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Unconscious

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Introduction

Many critical psychologists take issue with the exclusion of Freudian theories about the unconscious from mainstream psychology. The history of the unconscious predates Freud. It also includes Freud's changing theories about the unconscious before, during, and after the First World War. Freud's theories have in turn led to debates about the unconscious within psychology and psychoanalysis and within social and political theory. The unconscious is also relevant to international and practice issues including mental health.

Definition

"Unconscious" refers to experience which is not readily accessible to conscious awareness unlike "preconscious" and "subconscious" which refer to experience which is accessible to consciousness, provided one turns one's attention to it. The "unconscious" is also used to refer to an area of mind not readily accessible to consciousness.

Keywords

Abjection; art, attachment; behaviorism; capitalism; castration; dreams; ego; fantasy; feminism; hallucination; id; identification; image; individualism; language; literature; medicine; narcissism; neuropsychology; phallus; philosophy; politics; preconscious; projection; psychiatry; psychoanalysis; religion; repression; sex; subconscious; sublimation; superego; symbolism; therapy; transference; trauma; treatment; unconscious

History

Pre-Freudian notions of the unconscious include centuries-old ideas about influences operating on the mind beyond conscious awareness. These ideas include notions of externally or internally driven divine inspiration or demonic possession. Over 4,000 years ago Hindu texts – the Vedas – included medical reference to unconscious-like influences on the mind. Much more recently unconscious-like influences on the mind featured in *On Illness* (1567) by Paracelsus. Shakespeare explored unconscious-like motivation in his plays. It was also explored philosophically by Spinoza, Leibniz, Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche. Credit for originating the notion of the unconscious mind is often accorded to the eighteenth-century German romantic philosopher, Schelling, whose writings influenced the poet and essayist, Coleridge, in introducing the notion of the unconscious mind into English.

This notion was also explored by Dostoevsky, Ibsen, and by other nineteenth-century writers including the founder of the first psychological laboratory, William James, in *The Principles of Psychology* (1890) and *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902).

In *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), Freud revolutionized ideas about unconscious experience. Whereas James described this experience as lying on a continuum with what is subconscious and conscious, Freud characterized it as consisting of infantile, pleasure-oriented, primary-process, wish-fulfilling hallucinations in "dynamic" tension and contradiction with reality-oriented, secondary-process conscious thinking in words. Subsequently, in *The Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* (1915–1917), Freud developed an "economic" or "topographical" theory of the mind as constituted by the flow of sexual libido between what is unconscious, preconscious, and conscious. At the same time he theorized the unconscious in an essay, "Repression" (1915a), as consisting of psychological representations of instinct denied entry to consciousness by primal repression together with related conscious experience rendered unconscious by secondary repression. The unconscious, he argued in a further essay, "The Unconscious" (1915b), consists of "thing presentations" which become conscious through being linked with "word presentations" in the preconscious mind.

Subsequently, influenced in part by studies of obsessional neurosis, schizophrenia, melancholia, and trauma, Freud developed in *The Ego and the Id* (1923) a "structural" theory of the mind divided between three structures: the unconscious id reservoir of the instincts, the unconscious superego surfacing as guilt-making conscience, and the conscious reality-oriented ego. This led to his abandoning his early-treatment goal of enabling patients to become conscious of the dynamically repressed unconscious wishes causing the ills bringing them into psychoanalytic treatment and to his subsequent aim of freeing the libido from fixation to repressed unconscious fantasy linked to oral, anal, and genital stages of infantile psychosexual development. Instead he theorized the goal of treatment as that of harnessing the unconscious id to the conscious ego. His "dynamic," "topographical," and "structural" theories of the unconscious have featured variously in histories of psychoanalysis including Ellenberger's *The Discovery of the Unconscious* (1970) and in debates within psychology and psychoanalysis and within social and political theory.

Traditional Debates

One traditional debate arises from the determination of mainstream psychology to free itself from the introspective and subjective research methods bequeathed by William James, Freud, and others. Inspired by the classical conditioning experiments on dogs pioneered by Pavlov in Russia and by the behaviorist manifestoes of Watson and Skinner in America, mainstream, university-based psychologists opted to focus their research on the objectively measurable behavior of rats, pigeons, and other animals from which extrapolations were made to research into human psychology and its modification through behavior therapy. Freud's theory of the unconscious also spawned debate, which continues today, regarding the validity of Popper's rejection of psychoanalysis in, for instance, *Conjectures and Refutations* (1963), for making claims about the unconscious which are unfalsifiable and based on pseudoscientific methods and procedures masquerading as science.

Within psychoanalysis another traditional debate concerns differences between Freud and Jung about the unconscious. Whereas Freud argued that the unconscious can only be discovered indirectly through deconstructing and freely associating to elements of its manifestations in consciously recalled dreams, Jung argued that the only difference between unconscious and conscious mental process is that the former involves images, the latter words, so that consciously recalled dream images, for instance, provide direct access to the unconscious. Further debate within psychoanalysis stems from Freud rooting the unconscious in the body and sexual libido, whereas Jung rooted it in inherited archetypes

and symbols of a nonsexual libido as vital life force or "*élan vital*."

Further debate within psychoanalysis stems from the 1941–1945 controversial discussions within the British Psychoanalytical Society (BPAS) regarding the claim by Klein and Isaacs that, as Isaacs put it in her essay, "The Nature and Function of Phantasy" (1948), every impulse and instinctual urge or response is experienced from earliest infancy as unconscious fantasy. This led to the BPAS's present division into three groups – Kleinian, Contemporary Freudian, and Independent. Influenced by the phenomenological philosophy of Sartre, the Independent or Middle Group psychoanalyst, R D Laing, in *Self and Others* (1961) rejected Isaacs's notion of unconscious fantasy and of unconscious experience as self-contradictory. Others, including the Paris-based psychoanalysts, Laplanche and Pontalis, criticized Klein's concept of unconscious fantasy in their essay, "Fantasy and the Origins of Sexuality" (1968), for failing to distinguish between what is conscious and unconscious and for failing to take account of the influence of the society into which we are born and its myths and legends mediated to us by our relations and others in shaping unconscious fantasies about sex and castration.

A rather different debate arises from Klein's concept of an unconscious fantasy of projective identification involving unconscious projection and identification of aspects of oneself in others. According to Bott Spillius in *Melanie Klein Today* (1988), Klein disputed whether this unconscious fantasy is a cause of the psychoanalyst's experience of the patient in therapy. Many of Klein's followers today, however, regard this unconscious fantasy in patients as a major factor of the psychoanalyst's countertransference experience of them.

Critical Debates

Within Psychoanalysis and Psychology

A major debate within critical psychology stems from Freud's argument in his *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* (1933) that the goal of psychoanalysis consists in harnessing the unconscious id to the conscious ego. This goal was further developed by his psychoanalyst daughter, Anna Freud, in *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defence* (1936) and by her followers in America including Hartmann in *Ego Psychology and the Problem of Adaptation* (1958) and Kohut in *The Restoration of the Self* (1977). This development of Freud's theory of the unconscious has been debated in terms of Lacan's essay (e.g., Lacan, 1949, 1953) describing those ego as founded in the infant's mis-recognition and misidentification of itself with its virtual or imaginary image of itself in the mirror as precursor of its alienating itself in the personal pronoun, "I," of language. Far from psychoanalytic treatment seeking to strengthen the patient's self-alienation through identifying, for instance, with the ego of the psychoanalyst, the proper goal of psychoanalysis, it is argued, involves enabling the unconscious repressed in the name of the ego to become conscious. This is explained by Bailly in *Lacan* (2009) and by Parker in *Lacanian Psychoanalysis* (2011).

Against those who equate the primary process of the unconscious with the unlimited oceanic feeling of primary narcissism described by Freud in *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930), followers of Lacan have adopted his argument in "The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious" (1957) that, since the dreamwork mechanisms of condensation and displacement described by Freud in his theory of the unconscious correspond to metaphor and metonymy in language, therefore the unconscious is structured like a language. Followers of Lacan also adopt his reformulation in "The Signification of the Phallus" (1958) of Freud's theory of the Oedipus and castration complex repression of wish-fulfilling desire into the unconscious as effect of the phallus as privileged signifier or symbol of the joining of language with desire.

Meanwhile further debate concerns the extension of Freud's theory of the unconscious to the treatment of very young children and of psychotic states of mind in adults leading psychoanalysts to attend to the precursors of symbolism. This included the psychoanalyst Winnicott in an

essay, "Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena" (1953), arguing that infants bridge the gap between unconscious and conscious, subjective and objective modes of thinking with sucking, farting, babbling, bits of fluff, and so on. In other essays including "Primary Maternal Preoccupation" (1956), Winnicott theorized this gap as also bridged by mothers bringing external reality into accord with their babies' more or less unconscious hallucination of what might satisfy their desire. The Kleinian psychoanalyst, Bion, in turn argued in "A Theory of Thinking" (1962) that through taking in, being affected by, and containing their babies' projected sense-data experience, mothers transform this experience into the meaningful elements of unconscious and conscious dreaming, knowing, and thinking.

These theories have been used in debating Lacan's emphasis on phallic and other symbolism to the neglect of exploring the bodily based semiotic precursors of the unconscious formed also through abjection of whatever seems to signify oneness with the mother as theorized in *Desire in Language* (1980) and *Powers of Language* (1982) by Kristeva. Against those who argue in terms of the theories of the unconscious developed by Freud and Lacan that psychoanalysts should adopt an impassive stance in relation to their patients, Kristeva argues in *New Maladies of the Soul* (1993), and other psychoanalysts have likewise argued, that enabling unconscious material in the patient to become conscious can entail psychoanalysts revealing and putting into words the countertransference experience evoked in them by their patients. This has fuelled ongoing debate between relational and other psychoanalysts today.

Meanwhile the demise of behaviorism and the development within non-psychoanalytic psychology of cognitive psychology and neuropsychology has led to renewed interest in the psychoanalyst Bowlby's theory of attachment and internal working models and in neuropsychological correlates of unconscious mental processes. This has led to debate by, for instance, Talvitie and Ihanus in "On Neuropsychoanalytic Metaphysics" (2011) about the relevance of neuropsychology findings for psychoanalytic theories of the unconscious.

Within Social and Political Theory

These debates have their precedents in Freud's account of social factors contributing to the repression of sexual desire into the unconscious in essays such as "'Civilized' Sexual Morality and Modern Nervousness" (Freud, 1908) and in his books including *Totem and Taboo* (1913), *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (1921), and *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930). Freud rejected the psychoanalyst Adler's claims regarding the socially caused, more or less unconscious inferiority complex. In his *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* (1933), Freud also rejected Marxist social theory as based on wish-fulfilling illusion and as leading to repressive political practice. He was unsympathetic to the integration of Marxism with the theory of the repressed unconscious which the psychoanalyst, Wilhelm Reich, developed in books such as *Dialectical Materialism and Psychoanalysis* (1929).

The foundation by Horkheimer of the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt in 1930 resulted in the beginning of critical theory and its integration of the dialectical materialist political philosophy of Marx with Freud's theory of the unconscious in contradiction with consciousness as means of exposing so as to free people from repressive social conditions. Following Hitler's rise to power in 1933, many critical theorists left Germany for the USA. They included Marcuse who in *Eros and Civilization* (1955) criticized capitalism for its surplus repression into the unconscious of bodily based, polymorphous perverse sexuality. He also criticized the emphasis by Fromm, Horney, and other post-Freudian psychoanalysts in America on individual freedom, thereby contributing to the conformist repression of bodily based, polymorphous perverse sexual instincts into the unconscious. Marcuse then modified this critique in *One-Dimensional Man* (1964) in which he described the repressive de-sublimation from unconsciousness of sexual wishes in the interests of capitalist free market individualism.

Meanwhile an ethic of free-will individual free choice had been propounded in France by Sartre in *Being and Nothingness* (1943). He criticized those who eluded recognition of their responsibility for exercising their free choice as guilty of bad faith, false consciousness, and mistaken appeal to the repressed unconscious which he rejected as self-contradictory since what is repressed has to be conscious to be repressed. Sartre's ethic of free-will individual free choice led to debate in terms of its constraint theorized in terms of the structural linguistics of de Saussure, the structural anthropology of Lévi-Strauss, and the structural theory of the unconscious of Lacan. These theories were integrated with Marxist theory by Althusser in *Lenin and Philosophy* (1968). This was followed by Deleuze and Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus* (1972) celebrating the anarchic anticapitalist potential of the unconscious.

Lacan's theories were also taken up within sexual politics by Mitchell in *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* (1974). She criticized feminists for rejecting Freud's theory of penis envy and the unconscious rather than accepting it as means of understanding women's and men's unconscious acquiescence as agents or objects of patriarchal kinship exchange within capitalism. Irigaray, by contrast, in *This Sex Which Is Not One* (1977), rejected Lacan's theory of the unconscious as phallocentric and as wrongly neglecting the gynocentric factors shaping women's psychology. Kristeva's implicit criticism of Lacan's theory of the unconscious in terms of her *Powers of Horror* (1982) theory of abjection has also been debated by Tyler in "Against Abjection" (2009) for diverting attention away from the harm done to women as objects of abjection.

Others oppose Freud's theory of the repressed unconscious in the name of post-structuralist social and political theory. In this they adopt Foucault's argument in *The History of Sexuality* (1976) that far from Freud's talking cure method freeing sexuality from repression into the unconscious it instead instituted, in the name of medical science, a means of inciting people to talk about and thereby produce themselves as essentially sexual. Freud's talking cure theory of the unconscious is therefore just one of the many discursive practices producing our multifaceted subjectivities. It is therefore nonsense to suggest that we can discover what is pre-discursive and unconscious through talking cure psychoanalysis argues the Foucault-influenced theorist, Jameson, in *The Political Unconscious* (2002).

Others, however, are more favorably disposed to Freud's theory of the repressed unconscious. They include Joel Kovel who, in *White Racism* (1970), brought together the dialectical materialist political philosophy of Marx together with Freud's theory of the unconscious to explain the history of anti-Black discrimination in America. Subsequently the Lacan-influenced account by Laplanche in *Essays on Otherness* (1999) of the formation of the unconscious through the enigmatic signifiers conveyed to us by others has been used by Sullivan in *Revealing Whiteness* (2006) to explain the early childhood origins in the unconscious of racist discrimination. Also influential on current social and political debate about the unconscious is the integration of Marxist and Freudian theory by Zizek in, for instance, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (1989) and in subsequent writings depicting the unconscious structure of the superego as a result of the castration or sacrifice of *jouissance* involved in conscious submission to socially given law.

International Relevance

The unconscious has been explored in relation to post-colonialism by, for instance, Neil Lazarus in his book, *The Postcolonial Unconscious* (2011). It is also relevant to the internationalization of psychiatric categories and to the undermining of individual freedom and democracy by the growing political power of multinational companies.

Practice Relevance

Freud's theory of the unconscious is relevant to various fields of practice including artistic

creation and social and political consciousness-raising and to the campaign of Leader in *What is Madness?* (2011) and to others in challenging and providing alternatives to the psychiatric classification of symptoms of mental ill health and suppression of these symptoms with psychiatric medication or behavior therapy.

Future Directions

In future years we are likely to see more from mainstream psychology concerning the role of the unconscious in cognition. From a critical psychology perspective, the unconscious could usefully be used in the future to expose and counter problems with psychiatric categorization, medication, and their internationalization, as well as to counter ideologies of terrorism and the benefits (or otherwise) of the undermining of individual democracy by the dominance of multinational corporations.

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Unemployment

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Introduction

What would it be to engage with unemployment from the perspective of critical psychology? For Holzkamp and others who developed a version of "critical psychology" at the Free University of Berlin (see Teo, 1998), a "critical psychology" would be a psychology based on the works of Marx. It would be impossible to engage seriously with unemployment without engaging seriously with the contributions of Marx and Marxists in relation to the accumulation of capital, reproduction of the conditions of production (including labor power – see Althusser, 1971), the reserve army of labor, and the proletarianization of the working class. Yet for others influenced by contemporary critical social theory, including this author, psychology – indeed the psy-complex (Rose, 1979) – is profoundly problematic, and for post-Foucauldians again including this author, Marx's positions on both power and the state are problematic, so the notion of "a psychology based on the works of Marx" is doubly problematic.

In this entry the violence wrought on individuals, families, workplaces, communities, whole countries, and transnational geographical areas by the unemployment which is an intrinsic aspect of twenty-first-century neoliberal capitalism is emphasized. The contributions of Austro-Marxist Marie Jahoda to the field are also emphasized. However, the research of psychologists "into" unemployment (some would say the research of psychologists constituting unemployment as we

know it) is also positioned as critically problematic in its reproduction of bureaucratized, acritical, "scientistic" knowledge – production and legitimation methods; the oppressive role of the research of psychologists "into" unemployment in the war without bullets (Fryer & McCormack, 2012) against those surplus to capitalist market requirements is also emphasized; the parallels between the role of the psy-disciplines in distal colonization and their role in the subjugation of the proximal "working class" are underlined; and the problematic re-inscription of modernist notions of separate individualistic agentic subjectivity and contextual social structure achieved by unemployment psychological research is problematized. Critical postmodern scholarship is recommended.

Definition

The definition of "unemployment" is bedeviled by conceptual and political controversies. Unlike "work," which could be defined as a sort of purposeful activity, "employment" is a relationship between an employer and an employee, within which work is done in exchange for income or other privileges. Headline figures of unemployment can be politically controversial: "the TUC and ILO accused the Thatcher government of changing the definition of unemployment twenty-three times (between 1979 and 1991) to reduce the headline figure and therefore conceal the true extent of unemployment" (Pierce, 2008: 82). These days the number of unemployed people is calculated in most "advanced" i.e., OECD countries using a survey measure developed out of a definition sanctioned by the International Labor Organization, an agency of the United Nations. According to this operationalization, unemployed people are of an age to be employed, without employment, available for employment, wanting employment, and have actively sought employment in the previous 4 weeks. This definition, of course, means that those who are positioned by mainstream psy as depressed, anxious,

demoralized, discouraged, low in self-esteem, socially isolated, etc., *as a consequence of being unemployed* do not count as unemployed in ILO i.e., government figures. The irony of those who are reconstituted by unemployment to fall outside the criteria for inclusion in the politically salient category of the unemployed, i.e., to be politically disappeared is surely a form of social violence?

Keywords

Unemployment; poverty; capitalism; reproduction of the conditions of production; reserve army of labor; the war without bullets

History

In 1909, a *Bibliography of Unemployment and the Unemployed* prepared for members of *the Royal Commission on the Poor laws and on the Relief of Distress from Unemployment* (1905–1909), including nearly 800 books, pamphlets, and articles, was published but was criticized by Sidney Webb, in its Preface, for lack of "historical perspective." Webb highlighted "the demoralization of prolonged unemployment" and the "historical persistence of the problem for at least three centuries" (cited in Fryer, 1986a: 240). However, reports of "the psychological consequences of unemployment" in a form recognizable today as "social scientific" probably go back to Marienthal, a village outside Vienna, in 1933 when a group of interdisciplinary researchers led by Paul Lazarsfeld and Marie Jahoda subjected the residents, who were experiencing mass unemployment, to sustained detailed "sociographic" scrutiny (see Fryer, 1986a for reference).

From 1933 to the present day, there has been a steady stream of studies "about" psychological, health, social, community, and wider "consequences" of unemployment. Maynard & Feldman (2011) reported that their search of relevant databases (PsycINFO, SocIndex, etc.) had revealed 31,839 peer-reviewed works with "unemployment" in the abstract published in the previous 50 years, i.e., since 1961. Moreover the period between 1933 and 1961 was a flourishing period of unemployment research with classic work published by Bakke, Eisenberg and Lazarus, and Pilgrim Trust to name but a few important studies (see Fryer, 1986a for references).

Since the 1930s research has been done in a wide variety of geographical settings, across a wide variety of historical periods, from a wide variety of diverse funding bases and political assumptions. This huge and diverse body of research has been done at a variety of "levels" (individual unemployed people, unemployed families, cohorts of school-leavers, whole redundant workforces, populations of states or whole countries, etc.) and has been characterized by researchers' use of a wide variety of methods and research designs (psychiatric assessment, qualitative interviewing, cross-sectional and longitudinal surveys using validated reliable measures, epidemiology, and action research). Meta-reviews have pooled data from a variety of studies (e.g., Paul & Moser, 2009).

While there have been provisos, there has been effectively near unanimity that unemployment is not only associated with but "causes" individual misery and mental health problems including anxiety, depression, negative self-esteem, dissatisfaction with life, social dislocation, community dysfunction, and population morbidity. Actually those who are unemployed are only a small proportion of those who are reported to be deleteriously psychologically affected: the spouses of unemployed people, children in unemployed families, non-unemployed people living in unemployed communities, those who anticipate unemployment without becoming unemployed, and those who have been unemployed and are re-employed are all reported to be subject to negative psychological consequences of unemployment.

Theorized explanations of why such consequences occur have been developed and enthusiastically taken up. The most influential such explanation is that of Marie Jahoda who argued that although the "manifest," i.e., intended function of employment was to earn a living, employment also had "latent" functions (an imposed

time structure, engagement in regular social contact, participation in a collective purpose, receipt of a social identity, and required regular activity); the deprivation of which – during unemployment – was responsible for the psychological consequences of unemployment (Jahoda, 1982). Fryer (1986b) offered both a critique of Jahoda's explanation and an alternative meta-theory in terms of the restriction of agency by unemployment.

Traditional Debates

Researchers in the 1930s carried out unemployment research in the context of mass unemployment and hunger marches to determine whether mass unemployment would lead to revolution or apathy. Researchers in the 1970s and 1980s were more concerned with the question of whether the association between unemployment and indicators of poor mental health was to be explained by processes through which those with poorer mental health were more likely to become and remain unemployed (individual drift) or processes through which healthy people who became unemployed were more likely to become less mentally healthy (social causation). Epidemiological and cross-sectional studies, while suggestive, were deemed inconclusive. Large-scale longitudinal survey design studies using measures or accepted reliability and validity and meta-review studies were taken to definitively answer the question in favor of social causation.

Traditional debate also occurred about variability in the impact of unemployment from person to person. This led to research on "moderator variables" which were positioned as moderating the relationship between unemployment and mental health. These included age, gender, length of unemployment, "employment commitment," and social class.

Perhaps, however, it was the two aspects where there was a *lack* of debate by mainstream researchers regarding the psychological impact of unemployment, which are most noteworthy here.

Firstly, although there have been huge differences in the nature of employment, the nature of work, the labor market, the nature and degree of support for people, distribution of wealth, and dominant social values from the 1930s to the twenty-first century and from country to country, the psychological impact of unemployment has been, according to researchers, with minor caveats, pretty well identical across time, space, and culture.

Secondly, although researchers have approached the impact of unemployment from very different political assumptions, there has been – again with minor caveats – an astonishing consensus both that unemployment is psychologically destructive and about the particular nature of that psychological destruction.

Critical Debates

At the most basic critical level, critique of mainstream unemployment research starts by drawing attention to the formulaic, mainstream, modernist, risk-averse, research methods which have dominated the field: survey design, standardized measures, bureaucratized division of labor between researchers, survey companies, data preparation staff, statisticians, etc.; the decontextualizing of subjectivity from its material and discursive circumstances, the answering of questions posed by and useful to the status quo, its suspicious consensuality, its inauthentic nature, e.g., enactment of the form of employment most profitable for employers being positioned by psychological research as not only necessary, but ideal for psychological health.

A second level of critique focuses on the acceptability to the status quo of research showing unemployment is bad for mental health: to argue that unemployment is psychologically destructive is totally uncontroversial, yet to argue that unemployment can be good for mental health is hugely controversial. Why is that? "The Governor of the Bank of England, Eddie George" once "provoked outrage with his comment that job losses in the north were an acceptable price to pay for curbing inflation in the south." (http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/talking_point/198830.stm); there is a well-used acronym (NAIRU – Non

Accelerating Inflation Rate of Unemployment) created to refer to the level of unemployment required to prevent inflation (4–6 %); bonds and stock exchanges tend to rise with increases in unemployment. The explanation of what causes the psychological consequences of unemployment received telling endorsement from The Times newspaper in London on 27th September 1993 (page 19). A leading article based on a report by the paper's science editor interpreted Jahoda's explanation as saying "the kind of self-esteem and satisfaction that most feel to be necessary for a fulfilled life can rarely be achieved outside of paid work ... the very constraints of working life are what make it satisfying ... being at work often involved doing things which were initially disliked. The overcoming of ... resistance to complete the task gave a form of gratification that was peculiarly difficult to match outside of the workplace." Clearly psychological research is here positioning oppressive employment conditions as psychologically necessary. Drawing inspiration from Herb Gans, Fryer (1985) drew attention to "the positive functions of unemployment" for some interest groups: unemployment: provides a pool of potential workers unable to refuse to do the most boring, dirty, dead end, menial, underpaid, temporary, insecure, stressful jobs; provides consumers of substandard products and services which would otherwise be "wasted"; provides competition for jobs from desperate job seekers allowing employers to drive down wages and working conditions; acts as an incomes policy ensuring lower wages, bigger dividends, and more investment; creates jobs for middle-class professionals, "worthy causes" for middle-class philanthropists, and rallying issues for political groups; and positions some people as deviants who can be used to legitimate dominant norms of hard work. Unemployment functions better as an instrument of social, political, and economic control to the extent that unemployment is not only constructed to be psychologically deleterious, but widely recognized as being so. Research documenting the negative psychological costs of unemployment is one way in which that recognition is achieved.

A third level of critique of unemployment research draws upon decolonizing research, for example, that of Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) who claims that "scientific research is implicated in the worst excesses of colonialism" (Smith: 1); refers to research "both in terms of its absolute worthlessness" (to colonized people) "and its absolute usefulness to those who wielded it as an instrument" (Smith: 3); notes that "many indigenous communities continue to live within political and social conditions that perpetuate extreme levels of poverty, chronic ill health, and poor educational opportunities" and that "while they live like this, they are constantly fed messages about their worthlessness, laziness, dependence, and lack of higher order human qualities"; refers to "creeping policies that intruded into every aspect of our lives, legitimated by research" (Smith: 3); and notes that "Indigenous communities are not only beginning to fight back against the invasion of their communities by academic, corporate, and populist researchers, but to think about, and carry out research, on their own concerns" (Linda Tuhiwai Smith: 39). To critically extrapolate, psychological research on unemployment could be said to be implicated in the worst excesses of neoliberal violence against unemployed people, worthless to unemployed people but useful to those benefitting from the construction of unemployed people, collusive with the individualization, psychologization, and essentialization of the collective, material, economic, and political but preventable problems faced by unemployed people while deflecting attention from their pathogenic constituting circumstances and complicit with oppressive policies. Counter research by unemployed people on issues which matter to them in order to bring about progressive emancipatory outcomes in the interests of unemployed people occurs seldom (Cassell, Fitter, Fryer, & Smith, 1988) and is usually below the radar of the status quo (see "real jobs or dead ends": http://www.i-develop-cld.org.uk/pluginfile.php/757/mod_sectionresource/content/2/Combating%20Poverty%20Resource%20Pack.pdf).

A fourth level of critique dissolves unhelpful taken for granteds and re-problematizes key

issues in unemployment research. For example, the explanatory accounts of both Jahoda and Fryer are, from a critical standpoint, both within the liberal humanist tradition. They reinscribe the traditional modernist "agency/structure" binary and reproduce modernist notions of the person-in-context and cause-and-effect relations. Both accounts set up a realist frame of reference in which attention is paid to how the consequences of unemployment are "caused" and position the unemployed subject as unitary, individual, and agentic. From a critical standpoint it is necessary to instead position the unemployed subject as subjectively and materially (re)constituted as "unemployed," a socially and historically produced identity. Both the social institution of employment and the social construction of unemployment have changed in many ways and to many degrees across time and place, yet the "experience of unemployment" gleaned from the psychological literature is presented as near identical across time and place. The consistency of the results of subjectification of unemployed people across time and space tells us more about the functions served by unemployment, and the particular unemployed subjectivity which is repeatedly reconstituted, for the economic and political status quo than it does about authentic phenomenology.

International Relevance

At the time of writing this entry, the International Labor Organization (ILO) "has downgraded its Global Employment Outlook forecast for 2012 and 2013, revising upwards global unemployment rates to 6.1 per cent this year and 6.2 per cent in the next with unemployment expected to remain at over 6 per cent until 2016 Global unemployment is expected to hit 202 million by 2012, up 2 million from the previous forecast. 2013 figures are revised upwards by 4 million" (ILO Global Employment Outlook April, 2012). Given the strong claims in the mainstream acritical research literature about the psychological consequences of unemployment and the vast numbers of people unemployed, the scale of the misery and illness being generated by neoliberal policies manufacturing unemployment is, according even to mainstream psychology, colossal. Given unemployment is constructed to be psychologically destructive, re-subjectification functions to constitute misery and ill-being and psychology is central to that following through on critique both in relation to consequences of unemployment and the complicity of psychology in those consequences is an urgent international priority.

Practice Relevance

In general psychologists advocate individualistic, victim-blaming approaches which deflect attention from the economic and policy causes of unemployment, make no sense at a public mental health level, and at best contribute to a reordering of the queue of unemployed people looking for jobs. Such approaches include recommending unemployed people receive cognitive behavior therapy (Fryer, 1999; Proudfoot, Guest, Carson, Dunn & Gray, 1997); the JOBS project which "involves the design and evaluation of a preventive intervention aimed at providing job-seeking skills to promote reemployment and to combat feelings of anxiety, helplessness, and depression among the unemployed"; and the "Improving Access to Psychological Therapies program."

Future Directions

From a critical standpoint, it is now necessary to attend to and support resistance to the oppressive re-subjectification of unemployed people and to engage in collaborative counter-praxis with unemployed people in order to jointly bring about progressive emancipatory outcomes. It is necessary to move beyond modernist scientism and draw inspiration from postmodern social theory. It is also time to move beyond Marx. A critical psychology which does not start with Marx is not critical, but a critical psychology which stops with Marx is not critical either?

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Online Resources

Improving Access to Psychological Therapies Programme: http://www.iapt.nhs.uk/

International Labour Organisation. http://www.ilo.org/global/statistics-and-databases/statistics-overview-and-topics/employment-and-unemployment/lang–en/index.htm

ILO Global Employment Outlook April. (2012). http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/—ed_emp/—emp_elm/—trends/documents/publication/wcms_179663.pdf

JOBS Project. http://www.isr.umich.edu/src/seh/mprc/jobsupdt.html

Universalism

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Introduction

Universalism implies that it is possible to apply generalized norms, values, or concepts to all people and cultures, regardless of the contexts in which they are located. These norms may include a focus on human needs, rights, or biological and psychological processes and are based on the perspective that all people are essentially equivalent. As an example, the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights asserts various rights to all people – e.g., to marry, own property, and access equal protection under the law – regardless of culture or nationality.

Definition

The concept of universalism is prevalent across the social, political, and physical sciences. In the field of psychology, universalism conventionally refers to the idea that the range of human experience – from basic needs and psychological processes to core values – is intrinsic and therefore similar across humans and cultures. Thus, universalism enables not only meaningful comparisons across individuals and groups but also the application of universal laws and rights. If people are fundamentally the same, they are accordingly deserving of equal rights and protections, regardless of differences such as race, class, or gender.

Because universalism is concerned with the identification, measurement, and application of universal laws and principles, it is often guided by a philosophy of science rooted in a post-positivist ontology (Hergenhahn, 2008). In other words, universalism implies that one reality (i.e., "truth") exists and can be understood through systematic study (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010). The precise shape universalism takes, however, differs greatly between scientific fields. There is an important distinction, for example, between universalism as applied to the search for general psychological principles and universalism as observed in fields like international development and political science. In cross-cultural psychology, it is common to look for similarities and differences in the expression of behavior across cultures, assuming that the psychological processes underlying the behavior are similar. For example, a cross-cultural psychologist might study the expression of love and intimacy in marital relationships in several countries, based on the perspective that love and intimacy themselves are common values. A critical psychologist, on the other hand, might endeavor to understand the social structures that best support the adoption of marriage rights, assuming that humans are universally deserving of equal rights. The former is based on the premise that universal laws govern psychological processes, whereas the latter universalizes a particular value (marriage) and normalizes a particular social structure (the family).

Critical psychologists have played an important role in stimulating inquiry into how a universal perspective might facilitate the interpretation of behavior and psychological processes as well as our approach to social and individual level change. Some critical psychologists advocate the value of combining both universal and relativist approaches, recognizing that structural power is ubiquitous, while the inequities it produces differ across contexts (Grabe, 2010). Others reason for the strategic use of universalism especially in the application of human rights and research that contributes to social justice (e.g., Ackerly, 2008; Nussbaum, 2000). Although psychologists may take up divergent stances on debates around universalism, common to critical perspectives is the attention to social and psychological phenomena as embedded within systems of power. Therefore, universalism should not be uncritically applied with no recognition of context. Indeed, a critical framework demands attention to the positionality of the psychologist or researcher as well as the people or phenomena under study.

Keywords

Cultural psychology; cross-cultural psychology; relativism

Traditional Debates

Universalism is an implicit assumption in many areas of traditional psychology. One of the most prevalent debates relevant to universalism concerns its distinction from cultural relativism (Phillips, 2002). The universalism-relativism debate cuts across disciplines, including both traditional and critical psychologies. The nuances of the debate reflect the theoretical and disciplinary position of the debaters, and therefore, the tension between universalism and relativism falls under both traditional and critical debates. In contrast to universalism, relativism holds that psychological processes, norms, and values are socially constructed in relation to particular cultural and historical contexts. Universalists may take cultural variation in behavior and experience into account, but a relativist perspective sees behavior and experience as inextricably embedded within culture. Whereas universalism is consistent with the post-positivist scientific ontology that recognizes a single objective reality, relativism is more aligned with a constructivist or critical ontology that understands truth as relative to a cultural context. Relativists argue that there are many possible "truths," based on the situated experiences of individuals and groups. In addition, this position maintains that one perspective is no more

legitimate or valuable than another. Universalism and relativism have traditionally been conceptualized as dichotomous, mutually exclusive perspectives. More recently, however, psychologists have reconceptualized them as a spectrum, with few individuals identifying as exclusively one or the other.

Relativists question the validity and ethics of universalism within the social sciences. Although universal laws are common within the physical sciences, the similar application of universalism to social sciences may be inappropriate. If individuals and groups can only be understood in relation to their cultural context, then universal theories concerning human psychology are not scientifically valid. The homogenizing tendency of universalism is apparent in social science's emphasis on similarity and the collapsing of potentially meaningful within-group differences; in universalism, the risk of overgeneralizing is high (Lawson, 1999). Ethical concerns also arise when universalism is uncritically applied to explain the experiences and norms of particular groups. For example, the postulation of a universal experience associated with membership in specific social categories (e.g., woman, child, person of color) threatens to essentialize difference and potentially naturalize inequitable social positions.

Critical Debates

Critical debates concerning universalism have primarily centered on the political implications of defining universal norms and values and on the need to reformulate a universalism that acknowledges difference, both areas where critical psychology has already had a substantial impact. There is significant debate over the politics of representation inherent in attempts to define universal norms and processes. While adherents of universalism may argue that norms of justice can be applied to all people and societies, relativists claim that a universal set of rights entails the imposition of a particular model of functioning onto underrepresented groups. Indeed, universal claims are typically defined by individuals and groups with greater access to structural power. Critics of universalism contend that dominant groups establish universals based on their own limited and privileged perspective, setting up standards that construct others as deviant or dysfunctional. Debates over power and representation foreground a tension between the articulation of common needs and rights and the recognition that those very needs and rights are constituted in relation to particular cultural experiences. A critical question psychologists can ask in response to this debate is whose perspectives are absent in defining what is normative.

In response to the critiques leveraged against universalism, some feminist scholars have articulated a more nuanced conceptualization of the term and have argued in favor of its strategic application in the area of human rights. For example, the categorization characteristic of universalist theorizing can be an important strategic maneuver for subordinated groups. Coalition building, broad-based organizing efforts, and collective solidarity work often rest on universal notions of group experience (e.g., universal womanhood) in order to build membership and group cohesion.

Other perspectives reconcile the universalism-relativism debates through establishing universal standards of equity that simultaneously recognize and maintain cultural diversity. For example, Ackerly, (2008) asserts that a universal principle might be that norms, rights, and psychological processes are culturally relative. Rather than delineating specific lists of rights or normative behaviors, Ackerly argues for the establishment of social structures that expand the life possibilities for all people, so that they experience fewer constraints on directing their own life. In a similar vein, Nussbaum, (2000) argues for the enumeration of universal human capabilities rather than specific human rights. This perspective acknowledges that legal rights are necessary but not sufficient to ensure equity. Critical psychologists have begun to examine the role of institutional resources in the development of capabilities and actualization of rights (Grabe, 2010).

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Online Resources

The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) – http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/index.shtml

Universalization

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Introduction

Universalization is both a process of homogenization towards the utopic idea of universal unity and an obligation to the presupposition of universality. Universalization works as reification, in practice. Thus, as both a cause and an effect, it frequently is used interchangeably with the principle of universalism in psychology and in all areas of systematic study and everyday communications as well. Although universalization and universalism might appear similar at first sight (even like Siamese twins at times) and are closely related with other relevant concepts with the prefix *uni-*, such as human universals, unification, uniformity, universe, and so on, they are not identical. Universalization, for instance, could have been about the dissemination of different principles and ideals in psychological sciences such as pluralism, human diversity, particularity, multiverses, and so on, in principle. Thus, this fictive yet self-fulfilling process of unification is about making some ideal universally accepted, regardless of its content. It also needs to be thought of together with some other processes like internationalization and indigenization (see also globalization and localization) of modern psychological knowledge.

It is widely accepted that modern psychology is established in the historical time-place of the late nineteenth-century Western modernity. Modernity, as an epoch following the Middle Ages or feudalism (medieval heteronomy), produced its own set of institutions, discourses, and practices to legitimate its particular methods of disciplinary control (Foucault, 1977). Modernization called for various processes such as secularization, bureaucratization, rationalization, urbanization, industrialization, individualization, and so on, all of which together aimed to constitute the modern world. Psychology assumed a particular task and played a significant role towards constructing the modern subject to fit the new social order in the division of labor of modern scientific disciplinary taxonomy (Danziger, 1990; Rose, 1989, 1996).

Psychology developed in various intellectual directions, but all being in the Western geographical, social, philosophical, and religious soils. Despite some variations between its early schools of thought, psychology produced sociohistorically embedded knowledge. With all its locality, it has been ignorant of other psychological intelligibilities that have been "developing" in different parts of the world (Brock, 2006; Gergen, Gülerce, Misra, & Lock, 1996). Within a context of international power relations and

given its universalistic foundations and scientific commitments, psychology spread towards the "less developed" countries at the "periphery" (the Third World) from this "developed center" (the First World) as a Euro-American enterprise in the modern World-System (Moghaddam, 1987; Wallerstein, 1999).

Psychology has not been quite secular either, in the sense that, from its very beginning, it kept the universalistic and individualistic aspirations of Christianity and its beliefs that "all men are predestined for salvation." Implications in Western philosophy of Greco-Roman European superiority as a hidden design in nature and of being in charge of the emancipation of entire humanity have been examined (Derrida, 1998). It can be said that theological foundations have been replaced by the modern scientific method. Eurocentric knowledge has self-righteously assumed an additional mission to "civilize" non-Western civilizations.

There have been various controversies regarding psychology's subject (or object) of study, its philosophical presumptions about human "nature" or "behavior," and the proper scientific method throughout the twentieth century. However, the discipline has maintained a strong belief in universality as its scientific grounding. In other words, mainstream psychology neither changed its presupposition of universal uniformity nor challenged its search for pre-given human universals. Instead, in order to "discover" human universals, psychology rather "invented" or "renamed" various concepts, principles, justifications, and interpretations for the enormous invalid or partial empirical data it has produced.

Definition

Universalization in psychology is the reificatory process of homogenization towards a presumed psychological unity through the dissemination of psychological knowledge and institutionalized practices that are produced in a hegemonic Western center regardless of their form and content.

Keywords

Human universals; universality; homogenization; diversity; cultural difference; universals; cultural imperialism; modernization; internationalization; globalization; psychologization; westernization

Traditional Debates

The debate on whether psychology is a *Natur-*, *Geistes-*, or *Kultur-wissenshaft* has been oscillating ever since its establishment as a modern discipline in Leipzig. Wundt had a need for two different psychologies: experimental psychology for the "lower" processes of sensation and perception and folk/collective psychology (*Völkerpsychologie*) for the "higher" processes of thinking and for products of human interaction, such as language, myth, and custom. Clearly, the natural science approach and the Darwinian influence have dominated modern psychology. Whenever some sensitivity to the discipline's cultural blindness became an issue, Wundt's folk psychology has been acknowledged as a predecessor. However, both of Wundt's psychologies were equally culturebound and ethnocentric, and they put the main emphasis on the identification of universal structures of the human mind like all other schools in psychology and psychoanalysis. Freud presupposed a developmental/evolutionary correspondence between the psychic life of the infants and the "primitive" peoples. Jung diverted from him with an interest in the collective unconscious and by questioning the secular divide between the truths of natural sciences, myth, and religion. They both, as with psychoanalysis and psychology in general, presupposed psychic unity.

Developmental theorists further naturalized human development. Traditionally, psychology conformed to the universalist, hierarchically determinist, teleological, racist, and individualist presumptions of the progression, emancipation, and salvation narratives of missionary Judeo-Christianity and the hegemonic discourse of

Western modernity aimed at liberating the "savage" or the less privileged populations in our world. The influential developmental theory of Piaget that draws on an epistemic and universal child, for example, still paradoxically suffers from its superior position with its intrinsic univeralist, acontextual, ahistorical, Eurocentric, androcentric, and egocentric presuppositions.

Traditionally, all psychology has been univeralist, and the issue of universalization has not been an issue for recognition and debate. Particularly following World War II, various early schools of psychology in Europe have been overlooked as the Americanization of psychology became more visible. This was not just in the sense of geographical location of the produced knowledge but also the institutionalization, research interests, values, and the sociopolitical concerns that were distributed in the international community.

Critical Debates

Together with the shift of the knowledge center of psychology from Europe to the United States in parallel with other geopolitical changes in history and the establishment of various international institutions, internationalization of psychology gained a different pace and dimension. As the world's new market for psychology has been created and expanded, it has been further monopolized by psychological products that were and are "made in USA."

Psychological goods (e.g., concepts, tests, research methods, textbooks, associations, scientific meetings, journals, etc.) were and are predetermined towards human universality and are not "culture-free." These "exports" enter to cultures, some of which have no equivalent words for some psychological concepts, including "psychology" itself. Psychologists or academics and professionals in other related fields in countries outside North America and Western Europe are not the only social actors involved in this "trade"; local "importers" belonging to the early "modernized," Westernized, urbanized sections in their countries have taken part in the psychologization of their traditional populations.

Psychological knowledge has serious sampling, measurement, and other methodological problems. From its production to distribution, psychological knowledge involves a small, privileged group of people and excludes the much larger group as its users, the world population and their concerns. That is why universalization is frequently considered as cultural imperialism, hegemonization, and Westernization, as well as modernization, decolonization, and liberalization, depending on the local history of social transformations of a particular society and the ideological stance taken.

Cross-cultural psychology appeared as a subfield of psychology in early the 1970s in the climate of ideological protests of Vietnam War as Western(ized) psychology's response to modern anthropology's concept of "culture" and reports of ethnographic studies in exotic places. Cross-cultural psychologists recognized the necessity of making systematic comparisons themselves and collected numerous data from other parts of the world (Triandis et al., 1980). They are committed to search causal links between the individual behavior and the cultural context in the world's largest laboratory. In order to "uncover universals of human behavior," they prefer to "transport and test" and to "discover and explore" universalist assumptions by using "culture" as either an "independent" or an "index variable" (Berry, Poortinga, Segall, & Dasen, 1992). Having criticized mainstream psychological research for either focusing on only certain types of evidence or ignoring specific differences in human activities that are situated in different national, social, and cultural contexts, cross-cultural psychology ends up doing exactly the same.

Another response to the exportation of American psychology to other nations and cultures than those in Western Europe and North America exhibited itself under the label of indigenous psychologies (Heelas & Lock,

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1981). Some Third-World psychologists, who were trained in the West and/or allied with Western researchers, claim to avoid culture-blindness and culture-boundedness of mainstream psychology. They aim to scientifically study behavior of the "native human mind" that is "not transported" and is "designed for its people," still being interested in the discovery of human universals without assuming a priori that they exist (Kim & Berry, 1993). Some, however, are discontent with the inclusion of cultural variables that general or cross-cultural psychology either "eliminated" or "controlled." They seek, for example, a "macropsychology" (Sinha, 1994), a relational redefinition in psychology (Misra & Gergen, 1993), and further critical deliberations of racism and sensitivity to the postcolonial conditions for a "liberation psychology" (Foster, 2004; Hook, 2004). Both local and indigenous responses to hegemonic psychology cannot avoid reproducing the prevailing categories of the mainstream psychology in a counterdependent fashion at a different level of knowledge-practice.

Universalization, as explicitly/implicitly present in many narrow and partial, mainstream, or ideologically critical analyses, conceptualizes "development" as a linear, unidimensional, unidirectional, unicentered, and teleological process in a static world, and "culture" as a homogeneous entity with an essentialistic perspective. Substantial challenges to both orientations that are calling for radical transdisciplinary transformations are frequently ignored, censored, or marginalized. Present historical conditions of postmodernity or late modernity and the critical scholarship together pose further challenges to this heavily saturated concept and seriously test its heuristic value, survival, and definition.

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