to ethnocultural identity construction. Each experience of foreign social representations that is more than just emotionally neutral information associated with declarative/semantic memory should be considered part of higher-order meaning-making that is indissolubly related to various layers of socio-collective identification. Therefore, any theory on cultural dynamics at the same time should be the theory on identity construction.

## Conclusions

Culturally sensitive anthropological approaches to intercultural communication were elaborated in the first part and the middle of the twentieth century; however, they were sidelined from the mainstream of psychological science. Our goal is to explore significant ideas in classic, intercultural psychological studies and consider their significance and implications for current/future studies in the field. Major cultural evolutionist, diffusionist and social representation theories were considered in this chapter to discuss different approaches to cultural development and intercultural dynamics. Furthermore, a critical comparative analysis of each of those approaches was carried out, and their theoretical implications were identified. Finally, social representation theory, regarded as a contemporary diffusionist approach, is considered as a model that properly reflects intercultural dynamics at the sociological level; however, for the reflection of the significance of individual subjective processes of meaning-making as a core of (inter)cultural developmental dynamics, more person-centred semiotic cultural psychological approach is proposed.

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# Chapter 5

## Semiotic Dynamics of Intercultural Communication and Its Meaning for Self-Construction: Theory of Proculturation



### Introduction

Contemporary psychological science requires further elaboration of developmental models of mental dynamics, including and maybe especially intercultural interactions as they evolve in time and are developmental at their core. The “developmentality” of adaptive experiences evolving through intercultural communication needs to be reflected in relevant theoretical models that have been long forgotten by the mainstream strands of cross-cultural psychological studies for decades (see Chap. 3). By examining intercultural dynamics, it is possible to reveal the systemic workings of sociocultural systems and their indissoluble relation with individuals as it most visibly illustrates that mental systems function at the crossroads of individual and collective levels of functioning. The concept “proculturation” was introduced recently to signify the systemic and developmental process of the intercultural experiences that evolve when individuals meet foreign cultural elements at home or abroad (Gamsakhurdia, 2018; Valsiner, 2019b). This chapter defines what “proculturation” is and distinguishes its distinctive conceptual features among other relevant concepts. Certain semiotic strategies used during mediating foreign experiences will be particularly considered.

The need for the introduction of the new concept is conditioned by the need to confront the dominance of reductionistic representation of intercultural mental phenomena and individuals’ relation to cultural environment by mainstream concepts which were designated to signify the process and effects of interacting with unknown and/or foreign cultural elements – acculturation, assimilation, accommodation and appropriation. The tradition of acculturation research was discussed in previous chapters, so we will mainly concentrate on considering the conceptual features of the latter two terms and their difference from “proculturation” in this chapter.

*Schema* is the primary building block of cognitivist theories and implies organised patterns of knowledge or guidelines for the sequence of behaviours in response



to particular information coming from the external environment (Piaget, 2013). Schemata can be changed through two different processes of transformation during human development. *Assimilation* and *accommodation* both designate the process of adjustment to new experiences elaborated by legendary Jean Piaget many decades ago and represent classic but still significant terms in developmental psychology up to now (Wadsworth, 2004). Both of these concepts attempt to reflect what happens with mental schemas when a person obtains new information.

*Assimilation* signifies the process of relating new information to the existing categories of knowledge and their inclusion without a significant transformational consequence. For example, imagine an Italian traveller in Chicago who discovers Chicago-style pizza first time in his life. Despite different textures, tastes and forms of the Chicagoan version of the dish, it still will be identifiable as pizza as by general features it fits into the category of famous Italian dish. So, Italian travellers will probably be able to assimilate the Chicago-style version among the general pizza category. Thus, *assimilation* enriches or adds clarity to existing categories or adds subcategories.

*Assimilation* is very similar in its meaning to the term of *anchorisation*, which Serge Moscovici considered to signify the processing of new social representations. The idea of “concept mapping” is at the basis of both of these terms (see Chap. 4 for the detailed consideration of anchorisation). The primary and only distinction between them is that Piaget’s assimilation refers to any kind of semantic information, whereas anchorisation signifies representations offered by “other” social groups and, in its essence, is the effect of intergroup and/or intercultural process of communication. Therefore, *anchorisation* might be considered a specific form of Piaget’s *assimilation* that evolves at the sociocultural representing level. Besides, Piaget’s model is predominantly used to understand cognitive development in childhood, whereas Moscovici’s term refers to the dynamics of adult groups’ sociocultural cognition through cultural diffusion.

*Accommodation* is another type of cognitive adaptation that leads to the meaningful transformation of existing *schema* or the elaboration of new ones. It evolves only when a piece of further information cannot be classified in the frame of existing cognitive categories. For example, when a representative of a Georgian culture where the horse is regarded as a “sacred” friend (like a dog) occurs in Europe, he might be shocked by the possibility of considering it as a dish and will face a challenge to accommodate to this foreign cultural norm and identify the horse as an edible thing or to create a new schema of people who eat horses. A transformation that is needed in this particular case requires a significant modification of existing schemata and their affective value. As a result of accommodation, old schemata are transformed, or new schemes are formed, which might require *objectification* through particular symbols for their familiarisation to the self. I assume that Moscovici’s concept could be considered as a semiotic tool for the completion of *accommodation*.

Assimilation/accommodation and objectification/anchorisation are oriented on the reflection of the course of new information processing. However, none of these concepts covers the process of meaning-making in its semiotic sense. In the

examples mentioned above, cognitive theories on development would not seek what kind of meaning the assimilation or accommodation processes have for self-development or identification. For example, what are the consequences of understanding that the animal, horse, that is regarded sacred in your homeland is treated as a perfectly edible farm animal in some other countries?! Maybe an immigrant will deduce that locals are savages who do not appreciate the friendliness and service of horses or she/he might believe that norms of sacredness are nothing but relative social conventions (creating a new concept of relativity) and represent a matter of agreement between members of particular society. In the same case, Berry's acculturation model would try to identify whether an immigrant/traveller accepts the practice of eating horses without bothering itself by asking additional questions concerning the variety of reasons, context and specific meaning of making that decision. Thus, concepts discussed above designate information processing and attitudes at the lower cognitive mental level and do not cover questions concerning semiotic course of meaning-making.

Another term signifying the process of intercultural communication is cultural *appropriation*. According to Merriam-Webster dictionary, *appropriation* is defined simply as "an act or instance of appropriating something" (*Appropriation|definition of appropriation by Merriam-Webster, n.d.*). In social sciences, appropriation is understood as borrowing or taking elements from other cultures and is very similar in its meaning to acculturation. However, unlike "acculturation", appropriation is strongly associated with "colonialism" experiences and has been recently connected explicitly with the usage of minority cultural elements by dominant groups that might sometimes get denigrating forms. For example, western pop stars like Selena Gomez or Madonna sometimes use pieces of indigenous groups' clothing without referring to its origin or cultural meaning that might be unpleasant or even traumatic for representatives of minor communities. The appropriation was also considered as the process of accepting by individual the foreign cultural elements from dominant colonial powers; however, in that case, it is also strongly and mainly related to the adjustment to colonialist influence. Due to its very specific connotative meaning, *appropriation* could not be helpful for understanding and signification of the broad spectrum of multilayered intercultural developmental dynamics.

I assume that none of the existing terms – acculturation, appropriation, accommodation, assimilation, anchorisation or objectification – is answering conceptual preconditions of semiotic and developmental theoretical modelling. So, there is a choice in front of us to redefine existing ones or to elaborate on the new ones. The only term specifically designated to signify the effects of intercultural interaction is "acculturation". However, the existing Berry-inspired mainstream of "acculturation" research has been building for decades and has a well-established academic following that is based on the considerable body of empirical research without significant reference to developmental studies or semiotic aspect of human mentality and has been relatively rigid to theoretical criticism up to now. The redefinition of "acculturation" and Berry's acculturative orientations traditionally meets inflexible and strong "political backlash" from the elite of acculturation psychology, which mostly ignored inconvenient critiques of such significant intercultural psychologists

as Valery Chirkov's indications on a theoretical inconsistency (2009), Floyd Rudmin's revelations about statistical miscalculations and invalid deductions on acculturation orientations (2003, 2009, 2010) and Sunil Bhatia's proposition to consider intercultural interactions from the dialogical perspective (2004, 2009, 2010) to mention the least. Neither more constructive attempts of Eleni Andreouli (2013) to offer more developmental and dialogical in-depth analysis of immigrants' experiences caught much attention in acculturation researchers' circles. Thus, I assume that the proposition of a new (re)definition of acculturation would add to the confusion in understanding that particular term as it has already very clearly established representation in the form of Berry's dominant model. Besides, there is enough confusion with the concept of assimilation, which by some is considered a synonym to acculturation, whereas followers of Berry's model consider it as one of four "acculturation orientations".

Moreover, Berry's model essentially reflects processes at the sociological level, whereas individual psychological acculturation is largely ignored (see Chap. 3 for the consideration of theoretical issues related to "psychological acculturation"), which requires particular addressing. Non-existence of specific terms that would cover individuals' intercultural dynamics might be one of the reasons that led to the ignoring of idiosyncratic developments.

So, as Jaan Valsiner suggested during our personal talks, we decided to elaborate a new theoretical model with a new label instead of arguing for the reformulation of an old and firmly established definition and understanding of acculturation. Proculturation is considered as a person-centred concept and is designated to reflect self-developmental dynamics through intercultural mobility, which is largely ignored by acculturation research mainstream that is predominantly "sociological". Therefore, the proposition of the new concept – proculturation – aims to highlight and reflect changes evolving at the individual level from a developmental perspective and will complement sociological acculturation research by providing a person-centred perspective that brings more theoretical clarity.

## Considering Proculturation

Proculturation is the idiosyncratic developmental process of affective semiosis that evolves through intercultural relating and experiencing. If it occurs, proculturation becomes part of the ontogenetic life-course. Moreover, individual developments inevitably have consequences for social dynamics, though the latter two are interesting for us only as much as they provide context for the particular person's functioning. So, the concept of proculturation is focused on selves and their experiences, not groups.

## *Considering “Culture” and Persons’ Relation*

Proculturation is a deeply personal process; however, it could not exist beyond and without a dynamic cultural context. People are born and formed in society and culture, and it is impossible to consider idiosyncratic development without clarifying the definition of culture. From the cultural psychology perspective of semiotic dynamics, cultures are considered the semiotic fields populated by semiotic signs mediated by persons (Valsiner, 2014). It might also be defined as a meaning system that is embodied through certain material or immaterial symbolic objects and processes. Thus, culture is constituted by the entirety of meaning-making processes, dynamic schemas and manmade artefacts that could be distinguished from pristine nature. Selves are born and enculturated through communicating and mediating verbal and nonverbal signs that become the basis of human thinking and internal dialogues (Vygotsky, 1994).

However, none of the cultures is bounded, independent, absolutely distinct from “others”. It is neither homogeneous nor internally diverse nor indissolubly related to their neighbouring cultures and the broader world. Culture as a semiotic field is part of the broader neighbourhood of other cultural fields, which are delineated and simultaneously dialectically linked by symbolic borders (Gamsakhurdia, 2018, 2020c). “Our” culture is defined in contradiction to “other” cultures, which serve as semiotic *gegenstand* for our self-definition. Various cultures are somehow similar and somehow different as a result of the unstoppable diffusion of cultural elements all over the world. Besides, any culture includes diverse and even contradicting ideas that are competing for dominance. The one unique feature that distinguishes all societies despite having certain commonalities is a common ethnocultural identity.

So, an individual operates in the pluralistic context where his/her native cultural knowledge or experiences are just one element of surrounding diversity. Following field-like description of mental phenomena (Valsiner, 2005), I assume that the self defines oneself in relation to other people inside the native cultural (or multicultural) context, which by itself defines own symbolic borders in relation to other cultural areas. However, unilateral conditioning of the self by culture is impossible as long as each cultural field involves various heterogeneous ideas, some of which are contradictory. The self is formed in a fluid multidimensional semiotic field that is structured in different subspaces by “plasmic” symbolic borders that constantly move and get transformed through social construction. The self is continuously delineated as a “figure” inside the native semiotic field that is on its part delineated as a figure inside the wider regional semiotic field and so forth. The dynamically stable semiotic world could be depicted as a multilayered ocean that involves an interconnected set of seas and rivers which are tentatively delineated (“inclusively separated”) by symbolic borders and flows endlessly, simultaneously maintaining overall organisational structure.

### *Moving Across Different Cultural Fields*

Field-like representation of relations between persons, native cultures and the broader world in combination with the assumption of cultural diffusion has significant implications for understanding the context of intercultural dynamics. Firstly, and most importantly, it highlights the non-essentialised nature of cultures and their dialectic interconnectedness. When a person moves from one society to another, she/he does not travel from one independent universe to another but instead passes across spaces that involve the variety of somehow similar and different representations of primary fields of life but with different configurations and hierarchical order. For example, most societies have representations of genders (male; female; non-binary) that create a pool of possible oppositional attributes: dominant-non-dominant, masculine-feminine, active-passive, sexually free-sexually repressed, strong-weak, etc. In any community (maybe, except hunter-gatherer societies), there are present all these and many other oppositional ideas concerning gender; however, only one end of the continuum is attributed to a particular gender, and those who do not meet common representation are socially pressured – in Georgian society masculinity of males is encouraged, whereas femininity of males is socially less supported – however, both ends of dialectically oppositional attributes are known and available to local people (Gamsakhurdia, 2017). Therefore, if a Georgian occurs in Canadian liberal-democratic society where the different configuration of male-female-non-binary gender representation might be present and femininity of males is much more accepted, the novelty of experience will be defined not by the idea of the possibility of the existence of femininity of males but by the different hierarchical organisation and power dynamics that allows/encourages the expression of such character. To say it otherwise, a Georgian person knows that there is a possibility of the existence of feminine males; however, in their native culture, it is suppressed, and for him, it will be a novelty to find out that somewhere else is treated differently.

So, travel/immigration implies the journey through different but similar cultures that allow further awareness concerning already somewhat known ideas and practices. People abroad might discover that previously suppressed alternatives might be considered normal for others, which might not necessarily enrich their declarative knowledge. Such discoveries might have long-standing consequences for the perception of norms and values. Therefore, immigration or temporal mobility abroad should be considered as a continuance of the previous life-course.

However, it is also possible that any person might obviously learn a totally new element in a foreign culture like medieval travellers discovered tomatoes, potatoes and other vegetables in the Americas. But I assume that the possibility of totally new discoveries becomes less likely the more globalisation evolves.

## *On the Importance of “Power”*

Cultural diffusion implies relating different cultures to each other that might have dialogical or monological forms. In the case of dialogical relations, representatives of different communities might borrow or exchange certain elements by their own free will. Fredrik Bartlett labelled the latter form as “comradeship” (Bartlett, 1923; Wagoner, 2017). However, even “comradeship”-style exchange implies reconstructive perception that is performed and communicated by particular individuals as they never accept any information without subjectively “filtering” it.

On the other hand, certain relations are monological if cultural elements come from politically dominant or powerfully prestigious/fashionable sources. For example, Hollywood movies are appealing to millions of people worldwide as they dominate the cinema market. Therefore, values and norms propagated by their films/series exert cultural pressure on many societies worldwide. In the latter case, members of local indigenous communities are also reconstructively perceiving even monologically delivered elements; however, they are not able to provide a response and contribute back to the interlocutor. In some instances of direct invasion, like the USA military occupation of Iraq or Afghanistan, foreign countries might forcefully promote certain values and norms alien to some or most locals. Therefore, individuals’ relation to the foreign culture depends on the balance of political and symbolic (including) power of promoters of particular cultural elements.

## *Temporality and Relationality of Intercultural Relations*

The self functions in a multidimensional temporal system, including when engaging in intercultural relations. The present moment is transient and flows in between the past and future times. Current time is always experienced as the continuation of the history and prelude of the upcoming future. Thus, individuals live in the constant process of “becoming” and “unbecoming” moving from the past to the future.

There have not been obtained definitive data or conceptual scheme that would prove that humans’ past experiences by themselves directly condition actions in the present (Shweder, 1979; Valsiner, 2019a, b) as their determining power is dependent on the entirety of catalytic factors and subjective interpretation of those experiences/factors which are formed in relation to sociocultural context and future expectations. The thing is that the meanings assigned to past experiences or possible developments define their role in developing feelings, thoughts and human conduct in the present (Gamsakhurdia, 2020d). So, none of the particular periods – past or future - of time has the determining power to define selfhood and mental dynamics.

Moreover, self-definition involves the imaginary representation of lived experiences and alternative possibilities/choices that were never realised in the past. People ponder on (possibly) missed opportunities and also can take lessons from past experiences. They occasionally imagine what might have happened if they had

taken different decisions in the past. Besides, when people anticipate future developments, they never have in mind only one option/scenario of future actions or developments. The human also considers that particular decisions might bring different results based on environmental developments and reactions from “others”. So, the process of selves’ development is indissolubly related to the operation of meaning-making of particular lived (past) experiences and the anticipation/imagination of not-yet-lived, could-have-lived or even impossible experiences that plays a significant role in self-perception and human conduct.

Temporal dynamics have significant implications for understanding intercultural dynamics. In many cases, people have personal experiences and knowledge concerning particular foreign groups or outsiders in general that are obtained in the *past*. They are also aware of historically constructed native cultural knowledge and stereotypes about “others”. Personal and cultural knowledge guides individuals towards constructing future expectations concerning possible developments in case of immigration or travelling abroad (Gamsakhurdia, 2019b).

Any person before she/he immigrates or travels to a particular location abroad interplays with the representation of a foreign country and the possibility of immigration/social mobility. People imagine what might happen with them abroad and contemplate possible obstacles and opportunities. Even in the case when people’s lives change abruptly, and they become refugees in a foreign country, they still have specific knowledge, real or imaginary, hopes and fears about the host environment. Some persons might prepare specifically for their upcoming journey, while others might be more spontaneous; however, it is hardly ever possible not to anticipate upcoming or potential developments.

The occurrence in a foreign context changes the referential context and temporal setting of meaning-making as a person needs to understand his new position and entailing consequences. An immigrant/traveller is no more at home and is distanced from it while is near/inside the new/foreign context. She/he might consider what might have happened if they did not immigrate/travel abroad or move to another place. The new options that appear in front of a traveller/immigrant are staying in the current location of immigration, moving to another foreign destination or maybe returning to their homeland. These are just a few among other theoretically possible possibilities; however, choices of various kinds could be numerous. People face them occasionally and form the context of mediation of particular experiences/elements.

So, adaptation to foreign cultural elements starts before physical immigration, while parting ways with homeland never implies (complete) cutting mental ties to it (Gamsakhurdia, 2019a; Rudmin, 2010). Negotiation of the native and foreign cultural elements is continuous and as endless as a human curiosity. People function in a tensional world that allows the construction of different ways for development, and during *proculturation*, they tend to contemplate, doubt, remorse, anticipate, look forward or ponder about them before or after occurring abroad.

Proculturation is a continuous process, whereas homeland and foreign cultures represent interrelated semiotic fields across which individuals evolve through social positioning and negotiations of heritage and foreign cultural meanings. Foreign

cultural elements' meaning and catalytic effect are not defined by their original significance that it has in the source culture/community but on individuals' personal experience (including knowledge) and expectations/anticipations, cultural background and the concrete situational context of experiencing.

All actions, reconstructive perception and meaning-making are intentional. However, we should not confuse intentions with goals as the former implies "aboutness" of any higher mental process (Brentano, 2005). The content of "aboutness" is defined through different dimensions of meaning-making, including foreign cultural elements, which are dynamic and transient processes based on past experiences' interpretations and future expectations that are always integrated by the self-centred and subjective individuals (Gallagher & Zahavi, 2012; Valsiner, 2014). For example, travel/immigration starts because of some reasons and to achieve certain purposes that define the meaning of each act of that process. So, each moment of intercultural experience is part of an ongoing life story, and it is a narrative about a particular person and his/her relation to groups and cultures.

### ***When Immigrants' Intentions Meet the Host's Strategies of Semiotic Mediation of Newcomers***

Obviously, self-construction depends not only on immigrants' opinions about themselves but also on how familiar or unfamiliar "others perceive them". When a person travels abroad for a reasonably long time, their social status and positioning radically change, and so do change their social environments' relations to them. Particularly, an immigrant's self-construction depends on the perception and expectations of local/host people towards his place of origin and also on how she/he is perceived as an individual. The lack of awareness about the location of origin of an immigrant/traveller may induce anxiety and fear among locals towards them that will hinder intercultural communication, whereas their positive representation will encourage interaction. So, each immigrant/traveller's adaptation and relation with local communities significantly depends on local communities' expectations and relevant social representations.

The stereotypical perception of particular groups and their members might be positive or negative as well as ambivalent. Immigrants and their homeland are often might be represented through "alternative social representations" (Gillespie, 2008) and are used as a scapegoat to blame for various misfortunes by host communities. Donald Trump's verbal accusative attacks against immigrants, blaming them for all kinds of real or imaginary calamities in the USA and attempting to build the wall against Mexico, could be considered a very illustrious example of such adversary forms of semiotic mediation. The latter could serve various purposes depending on the context and the meaning implied by the teller and the addressee. Firstly, it could be considered a manipulative strategy that would be oriented at alleviating the feeling of "our" responsibility about certain developments that are perceived as



unfavourable by blaming others. Secondly, adversary forms of mediation lead to the sharpening dialectic tensions between groups and might serve for the mobilisation of intragroup cohesion against common (imaginary) “enemy”. Finally, adversary semiotic mediation consolidates ethnocultural identification (Tajfel et al., 1971).

Sunil Bhatia (2002, 2009) considers cases of the second- and third-generation immigrants who live in the USA and think of themselves as “locals” and fully “integrated”; however, their integration in reality does not come to be smooth due to the external influence. He explored the experiences of descendants of Indian immigrants who are very successful financially and professionally and live in upper-middle-class neighbourhoods. Therefore, they seem to be very well settled (John Berry’s model would classify them as perfectly integrated or even assimilated) in the local society (some of them even for several generations). As Bhatia noticed, his research subjects felt very comfortable for most of their lives; however, that changed after 9/11/2001. After a well-known terrorist attack on the USA, people who were previously mainly peacefully living in their neighbourhoods became targets of suspicion and stigmatisation even by their close neighbours only because of their more “Asian appearance” and “immigrant origin”. As a result, Bhatia’s research subjects who had felt like “Americans” prior to 9/11 were not allowed to “feel/think” so anymore and were (re)classified as “Indian Americans”. It defined their particularised status and groupness different (“other”) from “true Americans”. So, in the particular neighbourhoods which Bhatia explored, the social representing process of “Americanness” is highly influenced by “Americans of White skin colour”, as their opinions, perceptions and communication practices make a meaningful impact on the self-perception of “Indian Americans” who became sharply distanced from “Americanness” due to the external stigmatisation.

Marian Martsin (Märtsin, 2010a, b; Märtsin & Mahmoud, 2012) describes examples of immigrants from eastern Europe in Great Britain who meet negative stereotypes and stigmatisation concerning their character during everyday communication with local people that makes them feel not only uncomfortable but also feel subordinated to particular roles that are imposed on them. For example, one unfortunate of labels attributed to Eastern European women is “sex worker”, and they are generally expected to perform blue-collar work at best.

Additionally, particularly significant is the host society’s legislation, policies and relevant bureaucratic practices for the construction of immigrants’/immigrants’ experiences. Tania Zittoun (n.d.) and Lado Gamsakhurdia (2021a, b) describe experiences of immigrants who are highly motivated and eager to become part of local societies in Switzerland and Germany; however, their aspiration is hindered in that way by rigid, uncomfortable and emotionally rejective bureaucratic procedures of the obtainment of residence permits and citizenship in their host societies, respectively. For example, a Georgian immigrant who spoke perfect German and felt herself entirely in accordance with local German norms/values still could not feel herself as “local” even after successfully living there for more than 10 years (Gamsakhurdia, 2021b).

Notably, travellers/immigrants maintain mental links with their homelands even after a long time of moving away. The image of homeland, memories of native

experiences, significant others who are perceived a part of own personal experiences, historical figures from heritage culture and general voice of homeland society are represented in the structure of the self and could not be erased from there, ever, as well as any other experience that is lived throughout people's life-course. While abroad, people might engage in the imaginary dialogue with voices representing their "homeland" and imagine what significant others and "general public" from their motherland might contemplate and their behaviour.

Interestingly, when a person occurs abroad, the direct social pressure from native society to follow their rules gets alleviated, and in light of the new experiences, an immigrant/traveller becomes able to have a fresher personal look on their homeland, past experiences and the place that she/he held there. Moreover, a person might also contemplate how the lives of acquaintances and friends or the general public might be developing in the homeland in parallel as their life evolves in immigration. Thus, imaginary (or real) dialogue and relating with homeland could be ever-continuing.

So, immigrants/travellers function and mediate the present moment of their experiences between past experiences and future expectations on the one hand and another in-between native and foreign host cultural worlds/communities. The mediation of intercultural experiences evolves through the multidimensional temporal and spatial semiotic field.

## **Negotiations of Ethnocultural Identity as the Core of Proculturation**

Proculturation concerns the entire process of self-construction, the crucial part of which is the process of ethnocultural identification. The latter sets symbolic boundaries between groups by distinguishing and "representamens" of particular groupness. Any form of intercultural dynamics brings new information concerning foreign cultures and ways of life that inevitably leads to the reflections on native cultural elements like values, norms and "ethnicity" overall. The more comprehensive and more profound is the spectrum of a person's intercultural experiences, the broader the circle and referential context of their social positioning get that might have significant implications for ethnocultural identification and selfhood.

Ethnocultural identity could be considered a specific form of semiotic sign formed through dialectic mediation in between the set of oppositional ideas (Gamsakhurdia, 2020a; Tateo & Marsico, 2013). "I" is always defined in relation to "others" who are not "me". Different ends of oppositional continuums constitute the same semiotic system that defines themselves by negotiating different meanings. Ethnocultural groupness' heterogeneity is determined precisely by the internal representation of different ideas, which are continuously contrasted to each other through social representing processes and cultural practices. The involvement of different ideas in ethnocultural identity negotiations ensures its transformational dynamics.

The hierarchy of various socially coordinated cultural patterns of social representations defines the significance of each of them for determining the ethnocultural identity of a particular “groupness” and its members. Certain social representations serve as markers of the symbolic boundary of each social “groupness”, while others are considered less significant. Generally, highly significant social representations are related to the myths of shared history and essential fields of life like sexual practice, behavioural patterns, expectations concerning social embeddedness, etc. Those values and norms that serve as ethnocultural markers are actively vocalised by external voices in the self-structures of members of any society and might allow “offline thinking” to guide people’s conduct unconsciously (Gamsakhurdia, 2020d; Hermans et al., 2017).

When a person occurs abroad, she/he occurs in the environment where markers of foreign ethnocultural identity are promoted, whereas they are relatively freed from native social pressure. However, the content of foreign cultural identity markers might be contrasting or irrelevant in relation to the native groups’ tags. For example, when a Georgian person occurs in Sweden, she/he directly experiences jump from the society which extremely encourages social embeddedness to the community which appreciates solitary form of living (e.g. in Sweden, most of the youth lives alone, and it is encouraged by economic structures and governmental policies); however, if Georgian traveller occurs in Armenia she/he will not find dramatic differences in values and norms except religious identity, language and particular not very much significant cultural practices and cuisine. On the other hand, sometimes, in culturally and geographically neighbouring societies, people tend to exaggerate their intercultural differences in order to absolute and delineate/justify their distinct ethnic identities. The latter case is the example of the working of hyper-generalised semiotic sign (ethnic identity) that unconsciously and affectively overwhelms lower-level cognitive processes of rational reasoning. Therefore, I assume that it is ethnic identification that might direct and define meaning-making processes, not otherwise.

Notably, we should remember host communities are often heterogeneous, and travellers/immigrants might get a variety of multicultural experiences while living abroad. Moreover, traveller/immigrant does not engage with a host society in its entirety but only those layers that become available for communication. Proculturation is always Personal and unique up to some level due to the heterogeneity of the variety of representations that they meet throughout intercultural experiencing. Thus, immigrants have no other choice but to navigate among tensions between contradictory ideas not only in the intercultural space but also inside the host intracultural systems.

### ***Distinguishing Different Layers of Proculturation***

I assume we can distinguish different layers of proculturation – social positioning and cultural learning/unlearning – that are related to each other; however, change in the former does not automatically imply simultaneous similar changes in the latter.

This assumption is based on the minima-group paradigm experimental data that show that common identities could be formed without any previously shared cultural ties, which appear only as a result of creating groupness and also by rich historical, anthropological data that shows that ethnocultural identities might disappear, but their “cultural legacies” never completely disappear neither at the individual nor at the group levels. For example, Romans are long gone, but roads built by them are still there, while the Latin language, despite being “dead”, did not disappear without a trace. On the contrary, it played a significant part in constructing Spanish, French, Romanian, English and many more languages. While remains of ancient Greek or Egyptian statues and the building may decline physically, however, they obtained novel symbolic meaning over and over again throughout history (Valsiner, 2014). Ancient books or crafts might not be in their best physical condition, but they are invaluable for lovers of antiquities (bukinists). So, cultural material does not disappear from cultural space until it can be signified and semiotised.

So, along with intercultural communication, social positioning/identification might get meaningfully transformed as people might hybridise/mix their native identities with foreign identities creating hyphenated identities (Bhatia, 2002; Bhatia & Ram, 2009), or they may prefer individual mobility and leave native identities behind through assimilating to “other” social group (*I do not imply culture here*), or, alternatively, some immigrants may tend to radicalise their native nationalistic sentiments, and, finally, some might discover more humanistic values that would allow the formation of more globalist identity orientation<sup>1</sup> (Gamsakhurdia, 2020a).

At the individual level of development, which is historical and irreversible in its nature, past experiences constitute part of humans’ life-course. As people live abroad, even for a long time, their experiences of living and participating in their native cultural space are never erased even if humans want it to happen and play a role of a reference point during internal thinking/negotiations. Native culture or the general public remains represented as external voices in the self during their life-course.

### ***Are Immigrants Deficient?***

Immigrants or ethnic minorities are often considered as a priori problematic group of people who lack particular abilities or knowledge and require specific treatment. In comparison, ethnic majorities are regarded and represented as “norm(al)” or a kind of “objective reality” that stands in front of “poor foreigners” who need to pass a certain test on adapting to the host/majority communities. Dominant bidimensional conceptual approaches (e.g. John Berry’s acculturation orientation model) reflect such ethnocentric and power-centric views and are mainly interested in understanding if non-dominant communities’ accept or reject of cultures of ethnic

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<sup>1</sup>The list of potential forms of identity transformation that is given here is and could not be complete as the magnitude of developmental variability is potentially endless.

majorities and never bothered themselves inquiring about the contribution that newcomers might make.

However, immigrants, travellers or ethnic minorities and any other group of people are not the only recipients of information or experiences but their constructors. Throughout various chapters of this book, we reiteratively highlight that individual hardly ever passively mirrors materials provided by the external environment and tend to reconstructively perceive them. Furthermore, experiencing particular phenomena not always ends at the stage of its internalisation as people tend to externalise their internal feelings, thoughts and intentions in art objects, performances, symbols, etc. (Valsiner, 2007, 2014). So, Immigrants' role can never be limited to the passive perception and integration of existing host societies as immigrants' influence could be visible even if they represent a small minority. For example, the Roma people made a significant contribution to Andalusian and Spanish culture by playing a role in creating and popularising Flamenco. Also, it would be hard to imagine the appearance of New York or Chicago pizzas without Italian minorities appearing in those cities a century ago.

Moreover, I assume that even the mere presence of different groups imposes back influence on the majority groups as representatives of host/majority communities are challenged to make sense of "others" if they are present in their surroundings. The level of dominance of a particular host group is hardly ever absolute, and they often try to address the interests of immigrant communities somehow. Besides, various forms of motivation might condition the attempt to incorporate elements of minority cultural elements. Sometimes, considering the "gustos" of minority groups might be directly beneficial to certain "host" agents. For example, the incorporation of elements of Mexican cuisine (e.g. jalapeño, chilly, guacamole sauce, etc.) into the menu of McDonald's increases its appeal and "marketing asset" among Latino minorities or immigrants; however, on the other hand, it also transforms traditionally "American" foods by adding foreign salsa to it. As Valsiner neatly showed, ornamentation could be central for constructing the core of sociocultural phenomena (Valsiner, 2018). The hybridisation of cultural elements and practices might but not necessarily decrease dialectic tensions between different ethnocultural identities. There are numerous examples of sharp rivalry between neighbouring ethnocultural groups despite having a lot of cultural elements and sometimes even language in common (e.g. Ireland-England; Armenians-Georgians; Serbians-Croatians; etc.).

### ***Considering Differences Between Ethnic, National and Globalist Positioning***

However, in some instances, when a person obtains a more internationalist position and follows globalist ideas, she/he might attempt to distance oneself from the native group. The most famous person to make such an effort was Stalin, who was born and raised in a small Georgian town Gori; however, later on in his life, when he

joined socialist movements, he accepted globalist communist ideas that disregarded the question of ethnicity, mainly. Stalin, even though he was speaking in Russian with a terrible Georgian accent and loved very much Georgian wine “Khvanchkara”, was asserting that he obtained a new Soviet/Russian identity and was very harsh while holding his repressive politics in Georgia.<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, it is necessary to highlight the importance of the distinction between ethnic and national identities in the multicultural world. The western idea of the nation state is relatively new and far from being dominant. Ethnocultural identity/groupness is often associated with myths of common ancestry and history and is highly affective. At the same time, national identity is more of a formal label and is associated with citizenship that might not always be consolidated by strong attachment or affections. For example, in many post-Soviet countries (Moldova, Russia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, etc.), you can find ethnic enclaves which are not loyal to central national authorities or even rebel against them. On the other hand, even if they get local citizenship, immigrant groups often maintain their ethnic allegiance to native groups and live through the negotiations between those two (or more) social identities. The particular configuration of the self and social positioning is dependent on the personal, social and political context.

Ethnocultural identities’ semiotic mediation may get hyper-generalised and flow semi-consciously, beyond the control of rational reasoning that might become relatively blurred and flawed. However, the concrete experience is always personal, and particular strategies of semiotic mediation of its meaning depend on the organisation of self-structure, past experiences, expectations projected on the future and intentions.

## Considering Particular Semiotic Strategies of Representing and Mediating Immigration

Semiotic mediation of immigrants’ experiences involves multilateral interaction that might have various emotional connotations and have proactive or adversary character. Adversary semiotic strategies sometimes are accented on particular features of “other” people like religious identity, language or physical colour. Those features might become powerful signifiers of different ethnocultural identification and stigmatisation. According to social identity/categorisation theory (Tajfel et al., 1971; Turner et al., 1994), cultural difference or similarity would be expected to be less significant as it is social positioning that gives direction to meaning-making processes. Social positioning is a fundamental feature and precedes semiotic mediation. The latter is used to make sense of and legitimise an established sense of

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<sup>2</sup>Napoleon’s story, born as Corsican/Italian but becoming as French, is a similar but not the same as France was building nation state, while Stalin’s camp of communist party did not care about nationality/ethnicity much but was rather oriented on socialistic/communitic ideas as their ideological frame.

groupness. However, I would assume that social identification could also be considered as the first step of mediation of (one)self in relation to other(s).

As said by Henri Tajfel and John Turner (2004), people tend to interpret experiences and information in a way that would serve for the maintenance and the representation of their own group's "superiority" over "outsiders". Consistent with social identity theory, the primary purpose of each individual's cognitive activity is to represent oneself in a better look and belongingness to a specific group matters only as much as it influences the perception of self-worth – the better is own group, the better is "I". So, people try to imagine ways of representing their own group as better comparably to some other groups and increase own personal values as a member of it. However, if it becomes impossible to strengthen own image through belonging to a "native" group, people might attempt individual mobility and change allegiance in favour of a more successful group. Tajfel's view represents people as extremely rational creatures for whom such feelings as loyalty and emotional attachment are unknown. However, it does not answer why people sometimes make personal sacrifices for their groups' benefit.

Social identity theory has been elaborated in laboratory settings and does not comprehensively reflect the variety of developments that might occur in the real world. It considers identity as an "ontologised" entity that could be taken, accepted or thrown away. Tajfel and Turner consider identity as a clearly delineated element that is exclusionary and obviously felt by its holder. In a sense, identity is represented as a tag that one wears. However, social identity theory does not foresee the dialectic processuality of personal or ethnocultural identification (see Chap. 2) and accompanying the possibility of confusions, doubts and tensions in the increasingly heterogeneous and mobile world where people might occur in various situations (Gamsakhurdia, 2020e).

When a person immigrates abroad, she/he is no more regarded as an ordinary group member in their native group who lives in their homeland as she obtains foreign experiences and is not participating in native cultural practices at the place anymore. However, on the other hand, she/he is neither member of a local (host) group as she/he might be perceived as a newcomer and foreigner even after being a second-third-generation immigrant who does not completely share some experiences or features with locals. Immigrant status is inevitably related to the increased level of liminality as people occur between and at the crossroads of symbolic boundaries of different groups. So, it is not apparent which group will be perceived as own and which will be the direction of in-group bias. Will it be the host society or the native society that was left behind? Unlike acculturation or social identity theory, proculturation implies that tensional and dialectic dialogue between different options of social positioning evolves through continuous negotiations that are never completed. A person who is an alien for both host and native groups is provoked to distinctively reflect on both of them and seek their own position under the sun. The process of self-definition is continuous and irreversible and does not have an end.

Taking the perspective of cultural psychology of semiotic dynamics and dialogical self-theory, I assume that the hierarchy of voices and I-positions inside the self-structure will be definitive for the direction of meaning-making of intercultural

experiences, not social identity per se. The dominant I-position serves as a guiding orienteer and might define how the new experiences and social position in immigration and relations with relevant groups will be perceived and interpreted. I-positions are self-concepts that represent attributions concerning oneself that are present in any self-structure (Hermans, 2001). For example, if a person has a dominant I-position “I am smart and always make correct decisions”, she/he will try to justify their decision to immigrate and might tend to denigrate native culture/people by criticising it in every possible way and, on the other hand, exaggerate positive sides of living in the host country. An immigrant will try to distance himself/herself from the homeland stating that she/he is different from their former compatriots and will deny any connection/similarity, avoid communication with compatriots and try to praise the host community trying to assimilate oneself in it. However, the more she/he tries to detach from homeland identity, the more (affectively) attached/dependent on it may she/he remain in fact. The radical form of avoidance simply illustrates and consolidates existing attachment and longing – as otherwise, a more rational form of relatively moderate critics and steady detachment would have occurred without radical mood swings. Sweeping and obsessive forms of irrational rationalisation/justification of existing situation in the form of “semiotic reversal” might indicate that expressed positions disguise opposite internal and “true” feelings or at least tensional dissonance between contradictory tendencies. Such people often even try to abandon Georgian rituals or traditions and attempt to behave as locals do thoroughly.

What can I do in Georgia? There is stagnation. My neighbours and friends all refuse to develop; they are still there where they were years ago. I want to live in Spain; I need to realise my potential. It is more possible here. Aaaaah, Georgian people are in darkness. One guy, my neighbour, stands on “Birzha” for the whole of his life, he is 35 now, and he has never done anything valuable in his life. So many people are like that. It is a disaster. It was good that I moved here. I am practising the local language, how to behave; Georgian behaviour is not good for me. The only thing I miss is cuisine, but it is difficult to cook it here, so I am not cooking it often either. (Female, 30, Georgian immigrant living in Spain, with a 3-year history of immigration (Gamsakhurdia, 2016))

Another form of mediation is related to the existence of the “semiotic (cognitive) dissonance” that might be provoked by having contradicting dominant “I-positions”. For example, the desire to justify own decision to immigrate (driven by the following I-position: “I made the right decision when immigrated”) might coexist with the strive to resist overwhelming positive feelings of love and nostalgia towards homeland in case of having dominant I-positions like “I as a patriot” or “I lover of my country” which might be affectively imbued and awe-inspiring. Active semiotic dissonance could be mediated and dealt with in various ways; for example, on the one hand, such immigrants may tend to maintain performative aspects of native culture, including native traditions and rituals as much as it becomes possible in immigration (e.g. certain groups of Georgian immigrants in Munich regularly organise traditional Georgian feasts – Supra – and participate in religious rituals in local Georgian church (Gamsakhurdia, 2021b)). Still, on the other hand, the same people may attempt to denigrate and criticise their homeland for representing their immigration as the only possible/necessary escape and version for their development



(Gamsakhurdia, 2021b). Also, some other Georgian immigrants living in western countries justify their choice in favour of immigration by the need to help and provide means for subsistence to their poor relatives who live in their homeland. These versions of development are just a few of many possible options, and novel research might help in the elaboration more comprehensive least of semiotic repertoire.

I hated that period while I was living in Georgia. Life was rough, and people were so chaotic, there was no order. They cannot follow the rules. Those gossips all the time. Jobs are poor... I have better chances here. I am helping to my family financially, sending money to them.

Sometimes I miss that family situation and friendly ambience... But that's not an issue. I am having 'Supras' here from time to time, Georgians are gathering, cooking Georgian dishes. I go to Georgian church regularly here. We have a very nice priest there, not like those uneducated ones that you can mostly meet in Georgia. We have small Georgia here. (Female, 30, Georgian immigrant in Germany, 10 years experience of living abroad)

The previous example directly contradicts the social identity theory (SIT), which assumes that *individual mobility* from one group to another happens only when it becomes impossible for a person to represent their own group as superior in relation to others. It is clear that people might have internally contradictory relationships towards their own or other groups, disliking its particular features while appreciating some others. The representation of social identification processes as internally homogeneous and straightforward is oversimplistic. People's relationships with their own or foreign groups are rather heterogeneous, ambiguous and multifaceted full of positive and negative emotions at different moments and about different things.

Furthermore, SIT overlooks the possibility of identity diffusion or hybridisation/mixture of identities through personal development and intercultural communication while living abroad. It considers social identity as a matter of personal choice dependent on rational calculations; however, in fact, it is indissolubly dependent on external evaluation, feedback and sociopolitical context (including the legislature and bureaucratic practices) of adaptation. Even if a person wants to assimilate into a certain group, it does not mean that she/he will succeed in case of rejection from that group (see examples considered above). The idea of hyphenated identification is famous in intercultural psychology and cultural anthropology; however, it is largely ignored by SIT, and I assume it would be wise to activate dialogue between different directions of social and cultural psychologies/anthropologies to take steps towards a more comprehensive theorisation of social positioning and self-construction.

If immigrants maintain a direct connection with their homeland by having communication to native people through various online tools or even more so, if they conduct occasional visits there, then their representation of their own immigrant experiences to compatriots might also take various forms and could be telling of people's intentions and constitute a significant part of self-construction in immigration. Besides, Immigrants' representation of their native/internal "others" is substantial for their self-construction in immigration and self-representation to local people in the host society.

So, immigrant individuals' self-construction involves multilateral intergroup interactions as they engage in a separate engagement with different groups in the host society and homeland. Therefore, they represent themselves to various internal and foreign "others" differently while anticipating their expectations and possible reactions/evaluations in response to their actions. Semiotic tactics which might be used by immigrants to represent themselves to native people depend on the context in the place of origin, host community's social representations of immigration in a general and particular area of immigrants' location in particular and their personal experiences as well as reasons, outlooks about immigration and related stereotypes which are known for immigrants themselves.

Many humans strive to increase their own self-worth in front of others and justify their own choices as it is hard for many people to recognise their own decisions as mistakes even if they are aware of them semi-consciously. People are biased not only against out-group members as SIT would assume but also personally against in-group members as they are perceived as competitors. Self-worth is perceived while comparing self not only to actual others but also to contemporary famous or imaginary people and historical figures. Different forms of semiotic mediation are motivated by an internal desire to represent oneself in a better way or/and in accordance with dominant I-positions. The normative framework that sets orienteers for self-evaluation is guided by sociocultural expectations anticipated and projected on others.

While making sense of their life abroad, certain immigrants who attempt to justify their immigration tend to exaggerate positively their experiences and picture "fabulousness of life" abroad if they expect that it is what will increase their prestige among people who are living in the homeland, whereas, in fact, they might be homeless, living in refugee camps or on poorest living allowance provided by the host government or working at the lower-level blue-collar jobs. Even poor conditions of living might be signified as better than it was available at home if it fits their purpose of a certain form of self-representation that is set by dominant I-positions.

On the other hand, the same immigrants may represent themselves as poor in the face of host governments and society asking for acceptance/help, whereas playing the role of successful "posh stars" in front of their family/friends/acquaintances in their homeland. Below, you can see the highly popular meme that objectifies the social representation of this particular form of *double-faced self-presentation* tactics. It was publicly posted on social media and got 3700 likes and up 120 comments only under this one post (<https://9gag.com/gag/aGpNBEw>); however, it was spread across various social platforms<sup>3</sup> that shows its viral character. I assume viral memes could be conceived as objectification of mediational tactics.

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<sup>3</sup> Full-scale media analysis goes far beyond the purposes of this chapter. This example is provided for the illustration of particular form of objectification of semiotic mediation.

**When you work  
outside the  
country**



**When u come for  
vacation in your  
country**



Another form of internally heterogeneous form of mediation and self-representation to native and foreign people could have opposite content, however, maintaining the same purpose to increase own prestige, but now through exclusivity. Certain immigrants might be critical of the host community when they speak of immigrant experiences with natives and exaggerate difficulties they meet while adapting abroad and judge the downsides of living in a foreign land. For example, certain Georgian immigrants in Germany or Nordic countries often vehemently lament about the lack of social embeddedness and difficulties in finding jobs abroad, attempting to decrease other Georgians' motivation to join them. Meanwhile, despite alleged difficulties, many of them remain to live overseas and justify their desire for immigration by stating that it is their only choice for survival. The intention of such internally contradictory semiotic tactics might demotivate compatriots to move abroad; however, it at the same time highlights certain very significant positive sides of living abroad as many immigrants prefer to stay there. Such heterogeneous representation of immigrant experiences could be motivated by the desire to maintain the relatively exclusive and particularised status of an immigrant, which makes them somewhat unique in relation to other "ordinary" native acquaintances who are still living where they were born. For certain people, the mere fact of being an "immigrant" or the opportunity to live abroad could be the source for self-affirmation as a successful individuum, especially if a person comes from a less

“prestigious” non-WEIRD country and moves to a more “fashionable” and economically more developed state in the eye of own perception – for example, from Georgia to Germany or Spain.

Why are those people coming? They think that there is heaven here... Fools! Stay at home! ...I have been living here for ten years, and I know what I am talking about. (Translated from the post in the Facebook group “Georgians in Spain”, which involves thousands of Georgian-speaking people)

Above-mentioned two forms of double-faced and internally heterogeneous forms of mediation of immigrant experiences and self-representation are not exclusive or incompatible with each other and can coexist in the selves’ semiotic tactics repertoire. They might be used in turn one at a time depending on a particular situation, context and perceived expectations concerning the interlocutor (addressee). They might even compete with each other to obtain more dominance inside the self-structure. It’s part of any individual’s ordinary life to go through “semiotic turbulence” and be happy, confused, determined, disappointed, sad, pessimistic and optimistic concerning the same matter at different points of time or even simultaneously.

The meaning and intention of particular forms of mediation could be identified by revealing the probable result(s) at which they are directed. The content and direction of semiotic mediation are influenced by sociocultural context(s) and expectations (own and those attributed to each relevant group). Notably, the mediational process might be but is not necessarily unconscious as people are sometimes able to choose and construct semiotic tactics of communication intentionally. In order to identify meanings of particular semiotic tactics of mediation or human conduct, one has to examine phenomenological experiences of people engaged in intercultural experiences and personal, social, cultural, situational and historical contexts of its construction (Gamsakhurdia, 2020b).

## Semiotic Resistance

*Semiotic resistance* is a significant part of personal and social positioning. It could also be governed by economic conditions, the official policies and legal procedures associated with immigration-related bureaucracy (Gamsakhurdia, 2021b). Structural racism in the USA and “ethnoburbs” in Europe (e.g. in Malmo, Berlin, Esch-sur-alzette, etc.), which are predominantly populated by several generations of immigrants, are examples of segregation. Consider the case of famous Turkish-German footballer Mesut Ozil, a second-generation immigrant in Germany, who was one of the leaders of the German national football team when they became world champions. He once stated that he felt gradually distinguished and denigrated by making him “Turkish” scapegoat by the German sports press in various situations during his career that encouraged him to fairly distance himself from Germanness eventually and refused to play for the national team in 2018 after serving most of his career to

it. Ever since that Fact, Mesut Ozil publicly started estrangement from Germanness and intense representation of him rediscovering his own Turkishness (conducted visits to Turkey and eventually moved there for playing, met with Turkish President Recep Erdogan, who is very negatively perceived in Germany and participated in various public events highlighting his Turkish roots). So, he felt rejected by Germans and went to the homeland of his ancestors to find (or rediscover) his “home”.

I am German when we win, but I am an immigrant when we lose. (Mesut Ozil (van Campenhout & van Houtum, 2021))

Moreover, even if a foreign community/state is very appealing in terms of higher status and socioeconomic welfare, it does not necessarily lead to the abandonment of less prestigious and less beneficial native ethnocultural identities. Native identities (related I-positions) tend to *resist* and fight for their survival. Social groups’ produce I-positions like “I am a loyal (not traitor) person” in order to encourage allegiance among their members. If such I-positions dominate the self-structure, a person might even feel happy to follow “martyr’s way of life” and make sacrifices to maintain a connection with a native ethnic group. The particular choice is always made in specific circumstances influenced by many catalytic factors.

I’ve lived in the US for several years for now. I feel Georgian myself, and I think I like it. It would be easier and convenient to be American while living here, though. But I can never become American; even if I get local citizenship, I will remain Georgian at my heart. (27, female, Georgian immigrant living in the USA)

## Differentiation and Undifferentiation of Meanings

When a person occurs abroad, she/he goes through a continuous process of adaptation that involves gradual and simultaneous processes of undifferentiation of representations of native culture and differentiation of local/host society. The dynamics and direction of each process is different. The first steps in a foreign country might be associated with stronger emotions as people are excited, anxious or both in the face of an alien environment. Differentiation through familiarisation changes the character and affective charge of the lower and higher cognitive processes. The more the person knows about something, the less ambiguity and anxiety are associated with it. The more routine and usual relations with the host society, the fewer/weaker emotions will be raised while performing particular native practices. For example, the perception of time flow, length and duration is differently perceived in familiar and unfamiliar environments. I assume that Henry Bergson’s idea (Bergson, 2002) of the subjectivity of perception of the “duration” could not be more visibly embodied than through the observation of change in the perception of the length of the period needed for performing similar tasks in familiar and unfamiliar contexts. When one tries to reach a certain location in the unknown environment, the time duration required for orientation and passing route until reaching the desired

destination generally is perceived as more prolonged due to accompanying tension of the process as time subjectively “flows/durations more slowly” due to the higher level of ambiguity and emotionality; however, as the same path/track becomes well beaten and part of the daily routine, it becomes perceived as familiar and even somehow automatised. So, followingly, *perceived* time/period needed to get to the destination gets significantly “shortened”.

The more knowledge and experience in a particular environment are obtained, the more “abbreviated” becomes the process of thinking, mediation and conduct that allows “offline/implicit mediation”. The same goes with many experiences as things that initially seem extraordinary due to their novelty become rationally classified, “routinised”, which decreases their emotional appeal and makes them perceived as “ordinary”. So, if the initially “mysterious” foreign world inevitably becomes familiarised through experiencing, then its particular features become differentiated/categorised and so mundane.

Simultaneously to differentiating host societal experiences and knowledge, dedifferentiation of certain memories concerning homeland experiences happens. Particular details of homeland-related memories fade away; however, specific memories of significant personal experiences and markers of ethnocultural identity may become even more salient than before and obtain higher emotional power as the *markers* of the previous stage of their lives (that happened before moving abroad). Those markers might get positive or negative emotional flavour depending on the semiotic tactics of mediation chosen in the present context.

So, differentiation of semiotic signs leads to their rationalisation/schematisation and concretisation/particularisation and introduces more clarity in terms of understanding of various matters and experiences through the increase of factual knowledge and procedural/bodily memory/skills about foreign culture. Furthermore, it results in the “deafectivation” of semiotic signs like a foreign ethnocultural identity that also might become “duller” semiotically and could not serve as *Gegenstand* for native identity construction leading to the identity mixture and hyphenation or various forms of globalist self-definition. Through this process, foreign culture, which from a distance might be perceived through the lens of common stereotypes and myths, becomes understood as much more trivial than it was expected through its “out-group” demonisation (e.g. Western Europe is represented as a “sinful” place by certain groups in Russia and Caucasus) or romantic mystification (e.g. the USA or other western countries are perceived as many non-westerners as a financial/economic “dreamland” full of opportunities).

On the other hand, dedifferentiation of homeland culture, on the opposite leads to the decrease of clarity and absolutisation of salient markers of its cultural boundaries at the expense of losing certain details from memory that may make mediation more affective and less rational, leading to exaggerations in a positive or negative way. The example of the latter process is the semiotic notion of *nostalgia* that implies sadness over missing homeland and is consolidated by an exaggeratively positive representation of particular experiences or native ethnocultural markers.

### ***Remarks on Methodological Implications***

Proculturation signifies the process of *becoming* through intercultural interactions. So, I assume that its scientific exploration should be oriented on identifying and understanding those conditions that lay in the basis of the development process in the multicultural context. The research of proculturation should be oriented on the revelation of theoretical mechanisms reflecting selves' transformational dynamics when operating with "other". Transformation of higher mental processes is qualitative and so should be the primary approach to their exploration. Proculturation involves deeply subjective idiosyncratic phenomena, transient phenomenological processes and socioculturally coordinated semiotic mediation that requires a person-centred methodological approach (Gamsakhurdia, 2020b).

Therefore, proculturation research is fundamentally historical as it should trace preconditions that led to the creation of the developments in the current moment. The identification of historical context is crucial for the proper understanding of the meaning of human conduct in the present moment. On the other hand, through personal and historically constructed cultural guidance, individuals construct intentions and expectations projected to the future, the awareness of which is also crucial for understanding subtleties of semiotic mediation (Valsiner, 2017). Besides, inquiry about research subjects' representations should involve a particular accent on bifurcation points that they met during their development and not-realised possibilities that serve as referential context during the mediation of actual lived experiences.

Moreover, the research from a cultural psychological perspective emphasises the importance of recognising researchers' subjectivity and considering the research subject as a co-constructor of scientific knowledge instead of treating them as simple informants (Branco & Valsiner, 1997; Valsiner, 2017, 2020). The importance of recognition of emotional reference of the researcher to the research process, field and subjects has been emphasised recently (Stodulka et al., 2019).

Therefore, the developmental methodological approach to proculturation requires the usage of ethnographic methods, including observation, "qualitative" interviewing, diary research and the analysis of various forms of media texts.

### **Conclusions**

This chapter explores the meaning and place of the concept of proculturation in the field of intercultural psychological dynamics. It emphasises the importance of the systemic approach to developmental higher mental processes and the significance of considering temporal, spatial, social, political and cultural dimensions of semiotic mediation of intercultural phenomenological experiences at the individual level.

Furthermore, proculturation is regarded as a holistic process that plays a crucial role in self-construction. It implies the developmental process of "becoming"

through the imaginative mixing of familiar meaning systems with foreign experiences and significations that result in novel cultural forms construction.

Finally, particular tactics that are used for the semiotic mediation of foreign cultural material during intercultural dialogue and their meaning for self's personal and social positioning are revealed in this chapter. However, the more comprehensive systematisation of semiotic strategies that might be used in various situations remains a challenge for future explorations.

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## Chapter 6

# General Conclusions: Considering Developmental and Constructive Nature of Proculturation – Towards the Phenomenon-Focused Methodology



Psychology is often defined as a science of mental processes and behaviour; however, its mainstream lost the fundamentally developmental character of psychological dynamics out of its sight a long time ago. Throughout the twentieth century, psychologists increasingly become oriented on the delusional goal of creating entirely natural science (Naturwissenschaften) (Valsiner, 2012), representing people as research objects on the one hand and researchers as impartial and objective scholars on the other hand (Moghaddam, 2004; Valsiner, 2017a). Since the behavioural revolution and establishing the dominance of “quantitative methods”, the emphasis shifted towards elaborating particular methods and the amalgamation of piles of data while their theoretical consideration was regarded as reasonably secondary (Valsiner, 2014, 2017a, b). The latter movement finally resulted in a broad “replication crisis” and many critical meta-analytical papers that show that massive amounts of empirical data do not actually allow to making clear and far-reaching deductions concerning various mental phenomena (Michell, 1997, 1999, 2000; Rudmin, 2006, 2009; Valsiner, 2017a, b), have issues with non-ergodicity and often misrepresent mental facts by ignoring cultural context and cross-situational variability (Hill et al., 2021; Lowie & Verspoor, 2019; Shweder, 1979a, b; Valsiner, 2014, 2017a) and mixing individual and sociological levels of analysis (see Chap. 3 for detailed consideration).

Uchoa Branco and Valsiner (1997) offered the “methodological cycle” conceptual scheme that highlights the importance of elaborating a theoretical framework for psychological research. It offers the theoretical guideline for obtaining valid psychological explorations and deductions. This book attempts to bring focus from methods to phenomena and illustrate the significance of mental processes’ theoretical elaboration for their better understanding. I consider a particular field of proculturnative mental experiencing that highlights the importance of cultural context for mental functioning and propose a person-centred developmental model of intercultural dynamics.

The empirical *psychological fact* does not exist independently of sociocultural and political context and those epistemological and ontological theoretical models which define the form of its identification and meaning. Any *psychological fact* is created by researchers who are raised and guided by socially coordinated normative systems and signified by ethnocentric conceptual (including language) systems. Therefore, pretension on the complete objectivity of psychological studies and the goal of complete detachment of a psychological scholar from research subjects can be considered delusional.

Moghaddam (2004) indicated that even the seemingly strict (“hard”) experimental procedure could be considered as a theatrical script which is staged by the researcher (director) who defines the particular context in which actors (research subjects) play their role under certain circumstances (independent and additional variables) reacting/behaving in a certain way (dependent variable). I assume, in the same manner, we could consider one-on-one interviews as theatrical dialogue where an interviewer serves the role of the specific kind of a solicitor of information or convenor, while the respondent is considered as a competent (“sage”) figure providing information or an individual confessing their thoughts, feelings and experiences.

Each person involved in these theatrical scenarios possesses a certain status/role associated with particular beliefs and stereotypes and has specific expectations of the research process, intentions and particular perception of their own role in it. Moghadam indicates that the representation of a scientist is different in the west, where it is associated with higher authority; however, in particular eastern countries, scholars could not enjoy similar privileges and meet stronger resistance. Even the researchers’ theoretical ideas, insights and hypotheses are socially suggested and rooted in experiences obtained through their culturally coordinated life trajectories (Valsiner, 2012). Therefore, all participants of psychological research should be considered not as impartial robots but as intentional subjects who, in a certain way, are related to the research questions and co-construct together with research subjects’ data under the influence of cultural catalysis.

## **The Theoretical and Methodological Basis of Proculturation Research**

William James (1890) highlighted that concepts are not actual experiences and urged psychologists to avoid their ontologisation. The concept’s function is to allow grasping characteristics of mental phenomena. However, despite vocal warnings, mainstream psychologists constructed endless examples of “psychological fallacies”, confusing scientific concepts with actual experiences. In extreme cases, psychological artefacts radically diverge from actual mental phenomena; for example, Berry’s model offers concepts of acculturation orientations/strategies like integration, assimilation, separation and marginalisation that are simply impossible to happen in individuals’ real lives (ontogenesis) (Gamsakhurdia, 2018, 2019a, 2020b;

Rudmin, 2009). In this book, I proposed to signify the transformative relational dynamics of individuals' intercultural mental processes as *proculturation* that is not a thing, stage or trait, and it does not come in different levels but rather represents a holistic higher mental process that reflects the course of *becoming* through the cultural mobility.

Cultural psychological explorations of proculturation are based on the following axiomatic assumptions: (1) human mental systems are open and relational. A person operates and develops in relation to other persons and various contexts. (2) Humans and sociocultural actors and groups/organisations are intentional and future-oriented. (3) The meaning of past experiences and expectations are equally crucial for self-construction as they form a referential context for the meaning-making of present experiences. (4) Proculturation is an irreversible process of "becoming" and self-construction through intercultural experiences. It is a historical process. (5) Proculturation is a personal process and involves qualitative transformations that are culturally suggested. (6) And, unsurprisingly, no data indicate the possibility of reliable and valid generalisation and the usage of quantitative parameters of particular groups for describing or explaining individuals' mental functioning and behaviour in particular situations.

Therefore, the core of proculturation studies should be person-centred, idiographic and ethnographic. Proculturation evolves in the context of relating homeland and foreign cultural elements. It is mediated by a person who is the subject of their own experiences; however, ecological factors are crucial as they represent catalytic conditions that influence individuals' meaning-making processes.

### ***Systemic Features of Proculturation***

Proculturation is most visible when a person occurs abroad as an immigrants' status is very specific and positions a person in a liminal space between different cultures. Any immigrant gets/is alienated and distinct from both homeland and host societies up to some level. In a way, immigration could be understood as a certain form of semiotic abjection (Duschinsky, 2013) from homeland society and host groups simultaneously and might lead to the semiotic rupture in the self-structure (Zittoun & Cerchia, 2013).

Immigrant's or refugee status represents an essential catalytic factor during the self-definition in immigration. Political context, "host" government's policies and relevant (native and foreign) social groups' attitudes and behavioural strategies directed towards immigrants/refugees are also highly important for determining the nature of immigrants' adaptive processes. Individual acts in a multidimensional temporal and spatial context where particular idiosyncratic experiences are evolving and are signified. Proculturation implies the mediation of experiences obtained in a foreign cultural context and continuous social positioning through the real or imaginary dialogue/monologue with social groups in the homeland and host society.

While in intercultural space, a person co-genetically (Herbst, 1976) proculturates in relation to all meaningful sociocultural referents.

Proculturation is a complex systemic process involving intercultural sensual/bodily and cultural experiences that people continuously mediate in a particular political and economic context. It evolves through the fundamentally irreversible developmental ontogenetic trajectory and involves occasional reconsideration/resignification of previous intercultural experiences in light of either new experiences, contextual factors or imagining new forms mediating. Past experiences set catalytic conditions for self-construction; however, at each present moment, a person might arrive at a holistic insight resignifying their previous experiences and, thus, change their perception and future expectations by means of changing the meaning of prior experiences or/and contexts. Therefore, proculturation evolves in three-dimensional temporal space – past<>present<>future (Gamsakhurdia, 2019a). So, in order to understand particular persons' proculturation orientations, we need to take the systemic methodological approach and explore their living context, personal biography, history of intercultural experiences, sociocultural-political context and future expectations.

In a sense, proculturation is a process that has a clearly quasi-experimental design which is set in the real-life experiential context as a person is positioned in a specific situation where she/he is influenced by newly introduced external cultural elements (that could be considered as an “independent variable”), and the construction of the meaning of the interaction with a (foreign) culture as well as the perception of native cultural elements should be longitudinally or retrospectively traced. However, the methodological approach to proculturation could not be reduced to any particular method as it in each specific case should be focused and based on the characteristics of the phenomenon.

### ***From Reactionary Modelling Towards the Constructive Representation of Adaptation***

The interest in the nature of humans' adaptation to changes in their environment is as old as psychology and anthropology. Meeting with foreign cultural ideas when a person goes out of their familiar “comfort/known zone” is an example of changes in their environment. Immigration and living in a foreign community are the most visible example of the latter and provide people with an intercultural experience that may be rupturing or not; however, it always requires mediation, as any other sort of experience would. Each bit of experience (e.g. viewing sites, tasting food, touching particular objects/subjects, communication, experiencing foreign climate, etc.) obtains specific meaning for a person and serves as a reference for future meaning-making processes.

Each proculturative process is unique at a certain level; however, they are constructed through particular meaning-making practices/strategies that are universal.

Semiotic mediation strategies serve to interpret ongoing or past experiences in a way that would fit individuals' personal goals and relevant hyper-generalised fields of meanings that serve as a meta-frame for their meaning-making processes. People tend to justify and fulfil their mental I-positions, including views about their social environment or themselves, by constructing novel interpretations accordingly. Besides, people lean towards a justification of the decisions that they made in the past by making specific interpretations in the present. Long-term goals and expectations can serve as a referential source for either positive or negative experiences in the present (Gamsakhurdia, 2019a).

Different forms of meaning-making were considered by various authors and schools of thought; however, most of them mainly conceive situations where people have negativistic goals, opposing certain voices and positions. Psychoanalysts famously considered "ego defence mechanisms" to fight repressed unconscious psychosexual drives through various forms of unconscious mediational mechanisms that result in multiple forms of mental constructions ranging from rationalisation to "reactive formation" are regarded as symptoms/slips of immoral libidinal and aggressive strives. The thorough consideration of defence mechanisms goes beyond our purposes; however, it is crucial to notice that their function is very limited, and they do not lead to the formation of novel meanings, drives, intentions or further transformation of the self-structure. The primary forms of innovation expected through psychoanalytic mechanisms are the outcomes of "sublimation", resulting in artworks or some other products that are nothing more but the revelation of person's eternal battle with their own biological drive for pleasure. So, "defence mechanisms" are conceptually non-developmental and serve the mere purpose of blockage of immoral unconscious drives.

Alex Gillespie considers particular strategies used during the construction of social representing processes of meaningful phenomena that evolve during the semiotic contact with "others" (Gillespie, 2008). He highlights that social representations are defined in contradiction to "alternative representations" that serve as a reference point for comparison. Gillespie considers three modes of mediation which are also considered as a certain "defence mechanism" against "others" and the "threat" appearing during "semiotic contact" while crossing symbolic boundaries (Gillespie, 2020). Those three modes of mediation are (1) denial or ignoring the existence of "other" representations and groups. (2) Delegitimising the "other's" is oriented on showing their inadequacy by blaming them for being arrogant, uninformed, wrong, etc. (3) The third semantic barrier implies the recognition of the legitimacy and rationality of "other's"; however, it strives to limit the possibility of its usage by imagining possible downsides. For example, Gustav Le Bon argued that spreading education among peasants was a legitimate goal; however, it might have led to revolts (Gillespie, 2020). These three modes of mediation focus on competing and contradicting to "others" and preserving own social representation that does not leave a conceptual place for the consideration of the possibility of innovation.

According to the straightforward conceptualisation of the tension between social representations and alternative representations, only the endless radicalisation of views could be expected oriented to identification of more and more contradictions

between different representations. However, I assume that we need to consider other possibilities of development too. In terms of the cultural psychology of semiotic dynamics, “alternative representations” could be regarded as “Gegenstand” (Valsiner, 2014, 2020) that is the semiotic wall “against” which own social representations are built. On the other hand, social representations could be understood as “A”, which is not an “alternative representation” that is “Not-A” serving as “Gegenstand”. Gamsakhurdia illustrated the example of such dynamics on the example of the process of definition of the social representation of Georgianness against the alternative social representation of westernness that create a tensional semiotic couple and are constructed in relation to each other by research subjects (Gamsakhurdia, 2019b). The self-definition through contradicting against imaginary Gegenstand could be understood as another form of negativistic mediation of symbolic borders between “us” and “them”; however, in fact, it does not necessarily end by simply identifying symbolic boundaries but instead might lead to the innovative solutions through the curvilinear line of development. Semiotic mediation between opposite ideas can potentially lead to the innovative construction of novel cultural forms that could be most visibly seen during proaculturation (Gamsakhurdia, 2020a).

Semiotic mediation, whatever form it takes, is always intentional and future-oriented. Each experience or conduct is always about something and for something due to something. Each particular moment in present or choice made or not made by humans are evaluated not by their immediate effects but sometimes on their long-term implications and, also, other possible developments that might have happened. Semiotic mediation not only preserves the existing configuration of alternative meanings and processes of social positioning but also may lead to the significant reshuffling of existing perceptions and innovative interpretations and identities. It is a fundamentally constructive process and sometimes might lead to certain forms through a mixture of opposing ideas or to creating novel overarching interpretative frames that resignify existing experiences in a new form.

Semiotic mediation is directly linked to the self-representation practices/modes during social positioning. Each immigrant attempts to meet the expectations of relevant groups to make a desirable impression on them and so is highly influenced by them. So, certain contents of mediation of experiences and self-presentation might be idiosyncratic; but they are always socioculturally suggested and coordinated. The specificity of immigrants’ social position is that they are caught between expectations and coordination of at least two different groups (homeland and host) that sometimes results in “double-faced” mediation or various forms of “semiotic reversals” (see Chap. 6). The position of significant others and politically powerful voices also exert influence on meaning-making processes. The same/similar experience might be mediated and felt as positive or negative at different points of time and context depending on who is the interlocutor or addressee of a person. Positive and negative interpretations/positions of the same experience might coexist in the same self-structure. So, as the truth/morality is relative, so is the value of immigrants’ experiences. So, semiotic mediation is always (co-)constructive and leads to self-transformation in a very specific way due to the particular intercultural and intracultural experiences.



Interestingly, changes in the particular values and norms or other preferences do not necessarily mean change in ethnocultural identification (it is neither excluded. See Chap. 6), though. But even the case of changing ethnic identity and citizenship does not mean that a person will be able to completely erase native cultural knowledge or previous experiences as they will remain part of their memory and self-structure. Instead, proculturation leads to the innovative mixture of older and novel knowledge and experiences, leading to the construction of new semiotic signs, significations and forms of social positioning.

## Conclusions

This chapter considers the methodological principles of studying proculturation. It highlights the importance of taking an emic approach and “methodological cycle”. Fundamental qualitative features of proculturation are discussed that are considered as the basis for the elaboration of an appropriate phenomena-focused methodological framework. The developmental and constructive/imaginative nature of proculturation is particularly highlighted.

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