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(Critical) Psychology as Politics by Other Means



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Editorial

More than a century after its establishment, psychology has burgeoned into a vast industry that produces and disseminates knowledge, interventions, and social outcomes. This industry often frames its practices as neutral technologies aimed at helping and improving individuals and society. However, this purported neutrality obscures the political nature of these practices, masking their role in social and societal control. The current issue of the *Annual Review of Critical Psychology* (ARCP) delves into the intricate relationship between psychology and politics, emphasizing that human action and agency are inherently political.

The connection between psychology and politics is multifaceted, encompassing areas such as psychology *and* politics, psychology *in* politics, political psychology, and politics *in* psychology. Despite this breadth, the political character of human action is frequently treated as an optional aspect, dependent on the individual psychologist's ethical orientation. This approach fails to acknowledge that the political dimension of human action resists confinement to a specialized subdiscipline like political psychology. The term 'political psychology' misleadingly implies the existence of an 'a-political psychology,' a notion that is fundamentally flawed.

Human action is inherently political due to its social contextualization. It constitutes and is constituted by the social fabric, extending outwards through activities like planning, organizing, caring, prevention, and foresight. The political nature of human action is a fundamental aspect of every human endeavour, including psychological and academic work. Agency involves not just executing given tasks but also formulating questions and identifying phenomena as problematic, thus demanding corrective action. This anticipative and creative dimension of agency underscores that human action maintains and pioneers alternative social relations, making it perpetually political.

In recognizing the pre-figurative qualities and dimensions of human action, (critical) psychology emerges as inherently political. It becomes clear that (critical) psychology operates as politics by other means. This perspective is central to the current issue, which explores psychology as politics by other

means, challenging the view that the political aspect of human agency is merely an add-on to psychological theories or practices.

This issue engages with the diverse and profound relationship between psychology and politics, examining the political assumptions embedded in our psychological theories and practices, the emergence of distinct subjectivities within psychological theory and practice, and the explicit or tacit interests of these subjects. Through this exploration, we aim to foster a deeper understanding of how psychology can serve as a powerful tool for political action and social change.

The contributions

There are over 50 articles in this issue. They cover a wide range of topics and are grouped into six broad areas: Methodology and Epistemology; Subjectivities and Subject Formation; Social Practices of Psychology; Racism and Nationalism; Gender, Women and Critical Feminisms; and Struggles, Visions and Future Possibilities.

The authors of this issue are from a variety of places on the globe, including Brazil Germany, Greece, Austria, South Africa, Turkey, Denmark, the USA, the UK, Botswana, Chile, Iran, Mexico, and Norway. Additionally, some articles focus on the Russia-Ukraine war or the US-Vietnam war, adding further geographic diversity.

The issue includes articles that are primarily theoretical or conceptual in nature, use empirical or primary data, or are reflective and/or critical commentaries. While all the articles straddle theoretical issues, conceptual critiques, reflective commentaries, and draw upon some data from existing research projects, these broad classifications give us a sense of the methodological slant of this collection. Where empirical studies are reported, critical discourse analysis, qualitative interviews, or ethnographies are the preferred modes.

Overall, all articles speak to the broad failure of mainstream psychologies, critiquing and troubling the status quo, while also offering alternative and nuanced visions and manifestos for future possibilities of a politicised psychology from a wide range of vantage points.