

# Preface

Morton Deutsch, one of our great pioneers of peace, long believed in the power of ideas to rectify social problems and realize global well-being. Nurtured in the intellectual atmosphere of Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, Charles Darwin, and Albert Einstein, he witnessed that power in action. Educated and trained to spar, question, and debate in the halls of the City University of New York, he honed his considerable intellect and skills as a social critic, theorist, and researcher. So as a young man returning from war, as the world was still reeling from the atrocities of the Nazi death camps and the annihilation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, he turned his mind to the grandiose task of addressing social ills, big and small. From marital strife to global thermonuclear warfare, from ethnic slights between peers to race riots in the streets, and from acts of “civilized oppression” in the home to state-sanctioned policies of apartheid, Deutsch devoted his life to addressing social problems through the power of ideas.

This book celebrates the ideas of Morton Deutsch. It presents several of Deutsch’s most seminal theoretical papers, all published previously in different journals and texts, but brought together here to highlight their originality, importance, and relevance for the world today. They cover much ground, from his early work on different types of interdependence in groups, conflict resolution, and social justice, to his later thinking on interrupting oppression and sustaining justice. They culminate in to two of his most ambitious intellectual undertakings: a general theoretical model of the psychosocial dynamics between people and different types of social situations, and his prophetic vision of the processes and institutions necessary for a more peaceful and prosperous world.

Embedded in each of these groundbreaking papers are the ideas, the distinctions, variables, relationships, dynamics, and outcomes that Deutsch developed through his reflection, research, and practice (He was an experimental scientist and a practicing psychoanalyst), which he delivered to us as a fully-developed theory. These ideas are essential. Although the theory has been defined as “An arbitrary structure that we impose on chaos to make it meaningful and predictable”

(John Whiting), some structures are much less arbitrary than others. Trained by Kurt Lewin to focus on “the essence of the phenomenon,” Deutsch’s focus in his theoretical work was basic and laser-like. Each insight integrated the work of others but then launched it to another level—to models of tremendous precision, resonance, and impact.

The focus of these ideas include: cooperation–competition in groups, the conditions that lead to constructive versus destructive conflict, Deutsch’s Crude Law of Social Relations, the role of equity, equality, and need in distributive justice, the conditions for awakening a sense of injustice, a framework for interrupting injustice and oppression, the fundamental dimensions of social relations, and the dynamics between psychological orientations, social relations, and fit. This set of ideas and models are merely illustrative of the breadth and depth of Deutsch’s theorizing and the implications of his ideas for addressing social problems today.

Through decades of extraordinary work, Morton Deutsch became an internationally renowned social psychologist, widely honored for his scientific and practical contributions and beloved by his students. He was one of the most important pioneers in the development of modern social psychology. He lead by example and consequently became a great leader of leaders, including Jeff Rubin, Roy Lewicki, David Johnson, Michelle Fine, Harvey and Madelaine Hornstein, Barbara Buncker, Susan Opatow, Eric Marcus, Ken Sole, Kenneth Kressel, and Adrienne Asch, to name only a few.

This book celebrates the life’s work of Morton Deutsch, one of the world’s most influential peace psychologists. A hard-nosed scientist of the Lewinian tradition, Deutsch invested his long and prestigious career in the development of a rigorous empirical approach to the study of cooperation, constructive conflict resolution, and social justice—the basic building blocks of sustainable peace.

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