

## Series Editors' Preface

The book series *Social Interaction in Learning and Development* is established as a new space for continuous and systematic critical reflection of theories and studies focusing on co-constructing learning and development throughout the process of interaction with others. Studying social interaction in learning and development as well as how it might constitute the human mind and activities is highly relevant for different epistemological and theoretical approaches (e.g., individual constructivism, social constructivism, dialogical approaches). Consequently, during previous decades there was a growing number of studies dedicated to the analysis of social interactions in various contexts (family, educational, professional, clinical, institutional, social, political, and multicultural settings), based on different theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches. These studies have produced a multiplicity of findings, which are highly relevant for different theoretical and practical reasons and contribute to make a step further in the process of reflection and integration challenging. At the same time, these investigations inform us and create a good opportunity for a deeper understanding of how social interactions and individual learning and development are interwoven.

As editors of this book series, we believe that it might serve as a meeting point for various perspectives on social interactions in learning and development. One of our goals is to propose the book series as a platform to support dialogical reflection of controversies related to the theories, research methods, findings, and practical applications related to the studies on social interactions.

The present book *The Human as Animal Symbolicum: The Origins of Symbolic Function* is the English translation of second edition of the volume written by Ivan Ivić and published in 2015. After the first edition was published in 1978, the second edition was updated with new contemporary evidence from developmental sciences in order to support the theory of origins of symbolic function that was presented in the first edition.

The main reason for selecting this book for the present book series is related to the fact that it provides an original theory of the early development of symbolic function. In fact, the formation of symbolic function in children is a critical moment in their life with substantive consequences in every domain of child development.

However, it has been a challenging topic for all major theories of development since it requires a holistic approach integrating different developmental processes (cognitive, socio-emotional, relational, individual, and joint activities) that are typically studied independently. For that reason, in many cases authors have taken for granted that children—at certain point of their development—are becoming a symbolic being and accommodated their studies and theories to that fact. Without touching the issue of origin of symbolic function, the future progress of developmental science will stay limited.

The theoretical proposal provided by Ivić to understand the development of symbolic function is based on a meticulous analysis of symbolic function and its distinctive characteristics. His analysis has resulted in an original and comprehensive definition of symbolic function (sign, symbolic systems, and symbolic realities) providing a solid base for a new theory on the development of symbolic function. This is the first major contribution of the present book that can be relevant for researchers in various fields.

The second major contribution of Ivić's volume is related to his theoretical proposal on how symbolic function emerges as a result of a dynamic interplay between different developmental processes. His theory has integrated in an innovative way the Piagetian theory (especially the role of sensorimotor development and object formation), the Vygotskian conception of the critical role of others and the joint activity in the child development, the Wallon theory of relationships between practical activity, emotions and cognition in the early development, and the Bowlby theory of attachment, emphasizing the significance of relationships of the child with their primary caregivers. Ivić has provided a conception by defining how each of these components interact with each other and how they contribute to the formation of symbolic function in children.

We believe that this book is a relevant resource for teachers and researchers in the field of early child development, especially those interested in a better understanding of how positive relationships—with caregivers and the child and their shared activities and experiences—can provide opportunities for cognitive, social, and emotional early development.

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