Psicologia: Teoria e Pesquisa
2023, v.39, e39308

DOI: https://doi.org/10.1590/0102.3772e39308.en

School and Developmental Psychology

Queer Theory and Dialogical Self Theory: Considerations on Human Development

Carina Borgatti Moura* & Maria Cláudia Santos Lopes Oliveira

Universidade de Brasília, Brasília, DF, Brasil

ABSTRACT – The present study presents an exercise in a dialogue between queer theory and Dialogical Self Theory (DST) as theoretical support for research on the impacts of the gender positioning of LGBTI+ subjects on the development of the self. Queer theory inspires dialogical psychology to include in its notion of self the radical sociability of the subject together with the individuality that it makes possible, in addition to pointing to the importance of the particularities of the development of subjects considered deviant. In recent studies, DST moves in this direction by proposing a metaphor of the self as a democratic society, considering the obstacles imposed by differences in the social context. This perspective offers tools for investigations into the microgenesis of subversion.

KEYWORDS: human development, Dialogical Self Theory, gender, queer theory

Teoria Queer e Teoria do Self Dialógico: Considerações sobre Desenvolvimento Humano

RESUMO – Este trabalho apresenta um exercício de diálogo entre a Teoria *Queer* e a Teoria do *Self* Dialógico (TSD) como sustentação teórica para investigação sobre os impactos do posicionamento de gênero de sujeitos LGBTI+ no desenvolvimento do *self*. A Teoria *Queer* inspira a psicologia dialógica a incluir em sua noção de *self* a sociabilidade radical do sujeito juntamente com a individualidade que ela torna possível, além de apontar para a importância das particularidades do desenvolvimento de sujeitos considerados desviantes. Em trabalhos recentes, a TSD caminha nessa direção, ao propor uma metáfora do s*elf* como uma sociedade democrática, levando em conta os obstáculos impostos pelas diferenças no contexto social. Essa perspectiva oferece ferramentas para investigações sobre a microgênese da subversão.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: desenvolvimento humano, Teoria do *Self* Dialógico, gênero, Teoria *Queer*

* E-mail: carina.borgatti@gmail.com
■ Submetido: 21/09/2021; Aceito: 21/04/2022.

Violence against the LGBTI+ public is a matter of extreme concern with alarming numbers even nowadays. In a report that gathers information from ten countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, the LGBTI SinViolencia Network (Rede LGBTI SinViolencia, 2019) reports that, between 2014 and 2019, the sum of murders in nine countries[1] reached the number of 1,300. This number corresponds to the death of one LGBTI+ person per day in the region[2]. Given this scenario, it is possible to see that, although gender studies and the LGBTI+ movement have gained strength in recent years, LGBTI+ people are still at great vulnerability and risk, making it urgent to investigate how this reality of violence reverberates in subjectivities and, as a result, how psychology has been treating the theme.

According to Lopes de Oliveira and Madureira (2014), even amid a background of intense critical debate, the dialogue between psychology and gender studies remains modest and its deepening is very important for the strengthening of the critical paradigm in psychology. Regarding developmental psychology, such dialogue seems especially important, since this area is devoted to studying the mutual influences of personal and sociocultural structures on the processes of change in mental life and personal conduct (Lopes de Oliveira & Madureira, 2014). The present study understands human development from the dialogical perspective (Lopes de Oliveira et al., 2020), which cherishes a relational and socially anchored view of psychological functioning, in which subjectivity (or self*)* emerges in concrete affective-semiotic and activity contexts, whose meaning is constructed in dialogue with culture. Subjectivity is constituted, therefore, by internal and external factors, which act dynamically and are capable of transformation by the subject's actions. Among these factors are social values and demands regarding gender and sexual orientation. In the present article, the objective is to contribute to the debate on gender and subjectivity, within the scope of critical developmental psychology, from the approximation and tensioning between the study of human development from the perspective of the dialogical self (Hermans et al., 2017; Hermans, 2018; Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010; Lopes de Oliveira, 2020) and queer studies (Butler, 2011, 2018; Miskolci, 2007; Preciado, 2007, 2011).

Why should one seek this approach? To deepen points of contact and explore tensioning. As post-identity perspectives, DST and queer theory start from the observation that identity politics somehow reinforce power relations and binarism that, in turn, hierarchize and can imprison subjects in dichotomies that fail to contemplate many human experiences. Both theories conceive the subject as in a constant construction of their relationship with the others, through language and communicative processes. Thus, the important relationship of the interdependence of the subject with culture is highlighted, providing space for the possibilities of transformation.

Human development studies from the perspective of dialogical self can be enriched by argumentations of queer theory as, according to Barcinski & Kalia (2005), they still need to consider in a more profound way the social structures and broader historical aspects within which the positions of the self (trans) form themselves. Similarly, gender studies and the feminist perspective are useful to the developmental psychology of dialogical base by offering a more inclusive alternative to identity, while valuing a notion of self that emphasizes multiplicity and constant transformation, without minimizing its totality and, especially, the influence exerted by the social environment in its construction. Queer theory inspires, therefore, dialogical psychology to include in its notion of self the radical sociability of the subject together with the individuality that it makes possible (Stam, 2003, p.87). Finally, queer theory rejects the emphasis on the normalizing processes of human development and points to the importance of the particularities of subjects considered deviant, by calling attention to the subjective impact of obstacles built by forces of power that hierarchize subjects and that can limit their capacity for dialogue and resistance.

DST has also been following this direction in recent studies. Hermans (Hermans et al., 2017; Hermans, 2018), for example, considering the characteristics of the contemporary world—increasingly globalized, with more permeable borders, and with an increase of conflicts and differences in the social context—proposes the metaphor of the self as a democratic society, by conceiving that it also increases the differences within the self, imposes obstacles on the subjects, and demands a greater dialogical capacity.

Queer perspective offers tools for studies on the microgenetic processes involved in the experiences of subjects considered abnormal and excluded from gender norms. A question widely debated in queer studies turns to what factors lead LGBTI+ subjects to resistance, to positioning outside of hegemonic identities, and against social expectations. In this regard, we believe that an investigation based on DST offers instruments to identify external and internal factors that promote a developmental reorganization in the self and means to understand the configuration of the self in its relationship with culture, in the face of processes of resistance to normativity.

With such a debate, therefore, we also intend to contribute to the construction of a psychology that makes self-criticism about its historical role in the production of truths, supposedly universal, and in the essentialization of sexualities based on binarism such as male/female and heterosexual/homosexual (Nardelli & Ferreira, 2015; Peres, 2013).

1 The countries included in the present report are Colombia, Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Peru, Bolivia, Dominican Republic, and Paraguay.

2 Data from Brazil are published later, but the approximate numbers reported cite about 1,650 LGBTI people murdered in the aforementioned five-year period.

DIALOGICAL SELF THEORY

DST (Hermans et al., 1992) is one of the contemporary psychological theories that emerged as a result of recent transformations in social sciences, which left behind the Cartesian understanding and started to think of the individual in relational terms and identity as provisional, in a continuous process of development (Gergen, 2006). Overcoming modern individualism and rationalism and contrasting with the Cartesian subject, the dialogical self is polyphonic and embodied, since it is always tied to a particular positioning in time and space.

This approach reflects a social understanding of the self based on dialogue and otherness, in contrast to the role of cognition in the Cartesian conception. DST integrates dialogical epistemology (Lopes de Oliveira et al., 2020), which understands the human being in its complexity, in a process of constant integration, highlighting the relationship with the other and with the sociocultural reality in the construction of oneself. Specifically, the conception of personal identity, or self, in the DST perspective, emerges from a composition between the theory of the self of William James (1842-1910), the symbolic interactionism of George Hebert Mead (1863-1931), and the dialogism of Michael Bakhtin (1895-1975).

DST brings the arena of social interactions to the self, conceiving it as a dynamic structure, a system that is constantly reconfigured in social practices and which is constituted of different and relatively autonomous "positions of the self" (I-positions). These positions are like characters, each with its own voice, story, and experiences. Thus, "I as a mother," "I as a daughter", and "I as a researcher", for example, are parts of the self, which are in constant reorganization in space and time. Among them, the self (I) has the freedom to move, in a positioning process that involves both cooperation and competition between positions that take place in specific contexts (Hermans, 2001). The relationship between the distinct positions of the self is dialogical and the exchange of information and different perspectives make up the configuration of the self, at a given moment. The structure, however, is not chaotic, there is a hierarchy between the positions, that is, some can dominate others (Hermans, 2001; Hermans et al., 1992).

In more recent studies, Hermans (Hermans et al., 2017; 2018; Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010) uses society as a metaphor for the organization of the self, considering the social transformations that place the subjects in an increasingly globalized world, with more permeable borders. This is because, in such a multiple and heterogeneous world, the self also becomes heterogeneous and multiple. The growth of differences in the social context also increases the differences within the self, making some parts more dominant than others. Thus, to deal with conflicts and cultural and historical differences, a well-developed dialogical capacity is necessary, an ability to recognize and respond to the otherness of the other (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010, p. 30–31).

The metaphor of self-organized as a democratic society presents itself, according to Hermans et al. (2017), as a "desirable direction" (p. 509) for the development of the self in contemporary society. When democratically organized, the self gives space for distinct positions of the self to express themselves freely, even if in an opposite and contradictory way. Positions are in constant negotiation and tension, in a dynamic game of positioning and counter-positioning, which leads to the development of the self. The same authors also point out that the self has an "extended nature," that is, people and objects (in the environment) relevant to the individual (for example, my son, my friends) are part of the self as external positions. Both internal and external positions are signified by relationships, negotiations, and exchanges over time. Thus, the positions of the self are like "bridge to other persons or groups who are conceived of as 'another I' or 'another we'" (Hermans et al., 2017, p. 526), being, this way, built by "relationships of social power that may facilitate, limit, or block the free expression of the I-positions, their exchange with other positions, and their further development." (Hermans et al., 2017, p. 526). The other then becomes "dialogically addressable", having a subjective role that can sometimes be threatening or even abject.

Furthermore, given this hierarchical organization of the self, some positions are at risk of being silenced, but in the democratic self, dominant positions contribute to decision-making through consultation and dialogue with less dominant ones. It is necessary, therefore, that they respect and watch over "the development of less dominant and minority positions, including their wishes and purposes, as an expression of the value of equality in democratic relationships." (Hermans et al., 2017, p. 511). The positions, even if opposite, then need to find space for dialogue, reflection, and learning so that the self can organize itself democratically, which also contributes to the construction of a democratic society in general. We align ourselves with the authors, who argue that "in terms of a democratic self, these I-positions deserve, in the service of their further development, both freedom and care" (Hermans et al., 2017, p. 521).

To understand the functioning of the self as a democratic microsociety, it is necessary, therefore, to locate it in its broader context and consider, above all, the important role of power in the organization of relations and the development of the self. To Hermans et al. (2017), power relations embedded in cultural values and social institutions can create opportunities but also obstacles to the development of the self—which is challenged to respond to power structures. Thus, together with the authors, we highlight the importance

of considering that 'social power' is capable of affecting people, influencing their actions, and, with this, impacting the entire society, even producing relations of domination and discrimination.

HYBRIDISM AND INNOVATION OF THE SELF ON INTERCULTURAL TENSIONS

Hermans et al. (2017) make use of some research with multicultural, multiracial, and transgender subjects to defend hybridism as a possibility of innovation and democratization in the self. For the authors, these are groups of individuals who find their way between the borders of hegemonic identities, in the face of destabilizing situations that reflect differences in power in society and also fields of tension between distinct positions of the self. These fields of tension can lead subjects to stress, identity confusion, and maladaptation of the self, but they can also contribute to adaptation through the emergence of new positions or coalitions of positions.

Although recognizing the negativity of the meanings attributed to black subjects in the social construction of races and normal identities, remaining consistent with dialogical epistemology, the author sticks to the border and focuses on multiracial subjects, who would be located between the poles of racial difference, in a field of tension that allows them to move between the racial positions to which they belong, adapting to the context. Supported by some research (Shih and Sanchez, 2009 and Binning et al., 1999 in H. J. Hermans et al., 2017)), the authors argue that multiracial subjects tend to present more flexible understandings of race, better perception of the social construction of race, greater psychological well-being, and greater comfort in interracial relationships than subjects identified as monoracial. Based on this vision, hybridism would be a possibility of subversion and overcoming the bonds of fixed identities, freeing subjects from the social constructions of 'otherness.'

This argument is clearer in the analysis of multicultural subjects—immigrants dealing with the tension between cultural positions, with the conflict between expectations and demands of their original culture and of the culture in which they would be integrated. For them (Hermans et al., 2017), the need for constant readjustments of the self-demand positioning (they say I do not belong) and counter-positions (I am proud of my identity), which can lead to good or maladaptation, with identity confusion. As an example of maladaptation, the authors bring data from Meijl's research (2012in Hermans et al., 2017)) with young people leaving their lands for New Zealand due to a lack of opportunities and the effects of climate change. Having their identity challenged by both family members (who said they were no longer Samoans, for example) and New Zealanders of European descent, these young people live with insecurity and division of contradictory internal voices, which leads to identity confusion (Hermans et al., 2017, p. 513).

Another relevant study discussing hybridism, but with different results, is that of Bhatia (2007 in H. J. Hermans et al., 2017)). In it, the participants were Indian-Americans with higher education in areas of great social prominence, who presented a dubious discourse, sometimes feeling respected, sometimes suffering prejudice. Their prestige made them feel like respectable members of the USA, but it did not protect them from the many racist situations. For the authors, the adaptation of the *self* does not require the suppression of conflict or aim for harmony, it is about how experiences of discrimination combine to make it more adaptable to diverse situations.

Hermans et al. (2017) argue that some subjects can experience two cultures without losing their identity or having to choose between one or the other when they manage to transform themselves into a concrete relationship with the contexts of life. However, their greatest interest is in the processes that take place in the space between these identities, which they have found in Homi Bhabha (2012) and his notion of 'third space', which would be an ambiguous area between diverse cultures in which the subjects of diasporas find themselves. For Bhabha (2012), the third space is the result of hybridism, i.e., the mixture of different nationalities that are usually in an asymmetric relationship of power. The hybrid identity no longer corresponds to either of the two original identities, although it bears traces of both. For Bhabha (2012) and Hermans et al. (2017), while the original identities are based on stability and fixation, the hybrid identity destabilizes power and introduces a difference that makes possible the very questioning of hegemonic identities.

HYBRIDISM AND INNOVATION OF THE SELF ON GENDER TENSIONS

The notion of third space finds, for Hermans et al. (2017), a parallel with the notion of 'third position' within the scope of the self. As an example, the authors cite a study by Branco et al.(2008) in which the case study of a Brazilian lesbian from a Catholic family is approached, who found herself between two positions with clear historical-cultural contradictions. We consider it important to detail this study a bit more than the previous ones.

According to Branco et al., Rosane (fictitious name) showed clear suffering for feeling different from most people due to her non-hegemonic sexual orientation. At the same time, she presented various prejudices about homosexual

subjects, seeing them as lost, envious, unhappy, and coming from dysfunctional families, even though she felt like an exception to the rule (Branco et al., 2008, p. 33). Rosana was a practicing Catholic and, during the research, she builds a new positioning of self, the missionary. This positioning unites her participation in the gay world with the Catholic environment as a "Christian woman who helps the forsaken and lost souls that live aimless, non-structured lives in a difficult world," in this case, the gay world (Branco et al., 2008, p. 34). The authors note that the Catholic positioning was dominant, initially, hindering Rosane's integration into the LGTBI+ community, but later contributed to integration with a justification for the participation in the LGTBI+ community. In the I-as-missionary positioning, homophobic conceptions did not disappear, they were used only to maintain a certain coherence or unity between being lesbian and Catholic in public life. As strategies used in this process, for example, the Catholic and lesbian positionings remained related to different contexts and Rosane kept her sexuality a complete secret from everyone who was not from the gay community. This was a way she found to 'partially' solve her dilemma and create continuity in her self-system. This study inspires us to ask: What processes lead the subject to a discontinuity that promotes innovations in the self and the relationship with culture? And when does the self need to reverse the hierarchical logic between positions for the sake of its well-being? We believe, for example, that subjects who, in situations similar to Rosane's, question Catholic or conservative values and allow themselves to fully experience their desires, without hiding such an important part of themselves in so many social contexts, can experience a deeper change in the organization of the self.

Branco et.al research (2008) and the dialogue of Hermans et al. (2017) lead us to two points of discussion. The first one is that it does not seem to us that the third position created by Rosane is a 'third space,' insofar as it does not present hybridism as pointed out by the contemporary cultural theory (Bhabha, 2012). For this, it would be necessary for none of the positions to be maintained in an integral way, which does not seem to be the case for the missionary, which seems to be constituted entirely by the position of the Catholic, keeping its values dominant. Besides, the new position observed does not seem to question hegemonic identities or destabilize dynamic power relations that are intrinsically related to the transformations associated with Bhabha's (2012) third space. In this sense, perhaps the novelty of Rosane's third position is circumscribed to a pattern of micro regularities, without necessarily impacting the patterns of organization, i.e., without achieving true developmental change (Fogel et al., 2006).

Still concerning the first point, we consider that Rosane's strategies do not correspond to the idea of democracy in the self, presented by Hermans et al. (2017), since the lesbian position remains hierarchically lower, being silenced. In the democratically-organized self, others (individuals, groups, or institutions, such as religion) are not on the outside of the self, they are in the 'extended domain of the self.' These extended positionings engage in dialogues and interactions with internal positionings and, between them, fields of tension may or may not function as 'third spaces' that harbor oppositions. The authors reinforce that, as in a democracy, third spaces are created to make oppositions viable.

The second point concerns the understanding of sexual orientation as a positioning of the self. It seems to us that Rosane's attempt is this: to associate her sexuality with only one of the positionings that constitute her self, so that she can express or silence it as she feels safe, according to the context. However, this attempt is doomed to failure, since secretly guarding her sexual orientation requires restricting relationships, silencing narratives, and giving up experiences (such as sharing her love relationship with family, talking about her personal life with friends, etc.), thereby limiting the expression of other diverse positionings in the social world. Thus, the question that remains subject to further exploration is whether it is appropriate to reduce gender and sexual orientation to a specific positioning of the self. This is because we understand that all of Rosane's self-positionings, for example, are parts of the self of a lesbian, in dialogical relation to other positionings, as well as other selves and cultures. In this sense, we understand that Rosane's self-image is marked by the dominant values of our society that put her in the place of a different, deviant, and abject person/being. As a result, she faces a constant inequality of power that imposes various obstacles on the development and structuring of the self. Would it not be expected, therefore, that the overcoming of these obstacles and the subversion of social gender norms and expectations would require a deeper reorganization of the self? For us, this is the case of LGBTI+ subjects who assume their genders and sexual orientations in any context and need to review old positionings and relationships (family, school, friends, etc.) that prevented the emergence of this positioning before. If this is so, gender—along with other social markers of difference—must come to be seen in the dialogical theory as part of the constituent factors of the totality of the self, transversalizing and articulating all positionings, and not a positioning of the self.

GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE SELF

Hermans et al. (2017) outline a reflection on how gender issues impact the development of the self when referring to research on LGBTI+ subjects. The authors define trans identities as gender identities that differ from the sex assigned at birth, and also subjects who do not identify with either the male or the female gender. The center of the brief

analysis that they present focuses exactly on these subjects, which, according to the authors, are called "queer subjects", who position themselves between the binary categories of gender (Hermans et al., 2017, p. 517). Grossman et al. (2005 in Hermans, 2017), highlight that trans subjects face many obstacles such as family rejection and abuse, just by transgressing the gender binarism built in our society, which reduces subjects to only two types of bodies and gender expression: male/female and man/woman. This binary system prevents subjects from "moving into intermediate positionings that are more congruent with their own gender experience" (Hermans et al., 2017, p. 517). The authors bring, then, important criticism by highlighting how this binarism leads deviant subjects to a life full of fear – fear of being ridiculed, rejected, and assaulted, even by their own family. When children and young people go through these types of abuse, they end up protecting themselves through denial, withdrawing, and disconnecting from their feelings, or even blaming themselves—a process that leads to low self-esteem and problems in mental and emotional health (Grossman, 2005; Hughto et al., 2015 in Hermans et al., 2017). However, research such as that of Vaughan and Rodriguez (2014 in Hermans, 2017) found that gender positionings such as bisexual and transgender would be related to greater social awareness and cognitive flexibility, making it possible to interpret that the difference can also be "a potential source of strength and growth" (Hermans et al., 2017, p. 519).

We consider it important to also present the research of Clifton and Fecho (2018) about a transsexual boy. Sam, as a girl, faced many prejudices, especially at school, for presenting behaviors considered masculine (she did not shave and liked girls). While she could not find a counterposition that challenged the positions built by power relations, by the expectations of others, Sam suffered from maladaptation, with a lot of suffering (Clifton & Fecho, 2018).

The transformations came when Sam started reading autobiographies of trans men and attending events for trans youth. In these narratives, he found alterities that contributed to transforming the relationships and perceptions he had about himself and others, in a creative process of reorganization of positionings of the self. Defining yourself as trans, changing your name, and starting hormone treatment was, according to the authors, "a powerful moment of counter-positioning" (Clifton & Fecho, 2018, p. 25). From there, Sam became involved with art, which serves as a medium to express and dialogue about differences. His drawings are striking and feature human bodies with plant heads. It is a metaphorical way to approach gender, but also to ironize its categorization, since the bodies have an androgynous appearance, expressed by the plants. The absence of genre markers recognizable to the naked eye unsettles and provokes those who look at the drawings. Thus, for the authors, Sam (unlike Rosane) found an "alternative aesthetics of existence" (Clifton & Fecho, 2018, p. 25), which opens up to the development of globalizing positionings, with heterogeneity and unpredictability. The dialogue it proposes is characterized by dissonance and is part of a process of self-democratization and democratization of the other.

Hermans et al. (2017) argue that trans (more fluid) or even bisexual gender identities would be hybrid identities, which would have greater potential to build democracy between positionings of the self than heterosexual and even gay and lesbian identities. This is a point considered important to question in light of the queer studies—as we will see in the next topic—as we argue that homosexual subjects also find themselves amid fluid borders, insofar as they do not fit into the identities considered normal by the dominant values of the cultures in which they live. To be a lesbian is not to identify with the feminine gender norm constructed by our society, which is necessarily associated with compulsory heterosexuality, (Rich, 1980), and also does not mean to identify with the male sex.

To support our position, it is important to consider the developmental importance of disruptive experiences that establish a zone of tension between personal and social experience and provoke the transition from the personal stance to the political one, which leads to a new moral commitment to transformation. González (2019) explored this point, for whom activist action in the face of gender inequalities and discrimination based on sexual orientation is usually motivated by a disruptive experience in personal life and the identification with a new group. We believe that non-normative identities propel subjects in the direction of seeking an integration of the self and the mutual incorporation of their gender and sexuality positions, also transforming their relationship with culture. In light of the queer studies, LGBTI+ subjects would, therefore, be deviant, subvert gender norms, and create new possibilities for transformation.

The dialogue between DST and concepts of queer theory—which we aim to radicalize here — has already begun. Notions such as performativity, which we will present in the following topic, and the deconstruction of gender and body essentialism were points taken up by Hermans et al.(2017), quoting Butler (2011) (in addition to Bondi, 2014 and Doan, 2010, cf. Hermans, 2017). Hermans et al. (2017) also argue that gender would be a set of diverse experiences, not a dichotomy and that the binary system would just be an unnecessary distraction from human reality. The importance of overcoming this socially constructed dichotomy, giving space for the subjects to live their genders and sexualities beyond these culturally established boundaries, without discrimination, harassment, and pathologization is an important aspect in which the queer theory can contribute to the studies of the dialogical self.

QUEER THEORY

The queer theory derives from the approximation between studies on the social construction of difference, the so-called cultural studies, and French post-structuralism, bringing to the center of feminist studies the questioning of the binary oppositions of gender and sexuality. The original meaning of the term "queer" relates to something eccentric, of a "questionable, suspicious nature" (Lourenço, 2017, p. 877), having been used in a dominant way as an insult to non-heterosexual and/or effeminate men in the USA. It was from the 1980s onwards that the term "queer" underwent an important process of resignification, being appropriated by LGBTI+ activists as an emblem of the negation of normativity and calling into question the normalizing policy of identities practiced in the hetero, lesbian, and gay mainstream (Lourenço, 2017; Miskolci, 2007; Seidman, 1995). At this point, queer theory is born, which converts the adjective queer into a concept.

Addressing their critique of heterosexual/homosexual binarism, queer theorists have as their object of investigation the role of sexuality in the organization of society and social relations. For them, the very gay policies that defended the legitimization of homosexuality did not question, at first, the binary sexual regime itself and other gender-specific issues. Queer criticism then proposes an epistemological shift: the approach focuses on the cultural level, that is, on the linguistic structures, values, collective representations, and institutional contexts that build sexual binarism and conform subjectivities to it, "organizing selves, desires, behaviors, and social relationships" (Seidman, 1995, p. 128).

As a starting point, queer studies relied, mainly, on Foucault and Derrida, especially in their books History of Sexuality I: The Will to Know (1976) and Gramatology (1967), respectively. From Foucault, they extract the problematization of sexuality, the recognition of it as a power *dispositif* that was developed in modern societies and that turned sex into a part of social regulation strategies. From Derrida, queer theorists borrow, mainly, the deconstruction method, which tries to make explicit the process that creates normal subjects from the construction of the subjects considered abnormal, and the concept of complementarity. This concept gains special importance by highlighting the interdependence associated with the binarism inherent to language, where the hegemonic meaning of a term is built in opposition to another term, mostly considered inferior. The conception of heterosexuality depends on the construction of homosexuality as "its inferior and abject negative" (Miskolci, 2007, p. 3).

In queer theory, the reflection on binarism had an important contribution from Joan W. Scott, who, in the late 1980s, drew attention to the trap of naturalizing differences between groups of people by taking them for granted. For the author, the difference is constructed from naming the other through categories of people constructed by an assumed norm. With this, special attention is paid to the social and historical process in which norms related to gender and sexuality are built and, with them, a broader process of normalization of subjectivities. From this understanding, several authors have deepened the analysis of social knowledge and practices that organize society, as a whole, based on the operation of hetero/homosexual binarism. It is a social order that could also be characterized as a "sexual order," based on heteronormativity, which prioritizes heterosexuality, naturalizing it and making it compulsory (Miskolci, 2007).

Despite its great contribution to the critical focus of gender and identity, early queer studies were criticized for prioritizing in their analysis the experience of white, middle-class subjects limited to the US context and, often, gay men. To overcome these criticisms, queer theory presented the important contribution of the so-called subaltern theorists (Black people, lesbians, Chicanas, post-feminists, etc.) in a deontologization of sexual politics that redefined "the struggle and limits of the 'feminist' and 'homosexual' political subject" (Preciado, 2011, p. 17). In a review of feminism, these studies oppose the notion of sexual difference — supported by a supposed biological basis — and attack the notion of femininity that would be behind a subject "unitary of feminism, colonial, white, coming from the upper middle class, and desexualized", confronting feminism with "the differences that feminism erased in favor of a hegemonic and heterocentric political subject 'woman'" (Preciado, 2011, p. 17).

From this perspective, the particular contribution of Judith Butler's seminal work (2011, 2018), highlights the artificiality of gender identities and seeks to deconstruct normalizing processes, based on the concept of performativity—which speaks of the relationship between discourse and its practical effects. Performativity is a reiterative process by which the discourse not only represents a phenomenon but produces the effects it names. Such reiteration would also be in the order of citationality, a term that the author appropriates from Derrida (1988)[3] and which refers to the property of the sign to be displaced from an original context to another and the productive character of this displacement, which generates meaning. The citational quality of speech is related to the historicity of language. It is worth noting that this does not exclude the subject's responsibility, since the speaker, who uses words that are not his own, re-edits the linguistic symbols and, with it, the speech. The repetition of the speech–not its origin–is what makes the subject responsible (Stam, 2003).

According to Bento (2011), the performativity of a subject's gender begins as early as during pregnancy, when expectations about who the person being formed is and what it will be like. The anxiety to get to know that little being turns, in large part, to curiosity about its sex, information

3 Derrida, J. (1988). Limited inc. Northwestern University Press.

that makes the materiality of the body and the person in formation more intelligible. Thus, even before birth, a tangle of expectations and projections about the baby's subjectivity begins, which will later be materialized in toys, colors, clothes, attitudes, and even in the anticipation of projects for the future of that child—many of them which are anchored in the differentiation between boys and girls. "However, how is it possible to assert that all children who are born with a vagina like the color pink, dolls, and toys that do not require much strength, energy, and intelligence?" (Bento, 2011, p. 550). These are discourses and practices that work in the production of subjects, in the construction of genders according to dominant norms in society, and do not correspond to descriptors of biological and natural reality. In addition, the experience of subjects who do not fit into gender norms ("masculinized" women; "effeminate" men; homosexuals, transsexuals, etc.) clearly demonstrates that social roles are unnatural and that we can deviate and subvert these norms.

Butler (2018) speaks of this possibility of re-articulation or subversion of identity as new alternatives to refute the rigid codes of binarism and the naturalization of certain subject positions. To explain the possibilities of subversion, the author notes that the gender norm is initially assigned, "since language acts on us before we act" (Butler, 2018, p. 44), but the subjects can later perceive themselves as deviant and find the possibility of choice. In other words, we are obliged to represent the genre, but we can fail or interpret it in different ways, although it is not simple to define how this deviation is possible (Salih, 2016). Although Butler has stated several times that identity is not completely determined and that deviation is possible, the author's understanding that there is no subject before the discourse and that identity is an effect may imply that the subject is trapped in the discourse.

Stam (2003), in a study on Butler's contributions to the notion of dialogical self, observes that what the author presents to us is a dilemma both insoluble and necessary: we are constituted–challenged–by language and it is a language that makes us vulnerable. We are constituted and dependent on the addressing of the other and we are also capable of addressing others. Therefore, the subject is not a sovereign agent who instrumentally uses language and is complicit in the forces of power. Agency capacity does not outweigh vulnerability. The conception of the subject as a result of the dependence on the other, which makes its sovereignty impossible, is, for the author, in line with the notion of the dialogical self. The body does indeed exist in terms of language, but, at the same time, "the discontinuities between the body and language threaten our coherence as autonomous subjects" (Stam, 2003, p. 87). Thus, the author suggests that the notion of the dialogical self should be able to include "both our radical sociability and the individuality that it makes possible" (Stam, 2003, p. 87).

Despite the paradox, Butler is optimistic about the possibilities of denaturalization and proliferation of identities, extrapolating the limits of the models that founded them as fixed, definitive, and based on the "constructed nature of heterosexuality" (Salih, 2016, p. 96). In recent work, Butler acknowledges, however, that it is still necessary to understand how these deviations occur–when "something queer" is in operation (Butler, 2018, p. 12). This discussion opens space for the questions proposed in the present study, challenging, and motivating the dialogue between the chosen theoretical perspectives: what happens when a subject allows himself to deviate? What makes him stand up against expectations about who he should be? What transformations does this positioning entail in subjectivity and the relationship with culture? We believe that these questions about microgenetic processes related to the subversion of gender norms can be answered by the DST.

For this, we pursue a notion of self that considers the broader societal context, which is necessary when the object of our attention are deviant subjects. We, therefore, align ourselves with Barcinski & Kalia (2005), who argue that feminist theory can contribute to a more inclusive conception of identity, considering the social environment that influences its construction. In addition, it can contribute to the development of a notion of self that emphasizes multiplicity and constant transformation, but without minimizing its totality. As an example, the authors bring the notion of "mestizo consciousness" by Gloria Anzaldúa (1987, in Barcinski & Kalia, 2005).

Anzaldúa (1987), as an author who experiences some positions of subordination and "between-places"– woman, Chicana[4], and homosexual—, starts from the reflection on borders to discuss the binarism of the modern patriarchal capitalist world. The notion of boundaries refers not only to physical boundaries, but also to the edges of Western binary thinking, constituted around race, gender, and sexual orientation. The contradictions and struggles in this border space, the clash of voices, and the multiplicity of experiences from different worlds are aspects that give birth to a new consciousness. This phenomenon clearly coincides with the hybridism explored by Hermans et al. (2017), or even, with the third position, in fact, comparable to the third space (Bhabha, 2012). Anzaldúa (1987) names this new consciousness "mestizo consciousness" and affirms that it is plural and more tolerant of ambiguities and contradictions, for which nothing is at all abandoned or rejected. Inhabiting a 'between' position, the mestiza breaks with the dichotomous principles of Western society—includes rather than excludes and celebrates hybridity and plurality (Barcinski & Kalia, 2005).

4 'Chicana' is a term used to refer to a woman of Mexican descent who was born or grew up and lives in the USA.

Queer and intersectional perspectives like that of Anzaldúa (1987) defend the position therefore, that the experience of self-construction is strongly influenced by culture and 'social location'– the space of coexistence in which markers such as race, gender, and class are central to the construction of subjectivities and collective identities. In this sense, women's experience of oppression is understood as interdependent with their social location, whose impacts transcend individual experience and link the subject to a marginalized community. Recognizing that the formation of identity involves, rather, a process of construction of particular meaning, Anzaldúa (1987) notes that the process of individual change begins, however, with a collective awareness of the situation of oppression experienced by, for example, women. Thus, understanding identity as multiple, but not fragmented, this perspective preserves, in the subject, the capacity for action and resistance, considering that, at the same time that the subject is questioned by a concrete reality—by his socio-historical location—the subject, nevertheless, can transform his community and himself.

QUEERING THE DIALOGICAL SELF

Hermans et al. (2017) use Butler's concepts of gender and performativity in an exercise to analyze the experiences of trans subjects. For us, their study is a brief and important essay of articulation between DST and queer theory, aiming at the construction of a more inclusive conception of self and a bidirectional relationship with the social environment. The notion of the democratic self seems to pursue this mission, in addition to incorporating the contribution of the subject in the construction of a general society that is also democratic and, therefore, its ability to transform culture. However, we present some questions seeking to deepen the contributions that queer theory can bring to DST.

Hermans et al. (2017) understand that Butler's gender perspective considers gender to be fluid, that people "freely move in an unconstrained process of positioning, counter-positioning and repositioning" (Hermans et al., 2017, p. 518). This interpretation is in line with the analysis they make in their article on the "queer subjects", those who do not identify with any of the poles of gender binarism, since they can sometimes be located in a masculine position, sometimes in a feminine one, sometimes in both, simultaneously, or even identify with all genders; or with no gender.

It is important to note, however, that for Butler (2014), the procedural character of the genre does not exactly refer to fluidity or mutability[5]. For the author, gender is, indeed, "something" we do and not something we are, it is a "strategy" of cultural survival. It is "a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory framework" (Butler, 2011, p. 33). The central point of Butler's work would be to demonstrate that gender is a social construction permeated by forces of power that discriminate, make subjects who do not fit into gender norms abject, and, with that, defend that we accept an immense diversity of gender positions, that subjects should "be free to determine the course of their life when it comes to gender" (Butler, 2014, p. 1).

Would it be possible, then, to "queerize" the self from the close dialogue between queer theory and DST? The term queer has been used as a verb to signify a process of deconstruction, analysis, and questioning of the limits of our assumptions. It means exploring the limits of established conceptions, such as binarism and identities, widening their borders to make room for subjects currently considered deviant. It is about being vigilant of the creation of new categories or identities to, again, avoid the entrapment of subjects (Glickman, 2012). To queerize the self involves, therefore, recognizing the paradox of our dependence on the addressing of the other, which both constitutes us and makes us vulnerable. And so, to include, in the design of the self, "both our radical sociability and the individuality it makes possible" (Stam, 2003, p. 87). Perhaps it means knowing better the experiences of deviant subjects and identifying the impact that gender norms and social expectations have on the self. It also suggests recognizing the potential of subjects who do not fit these expectations in the transformation of culture, since resistance, for them, is a matter of survival. Therefore, it proposes to investigate the microgenesis of resistance, subversion, and the development processes that can both make it viable and be awakened by it. Queerize the self would be, for all this, a great step in strengthening the critical paradigm in psychology, a break with the normalizing and pathologizing processes to which traditional psychology contributed, and the construction of a notion of subjectivity that truly considers the diversity and forces of power that cross the culture.

5 "I didn't want to argue that gender is fluid and changeable (mine certainly isn't). I just wanted to say that we should all have a greater freedom to define and lead our lives (...). So the fact that someone wants to be free to live a more "naturally predetermined" notion of sex or a more fluid notion of gender is less important than the right to be free to live either of those things (Butler, 2014, p. 1).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In the present study, some important points of mutual contributions between DST and Queer theory are explored. In the metaphor of self as a democratic society, Hermans (2017; 2018) highlights the power relations that permeate social institutions and cultural values, imposing obstacles to subjects who do not fit into binary categories. These questions, as we have seen, can be enriched by the analyses and deconstructions of queer theory. The notion of resistance and the dialogical relationship between subject and culture, with emphasis on the possibilities of transformation, are points in common that can find important research tools in DST.

In this exercise, we consider it important to highlight answers that we could find, in the presentations made in the present study of the two theories, to the following question: What triggers the resistance process, or the positioning against dominant cultural values, which is expressed in LGBTI+ identities? What makes reorganization and developmental change possible? (Fogel et al., 2006) In Anzaldúa (1987), the important role of the collective, pointed out by the author as a trigger for "gaining awareness" of situations of oppression is observed. Perhaps there is a suggestion for an answer to the question that Hermans (Hermans et al., 2017; Hermans, 2018) asks about what factors, or under what conditions, subjects can move at the interface between the self and the other to increase what he calls social compassion or understanding of the experiences of different subjects and groups. The author presents us with two subject positions that have an important function in the development of the self and that can be explored about the role of the collective: the promoter position and the metaposition.

The promoter position refers to a person (or group) who inspires, adds value, and provides a sense of direction to the self. It is part of the extended self, as a position of the self, and helps to organize and direct a diversity of previously dispersed positions towards the future and development of the self. In this way, the promoter position, while ensuring the continuity of the self, also gives room for discontinuity and, with it, for innovation (Hermans, 2018, p. 71). It is worth noting that the participation of an external position in the self, such as the promoter position, does not occur without tension and negotiation, which are intrinsic characteristics of the dialogical self. There is always dialogical tension between external suggestions in a given position and moments of agency and resistance from the subject.

The metaposition, however, is the one that manages to distance itself from the other positions (internal and external) to have an overview of their patterns and interrelationships. It provides a distance that allows a different apprehension about their actions. It favors the connection and organization of positions to contribute to a new prioritization and enable new projections of the future. It also enables a long-term vision, connecting past, present, and future, as well as connecting positions to personal and collective histories. According To Hermans (2018), the metaposition opens space for the promoter position, but we believe, based on Anzaldúa's argument, that the path can also be the other way around: that promoter positions can inspire the metaposition by presenting experiences of other subjects to it.

Finally, for investigations on the impacts of gender issues on the development of the self, to build a new place for gender amid theoretical models that deal with the organization of the self—a transverse place, which constitutes and connects all the positions of the self— is considered important. On the paths of these investigations, two possibilities were found: (i) to understand which processes trigger resistance or subversion of gender norms (where the collective, the metaposition, and the promoter position seem to fit); and (ii) to understand more deeply what processes (or reorganization) occur after subversion, that is after the subject reveals his non-normative gender identity, against social expectations. A hypothesis is that this process may generate other resistances, leading the subjects to more active and transformative participation in culture. This is what Hermans' idea of the democratic self seems to suggest (Hermans et al., 2017; Hermans, 2018; Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010), with what he calls social compassion, a distributed form of affection, which contributes to democracy in general.

REFERENCES

Anzaldúa, G. E. (1987). *Borderlands: The New Mestiza = La Frontera*. Aunt Lute.

Barcinski, M., & Kalia, V. (2005). Extending the boundaries of the dialogical self: Speaking from within the feminist perspective. *Culture & Psychology*, *11*(1), 101–109.

Bento, B. (2011). Na escola se aprende que a diferença faz a diferença. *Estudos Feministas*, *19*, 549–559.

Bhabha, H. K. (2012). *O local da cultura* (E. L. de Lima Reis, M. Avila, & G. R. Gonçalves, Trads.). UFMG.

Branco, A. U., Branco, A. L., & Madureira, A. F. (2008). Self-development and the emergence of new I-positions: Emotions and self-dynamics. *Studia Psychologica*, *6*(8), 23–39.

Butler, J. (2011). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. Routledge.

Butler, J. (2014, maio 1). *Gender Performance: The TransAdvocate interviews Judith Butler* [Interview]. https://bit.ly/3xKKGyK

Butler, J. (2018). *Corpos em aliança e a política das ruas: Notas para uma teoria performativa de assembleia*. José Olympio.

Clifton, J., & Fecho, B. (2018). Being, doing, and becoming: Fostering possibilities for agentive dialogue. Em F. Meijers & H. J. M. Hermans, *The dialogical self theory in education: A multicultural perspective* (p. 19–33). Springer.

Fogel, A., Garvey, A., Hsu, H.-C., & West-Stroming, D. (2006). *Change processes in relationships: A relational-historical research approach*. Cambridge University Press.

Gergen, K. J. (2006). The relational self in historical context. *International Journal for Dialogical Science*, *1*(1), 119–124.

Glickman, C. (2012, abril 6). *Queer Is A Verb* |. Charlie Glickman. https://bit.ly/3KZAZQF

González, M. F. (2019). Narrativas de mujeres activistas: Participación y transformación entre lo personal y lo político. *Avances en Psicología Latinoamericana*, *37*(3).

Hermans, H. J. M. (2001). The dialogical self: Toward a theory of personal and cultural positioning. *Culture & psychology*, *7*(3), 243–281.

Hermans, H. J. M. (2018). *Society in the self: A theory of identity in democracy*. Oxford University Press.

Hermans, H. J. M., & Hermans-Konopka, A. (2010). *Dialogical self theory: Positioning and counter-positioning in a globalizing society*. Cambridge University Press.

Hermans, H. J. M., van Loon, R., & Kempen, H. (1992). The Dialogical Self: Beyond Individualism and Rationalism. *American Psychologist*, *47*, 23–33.

Hermans, H. J., Konopka, A., Oosterwegel, A., & Zomer, P. (2017). Fields of tension in a boundary-crossing world: Towards a democratic organization of the self. *Integrative psychological and behavioral science*, *51*(4), 505–535.

Lopes de Oliveira, M. C. S., Branco, A. U., & Freire, S. F. D. C. (2020). Preface. Em M. C. S. Lopes de Oliveira, A. M. C. U. de A. Branco, & S. F. D. C. Freire, *Psychology as a Dialogical Science: Self and Culture Mutual Development*. Springer Nature.

Lopes de Oliveira, M. C. S., & Madureira, A. F. A. (2014). Gênero e psicologia do desenvolvimento: Quando a ciência é utilizada como força normatizadora das identidades de gênero. *Labrys*: estudos feministas, 2, 1–31.

Lourenço, D. (2017). Queer na primeira pessoa: Notas para uma enunciação localizada. *Revista Estudos Feministas*, *25*(2), 875–887.

Miskolci, R. (2007). A Teoria Queer e a Questão das Diferenças: Por uma analítica da normalização. *Congresso de leitura do Brasil*, *16*, 1–19.

Nardelli, R. C., & Ferreira, M. S. (2015). Teoria Queer e Psicologia. *Mnemosine*, *11*(1), Article 1.

Peres, W. S. (2013). Psicologia e políticas queer. Em F. S. T. Filho, W. S. Peres, C. A. Rondini, & L. L. de Souza (Orgs.), *Queering: Problematizações e insurgências na Psicologia contemporânea*. EdUFMT.

Preciado, P. B. (2007). *Entrevista com Beatriz Preciado* (J. Carrillo) [Interview]. *Cad. Pagu, 28*.

Preciado, P. B. (2011). Multidões queer: Notas para uma política dos "anormais". *Revista Estudos Feministas*, *19*(1), 11–20. https://doi.org/10.1590/S0104-026X2011000100002

Rede LGBTI SinViolência. (2019). *Preconceito não conhece fronteiras*: homicídios de lésbicas, gays, bissexuais, trans e intersex nos países da América Latina e Caribe 2014 – 2019

Rich, A. (1980). Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, *5*(4), 631–660. https://doi.org/10.1086/493756

Salih, S. (2016). *Judith Butler e a teoria queer*. Autêntica.

Seidman, S. (1995). Deconstructing queer theory or the under-theorization of the social and the ethical. *Social postmodernism: Beyond identity politics*, 116–141.

Stam, H. (2003). Addressing oneself as another. Em C. B. Grant, *Rethinking Communicative Interaction: New interdisciplinary horizons*. John Benjamins Publishing Company.