

# Preface from the Series Editor

## Educational Contexts from a Cultural Psychology Perspective

This book inaugurates the new Springer books series on *Cultural Psychology of Education*. As the firstborn, this text has to accomplish the difficult task of tracing the coordinates for our intellectual journey, outlining the theoretical basis and the methodological approach within which a vivid debate in the field of educational psychology in contemporary society will be promoted. The aim of the series is to provide fertile ground that will give both direction and magnitude to educational research from a cultural psychology perspective, breaking through the classical vision of educational psychology as an applied field focused basically on the teaching-learning processes. Education, instead, deals with the object in development, paying attention not to “what the person is at a specific age” (being), but “what the child is becoming”—moving towards another state (Marsico 2013a).

This book is, in a certain sense, a programmatic volume focusing on some aspects of this complex phenomenon of *becoming human* within societies, which is labeled as *education*. Specifically, it emphasizes the importance of liminal spaces—borders—in the contexts of education and includes international contributions that systematically sample the views from outside to inside, inside to outside, and from within the border zones.

As humans, we live in a multi-bounded world that we ourselves constantly create, regulate, and cross in order to modulate our relationships with the environment and with others (Valsiner 1999; Marsico et al. 2013b). Here, the role of education—with its liminal and always future-oriented nature—undoubtedly occupies a leading position because it constantly works on the border of the “beyond area” (Boesch 1991).

Education is the outer border of human development, but it is the only border that is never crossed once for all. It is a borderland of indeterminacy; it is our unreachable horizon that moves with us. At each step, we move forward to a new, higher level of education, and the horizon is moving as well.

The idea beyond this conceptualization of the educational processes is the notion of *being on the move* within culturally organized life contexts (school, family, church, etc) in specific spatio-temporal coordinates. Striving for the uncertainty is an unavoidable characteristic of the human sociocultural locomotion, which implies crossing the borders between different social settings within the insurmountable limit of irreversible time.

The borders condition makes evident the relevance of the “space in between” (Marsico 2011), which is a very challenging issue in education. Think, for instance, of some “in between” aspects of education, such as the daily (or periodic) migrations from school to home, from school to other school (music or dancing school), or from school to gym/playground. What discourses and practices saturate this interstitial zone and/or cross from one side to the other? How are certain kinds of human activities, educational processes, and social dynamics made possible because of this betweenness?

The crossing borders phenomena, which entails a migration from one place to another while living the liminal condition, is an educational process in itself, but it is difficult to recognize as a relevant part of the individual educational enterprise. This volume is an attempt to fill this gap by looking inside, outside, and in between the educational contexts.

The book is also the pathway of synthesis of many kilometers spent travelling and several places visited in the world (from the Brazilian favelas to the upper-level Indian school, from the poor slum to the middle-class American educational contexts etc.), which have contributed to deep questioning of the classic ways to consider the role played by the context in human development and education. Very often, the concept of context has been used as an “umbrella” notion, losing any reference to concreteness and specificity of the social conditions where persons grow up.

These travels have changed my look on development and education—certainly, no one came home after visiting Novos Alagados (one of the wider favelas on palefittes located in the suburbs of Salvador da Bahia, Brazil) without questioning the abstract notion of context as it is still used in the current psychological debate. Growing up and learning in a poor area and in a middle-class urban environment are not exactly the same. Thus, it is important to consider the impact of poverty in providing the condition for the educational activities (Bastos and Rabinovich 2010). Consequently, development and education should no longer be studied abstractly, but rather in their interplay with the specific characteristics of the social setting. The scientific question therefore becomes how to analyze contexts and their interconnectedness (Marsico 2012).

This book brings the focus to the borders in the educational process. It is the result of a thorough analysis of the educational contexts provided by a group of international scholars who keep believing that education is the means for *becoming human*.

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Giuseppina Marsico

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