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Editorial

Reconceptualization as a Tool of Critical Practice

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We gladly announce the latest Outlines issue! As expected for a journal devoted to critical practice studies, this issue brings up themes linked to the necessity of overcoming the status quo. Though the articles published herein cover a wide array of research topics, all of them insightfully engage with the issue of the commitment to knowledge production, especially within cultural-historical approaches, as a tool of social transformation and emancipation. The authors' critical engagement with knowledge production pivots on the principle of reconceptualization as a tool of critical research and scholarship. As a reconfiguration of social cultural patterns, reconceptualization permeates the articles in this issue not as mere academic exercise, but as a tool to reimagine and build new possible futures through critical frameworks. In this historical and dialectical reading, inspired by Stetsenko (2019), reconceptualization goes beyond deconstructing the present and past to offer forward-looking, radical solutions to our challenges. This is clearly articulated in the article by Prior and colleagues, who begin with an ethico-onto-epistemological transdisciplinary stance (Barad, 2007) attuned to historical becoming and aligned with the long-standing Vygotskian linkage of theory, methodology, and social action. According to them, ethico-onto-epistemological frameworks (e.g., Mainardes, 2022; Stetsenko, 2020) "have articulated the integration of being-doing-knowing, the centrality of socio-political ethos to projects of knowing, and the importance of foregrounding social consequences and visions in the design, implementation, and uptake of inquiry" (this issue, p. 14).

In their article, titled "Rearticulating theory and methodology for *perezhivanie* and becoming: Tracing flat CHAT assemblages and embodied intensities", which opens this issue, the authors link *perezhivanie* and becoming while seeking to rearticulate theory and methodology to develop a fluid ontology of moments. Revisiting the traditional Vygotskian concept of *perezhivanie*, and seeking to move beyond static categorization, they bring together a broad range of theoretical and methodological perspectives to

address issues regarding becoming within an ethico-onto-epistemological approach. In their attempt to capture the dynamic whole of embodied persons and sociomaterial environments emerging in moments of activity, they propose the following principles to inform claims about how *perezhivanie* and becoming contribute to an ontology of moments: Namely, *perezhivanie* emerges in flat, co-genetic, dialogic moments of semiotic becoming; embodiment entangles heterogeneous material and biological becomings; and rich environments have powerful consequences for becoming. Then they explore their methodological framework by analyzing four different praxis-oriented research projects that illustrate their ethico-onto-epistemological approach to studying *perezhivanie* and becoming diffractively across different studies, timescales, and sociomaterial contextualizations. In their words, “taking the lens of an ontology of moments to trace human becoming, *perezhivanie* focuses our attention on *consequentiality*. The challenge for situated analysis then is to identify analytic and conceptual lenses that bring into focus affective, indexical, intra-actional, and historical intensities; illuminate co-genetic affordances emerging from the bio-cultural-historical *weight* of environments and practices; and track dialogic *resonances* across chains of moments” (this issue, p. 15). After thoroughly describing and discussing each research project, the article closes with a consideration of the implications of the cases presented for understanding and designing moments of *perezhivanie* and becoming.

The next article, titled “A Narrative of the Disaster: Understanding the Experience of *Zahab* Earthquake in the Context of a Traumatized History” by Moshiri & Aalizad, presents a case of disaster sociology at the multidimensional intersection of various social problems, including marginalization, insecurity, political conflicts, war, and associated traumas. Focusing on the social history of the large scale *Zahab* earthquake in 2017, the authors discuss the relationship between narratives and identities *based on data* collected from a critical ethnography including more than ninety interviews with the survivors in the Kurdish villages in the region. The main argument is built upon the notion that society’s understanding of suffering and disaster determines how it will be encountered, and how the narrators of the disaster share common fears and suffer together. The article illustrates how reconceptualizing a natural disaster, in this case an earthquake, far from being a mere re-interpretation of concrete facts, actually reconfigures how different communities get together around these narratives of disaster as they seek to overcome it and improve their (re)production of life.

This issue closes with Conde’s revealing article, titled “The culture of child labor as a current expression of neo-colonialism”, which brings to light some hidden and unexpected findings about child labor exploitation in Brazil and in the United States. The author compares the exploitation of children in tobacco farms in both countries within the framework of neo-colonialism. Connecting arguments from a range of theoretical perspectives, the main import of the article is to reveal how capitalist sociability, and what Conde calls “the culture of work”, render this kind of exploitation into a normalized social pattern of child development and education, and how different elements act in synergy to contribute to its naturalization. As the author points out, a range of different social institutions (schools, religion, legislation) work in tandem to naturalize labor exploitation in children by effacing its colonizing and punishing nature. The upshot, she argues, is to make the working class, such as the tobacco farm workers she studied, come to love and naturalize work. This, she argues, constitutes a new cultural form: the love of work. To overcome this naturalization, the author’s recommendation, inspired by cultural-historical

scholars, is to seek new cultural forms that go beyond this necessity of exploitation and punishment.

References

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