

## PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Social representations of history are fundamental in forming social identities and are consequently critical for understanding intergroup relations. Social psychological approaches are vital for understanding how history education can contribute to conflict transformation and reconciliation processes. In this volume, we discuss the effects, models and implications of history teaching in relation to conflict transformation with an emphasis on how social psychological theories can enrich our understanding of history teaching in relation to conflict transformation and reconciliation processes.

This book is based on the contributions made by members of COST Action IS 1205, “Social psychological dynamics of historical representations in the enlarged European Union” coming from various countries who specialize in the study of post-conflict societies. In addition to COST IS 1205 members, renowned academics were also invited to offer an international perspective on the role of history teaching in conflict transformation including contributors from North and South America.

The contributors comprise a mix of well-established, mid-career and young researchers and academics who study various actors and factors involved in history education ranging from policy making, school curricula, textbooks, civil society organizations, teachers and teaching practices themselves. Many of the contributors are particularly interested in the role of social representations of the past and of history, and of the role of group-based emotions in intergroup conflicts and reconciliation

processes. The contributors are also in the in processes of prejudice reduction, intergroup contact, apologies, guilt, shame, regret, forgiveness, moral exemplars and conflict transformation. They all draw on various social psychological theories that attempt to understand processes of conflict transformation and reconciliation in the context of post-colonialism, post-cold-war transition, post-conflict societies, genocide and the holocaust drawing valuable links between social psychological theories and various aspects of history education.

A distinct characteristic of this volume is that it stresses the importance of an approach to history teaching that is transformative at all levels of analysis (intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup/positional and social representational/ideological). The list of contributors comprises social, developmental, cognitive and educational psychologists, historians and educators referring to various social psychological theories and models to better understand the way that history teaching could be enriched from an interdisciplinary perspective. Such an interdisciplinary perspective is described as *transformative history teaching*, in another outcome of the COST IS1205 network of researchers which is the publication of the “Recommendations for the History Teaching of Intergroup Conflicts” (Psaltis et al. 2017). Transformative history teaching attempts a critical understanding of the conflictual past through the cultivation of historical thinking, empathy, an overcoming of ethnocentric narratives and the promotion of multiperspectivity.

The first part of this volume discusses the state of the art from an international perspective on developments relating to (a) history textbook writing in post-conflict societies (b) work from international, regional and local civil society organizations on history teaching and reconciliation with the purpose of identifying the various strategies, theories and models that inspired these initiatives and the extent to which they draw on social psychological theory explicitly or implicitly in conflict transformation processes, and (c) lay representations of people in relation to master narratives in post-conflict societies in South Eastern Europe (Croatia, Serbia) and the Eastern Mediterranean (Cyprus) that give ample evidence of the pernicious effects of adherence to master narratives at the representational level as a block to conflict transformation, reconciliation and political compromise.

The second part of the volume deals with the question of perpetrator–victim dynamic and the specific tensions arising from the asymmetrical configurations of these different contexts (colonialism and holocaust)

when it comes to the question of how to best deal with the legacies of the past, ingroup past wrongdoings, master narratives and counter-narratives as well as the phenomenon of genocide and the holocaust in a way that can be informed by social psychological theory. This part makes clear that well-established approaches in history teaching, in this context, can be problematic not only because they fail to achieve their proclaimed reconciliation or moral aims but because they often run the danger of reproducing problematic aspects of history teaching that fail to promote the historical thinking skills of the students.

The third part focuses on history textbooks and teachers as the main mediators of classroom teaching practice in post-transition and post-conflict settings that pose unique challenges due to the fact of reversals in asymmetric configurations of status and power. In such contexts, one interesting question is how history teachers from both the new and old minorities adjust to the rapture of a transition into a new constitution of a newly established nation state. The chapters of this section make clear the important role of the quality of deliberations and communication around textbook writing and actual teaching practice.

Finally, in the fourth part of the volume the focus moves to pedagogy and a comparison of various possible approaches that could be taken in post-conflict settings at the level of both formal and non-formal education through the work of civil society organizations. The context of Israel, Northern Ireland and Cyprus is very relevant to explore such questions because they all have by now gathered a lot of experience on the topic of this volume either through research on history teaching or through reflection on the work of civil society organizations in this field.

The concluding chapter written by M. Carretero, a co-editor of the volume, draws on his experience on history teaching in relation to patriotism, nationalism, social identity processes and reconciliation in various parts of the world. It tries to be a reflective commentary establishing a meaningful relation between present trends in history education and how to rethink them in relation to the teaching of historical contents in post-conflict societies. Therefore, this chapter tries to focus not only on what to teach but also on how to teach it and how this could contribute to conflict transformation. Also, this chapter intends to develop a meaningful relation between social psychology contributions and present ideas coming from history education, historiography and related fields.

We have enjoyed the process of preparing our edited volume and in particular the support of our colleagues and friends who have been

helpful and challenging at the same time. Believing that our work will be useful for academics and practitioners living and working in (post-) conflict contexts has sustained us with positive energy throughout this process. We want to especially thank members of the COST Action IS 1205 ([http://www.cost.eu/COST\\_Actions/isch/IS1205](http://www.cost.eu/COST_Actions/isch/IS1205)) coming from various European countries and beyond.

COST IS 1205 is supported by COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology), which is a pan-European intergovernmental framework. Its mission is to enable breakthrough scientific and technological developments leading to new concepts and products and thereby contribute to strengthening Europe's research and innovation capacities. It allows researchers, engineers and scholars to jointly develop their own ideas and take new initiatives across all fields of science and technology, while promoting multi- and interdisciplinary approaches. COST aims at fostering a better integration of less research intensive countries to the knowledge hubs of the European Research Area. The COST Association, an International not-for-profit Association under Belgian Law, integrates all management, governing and administrative functions necessary for the operation of the framework. The COST Association has currently 36 Member Countries ([www.cost.eu](http://www.cost.eu)).

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to both the process of reconciliation in Cyprus and other parts of the world and the cultivation of critically minded citizens so that children of the world like Maximos live in a more peaceful and co-operative world compared to the one we currently experience.

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Nicosia, Cyprus  
 Madrid, Spain  
 Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

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