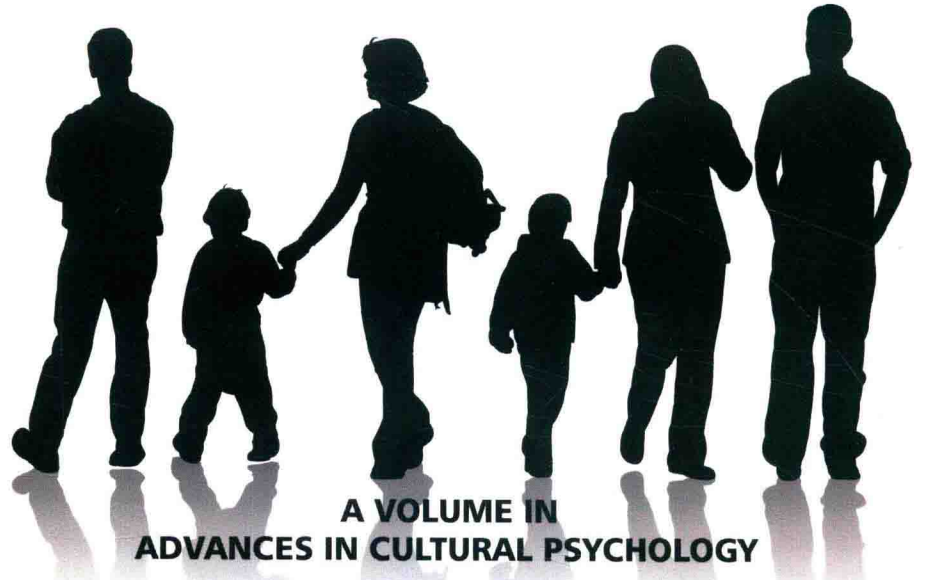
LIVES AND RELATIONSHIPS

Culture in Transitions Between Social Roles

edited by Yasuhiro Omi,
Lilian Patricia Rodríguez-Burgos,
& María Claudia Peralta-Gómez



A VOLUME IN
ADVANCES IN CULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY

Lives and Relationships

Culture in Transitions Between Social Roles

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Advances in Cultural Psychology:
Constructing Human Development

Series Editor
Jaan Valsiner,
University of Yamanashi, Japan

Lives and Relationships

Culture in Transitions Between Social Roles

edited by

Yasuhiro Omi
University of Yamanashi, Japan

Lilian Patricia Rodríguez-Burgos

and

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PREFACE OF THE SERIES EDITOR

CULTURAL PHENOMENOLOGY AND SOCIAL RELEVANCE

Jaan Valsiner

This book brings to cultural psychology the focus on phenomenology of everyday life. Whether it is in the context of education, work, or exploration of life environments, the chapters in this book converge on the need to give attention to complex realities of everyday living. Thus, a description of preschool organization in Japan would be in its form very different from school organization in Britain or Colombia—yet the realities of human beings acting in social roles are continuous around the world.

Relevance of work and education in any society seems obvious—yet it is interesting how psychology has treated them separately, segregating these two domains to two barely interconnected subfields—*of work (organizational) psychology* and *educational psychology*, respectively. From the perspective of our new cultural psychology, these two areas are inherently interconnected: both schools and workplaces are culturally organized (Perret & Perretr-Clermont, 2011) where similar ruptures occur. Children may be "*dropping* out" of school and workers may be "*thrown* out" of employment (forced into unemployment)—these are similar processes, albeit with different causal attributions as to who does the acting. As we find out in this book, the organizational order of educational institutions—reflected in the chapters by

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Omi and Eddy Spicer and Daniels—are comparable to the task of understanding the organizational structures of governmental and nongovernmental institutions. Yet it is real human beings who interact there—as Malcolm Reed's chapter beautifully illustrates. Psychology has lost touch with the reality of subjectivities both in schooling and in workplaces—and this book brings these phenomena back to our focus.

The central core of chapters in this book originates in the research conducted by psychology department at the beautiful university in Colombia—Universidad de La Sabana. Located in the outskirts of Bogota—in the small city of Chía—the university promotes academic work, in order to make a society just, pacific, and solidarity. There is a result of combination between research and teaching (Universidad de La Sabana, 2004, p. 3) it is a university who is growing and where the value of supporting social progress and transformation of the Colombian society is considered a major task, and where all academic personnel, from students and professors to faculty, are interested in the social impact of the different research areas cultivated in its psychology area. From this commitment to improving social realities emerges the New Colombian Project in the context of which realities of children's going to school and work are analyzed. The traditional themes of socially relevant research—on workers' subjective reflections on employment, or the cultural realities of handicapped people or the role of new technologies in adolescents' lives—are well represented in this book. However, these themes are elaborated through Worldwide commentaries—involving colleagues from Japan, Denmark, Brazil, and Australia—to widen the perspective through the lens of our new perspectives in cultural psychology. This is the hallmark of our *Advances in Cultural Psychology* series as a whole—our edited volumes may be devoted to a single topic (Branco & Valsiner, 2012; Marková & Gillespie, 2007) or cover primarily the scholarship developed in one country, but these core contributions get a multivoiced extension through the perspectives from all over the Globe (Bastos & Rabinovich, 2010; Bastos, Uriko, & Valsiner, 2012). We integrate ideas from all over the World.

It may well be that the core of the research presented in this book—born in the complex social context of Colombia—gets its systematic international arena for presentation for the first time in this book. Yet this presentation becomes immediately the intellectual property of international scientific community that appropriates it for understanding of how culture is guiding all the everyday life phenomena in any country of today. Such sharing of knowledge across institutional and countries-boundaries is the ideal for all science—yet not always easy in the world filled with patenting efforts on intellectual achievements.

Psychology in Colombia is young—situated in a society that has produced deep thinkers in the field of literature and art while being for

decades torn by various social conflicts in which ideologies and economic striving are mixed. In the middle of such difficult life realities emerges a sophisticated understanding of the human *psyche* as it operates against all odds in the ambiguous field of economic differentiation. I hope this book serves the purposes of our international understanding of human lives in various social realities, and hence can show where cultural psychology can make its contributions to social practices.

JaanValsiner
August, 2012
Worcester, MA

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EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

Lilian Patricia Rodríguez-Burgos, María Claudia Peralta-Gómez, and Yasuhiro Omi

Lives and Relationships: Culture In Transitions Between Social Roles has an interesting trajectory of coming what it is. Like any phenomena of development, this book is the result of the interaction of levels, fascinating processes, people, and scenarios. This factors are joined together to deliberate surrounding topics related to developing and culture. As Peter Molenaar has emphasized in numerous places—*any study of phenomena involve studying developmental trajectories* (Molenaar, Huizenga, & Nesselroade, 2002). In a similar way, we can trace the history of a book.

The starting point of this trajectory begins with academic visits made by Jaan Valsiner to the Universidad de la Sabana in Chia, at the outsides of Bogota, Colombia. At Sabana, discussions on the topic—what it does it really mean to do research?—proceeded in active and constructive ways. How does research proceed through investigators commitment to their vocation, interrogating methods, the study of development from a dynamical systems perspective, culture, and its tools. From these reflections the idea of writing a book emerges, a book that contains different theoretical perspectives and methodologies to understand the phenomena of culture. The idea of writing a book was proposed by people from different countries and academic communities.

A second point of this trajectory takes place when new experiences came from the K-Seminar ("Kitchen Seminar"—as it takes place in a

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kitchen situated in a small psychology department of a tiny North-American university). Most of the writers of this book have participated in the seminars that have regularly happened since 1997 on the third floor of the Jonas Clark Hall at Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts. The K-Seminar group was founded with this basic idea in mind:

> K- Seminar is open and in the making with others who have similar interests. It has no borders anybody can come (and go), nobody is coerced. Yet it has clear ground rules, no talk of politics or other trivial everyday events, discussion of yet unsolved problems in science rather than presentation of finished products. All participants are equal a young undergraduate can contribute good ideas as directly as a senior professor or just listen in, the result is an active often hyperactive, intellectual exchange that might not solve the raised issues during the weekly two- or-so hour meetings, but would certainly give an impetus for further open-minded search for solutions. (Valsiner, 2009, p. xvi)

Our investigations were conducted in the K-Seminary while drinking coffee. We received valuable contributions from students, visitors, and teachers. Many of these people came from different countries like; Japan, Korea, Russia, China, Australia, Estonia, Brazil, Chile, Spain and Colombia. We highlighted the reflections that had to do with various basic scientific perspectives made by Lee Rudolph, which stemmed from contemporary mathematics (Rudolph, 2013). The contributions of Roger Bibace (Bibace, Laird, Noller, & Valsiner 2005) had to do with the need for in-depth study on partnerships in clinical, educational, and research contexts Authors such as these contributed by studying the development and the transition to new and sophisticated methodologies. These new methodologies capture the changing nature and dynamics of the phenomena of development. (Rudolph, 2013; Valsiner, 2009, 2010).

The third point of this trajectory is building up every chapter in dialogue with their writers. The book stresses that the interdisciplinary dialogue is a reality by using articles written by psychologists, anthropologists, sociologists. It stresses more than just different professions; it highlights many theoretical, methodological, and cultural perspectives. With the inclusion of various professions and perspectives, this book becomes a great contribution to understanding the issue of subjectivity and culture.

The fourth point on the developmental trajectory of this book is contained in the structure of this book, where the reader will find 12 chapters, each chapter was written by authors from diverse universities around the world. The universities are; Clark University, United States; University of Bath, United Kingdom; Universidad de La Sabana, Colombia; University of Yamanashi, Japan; UFBA, Salvador, UPS-Sao Paulo, and Brasilia University, Brazil; University of Bristol, United

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Kingdom; University of Melbourne, Australia, and University of Copenhagen, Denmark.

Besides the fact of having being written from the perspectives of various cultures and studies, you will find the chapters gathered in four big groups. "Understanding Relationships in Educational Institutions" is the first big group. Specifically it talks about the schools' dynamics and how the social practices change through time.

The first chapter written by Spicer and Daniels highlights authority as an outcome of relations of power, and it displays the principles of operating control in institutions, organizations and the person itself. The authority is viewed in everyday interactions of those who work in schools teachers and leaders, and the ways in which these work conditions make development possible. In this chapter, the author offers a crucial vision of the empirical exploration, of the emerging terrain of power and control. He also shows how the notion of social positioning provides an important potential in revealing authority as an outcome of relations of power and control principles.

Reed in the second chapter gives us an interesting view about the classroom context in where students are worried about the agency of their own lives. If teachers actually care about young people, they must support the idea of being agents of their own lives. The author finally concludes that in scholar contexts, the conjoint activity of learning and teaching engages individuals in social webs of interaction in which ones are affected by others and their developments. In the third chapter Omi looks forward to create and share processes of value, as these are being constituted through a series of transactions of parents and educational officials. In this chapter, the construction of norms and how actors can proceed after confirmation or disconfirmation of a social norm is emphasized.

The second part of the book is: "Relationships With Social Roles: Public and Private." Córdoba and Vaca write about how a disability affects a woman's daily life, from their private roles (family, couple, and motherhood) to their roles in public (work, study). This is a study case; the authors use interviews in order to recover the daily memories of a physically disabled woman. The chapter tells the existing relationship between cultures and women's roles in countries where actions made by men are privileged. Peralta writes about social constructions in the organizational context explaining how today work is. It involves values, environments, and different meanings that make jobs significant and valued. This study describes the context of working and the changes that can be interpreted from the narratives subject. The author correspondingly analyzes work experiences and practices of the workers, and the way they face their present work conditions.

Furthermore, from a psychological and social point of view, unemployment can be understood as an external factor that may significantly alter the functioning of an individual or family. Nevertheless, a number of studies underline the importance of considering gender differences and social contexts when analyzing the impact of unemployment. This chapter by Padilla, Uribe, and Zárate, presents a research about the dynamics between families and work, and it illustrates how when families face unemployment, masculine roles are affected.

"Contextual Realities: Preschool" is the third big part. In this part an investigation focused on the aggression phenomenon in early childhood, is found. The authors Gonzalez and Minski describe how the aggression concept acquires different meanings according to the prevalent paradigms in a society and in specific moments of life. Furthermore, the authors explain the different types of aggression depending on the kids' ages, and the produced dynamics in different contexts. They point transformation moments related to new educational patterns. The second of them by Rodríguez, Rosero, Rodríguez, and Mojica is situated in the context of an integrating perspective of development, in which it is assumed that development behaves as an open system characterized by multiple-level interactions. It implies to recognize the materialization of new reasoning stages, in which hierarchical structures are important. These structures, as they have a meaningful status, range from the minimum multicellular structures, to psychological, social, and cultural aspects, and they are all interacting constantly. In the third chapter, Rodriguez, Giraldo, Obando, Romero, Mojica, and Rodríguez give an interesting perspective in which human development is not settled in a laboratory, but through different places and sceneries of daily life. This chapter exemplifies, through different young people's experiences and practices of everyday life, how helping with daily chores at home, contribute to the development of the cognitive planning. All at once, it highlights how these performances are formed by culture, which at the same time ease the sharing of knowledge and experiences form parents to their children. Besides, during this research, the abilities from kids at age five are proven through a case study, to see how they use their cognitive planning skills. This case researchers collected daily activities developed by the children and their family, to conclude that the human development behaves as an open system in which psychological, biological and cultural processes interact. These, at the same time, make the emergence of new abilities and skills possible.

In the final part, "Contextual Realities: Moving Beyond the School," Vaca and Rodríguez provide theoretical evidence of the violence in schools as a very concerning topic to teachers, psychologists, and parents. The main objective of this research is to understand the bullying phenomenon. Con-

scious of this phenomenon's complexity and implications that it has in youngsters' lives, particularly in academic, social and personal performances. This chapter's authors point out the importance of prevention as a first step towards a solution to this world wide extended problem, and also towards generating public policies. Another research study by Flórez, Yepes, and Padilla centers on the strong influence that the Internet is having on how people now understand the world. The authors describe how the development of technology influences perceptions and daily interpersonal communications in teen people who use this tool. In that way, the authors identify different ways to use the Internet, and both the positive and negative aspects it has. At the end of the chapter, they firmly propose studies that favor a well-being perspective in terms of social and personal states.

Finally, Beckstead examines the complexity of the human movement and how our exploration of the world is guided through external and internal meanings or signs, that enable and inhibit exploration and the way this process of exploration is marked by tension, hesitation, and overcoming.

Every contribution captured in this book put together gave us a dominant representation of the way psychology need to move to. Finding out a strong argument how psychology as a productive theoretical science can be recovered again in spite of its current condition. We invite you to enjoy with us this trajectory, and be part of it. Your comments regarding the chapters may lead to new books that strengthen interdisciplinary dialogue. We will proceed to achieve our objective of promoting interdisciplinary reflections about investigation.

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