

Call for Papers

Beyond Adaptation

The Unity of Personal and Social Change in Critical and Cultural-Historical Psychology

"The coincidence of the changing of circumstances and of human activity or self-changing can be conceived and rationally understood only as revolutionary practice." (Marx 1845/1888, Theses on Feuerbach)

Global crises such as the COVID pandemic, climate change and the impact of armed conflicts demand radical transformations in both societal structures and individual conduct. These crises have accelerated existing dynamics of oppression and exclusion and are particularly devastating to the marginalized. As practitioners and researchers in psychology, education, and social work, we are situated somewhat 'in-between' our clients/students and the societal structures – mediating individual needs with institutional demands. The question arises as to what follows from this mediators' position: the mandate to pacify or the capacity to change what exists. Are we doomed to perpetuate the status quo, or can we contribute answers to the pressing issues of our time?

Critical researchers have spilled much ink to outline the manipulative and disciplinary function of the psych- as well as the ed-professions. At the same time, the question of how to contribute to the dismantling of oppressive structures as psychosocial practitioners and researchers does not attract the same scholarly attention. For us as practitioners and researchers in these fields, however, this question is most relevant in an endeavour to resist being mere bystanders, or worse, collaborators of a system that favours the needs of a minority over the interests of the majority – and threatens humanity's existence.

Both critical psychology and cultural-historical psychology have taken up the challenge to address these questions and contribute to theoretical vocabularies for and practices towards collective efforts to revolutionize social conditions. However, the key concepts, namely subjectivity, social mediateness, and agency, are spelled out with different emphases, complicating the mutual dialogue between these two traditions. Researchers from both traditions continue to understand the individual as societally situated *and* capable of transformative joint action. Not stagnating at an abstract critique, they contribute to a positive program for psychology and the neighbouring disciplines that overcomes the notion of the abstract, isolated individual. Subjectivity, in González-Rey's and Mitjans Martínez' (2020, p. 50)¹ words, "*expresses the human capacity to transcend what is objectively dominant, making individuals, groups, and social instances capable of creating new realities and processes that*

¹ González Rey, F., & Mitjans Martínez, A. (2020). Looking Toward a Productive Dialogue Between Cultural-Historical and Critical Psychologies. In M. Fleer, F. González Rey, & P. E. Jones (Eds.), *Cultural-Historical and Critical Psychology* (Vol. 8, pp. 43–62). Springer Singapore. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-2209-3_4

in the beginning could have seemed idle fantasies." An inquiry into this human capacity is needed as an alternative to both positivist control science and abstract scholarly criticism.

The reference to the ever-present alternative of expanding one's own scope of action is so important precisely because practitioners in psychology, education, and social work have good reason to note a lack of substantial ability to influence the conditions of their work. They are confronted with a working environment in which they are mainly paid to rehabilitate their clients or educate their pupils to cope with the demands of wage labour. Therefore, methods primarily directed towards adaptation are dominant - which is also true for researchers who must peddle their work as a valuable investment in the eyes of state agencies and other funding institutions. Here, the challenge is to, at the same time, promote practices to address injustices *and* help individuals to get by. *We pose the question:*

How can we as psychosocial practitioners and researchers navigate within societal structures while at the same time pushing for socially just conditions in concrete professional practices?

Understanding and criticizing capitalism are preconditions to addressing individuals' problems in context. However, pointing out the structural characteristics of the society we live and work in does not suffice. A critically informed science of the subject – as provided by cultural-historical psychology and German-Scandinavian critical psychology- is also needed. *Authors are invited to contribute with historical analysis of this line of research and present their own further theoretical contributions to the field. It is a particular concern of this volume to trace the dialogue of cultural-historical researchers with critical psychology researchers in the past and re-connect the dots by discussing new developments within the two respective fields in the light of each other.*

We invite researchers to contribute with analyses of psychological practices in various contexts, either in the tradition of cultural-historical psychology, German-Scandinavian critical psychology, or both. The psychological practices can be situated within:

- *clinical, developmental, or social psychology*
- *social work*
- *education*
- *political practices*
- *scientific practices*

We are interested in theoretical and empirical contributions on the relation between societal and individual change, which are situated within or in relation to either cultural-historical psychology and/or German-Scandinavian critical psychology. For example, some of the following questions could be addressed:

- *What problems regarding personal and social change do psychosocial practitioners/researchers encounter in their daily work?*
- *How do practitioners and/or researchers reflect their positions in relation to societal structures?*
- *How do practitioners and/or researchers develop knowledge in support of both adaptive and revolutionary interventions?*
- *How do participants and clients of psychosocial practices experience and act upon the tensions of the respective field?*

- *How do organizational and institutional arrangements support and/or challenge the development of social change?*

We especially welcome contributions by practitioners/researchers writing about their own work. What is important to us is that all contributions address the overall question.

Formalities and Process:

After the initial round of submissions of contributions, we will ask some authors or other researchers to provide comments on other authors' contributions, which will be published along with the respective contribution, in order to establish a dialogue across local scholarly traditions.

- Send your abstract in the **maximal** length of **3600 characters** (app. 1-1,5 pages including spaces, excluding references) to critpsyc@gmail.com before midnight of **June 31 2022**.
- August 1st you will have feedback from us (acceptance or rejection).
- First draft of the full article should be submitted before January 31, 2023
- Subject to anonymous peer review, our book should be published with the Peter Lang Series (Post-)Critical Global Childhood & Youth Studies: <https://www.peterlang.com/series/7011> (which is the reason why all abstracts should be detailed & well-written).

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