

Social Relations in Human and Societal Development

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Charis Psaltis

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Alex Gillespie

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JEAN PIAGET AND NEUCHÂTEL: The Learner and the Scholar (*co-editor, 2008*)

Social Relations in Human and Societal Development

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*To Maximos, Lyla, Arlo, Noé, Léna, Amelia and all the
children of the world*

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Preface and Acknowledgements

Social relations are central to both human and societal development. In terms of human development, research has explored the importance of cooperation, constraint, conflict and asymmetries in expertise in cognitive development. In terms of societal development, researchers have explored the role of interdependence, similarity, cooperation, conflict and asymmetries of voice. Our ambitious aim here is to create a bridge from child development to societal development by focusing on the common denominator of social relations and social interaction.

This edited volume is interdisciplinary, with contributors representing social, developmental, cross-cultural and cultural psychology, education and international relations. It is divided into three parts, preceded by a general introduction by the editors.

Part I explores the relevance of the legacy of Jean Piaget to the study of cognitive and sociomoral development of the child. It underlines the importance of the social psychology of Piaget and his insistence on the distinction between social relations of cooperation and social relations of constraint (Piaget, 1932/1965), and the repercussions of this distinction for educational policy by international organizations until today, as well as the points of continuity of these ideas with the practical efforts for world peace and conflict transformation through intergroup contact.

Part II deepens the discussion about intergroup relations and conflict as it focuses on the role of intergroup contact for conflict transformation. In particular, it revisits Allport's (1954) intergroup contact hypothesis and enriches this approach with insights from George Herbert Mead's social psychology, international relations and cultural psychology. All contributors to this part of the volume offer a nuanced and complex understanding of the use of cultural artefacts, symbolic resources and semantic barriers as mediators of internal dialogue and reflection with the strange alterity in the imagination of alternative futures beyond conflict while also stressing the obstacles and barriers to such a transformation.

Part III extends the intergroup focus of the previous part by raising important questions that concern the interplay between intragroup and intergroup processes at the meeting point of groups and cultures. In particular, the contributors focus on how social relations, intergroup contact, norms and values mediate the effects of the economic culture

of a society or group and the financial crisis from social, cross-cultural and cultural psychological perspectives.

This part ends with a synthetic commentary by the editors, who return to the themes raised in the Introduction. These concern the fundamental question of the legitimacy of talking about development and not merely change; the related critique of conceptualizations of societal and human development by international organizations; and the bidirectionality between societal change and human development. Finally, the vision of genetic social psychology and Gerard Duveen's proposal to explore the heterogeneity of societies through an articulation of microgenetic, ontogenetic and sociogenetic processes are put forward as a framework that can capture the complexity of the processes raised by this volume.

This volume has been made possible because various individuals and organizations collaborated with the same vision and values of dialogue and mutual respect. It is mostly based on the contributions made during an international symposium entitled "Human and Societal Development: The Role of Social Relationships" that took place on 9 May 2011 in the "no-man's land" of the United Nations (UN) Buffer Zone in the divided capital of Cyprus, Nicosia, for the inauguration of the Home for Cooperation there. The contributions by Wilson and Cole (Chapter 10) and Passini (Chapter 11) were written after invitation by the editors as additions to the contributions available from the symposium.

The symposium was made possible with the financial support of the Cooperation Programme between Switzerland and Cyprus to reduce economic and social disparities within the enlarged European Union (EU) and with funding from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) – Action for Cooperation and Trust (ACT) as part of the Multiperspectivity and Intercultural Dialogue in Education (MIDE) project of the Association for Historical Dialogue and Research (AHDR).

We thank deeply the intercommunal AHDR in Cyprus for its enthusiasm in organizing this symposium on the inauguration day of its major project, the Home for Cooperation, and for its commitment to the idea of dialogue cooperation and world peace.

Charis Psaltis specifically wants to thank Chara Makriyianni, not only for her vision and work along with the other pioneers to create the Association for Historical Dialogue and Research, and the Home for Cooperation in Cyprus, but also for her lifelong companionship and support in the difficult writing-up period of this volume. Tracing the history of this book and the opportunity that brought the contributors

to the symposium, it would literally not have been possible without Chara's dedication and self-sacrifice to transformative praxis for a reunited Cyprus. We would like to thank little Maximos and Ioanna for agreeing to be included in the cover photo, which was taken outside the Home for Cooperation in the UN Buffer Zone of divided Nicosia. We also thank Eleni, the mother of Ioanna, for her help in taking the photo.

Many thanks also go to Nicola Jones, Elizabeth Forrest and Eleanor Christie at Palgrave Macmillan for all of their help during the contracting and publication of this volume. We also thank deeply all the contributors to this volume for their patience, energy and timely contributions. Without them this volume would not exist.

Last but not least, on the occasion of Anne-Nelly Perret-Clermont's retirement, Charis Psaltis and Alex Gillespie would like to thank their co-editor for her seminal work and an inspiring career that has left its mark on the field of social and developmental psychology.

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