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Maria C. D. P. Lyra • Marina Assis Pinheiro
Editors

Cultural Psychology as Basic Science

Dialogues with Jaan Valsiner

 Springer

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ISSN 2192-8363
SpringerBriefs in Psychology
ISSN 2626-6741
ISSN 2192-8371 (electronic)
ISSN 2626-675X (electronic)
SpringerBriefs in Psychology and Cultural Developmental Science
ISBN 978-3-030-01466-7
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-01467-4>
ISBN 978-3-030-01467-4 (eBook)

Library of Congress Control Number: 2018962005

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This Springer imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Switzerland AG
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

Preface of the Series Editors

Cultural Psychology: A New Science of the Human Nature

This book, thoughtfully edited by Maria Lyra and Marina Pinheiro, acknowledges the fruitful discourse between Jaan Valsiner and several generations of Brazilian researchers over the last several decades. The backbone of this work is built on three of Dr. Valsiner's previous texts, considered to be milestones of the most advanced reflections in the field of Cultural Psychology of Dynamic Semiosis, and the works of respondents who commented on and expanded Dr. Valsiner's thoughts. At the soul of this volume is a discussion of the special nature of what Cultural Psychology is, beyond the dialogical formation of these dedicated young scholars commenting on the three foundational papers.

This effort to define Cultural Psychology ties together all the contributions of the current volume as well as of its predecessors (Marsico & Valsiner, 2018; Valsiner, Marsico, Chaudhary, Sato & Dazzani, 2016; Raudsepp, 2017). However, what do we mean by "basic" here? Has it something to do with the investigation of the elementary component of psychological phenomena? Not at all!

The human psyche is complex, subjective, and meaningful. It cannot be explained by causal mechanisms of lower levels of organization (Valsiner, Marsico, Chaudhary, Sato & Dazzani, 2016). In the pages and chapters to follow, we delve into Cultural Psychology as a science of human forms of making oneself in one's environment and constructing meaning.

As the editors point out in the first chapter:

The core of this perspective – conceived as a science of the universality of culture – is the semiotic dynamics that is constitutive of selves and cultural environment. The focus is on the high mental functions that include many human activities that have been neglected by psychology in present days, like the role of the body, all forms of art, music, rhythms and cadences, taste and smell, silence, overwhelming information, etc. (2018, p. 1)

The dialogue between Valsiner and the other contributors in this volume has a focal point: the human as culture maker, constantly striving for the meaning of experiences *that are not yet here but are coming*.

According to Valsiner—moving forward from the time-honored semiotic traditions of Charles Sanders Peirce—the core of the human psyche entails the simple feature that:

...human beings make signs, use them to organize their lives to guide their move to the future, and abandon these signs when these are no longer necessary. Signs “stand in” for something (else than they themselves) in some capacity, and for some purpose. They are made to do this by the sign-makers—human beings—who act in order to “fit in” with the constantly changing environment. (2018, p. 518)

Yet, how should we study the person’s feeling, thinking, and doing in our complex, mutable world? How do we keep the complexity of human conduct without reducing it to its subdimensions? How do we get generalized knowledge from the most obvious acts of everyday life? The goal of Cultural Psychology as a basic science is in the search for universal knowledge that goes from systemic analyses of single case to the generalized contexts of the abstracted features (Nedergaard, Valsiner & Marsico, 2015; Valsiner, 2016).

This is the theoretical and methodological preoccupation of Dr. Valsiner and his interlocutors. This book aims to offer a holistic and innovative way of dealing with the complexity of the human psyche. In this vein, memory *and* imagination, mundane *and* aesthetic, and construction *and* deconstruction are treated as wholes and become the arenas of semiosis. The dialogue among the authors of this volume helps to foster this theoretical model even further by also including methodological stances.

Cultural Psychology as Basic Science: Dialogues with Jaan Valsiner focuses, then, on the universal nature of context interdependency of psychological knowledge. The reader will be shown how generalized knowledge of psychological phenomena emerges from apparently impossible conditions for abstraction, that of the irreversibility of time and the context dependency of psyche.

Salvador, Brazil

Giuseppina Marsico

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About the Editors

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Marina Assis Pinheiro is Professor of Cognitive Psychology at the Federal University of Pernambuco (UFPE). She coordinates the research group Psychology of Creative Processes. She is especially interested in the following subjects: creativity and imagination, art and psychology, language and subjectivity, and culture and singularity.

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Gabriel Fortes Macêdo received his M.A. and Ph.D. in Cognitive Psychology from the Federal University of Pernambuco (Brazil) with emphasis on Argumentation, Learning and Instruction, and Cognitive Development. He is currently teaching at the Faculdade de Tecnologia de Alagoas (FAT-AL) classes on Human-Machine Interaction and Cognitive Neuroscience. His research includes argumentative discourse, dialogic reasoning, reflective-thinking development, and classroom design.

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Her research interests include life course development, musical experiences, adoption, and cultural psychology. She also works and develops research as a volunteer at a group of study and adoption support.

Jaan Valsiner is a cultural psychologist with a consistently developmental axiomatic base that is brought to analyses of any psychological or social phenomena. He is the Founding Editor (1995) of the Sage journal, *Culture & Psychology*. From 2013 to 2018, he was the Niels Bohr Professor of Cultural Psychology at Aalborg University, Denmark, where he continues his research on cultural psychology, in combination with collaboration with the University of Luxembourg and Sigmund Freud Privatuniversität Wien in Austria and in Berlin. He has published and edited more than 40 books, the most pertinent of which are *The Guided Mind* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), *Culture in Minds and Societies* (New Delhi: Sage, 2007), *An Invitation to Cultural Psychology* (London: Sage, 2014), and *Ornamented Lives* (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, 2018). He has been awarded the *Alexander von Humboldt Prize* of 1995 in Germany and the *Hans-Kilian-Preis* of 2017 for his interdisciplinary work on human development. Previously while working in the United States, he was a recipient of a *Senior Fulbright Lecturing Award* in Brazil, 1995–1997. He has been a Visiting Professor in Brazil, Japan, Australia, Estonia, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands. Since 2017 he is a *Foreign Member of the Estonian Academy of Sciences*.