

The constitution of the dialogical self in adolescence: A systematic literature review

A constituição do self dialógico na adolescência: Uma revisão sistemática da literatura

La constitución del self dialógico en la adolescencia: Una revisión sistemática de la literatura

La constitution du self dialogique à l'adolescence : Une revue systématique de la littérature

 10.5020/23590777.rs.v25i3.e17226

Patrícia Rosa Lozado  

Holds a degree in Spanish Language and Literature from University of Brasília (2001) and a master's degree in Applied Linguistics from University of Brasília (2007). She is currently a doctoral candidate in the Graduate Program in Human and School Development (PGPDE) at University of Brasília (UnB) and a professor.

Sandra Ferraz de Castilho Dourado Freire  

Holds a PhD in Psychology from University of Brasília (UnB) (2008). She is an associate professor at University of Brasília in the field of Educational Psychology (Department of Theory and Foundations, School of Education) and in the Graduate Program in School Developmental Psychology. Her research interests lie at the interface between psychology and education, with an emphasis on human developmental processes and processes of change among individuals in educational settings, and are theoretically and epistemologically grounded in the Cultural Psychology approach.

Jane Farias Chagas-Ferreira  

Holds a PhD in Psychology from University of Brasília (UnB) (2008). She is an associate professor at UnB, affiliated with the Institute of Psychology, the Department of School and Developmental Psychology, and the Graduate Program in Developmental and School Psychology. She is a member of the research group Socioemotional Development, Creativity, and Talent in Multiple Contexts.

Abstract

This study consists of a systematic literature review aimed at analyzing academic articles published from 2012 to 2023 that used Dialogical Self Theory as a theoretical framework for research on adolescence. The results indicate that the number of publications in this field remains limited, highlighting the need for longitudinal, process-oriented research focusing on the dialogical self during early adolescence. Nevertheless, advances were identified in research on adolescence within the field of Cultural Psychology, particularly regarding human developmental processes.

Keywords: Dialogical Self Theory, adolescence, human development.

Resumo

O presente estudo consiste em uma revisão sistemática de literatura que tem por objetivo analisar artigos acadêmicos sobre a utilização da Teoria do Self Dialógico (TSD) como base teórica em pesquisas (em estudos) sobre a adolescência publicados de 2012 a 2023. Os resultados indicam que o número de trabalhos na área ainda é limitado, o que demonstra a necessidade de pesquisas que foquem no estudo do self dialógico na fase inicial da adolescência e que sejam de caráter longitudinal, centrando-se no processo. Contudo, evidenciou-se a evolução de investigações (no lugar de estudos) sobre adolescência na área da Psicologia Cultural, particularmente nos processos do desenvolvimento humano.

Palavras-chave: Teoria do Self Dialógico, adolescência, desenvolvimento humano.

Resumen

El presente estudio consiste en una revisión sistemática de la literatura que tiene como objetivo analizar artículos académicos sobre la utilización de la Teoría del Self Dialógico (TSD) como base teórica en investigaciones sobre la adolescencia publicadas entre 2012 y 2023. Los resultados indican que el número de trabajos en el área aún es limitado, lo que demuestra la necesidad de investigaciones que se centren en el estudio del self dialógico en la fase inicial de la adolescencia y que posean un carácter longitudinal, enfocándose en el proceso. No obstante, se evidenció una evolución de las investigaciones (en lugar de estudios) sobre adolescencia en el área de la Psicología Cultural, particularmente en los procesos del desarrollo humano.

Palabras clave: Teoría del Self Dialógico, adolescencia, desarrollo humano.

Résumé

La présente étude consiste en une revue systématique de littérature qui a pour objectif d'analyser des articles académiques sur l'utilisation de la théorie du Self dialogique (TSD) comme base théorique dans des recherches sur l'adolescence publiées de 2012 à 2023. Les résultats indiquent que le nombre de travaux dans ce domaine est encore limité, ce qui démontre la nécessité de recherches qui se concentrent sur l'étude du self dialogique au début de l'adolescence et qui soient à caractère longitudinal, en se centrant sur le processus. Cependant, l'évolution des recherches (au lieu d'études) sur l'adolescence dans le domaine de la Psychologie Culturelle a été mise en évidence, particulièrement dans les processus du développement humain.

Mots-clés : Théorie du Self Dialogique, adolescence, développement humain.

The study of the dialogical self system enables an understanding of psychological categories or mechanisms characteristic of human plasticity and the extraordinary capacity for change (Freire & Branco, 2016). Drawing on this theoretical framework, this systematic literature review aims to investigate how the relationship between adolescence and the constitution of the dialogical self has been discussed in academic research. Based on the theoretical contributions of Cultural Psychology to the study of adolescence, we argue for the need to deepen research on this developmental period and the constitution of its subjective processes, while also identifying potential gaps in the literature. To achieve this objective, we conducted a search of national and international databases. We subsequently sought to identify the main topics investigated, the fields in which the studies were published, the methodologies employed, and the theoretical approaches underpinning the research. Finally, we decided to include studies published between 2012 and 2023 to increase the number of publications analyzed and obtain a broader overview of research conducted in the field in recent years.

Considering Dialogical Self Theory (DST), particularly the development of positions during adolescence, our interest lies in identifying and analyzing, through a systematic literature review, how research has demonstrated the relationships between the constitution of the dialogical self and I-positions during adolescence. Freire and Branco (2016) argue that studying the dialogical self system can enable the characterization of psychological categories or mechanisms that represent human plasticity and the remarkable capacity for change through theoretical, conceptual, and methodological resources that emphasize the relational and plural nature of the self, highlighting the semiotic system and a developmental perspective centered on the dialogical principle.

Accordingly, through a review of scientific articles, this study seeks to understand how the configuration of the dialogical self and I-positions has been addressed during adolescence, such an intense period of human development. It also seeks to determine which elements and findings from this research contribute to processes of self-positioning and self-constitution during adolescence, thereby informing researchers' understanding of this topic. Understanding the academic literature on the subject, its findings and gaps, and identifying the best available evidence will provide guidance for future research. To this end, we address the theoretical assumptions of DST and the central aspects of adolescence and its development.

DST emerged from the convergence of the ideas of James (1890) and those of the Bakhtinian circle, whose work developed in different fields of knowledge, such as Psychology and Literary Studies, and within different theoretical traditions, including pragmatism and dialogism. The dialogical self can thus be understood as a concept situated at the intersection of these theoretical traditions (Hermans, 2001). According to Branco and Madureira (2008), rather than constituting a unified psychological structure, the dialogical self is a type of system shaped by powerful forces that promote change without spatial or temporal boundaries. It can therefore be conceived as a semiotic system constituted by different I-positions across space and time, which emerge and interact with different contexts, emotions, and relationships involving others. The self is characterized not as an entity but as a dialogical process (Hermans, 2001; Valsiner, 2021).

According to Hermans (2001), the self consists of a dynamic multiplicity of relatively autonomous I-positions and has a spatial nature expressed in the terms “position” and “positioning.” These terms suggest more dynamic and flexible referents than the traditional concept of “role.” A distinctive characteristic of the dialogical self is the combination of continuity and discontinuity, as well as unity and multiplicity. Furthermore, in contrast to the individualistic self, the dialogical self is based on the assumption that multiple I-positions can be occupied by the same person.

The dialogical self is “social,” not in the sense that an individual engages in social interactions with other people who exist externally, but in the sense that other people occupy positions within the multivoiced self; it is therefore described as a dynamic multiplicity of positions. Furthermore, it considers both the self and culture as dynamic systems situated within a field of tension between unity and multiplicity. DST operates through a map of I-positions, a theoretical system in which different positions relate to one another across the boundaries established to distinguish them, a notion borrowed from Mikhail Bakhtin’s literary theory. Each I-position provides the basis for multiple voices, constituting polyphony. Within this context, the set of voices emerging from the same I-position may itself be contradictory (Hermans, 2001; Valsiner, 2021).

Both childhood and adolescence are concepts that have been constituted and continue to develop in different ways across space and time, depending on the cultural conceptions of each society. According to sociocultural and economic factors, the age range legally delimiting adolescence encompasses approximately 10 to 19 years of age, with variations according to regional specificities (UNICEF, 2011). In Brazil, the legal and regulatory framework defines an adolescent as a person between 12 and 18 years of age (ECA, 1990). In recent years, research on adolescence has undergone paradigmatic changes. Broadly speaking, efforts have been made to move away from the hegemonic model of these developmental stages and toward a new, process-oriented model focused on interactions between individuals and their contexts.

Adolescence is a phenomenon associated with bodily changes that are directly related to processes of internalizing experiences and to the increasing complexity of the possibilities for acting as a subject in the world. Vygotsky (2018) argues that the primary characteristics of adolescence are related to the fullest development of higher psychological functions and the capacity to form more complex concepts. These developments enable individuals to achieve a greater understanding of both the world and their own behavior (Bicalho et al., 2022; Roncancio & Mattos, 2019; de Souza & Silva, 2018).

Based on an understanding of the subject–body unity within adolescents’ cultural development, de Souza and Silva (2018) argue that approaches seeking to universalize and naturalize adolescence are insufficient as analytical tools for understanding the complexity of this developmental period. Despite their contributions to understanding biological maturation, these perspectives reinforce the perpetuation of common-sense myths and stigmas portraying adolescents as inherently characterized by emotional dysregulation and disturbance, reflected in the popular Brazilian expression *aborrecência*, a pejorative play on words combining adolescence with annoyance, as though these were biologically inherent characteristics of adolescents. Incorporating historical and cultural factors into the analysis of this phenomenon helps deconstruct such myths and stigmas, enabling an understanding of the complexity of development in its entirety and supporting a conception of development as contradictory, dynamic, and singular while simultaneously historical, cultural, and universal.

During adolescence, the development of a body that differs both qualitatively and quantitatively from that of childhood gives rise to new subjective configurations. Cultural-historical theory transcends the dichotomy between crisis understood as a dramatic and negative process and maturation understood in terms of positive and uniform characteristics, giving rise to a qualitatively revolutionary perspective that does not conceive of adolescence as something predetermined or negative but rather as a developmental period that produces an entirely new form of psychological functioning. Vygotsky develops a critical theoretical account of age periodization and emphasizes historical-cultural criteria (de Souza & Silva, 2018).

The traditional developmental perspective, rooted in naturalizing, decontextualized, and normative conceptions that commonly characterize adolescence as a period of passage and linear transition into adulthood, should give way to dialogical perspectives capable of consolidating a new epistemology of adolescence, articulated with contemporary approaches to subjectivity, such as narrative psychology and the dialogical self perspective. Approaching adolescence either as a period dominated by passions and turmoil or as a superior expression of rationality has contributed to Developmental Psychology distancing itself from the realities and concerns of adolescents themselves, thereby disseminating a normative view of adolescence (Oliveira, 2006).

Methodology of the review study

The review search was initially conducted through the CAPES Journal Portal between May and July 2023. This repository was selected because it facilitates access to both national and international scientific literature, contains a large number of published studies, and provides access to other databases, such as Scopus and Web of Science (Almeida, 2022). The search terms used were “dialogical self” AND adolesc*, which yielded 109 articles, and “I positions” AND Adolesc*, which yielded 19 articles.

Following the search of the CAPES Journal Portal, the Scopus search employed the same terms. The descriptors “dialogical self” AND adolesc* yielded 48 articles, whereas the combination “I-positions” AND Adolesc* yielded 16

articles. To broaden the scope of the search, the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) database was also consulted because it provides access to education-related content; however, although the aforementioned terms were used, the search yielded no relevant results. In parallel, Sage Journals was also searched using the same terms. The search identified 46 articles using “dialogical self” AND adolesc* and 16 using “I positions” AND Adolesc*; however, none were selected because all were duplicates.

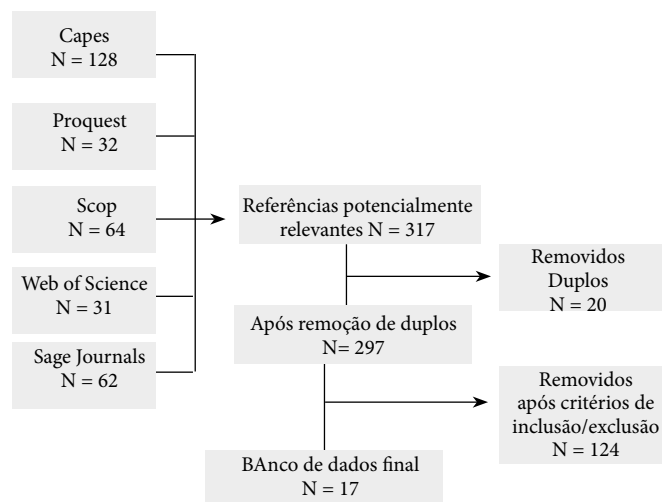
In ProQuest, the search yielded a total of 32 articles, of which 29 were retrieved using “dialogical self” AND adolesc* and three using “I positions” AND adolesc*. In Web of Science, 26 articles were identified using “dialogical self” AND adolesc*, four of which were excluded as duplicates; regarding the keywords “I positions” AND Adolesc*, five articles were identified. Thus, following searches of all the databases described above, 317 articles were initially retrieved. After removing 20 duplicates, 297 articles remained.

Regarding the study inclusion criteria, the following criteria were adopted: (a) initially, publications from 2018 to 2023; however, because an insufficient number of studies was identified, the scope was expanded to encompass the period from 2012 to 2023; (b) peer-reviewed articles only; (c) studies in the fields of Education and Psychology; (d) studies grounded in DST; (e) studies focusing on adolescence; and (f) publications in English, Portuguese, or Spanish only. The exclusion criteria were as follows: (a) age ranges outside adolescence; (b) studies not grounded in DST; (c) full text unavailable; and, finally, (d) gray literature or non-peer-reviewed publications.

After applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria, 124 articles remained, and their abstracts and theoretical frameworks were carefully reviewed. This process enabled more refined screening of the articles, particularly regarding their use of DST and the restriction to studies involving adolescents specifically. At this stage of the selection process, we conducted an overall critical analysis of the documents retrieved, examining study coherence, methodological quality, findings, and conclusions (Galvão & Ricarte, 2019). The review identified the fields of the journals publishing on the topic, the methodological approaches and methods employed, the types of studies, and the topics addressed by researchers, resulting in the final selection of 17 articles.

Figure 1

Research flow diagram



Results and Discussion

Regarding the published studies and the fields covered by the journals, the following distribution was observed: Psychology journals predominated (13 journals), followed by two journals in Education and two in the Social Sciences.

Regarding the types of research analyzed in this review, of the 17 articles examined, 13 were empirical studies, three were theoretical articles, and one was a documentary analysis. In terms of methodological approach, our investigation showed that 100% of the studies adopted a qualitative approach and employed various data collection methods. Among the 13 empirical studies, interviews and observations predominated (n = 7), followed by focus groups (n = 3), questionnaires (n = 1), analysis of oral and written narratives produced by participants (n = 3), and the monitoring and analysis of posts on the social networking platform Facebook (n = 1).

In the following section, we present the analysis of the literature review organized into thematic categories. This structure seeks to establish a dialogue between these empirical findings and the theoretical reflections developed throughout the study.

To systematize the selected studies more effectively and provide greater clarity regarding the topics most frequently addressed in the research, we organized the studies into categories. It is worth noting that, because of thematic overlap, some articles could have been classified into more than one category. In such cases, classification was based on the topic emphasized by the authors in the research objectives and on the findings reported. Based on the articles selected for the review, three analytical axes were established: (1) articles addressing changes in positioning or ruptures in the self ($n = 7$); (2) articles in which participants did not exhibit significant changes in positioning ($n = 4$); and (3) articles addressing relationships between identity-related issues and DST ($n = 6$).

Table 1

Analytical axes

1) Changes in positioning or ruptures in the self	2) Participants who did not exhibit significant changes in positioning	3) Relationships between identity and DST
Bicalho et al. (2022)	Andrade et al. (2017)	Ew et al. (2018)
Caetano et al. (2020)	Gomes et al. (2019)	Fork (2021)
Fecho (2013)	de Paula and Branco (2022)	Gomes and Dazzani (2013)
Gamsakhurdia (2018)	Prokopiou et al. (2012)	Meijl (2012)
Iriart and Bastos (2014)		Šehagić (2016)
Matos (2017)		Watzlawik (2014)
Roncancio and Matos (2019)		

1 Changes in positioning/ruptures in the self

In this category, the studies address changes in positioning or ruptures in the selves of the participating adolescents. Valsiner (2021) develops a particularly illustrative metaphor to explain the relationship between life and the dialogical self. In this sense, the author argues that life is a generalized form of theater, a continuous theatrical performance in which we are simultaneously actors, directors, and audience members, performing various roles. Thus, we simultaneously inhabit a multiplicity of roles that enables flexible innovations throughout our life course. Within this scenario, we continuously enter into social roles, constructing a heterogeneous and dynamic structure of the self. The self is dialogical and therefore requires a theatrical environment in which to negotiate the multiplicity of dialogues within itself and with its environment. The author argues that the dynamics of tensions among positions, which remain in continuous dialogue, may reach a point of rupture – a dialectical synthesis resulting in a new position – that subsequently finds its place within the heterogeneous system of the self. These are some of the points of rupture that constitute the focus of analysis in this category and fall within the scope of this systematic literature review.

Mattos (2017) analyzes the developmental transition of adolescence through the lens of DST, considering the transition from the end of the fifth grade to the seventh grade of elementary school. The study aimed to analyze the process of self-development during the transition from childhood to adolescence from a dialogical and cultural-semiotic perspective, focusing on transformations in the configurations of the self-system during a critical developmental period. The analysis centers on the dynamics of dialogical self-development at different points in time, seeking to demonstrate how the participant uses an iconic mode of self-signification that integrates verbal and nonverbal elements (drawings) during the transition to adolescence, thereby producing a semiotic regulation of experience capable of transforming the self-system. The findings and analysis presented by Mattos (2017) contribute to understanding major changes in positioning (for example, the transition from low self-esteem and shyness to self-assertive and confident behavior) that occur during the transition from childhood to adolescence and constitute a broader aspect of development.

In an empirical study portraying the trajectories of two adolescents, Roncancio and Mattos (2019) describe how research on adolescence has undergone paradigmatic changes in recent years, moving from a hegemonic model that emphasized developmental stages toward a new, process-oriented model centered on interactions between individuals and their contexts.

In their study, Roncancio and Mattos (2019) seek to contribute empirical evidence to the discussion and consolidation of the concept of “self-image.” Based on their findings, the authors conclude that participants’ experiences reflect tensions emerging from their Semiotic Affective Fields, defined as emotionally charged fields of meaning-making that regulate emotional processes. Through “self-image,” these adolescents internalize cultural values conveyed by cultural institutions or the media. “Self-image” thus becomes a process of development, creation, and innovation within the field of the self, enabling adolescents to project themselves into the future and orient their pathways toward it.

Caetano et al. (2020) present a participatory action research study in the field of Intercultural Education. The study aimed to analyze participatory processes and changes in the self associated with Intercultural Education and students' voice structures. Visible changes were identified during the most active period in which the projects were conducted. Drawing on DST, the authors explored, through dialogical and multivoiced spaces involving both internal and external voices, evidence of changes that emerged and were reflected in participants' ability to listen to themselves and to the "Other." Within this context, concepts such as Intercultural Education and Empowerment were interconnected, enabling students' voices to be heard and translated into action.

Iriart and Bastos (2014), in turn, sought to understand the configurations of the dialogical self across the developmental trajectories of young people living in conditions of social vulnerability. The study was grounded in semiotic and systemic perspectives and in the dialogical approach to human development, considering encounters with significant others and the mobility of networks of meaning during developmental transitions. The young participants' narratives indicated possibilities for resignifying critical events and constructing "psychological novelty." The authors concluded that narrative experience enabled the negotiation of I-positions, dialogically reconfiguring the self and broadening future perspectives and the pursuit of autonomy.

Fecho (2013) advocates literacy practices as a means of engaging in dialogue with oneself and with others. Drawing on a theoretical framework that examines the concepts of heteroglossia and the dialogical self, the author investigates the literacy practices of Isaac, a working-class adolescent diagnosed with bipolar disorder, and his attempts to make sense of the struggles in his life. By applying the theoretical framework of the dialogical self to Isaac's experiences, the researcher portrayed a young person who, although struggling with forces beyond his full control, was actively working to develop a dialogical understanding of the complexities of his life and to bring about changes in positioning. His responses to bipolar disorder often led him into an internal dialogue with I-positions to which he was simultaneously attracted and repelled.

In their discussion of homeschooling, Bicalho et al. (2022) conclude that school education enables unique forms of engagement with diversity, providing children and adolescents with multiple and varied opportunities for interactive exchanges that challenge and stimulate them. Within the family context, such interaction may be restricted to the same individuals and situations within the household, which is likely to reduce social belonging and limit exposure to the challenges inherent in children's and adolescents' interactions with others. Furthermore, the authors argue that restricting the learning process to the family environment may constitute an elitist and selective form of segregation available only to families with sufficient resources. According to their argument, schools guide the constitution of the self not only at the level of individual actions but also, and particularly, through the organization of the social actions of the "generalized other," creating space for new forms of expression and resignification. Schools therefore constitute a privileged setting for human development.

In the theoretical study conducted by Gamsakhurdia (2018), adaptive processes that develop through encounters with new cultural elements are reconsidered from a dialogical perspective, moving away from mechanistic and essentialist understandings of sociocultural transformations. Accordingly, the author proposes the term "proculturation" to emphasize the constructive and subjective nature of human adaptation to novelty and the continuous process of change and self-resignification. "Proculturation" occurs whenever a person encounters any form of novelty and is therefore an ongoing process. In summary, the author proposes avenues for integrating DST with Social Representation Theory.

Overall, studies addressing changes in positioning demonstrated participants' processes of "self-resignification," as well as important ruptures in positioning and the emergence of new perspectives for the future. Furthermore, they regarded the culture in which participants were immersed as an essential driving force of development and emphasized that culture and development are interdependent and maintain a bidirectional relationship (Vygotsky, 2018; Valsiner, 2014). Another important aspect is that most of the studies were grounded in semiotic perspectives and the dialogical approach to human development.

2) Participants who did not exhibit significant changes in positioning

This category appears to run counter to what the literature in the field generally proposes regarding the dynamics of the (re)construction or (re)signification of the self. Overall, rupture and development are expected to result from the constant dialogical tension among multiple voices; however, such tendencies were not observed in these studies. This was the category with the fewest studies, possibly because it does not represent the most common developmental trajectory during adolescence.

The study by Andrade et al. (2017) aimed to investigate the construction of self-narratives among adolescents. To this end, the authors used a dialogical exercise focused on the self as a methodological device, examining adolescents' awareness of the existence of internal conversations, their processes and dynamics, as well as their moral valence.

By mapping the flow of participants' self-narratives, Andrade et al. (2017) identified a distinctive topography characterized by intense dialogicality within a continuous flow of exchanges among voices, occurring in a unique manner

for each participant. Even so, the authors were able to confirm the assumption that the self seeks to maintain a sense of unity, even though this unity is not consolidated permanently because the self is continuously being updated.

No significant changes in participants' selves were identified in this study because the researchers were primarily interested in adolescents' perceptions of internal dialogue, contradictory thoughts about themselves, and moral valence. Thus, ruptures or changes were not the primary focus of the investigation.

Gomes et al. (2019) sought to understand the meanings associated with the school experience of an adolescent who had repeated a grade. The study was grounded in Cultural Psychology of Semiotic Dynamics and Dialogical Self Theory. The authors used the term "resistance to rupture" because the participant did not experience an essential transformation in their predominant I-position as an "excellent student," even after having to repeat the third year. The primary objective of the article was to analyze the meanings expressed in the adolescent's narratives throughout the schooling process in the context of grade repetition.

The authors reported that, when confronted with school failure, the participant experienced events that required decisions and rearrangements of their I-positions, alongside the emergence of new responsibilities arising from demands associated with present and future projections of the self. During this process, the adolescent silenced potentially negative voices related to the experience of failure and preserved the I-position of being an "excellent" student within the school context.

Prokopiou et al. (2012) employed a qualitative case study approach to investigate the dialogical processes through which two British-born siblings of Pakistani background constructed and negotiated their cultural identities. The study aimed to contribute to the advancement of DST as a conceptual framework applied to complex everyday phenomena, such as developmental changes in cultural identity. The analysis suggested that the young participants moved toward multivoiced cultural identities through continuous positioning and repositioning within their communities. In this context, the authors introduced the notion of hibernating I-positions as a resource for coping with rapid change, threats, and uncertainty. This concept enables DST to provide a more comprehensive and nuanced account of such situations.

de Paula and Branco (2022) addressed dialogue as a fundamental aspect of pedagogical practices; however, classroom realities tend to differ because they are not fully grounded in dialogical relationships. In their study, it was possible to identify that, despite the goals established by teachers, the activity they conducted adopted a monological practice, even though they valued a dialogical stance as a pedagogical principle. One of the key concepts proposed by de Paula and Branco (2022) was Cultural Canalization, which occurs through processes of communication and metacommunication among people and enables the continuous co-construction of meanings. The authors argue that the tensions and contradictions arising from these interactions demonstrate that good intentions, aspirations, and objectives do not always result in the promotion of dialogues and reflections capable of producing changes in positioning (I-positions) and affective dispositions toward prejudice.

Overcoming ruptures presupposes changes that act as catalysts for the emergence of new processes, ideas, and ways of feeling, thinking, and acting. Such ruptures and transitions represent a significant aspect of self-development because they are important not only for how individuals position themselves in relation to changes throughout life, but also in relation to inevitable events. Accordingly, resistance to rupture and transition, as in the cases described in the analyzed articles, requires at least a minimal dialogical reorganization of the psychological system and consequently indicates a self-regulatory process of the self (Gomes et al., 2019).

3) Relationship between identity and DST

The articles in this category are predominantly concerned with the constitution of participants' identities and with identity as the dialogical constitution of the self. The development of personal identity is understood as a relational achievement that exists only through dialogue with Others, and with oneself, without which it cannot be established (Hermans, 2004).

Šehagić (2016) investigated how memories of war persist in contemporary interethnic and interreligious relationships among adolescents. In this context, DST provided the basis for analyzing the dilemmas and ambiguities emerging from the multiple identifications of Muslim adolescents whose coexistence with Bosnian Serbs had become part of everyday life. The author employed a concept of identity focused on the dynamic relationship between the individual and the community, arguing that DST constitutes an essential framework for understanding individual identifications and the self. The theory was also used to connect these concepts with the narratives of Bosnian adolescents. The primary research question in this ethnographic study concerned how the collective trauma experienced by the Bosniak ethnic group influenced adolescents' identity formation, as well as their ethno-religious relationships with people of Serbian ethnicity.

During an ethnographic investigation involving a youth group within a Jewish community, Fork (2021) examined the contextualized construction of Jewish identities, analyzing how religion and culture interconnect in adolescent identity formation. By approaching identity formation as a holistic mode of learning, the author identified two socially embedded trajectories: the appropriation of aspects of Judaism taught within the youth group and belonging to the Jewish collective. Within the latter, the author distinguished three subprocesses: (1) forming and evaluating social representations of Jewish

people, (2) attributing “Jewishness” to oneself, and (3) experiencing community life. By interweaving religion and culture, the author investigated how the identities of adolescents in the group were formed and, for this purpose, articulated several theoretical frameworks, including DST.

In a theoretical study, Watzlawik (2014) analyzed the developmental trajectories of adolescent graffiti artists in relation to a graffiti-artist identity facet, showing how this particular facet may be replaced by others over time. Adolescents and young adults therefore do not merely discover or choose a particular group and, along with it, a particular identity facet; they may also refine or restructure this facet over time. The central objective of the article was to analyze the identity formation of adolescent graffiti artists through an examination of Hedegaard’s (2014) work, drawing parallels with other authors. An individual’s identity and self-concept, in addition to being defined in different ways, may also be described from the perspective of Hermans’ (2001) DST, in which multiple voices represent different facets of the individual. Identity facets not only contradict one another but also influence one another when they are not contradictory.

Continuing this line of analysis, van Meijl (2012) sought to examine how the identities of adolescents raised in multicultural societies were constituted within and through cultural differences. More specifically, the study explored how multiple forms of difference, such as traditional and postmodern cultural expressions, intersected within individuals’ selves. Empirically, the study examined the hybridization of multicultural adolescent identities through two case studies conducted in Pacific societies. Māori and Tongan adolescents shared considerable difficulty expressing their cultural identities in terms of traditional cultural elements, such as language and ritual, yet they were unable to disregard their ethnicity and therefore attempted to recombine traditional and postmodern elements within the cultural mix of their everyday lives.

From this perspective, intercultural contact gives rise to a multiplicity of positions or cultural voices that converge within young people’s selves. This phenomenon demonstrates that adolescents growing up in multicultural environments are immersed in a continuous, multidimensional, everyday process of negotiation between the so-called “traditional” environment at home and the cultural practices of the new society beyond the boundaries of the family.

Ew et al. (2018), in turn, aimed to understand how digital spaces enable adolescents to construct self-narratives, thereby highlighting new forms of contemporary sociability. The participants were six adolescents aged 16-18 years, and the research process involved observing their activity on Facebook and collecting information through individual interviews. The analysis focused on adolescents’ narratives and discursive production, organized into the following axes: communication economy and strategies; relationships of belonging and affiliation; and authorship and authenticity in narrative construction. The findings indicated that adolescents’ interactions and identifications in digital contexts occurred dialogically, articulating relationships of belonging, authorship, and authenticity. Furthermore, the possibilities for identification were related to a specular context characterized by spectacle and exposure, in which the audience constituted a central basis for content choices and the maintenance of certain online behaviors.

Gomes and Dazzani (2013) made a relevant theoretical contribution regarding the conception of the self and dialogical processes, namely heterodialogue (with others, including imagined others) and self-dialogue within the self itself. The self is an entity organized through a process of dialogical relationships among its components. In contrast to the notion of an individual self, the authors discuss the dialogical self as grounded in the assumption that multiple I-positions can be occupied by the same individual. In this study, identity formation is understood as an activity, i.e., as a complex and holistic learning process extending throughout the life course and taking on a particular expression during adolescence, which research on adolescent narratives seeks to elucidate. Schools therefore provide a relational space in which dialogues produced by multiple actors contribute to the configuration of what the authors refer to as the educational self.

Within DST, identity is defined as a multiplicity of voices representing I-positions that are constantly engaged in dialogical relationships (Fork, 2021). It is important to note that, in most studies included in this analytical axis, the developmental process was understood as the capacity for resignification and for the emergence of new forms of identification and positioning.

Final considerations

The objective of this systematic literature review was to analyze articles addressing DST as applied to adolescence. Although most studies support the conception of the self as multiple, polyphonic, and resulting from dialogue, emphasizing its importance within the context of human development (Ew et al., 2017; Ew et al., 2018; Fork, 2021; Gomes et al., 2019; Iriart & Bastos, 2014; Mattos, 2019; Roncancio & Mattos, 2019; van Meijl, 2012), few studies investigated or emphasized adolescents’ agency, authorial voice, and active role in processes of self-resignification and self-construction (Caetano et al., 2020; Ew et al., 2017; Gomes & Dazzani, 2013).

Oliveira (2006) emphasized that, in the absence of a consistent body of reflection within Psychology specifically addressing adolescence, understandings of adolescents had been mediated by theoretical and methodological perspectives from other fields, such as medicine and demographic studies, often without sufficient attention to interdisciplinary dialogue. This tendency contributed to the naturalization of human processes and to the dissemination of perspectives that separated adolescence from the social practices through which it is constituted. However, this review demonstrated that this scenario

has been changing: a substantial proportion of the analyzed studies showed considerable progress regarding the incorporation of Cultural Psychology into research and conceptualizations of human development. The publications identified were concentrated primarily in Psychology journals, demonstrating advances and a certain degree of independence from other fields of study, although this remains an area with substantial interdisciplinary potential.

We emphasize the need for further studies exploring the dynamics of transformations and affective-semiotic processes involved in the production and signification of the self, as in the studies by Mattos (2019), Ew et al. (2017), and Iriart and Bastos (2014). Freire and Branco (2016) similarly argue that development occurs through irreversible changes in the organization of an individual's psychological functioning, which become evident in their activities, ways of acting, and modes of positioning. Thus, the development of the dialogical self-system should not be treated in an objectified manner or as a psychological entity, because when attention is directed toward a given final state of the organism or individual, the processes involved in its emergence and its possibilities for transformation cannot be adequately captured. In this sense, the developmental perspective prioritizes the study of processes occurring in real time over arguments based on the products of such processes. This leads us to understand longitudinal investigation of these processes as the most appropriate way to advance research of this kind, as exemplified by Mattos (2019).

Finally, this review indicates that the number of studies emphasizing the importance of DST during adolescence remains limited, particularly longitudinal research examining early adolescence, a period characterized by extensive transitions, changes, development, and processes of self-(re)signification. Accordingly, further research addressing this developmental period is imperative. Studies of the dialogical self have predominantly been conducted with adults (Novaes & Oliveira, 2023; Bell & Das, 2011; Alastair & Mollstedt, 2022; Coakley, 2014; Gfeller, 2023; Shan et al., 2022; Ghaempanah & Khapova, 2023; Henry, 2016, 2019; O'Sullivan-Lago & de Abreu, 2010; Silva et al., 2022; Silva & Branco, 2019), focusing on interactions among different I-positions and on changes in the self as a semiotic self-system across a wide variety of adult experiences and contexts.

References

- Alastair, H., & Mollstedt, M. (2022) Centrifugal–centripetal dynamics in the dialogical self: A case study of a boundary experience in teacher education. *Journal of Constructivist Psychology*, 35(2), 795-814. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10720537.2021.1889423>
- Andrade, S. E. R., Castro, G. T., & Bones, R. K. (2017). Dialogicidade e contradições nas narrativas de si: Estudo de casos múltiplos com adolescentes. *Athenea Digital. Revista de Pensamiento e Investigación Social*, 17(3), 29-52. <https://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=53753454002>
- Ghaempanah, B., & Khapova, S. N. (2023) Gender inequality in academia from the perspective of the dialogical self: beyond ‘autonomous men’ and ‘relational women’. *Gender and Education*, 35 (6-7), 605-622. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2023.2242367>
- Barbosa, L. M. T., & Facci, M. G. D. (2018). Contribuições da psicologia histórico-cultural para o ensino médio: Conhecendo a adolescência. *Psicologia da Educação*, 47, 47-55. <https://doi.org/10.5935/2175-3520.20180017>
- Bell, N. J., & Das, A. (2011). Emergent organization in the dialogical self: Evolution of a “both” ethnic identity position. *Culture & Psychology*, 17(2), 241-262. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354067X11398312>
- Bicalho, R. N. M., Silva, G. J., & Oliveira, M. C. S. L. (2022). Processos de socialização e constituição do self: Reflexões sobre homeschooling. *Arquivos Brasileiros de Psicologia*, 74, e014. <http://doi.org/10.36482/1809-5267.ARP-2022v74.19628>
- Branco, A., & Madureira, A. F. (2008). Dialogical self in action: The emergence of self-positions among complex and cultural dimensions. *Estudios de Psicología*, 29(3), 319-332. <http://doi.org/10.1174/021093908786145377>
- Brasil. Lei n. 8.069, de 13 de julho de 1990. (1990). Dispõe sobre o Estatuto da Criança e do Adolescente e dá outras providências. Presidência da República. https://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/leis/18069.htm
- Caetano, A. P., Freire, I. P., & Machado, E. B. (2020). Student voice and participation in intercultural education. *Journal of New Approaches in Educational Research*, 9, 57-73. <http://doi.org/10.7821/naer.2020.1.458>

- Chen, S., Zhang, L. J., & Parr, J. M. (2022). Autoring selves in a language teaching: A dialogic approach to language teacher psychology. *Frontiers Psychology*, 13, 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.839152>
- Coakley, L. (2014). Racialized inequality, anti-racist strategies and the workings of the ‘dialogical self’: A case study in the shifting construction of migrant identity in Ireland. *Irish Journal of Sociology*, 22(1), 51-66. <https://doi.org/10.7227/IJS.22.1.4>
- Duff, P. A. (2019). Social dimensions and processes in second language acquisition: Multilingual socialization in transnational contexts. *The Modern Language Journal*, 103(S1), 6-22. <https://doi.org/10.1111/modl.12534>
- Ew, R. A. S., Hamann, C., Gomes, G. A., Pizzinato, A., & Rocha, K. B. (2018). Mídias sociais: Construção de narrativas de si de adolescentes. *Psicologia & Sociedade*, 30, 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.1590/1807-0310/2018v30169654>
- Gfeller, F. (2023). Difficulties in positioning as vegan: Two distinctions to examine positioning. *Journal of Constructivist Psychology*, 37(4), 369-386. <http://doi.org/10.1080/10720537.2023.2242534>
- Fecho, B. (2013). Literacy practice and the dialogical self: Isaac making meaning. *Journal of Constructivist Psychology*, 26(2), 127-136. <http://doi.org/10.1080/10720537.2013.759028>
- Freire, S. F. C. D., & Branco, A. U. (2016). A teoria do self dialógico em perspectiva. *Psicologia: Teoria e Pesquisa*, 32(1), 25-33. <https://doi.org/10.1590/0102-37722016012426025033>
- Fork, S. (2021). On becoming a ‘real’ Jew: An ethnography of adolescents’ identity formation in a Jewish community in Germany. *Culture & Psychology*, 27(1), 52–66. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354067X20922515>
- Galvão, M. C. B., & Ricarte, I. L. M. (2019). Revisão sistemática da literatura: Conceituação, produção e publicação. *Logeion: Filosofia da Informação*, 6(1), 57-73. <https://doi.org/10.21728/logeion.2019v6n1.p57-73>
- Gamsakhurdia, V. (2018). Adaptation in a dialogical perspective—From acculturation to proculturation. *Culture & Psychology*, 24(4), 545-559. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354067X18791977>
- Gomes, R. C., & Dazzani, M. V. M. (2013). As narrativas e a constituição do self educacional na adolescência. *Revista Entreideias: Educação, Cultura e Sociedade*, 2(2), 169-184. <https://doi.org/10.9771/2317-1219rf.v2i2.7669>
- Gomes, R. C., Dazzani, M. V. M., & Marsico, G. (2019). Resistência à ruptura no self diante da experiência do fracasso escolar: Estudo de caso de uma adolescente. *Avances en Psicología Latinoamericana*, 37(3), 407-420. <http://dx.doi.org/10.12804/revistas.urosario.edu.co/apl/a.7878>
- Hedegaard, M. (2014). Exploring tension and contradictions in youth’s activity of painting graffiti. *Culture & Psychology*, 20(3), 387–403. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354067X14542526>
- Henry, A. (2016). Conceptualizing teacher identity as a complex dynamic system: The inner dynamics of transformations during a practicum. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 67(4), 291-305. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487116655382>
- Henry, A. (2019) A drama of selves: Investigating teacher identity development from dialogical and complexity perspectives. *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching*, 9(2), 263-285. <https://pressto.amu.edu.pl/index.php/ssllt/article/view/12731>
- Hermans, H. J. M. (2001). The dialogical self: Toward a theory of personal and cultural positioning. *Culture & Psychology*, 7(3), 243–281. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354067X0173001>
- Hermans, H. J. M. (2004). The dialogical self: Between exchange and power. In Hermans, H. J. M., & G. Dimaggio (Eds.), *The dialogical self in psychotherapy* (pp. 13-28). Brunner-Routledge.

- Hermans, H. J. M. (2012). Dialogical self theory and the increasing multiplicity of I-positions in a globalizing society: An introduction. In H. J. M. Hermans (Ed.), *Applications of dialogical self theory: New directions for child and adolescent development*, (n. 137, pp. 1–21). Jossey-Bass.
- Iriart, M. F., & Bastos, A. C. S. (2014). Identidades narrativas: Construindo sentidos na travessia da juventude. *Fractal: Revista De Psicologia*, 26(1), 71–88. <https://doi.org/10.1590/S1984-02922014000100007>
- Koller, S. H., Couto, M. C. P. P., & Hohendorff, J. V. (Orgs.). (2014) *Manual de Produção Científica*. Penso.
- Novaes, R. E., & Oliveira, M. C. S. L. (2023) The impact of non-normative academic trajectories of higher education students over their self-development. *Hu Arenas* 6, 292–308. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42087-021-00217-y>
- Mata, R., Josef, A. K., & Hertwig, R. (2016). Propensity for risk taking across the life span and around the globe. *Psychological Science*, 27(2), 231–243. <http://doi.org/10.1177/0956797615617811>
- Mattos, E. (2019). Desenvolvimento do self e os processos imaginativos na transição para a adolescência: Um estudo de caso. *Avances en Psicología Latinoamericana*, 37(3), 421–434. <https://doi.org/10.12804/revistas.urosario.edu.co/apl/a.8181>
- Oliveira, M. C. S. L. (2006). Identidade, narrativa e desenvolvimento na adolescência: Uma revisão crítica. *Psicologia em Estudo*, 11(2), 427–436. <http://repositorio.unb.br/handle/10482/26751>
- O’Sullivan-Lago, R., & de Abreu, G. (2010). Maintaining continuity in a cultural contact zone: Identification strategies in the dialogical self. *Culture & Psychology*, 16(1), 73–92. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354067X09353207>
- de Paula, L. D., & Branco, A. U. (2022). Desconstrução de preconceitos na escola: O papel das práticas dialógicas. *Estudos de Psicologia*, 39. 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.1590/1982-0275202039e200216>
- Prokopiou, E., Cline, T., & de Abreu, G. (2012). “Silent” monologues, “loud” dialogues and the emergence of hibernated I-positions in the negotiation of multivoiced cultural identities. *Culture & Psychology*, 18(4), 494–509. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354067X12456885>
- Roncancio, M., & Mattos, E. (2019). Self-imaging: Beyond children’s and adolescents’ self-image. *Studies in Psychology*, 40(1), 1-29. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02109395.2018.1565028>
- de Souza, C., & Silva, D. N. H. (2018). Adolescência em debate: Contribuições teóricas à luz da perspectiva Histórico-cultural. *Psicologia em Estudo*, 23, 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.4025/psicolestud.v23.e35751>
- Šehagić, M. (2016). How a collective trauma influences ethno-religious relations of adolescents in present-day Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina. *Social Inclusion*, 4(2), 133-143. <https://doi.org/10.17645/si.v4i2.497>
- da Silva, V. R. B., de Oliveira, M. C. S. L., Branco, A. M. C. U. de A., & Flores, E. P. (2022). Processos Dialógicos na Eja: Refletindo a partir da psicologia cultural. *Psicologia Escolar e Educacional*, 26, 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.1590/2175-35392022230383>
- da Silva, M. O., & Branco, A. U. (2019). Obesity, prejudice, self and culture: A longitudinal case study. *Paideia*, 29, 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.1590/1982-4327e2926>
- Fundo das Nações Unidas para a Infância. (2011). *Situação mundial da infância 2011: Adolescência, uma fase de oportunidades*.
- Valsiner, J. (2014a). *An invitation to cultural psychology*. Sage.
- Valsiner, J. (2014b). Needed for cultural psychology: Methodology in a new key. *Culture & Psychology*, 20(1), 3-30. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354067X13515941>

van Meijl, T. (2012). Multicultural adolescents between tradition and postmodernity: Dialogical self theory and the paradox of localization and globalization. In Hermans, H. J. (Ed.), *Applications of Dialogical Self Theory: New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development* (n. 137, pp. 39–52). Jossey-Bass.

Vygotsky, L. S. (2018). *Sete aulas de L. S. Vigotski sobre os fundamentos da pedagogia*. E-papers.

Watzlawik, M. (2014). The “art” of identity development-Graffiti painters moving through time and space. *Culture & Psychology*, 20(3), 404-415. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354067X14542531>

How to cite:

Lozado, P. R., Freire, S. F. C. D., & Chagas-Ferreira, J. F. (2025). The constitution of the dialogical self in adolescence: A systematic literature review. *Revista Subjetividades*, 25(3), e17226. <https://doi.org/10.5020/23590777.rs.v25i3.e17226>

Correspondence address:

Patrícia Rosa Lozado
E-mail: patricialozado@yahoo.com.br

Sandra Ferraz de Castilho Dourado Freire
E-mail: sandra.ferraz@gmail.com

Jane Farias Chagas-Ferreira
E-mail: janefcha@gmail.com



Received on: 01/18/2024.

Accepted on: 10/23/2025.