From an individualized to a societal social psychology: Ideology and ideological changes as reflected in language usage

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Abstract

In our article we will first briefly review developments within critical psychology in Norway in the years after we prepared a review for *Annual Review of Critical Psychology* (in 2006). The substantial part of the article, however, will be an analysis and critical discussion of social psychology based on the assumption that social psychology (and the other social sciences) has a moral obligation to contribute in resolving pressing problems of our time; problems representing real threats to mankind and life on our planet (such as pollution and climate change, terrorism, poverty and unjust distribution of goods in an era of globalization, etc). These pressing problems of our time are somehow related to or even anchored in the currently globalizing ideology of neoliberalism. Our conclusion on this analysis will be that this assumption demands a social psychology rather different from the currently predominant experimental and laboratory based social psychology which individualizes the social. In particular, social psychology has to take the concept of ideology – a concept which is currently ignored or even excluded in mainstream social psychology - into consideration if social psychology is going to contribute to resolve challenging problems of our time (as they all carry ideological implications).

keywords: individualized social psychology, societal social psychology, globalization, neoliberalism, ideology

Introduction[1]

Neither as an academic nor as an applied field of study does social psychology address the societal nature of human beings. In fact mainstream social psychology currently ignores or neglects the societal level. Mainstream social psychology focuses almost only on individual and group levels at the cost of community and societal dimensions. But individuality and subjectivity cannot be understood and explained apart from social contexts. We are beings embedded in social, historical, economic and political contexts. We are citizens in society with rights and duties. We are part of transcultural and interregional networks of interaction. This is today's social life which social psychology cannot ignore. Thus, social psychology needs concepts and theories which are anchored both in the psychological individual and at the societal level to capture the mutual interrelationships between them.

In this article we will – as critical psychology has done before – promote a "societal social psychology" as opposed to the predominant "individualized social psychology". In this endeavor we insist on the relevance of the concept of ideology. As critical psychologists before us have argued and shown, to capture that society and global social networks and

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agencies which are our lives, the concept of ideology or ideological field is a necessary concept. This article starts by briefly analyzing the situation within today's mainstream social psychology, concluding that a societal perspective is still surprisingly absent and should be revitalized. We contend that in this rearticulation of a societal approach the concept of ideology is particularly relevant. We will further demonstrate how analyses of language usage and shifts and changes in language usage over time can represent a particularly useful methodology when empirically studying ideologies and ideological shifts.[2] Examples from such empirical analyzes will also be presented. Finally, we will briefly update our review from 2006 of the situation for critical psychology in Norway presented in the special issue "*Critical psychology in a changing world*" of *ARCP 2006*.

Mainstream social psychology and the ignorance of society[3]

Shaped in North America in the post-WWII period, in a predominantly positivistic atmosphere, modern social psychology was rendered into a largely experimental discipline (Jones, 1985). Within this context of time and place, mainstream social psychology developed into an individual psychological, as opposed to a sociological, form of social psychology (Farr, 1996). Mainstream social psychology has been, and still is, characterized primarily by studying the interaction between the individual and the social through experimental studies in the laboratory. As a consequence, societal and cultural levels have continually been underrepresented in mainstream social psychology: A situation forcefully pointed out by the social psychologist Doise (1982) in his book *L'explication en psychologie sociale*.[4] The developmental psychologist Bronfenbrenner (1979) in his book *The ecology of human development* argued that societal and cultural levels involved in complex social systems are difficult, if not impossible, to capture in laboratory settings by experimental studies. The programmatic title of Himmelweit & Gaskell's edited volume in 1990, *Societal Psychology*, envisaged an alternative. However, mainstream social psychology has remained individualized.

This indifference towards society and culture is a paradox, as the roots of a genuinely societal, intersubjective and cultural social psychology lie within the history of the discipline itself (Farr, 1996). For example, the symbolic interactionists (Cooley, 1902/1964; Mead, 1934) contended that individual and society are "two sides of the same coin"; Vygotsky (1978) analyzed how social values, expectations and beliefs are internalized in the individual; and Lewin (1935) developed a model of the interaction between individual and environment. Thus, ecological, constructionist, critical and political social psychology (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Fox & Prilleltensky, 1997; Gergen, 1973; Ibanez & Iniguez, 1997; Montero, 1997; Parker, 1999; Renshon & Duckitt, 2000), has for a long time strongly acknowledged the impact of society and culture: Humans at the same time produce and are themselves shaped by society. However, still three decades after Doise's (1982) thorough analysis of levels of explanation and Gergen's (1973) and Bronfenbrenner's (1979) seminal critiques of experimentalism within social and developmental psychology, the societal level is strikingly

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[2] The present article can be read as an explication and systematization of some of the theoretical foundations underpinning the Oslo Ideology Project that we initiated and have been working on for more than a decade (see e.g., Nafstad, 2002, 2005; Nafstad, Carlquist, Aasen, Blakar, 2006; Nafstad, Blakar, Carlquist, Phelps & Rand-Hendriksen, 2007, 2009a; Nafstad, Blakar, Botchway & Rand-Hendriksen, 2009b).

[3] As the following sections on ideology is based on and summarizes theoretical-empirical work conducted within the Oslo Ideology Project during the past decade, it is inevitable that theoretical-methodological issues have been presented and/or discussed in previous reports and publications from the project.

[4] English translation in 1986 as *Levels of explanation in social psychology*.

absent in mainstream social psychology. The marginalization of societal and cultural dimensions in mainstream social psychology is due to both conceptual and methodological reasons as the task of incorporating cultural and societal dimensions into social psychology is not merely a conceptual, but also a methodological challenge (Nafstad, Carlquist & Blakar, in press). The lack of applicable methods or tools of analysis for grasping relevant aspects of society might therefore be a major reason why research in social psychology still far too often excludes the societal or macro level in empirical research. As we see it, however, the main reason for this ignorance is, as Gergen (1973, 1989) pointed out, that mainstream psychology has strong resistance to acknowledge that psychology can be neither value free nor neutral. As researchers we are part of society and explicitly or implicitly take for granted assumptions of social life in our research. The philosopher of science Mendelsohn (1977. P. 3-4) therefore described scientific knowledge as social knowledge: "Science is an activity of human beings acting and interacting, thus a social activity. Its knowledge, its statements, its techniques have been created by human beings and developed, nurtured and shared among groups of human beings. Scientific knowledge is therefore fundamentally social knowledge. As a social activity, science is clearly a product of a history and of processes which occurred in time and in place and involved human actors. These actors had lives not only in science, but in the wider societies of which they were members." Already in 1936 Mannheim pointed out that the act of knowing is dependent on the constitution of the vital being and the character of his or her living space, particularly the position and place of the thinking individual. The idea that each culture creates at all times its own truth about what society and human nature contains has never been a prioritized idea within mainstream social psychology. Mainstream social psychology with its predominant universal conception of the human being still strongly ignores, in fact obscures that our ideas both as researchers and ordinary human beings are heavily conditioned by our time and place. Foucault (1972, 1980) also pointed out that in different periods of time science develops what he termed "regimes of truth" about human nature. Our scientific knowledge is thus social activity developing from historical and cultural ideologies or systems of beliefs and values. Knowledge about the ideological situation, of predominant as well as counter ideologies in society, is therefore knowledge social psychology cannot afford to leave "outside the door", to use William James' (1909/1979, p. 19) famous phrase.

A societal social psychology

Billig (1997: 51) argues: "If social psychologists take the project of investigating ideology seriously, the nature of social psychology will be dramatically transformed. Not merely will such a social psychology have very different methodological procedures, but more importantly, its intellectual scope will be expanded. By incorporating historical, anthropological, and linguistic insights, this social psychology will draw closer to other social scientific investigations. In so doing, it will be addressing some of the most important issues in the contemporary social sciences." Moreover, Doise (1986, p. 15) contends: "Every society develops its own ideologies, its own systems of beliefs and representations, values and norms, which validate and maintain the established social order." Applying the ideology concept might therefore help to transcend the nature of individualized social psychology thereby overcoming current limitations in the relevance of the discipline.

The concept of ideology is commonly encountered and used in social philosophy and the other social sciences, such as sociology and anthropology (Eagleton, 1991). The ideology concept came into usage in science around 1800 to describe the work of a group of French philosophers who were exploring the science of ideas (Wilson, 1992). Within Marxism, the concept has a long

history regarding the analysis of how society and its structures are established and sustained (Adorno, 1967; Mannheim, 1936; Marx & Engels, 1932/1976). The ideology concept has furthermore proved useful in analysis of more specifically delineated social relations, such as power/powerlessness (Marx & Engels, 1932/1976) and how people or groups in power impose certain views of the world (*Weltanschauung*). These worldviews serve as veils, preventing other people from understanding that they are being oppressed and marginalized (Adorno, 1967; Billig, 1991; Montero, 1994; Prilleltensky, 1994).

The concept of ideology is thus characterized by a long and complex history and various contemporary interpretations in other social disciplines, but as pointed out, not in social psychology (cf. Thompson, 1990; McLellan, 1995). Analytically, the notion of ideology is best approached as a generic concept, with multiple potential meanings. By applying a wide understanding of the concept, one can understand ideologies as more or less coherent systems of ideas and beliefs concerning the world and social practices; the concept captures and describes how society socializes into their members' preferred or normative views of social life and human nature (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). This social field of ideologies becomes our frames of reference and shape and form our thinking and thereby social systems, social practices and ideas of how society at large has to function. Continually we develop, form and shape our social imaginaries, ideals and meaning systems about life, and also incorporate them as individual truths of social life and human nature. We thus create our ideological fields at the same time as these ideological fields recast us. However, modern mainstream social psychology has to a large degree ignored these interdependencies between the indidividual and the societal system. In fact, mainstream social psychology, as mentioned, very often treats micro level phenomena as universal and natural phenomena. As a consequence, a huge part of mainstream social psychology has made itself somewhat irrelevant in understanding ordinary people's lives. The discipline has in fact adopted an epistemology which does not open up for the relationships between the societal, historical, economic and political contexts and the individual level; how we as humans create our social contexts, our ideas and beliefs concerning the world and then incorporate our ideological fields as almost universal, individual phenomena. In our own research we are continually studying these social and discursive constructions and their individual consequences, questioning for example the price we are paying at the macro and the individual level for today's globalizing strong individualistic ideology (Nafstad et al., 2007, 2009a, 2009b). Do we at the individual level "pay for it" with the consequence of less feelings of communality, connectedness and less social responsibility and willingness to stand up for others? Do we at the societal level "pay for it" by erosion of the ideals and practices of equal (and free) access to health, education and other welfare provisions in a traditional welfare society such as Norway? As we see it, these questions have to be approached with an understanding of how the ideology field functions as normative and self-evident.

The wide conception of ideology historically encompasses two theoretical traditions: First, the political traditions with roots in Marxism, and second, the "belief systems" or "common sense" approaches to ideology (cf. Eagleton, 1991; Billig, 1991; van Dijk, 1998; Montenegro, 2002 for discussions of these traditions). Common to both traditions is, as described, that ideology operates largely outside awareness, as taken-for-granted representations of social life; as truths about social justice, power relations and distribution of goods. Ideologies have profound influence precisely because they tend to be taken for granted, without further reflection, by members of society. This process of encoding is closely connected to what Ichheiser (1970, p.15) describes as "implicit, silently operating mechanisms shaping and misshaping our social perception". Under the force of ideology,

human beings are at the risk of being "blind to the obvious" (Ichheiser, 1970, p. 7). Social psychological research can thus apply this analytical concept to expose and critically unmask that which is taken for granted. Moreover, a key psychological function of ideologies is not only to produce ideas and to explain, but also to justify the status quo, and possibly consign oppositional voices to silence. In this respect, ideology serves as society's system justification (Jost, Burgess & Mosso, 2001; Montenegro, 2002; Prilleltensky, 1994).

An importunate issue for critical psychology then is why mainstream social psychology with the exception of community social psychology so entirely has eschewed the ideology concept[5]; definitely an essential social psychological reality. We contend, as mentioned, that the efforts of psychology to gain acceptance as a neutral and descriptive natural science, as well as today's increasing focus primarily on biological perspectives, are important reasons why the concept of ideology is not considered sufficiently "scientific". Mainstream social psychology has therefore in practice excluded from its research agenda socio-ecological, historical and political contextual analyses, thereby as a consequence ignoring societal issues such as social injustice, social inequality, globalization, corporate and consumer culture, and the influence of strong commercialism on ordinary people's lives around the world. Moreover, this ignorance has in turn resulted in researchers and practitioners of psychology often being unreflective about their role as ideology producers for society (Billig, 1997; Gergen, 1973; Montero, 2005; Nafstad, 2005, 2008; Prilleltensky, 1994). Another reason why social psychology leaves out the concept ideology is the lack of methods for assessing ideologies. This last issue will be addressed as we continue to expose the concept of ideology, but now using our own ideology research as illustrative examples (see below).

Ideology, hegemony and power

Our use of the term ideology firstly includes society's *dominating* ideas and beliefs. A key function of ideology, however, is not only to explain, but as mentioned also to legitimize the status quo. Our own theoretical and empirical approach also includes those thoughts and beliefs that are sufficiently powerful to challenge the status quo of society. Such ideologies can be referred to as counter ideologies (Nafstad et al., 2009a). In line with Thompson (1990), we thus suggest that ideology and ideological transmission refers specifically to the ways in which meaning serves to establish and maintain structures of power (Nafstad et al., 2007). Furthermore, one of the definitional dilemmas of the concept of ideology is whether the notion of ideology refers to any set of beliefs, or only the dominant forms of thought in society (Eagleton, 1991). Drawing on Gramsci (1971) we distinguish between the two interrelated aspects of ideology in our empirical research: First, ideology as common sense of society (Billig, 1997), which consists of shared ideas, although not necessarily coherent. From this perspective, ideology refers to: "... the ideas and thoughts that people hold, including both the form and content of their consciousness" (Sampson, 1981, p. 731). Thus we in our research understand ideology as an "economizing device that incorporates a world view that legitimizes the existing order and provides a framework for a consensus of the general purposes of community life" (Wilson, 1992, p. 19). The second aspect is hegemony, or rule by consent or accepted authority. The ideology concept thus for us refers to the perceived legitimacy and often widespread support that a certain system, currently for example consumerism, receives from the public (Augoustinos, Walker & Donaghue, 2006; Schwartz,

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[5] To the extent that main stream (social) psychology has used the concept of ideology, ideology has in the tradition of individualism been conceived of as a personality characteristic. Classical examples are "*The authoritarian personality*" (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson & Sanford, 1960) and "*The open and closed mind:investigations into the nature of belief systems and personality systems.*" (Rokeach, 1960).

2000). Hegemony involves then the incorporation of subordinate groups into the dominant ideology, often facilitated by construction of alliances, and thus winning approval of these groups (Fairclough, 1992). Both the common sense and hegemony aspects imply that ideology to a large extent becomes naturalized. In our empirical studies we contend that ideologies are encoded and naturalized in implicit premises and structural features of language (Rommetveit, 1968; Rommetveit & Blakar, 1979).

Ideologies are reflected in language usage

Linguists, social scientists, and some psychologists have for quite some time acknowledged the close and reciprocal relations between language and ideology. Anthropological traditions analyzing the interaction of language and ideology have evolved (for reviews, see Kroskrity, 2000; Woolard, 1998). In our research we take these close relationships between ideology and language as our point of departure. Within the multi-disciplinary field of discourse analysis, language usage is often studied in relation to ideology (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000; Fairclough, 1992; Potter & Wetherell, 1987; van Dijk, 1998). Silverstein (1985, p. 220) emphasizes the reciprocal interaction between language and ideology: "… the total linguistic fact, the datum for a science of language, is irreducibly dialectic in nature. It is an unstable mutual interaction of meaningful sign forms contextualized to situations of interested human use and mediated by the fact of cultural ideology." Adopting a more psychological perspective, Jovchelovitch (2006) shows how the relationship between macro-social structures such as ideology or culture on one hand, and linguistic practice and the singular word on the other, is constituted by everyday knowledge. Such knowledge exits in the form of social representations which, although individually held, are shared between members of a group or society. It is this contextualization and mediation through cultural ideology which renders language, indeed even the single word (Blakar, 1979; Pennebaker et al., 2003; Rommetveit, 1968; Rommetveit & Blakar, 1979), into an empirical reflection of the society at hand, and its potential influence on the individual. Our empirical studies of ideology and ideological changes (see below) are based on these linguistic reflections and conceptions of society.

The Russian linguist and philosopher Bakhtin (1952/1986) argued that social psychology is localized in the word, the gesture and the act. In the same way as Wittgenstein (1953) demonstrated how we obtain knowledge about humans and society by studying language in use, introducing the analytical concept "language games", Bakthin (1952/1986) emphasized how we obtain knowledge about society by studying various "speech genres". Furthermore, through concepts such as "symbolic domination" and models of "linguistic markets", the French social philosophers, in particular Bourdieu (1991) and Foucault (1980), noted the close and mutual interplay between societal ideologies and power relations on one hand, and linguistic means on the other. In summary, words reveal important aspects of the societal level (Rommetveit, 1968). As Sarason (1981: 47) argued: "… the world view is always expressed in our language …" Societal ideologies are reflected in the usage of even the most ordinary and trivial words and utterances, and can determine our understanding of the social world (Blakar, 1979). Changes in language usage over time therefore reflect macro-social or ideological developments within society (Blakar, 1979). To analyze societal and cultural impacts on the individual, relational and group levels, ordinary words and expressions constitute, as we see it, useful analytical units. Words are not neutral in representing and grasping the social and material world. Words reflect particular perspectives, thereby expressing some interests at the cost of others (Blakar, 1979). Therefore, words in general and change in usage of words in particular can serve as empirical indicators of ideological change. At the same time they are the instruments by which individuals make sense of

the world. Words and language usage thus constitute a subject matter where the societal and the individual levels meet and merge.

A lack of adequate methodology for studying ideology may, as mentioned, in part explain why ideology has been neglected within mainstream social psychology. For the social sciences and psychology, surveys involving questionnaires, interviews and different types of attitude scales are usual procedures for mapping out cultural assumptions, values, and occasionally ideologies. Such methods involve several weaknesses when applied to assess ideologies. First, they presume that ideologies can be explored by only asking individuals. In our opinion, such methods often are unable to reveal in particular the mechanisms by which power relations within culture and society are internalized by the individual and naturalized as common sense. Secondly, longitudinal analyses are of utmost importance when studying ideological change. However, within survey research, longitudinal analyses are time-consuming and difficult to administer. Whereas archive methodology can easily be used retrospectively in longitudinal research, survey methodology can merely be used here-and-now, or at best prospectively, which implies that one will have to anticipate years in advance which particular issues will be ideologically at stake some time in the future. Because ideologies and ideological changes are reflected in language usage, ideologies are thereby made amendable to systematic empirical investigation.

Archive methodology: The Oslo Ideology Project

People make sense of their world through everyday conversation, and today increasingly through the media (Perse, 2001). Therefore, media discourse and public language are important keys to understand how ideology is communicated and reproduced among individuals in society (Thompson, 1990). Or as Billig (1997, p. 48) concludes: "When individuals speak (and write – added here) they do not create their own language, they use terms which are culturally, historically and ideologically available. Each act of utterance, although in itself novel carries an ideological history." In our research we are analyzing media language. Until recently, empirical analyses of huge databases of text (e.g., several annual volumes of newspapers) have been time consuming and costly. However, modern information technology has changed the situation. Huge electronically searchable databases covering, e.g., newspapers across decades are now available in many countries. In Norway, where the present authors are situated, an electronically searchable database covering several newspapers and other types of publications has been available since 1984.[6] Electronically searchable archives of media language constitute, as we see it, a relevant and unobtrusive (non-researcher influenced) method for assessing ideological fields and transformations of ideologies in society[7].

We will now present a few illustrative findings from studies we have conducted within the Oslo Ideology Project adopting electronically searchable archives of media language[8]. One of the major quantitative indicators we use in our studies is the number of articles in each annual volume of newspapers containing a particular word or phrase. This indicator enables us to "read" ideological changes in society from year to year. For example, a markedly increasing consumerism has been identified, reflected e.g., in a marked increase in usage of words related to shopping such as

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[6] In many countries older annual volumes of newspapers are scanned in, enabling searches within particular newspapers across several decades.

[7] Our methodology was originally inspired by corpus linguistics (Nafstad & Blakar, 2002/2006). Moreover, our methodology carries certain similarities to the way in which corpus linguistics is now gradually being used within critical discourse analysis (cf. Mautner, 2009).

[8] Interested readers are referred to the following recent publications for detailed presentations of this methodology: Nafstad et al., 2007, 2009a, 2009b; Rand-Hendriksen, 2008.

'*kjøpe*' (to buy) and '*shoppe*' (to shop) as well as introduction of new words such as '*kjøpefest*' (feast of buying) (Nafstad et al., 2009a). Moreover, we have demonstrated how the Norwegian society over the past decades has become increasingly imbued by market ideology (Nafstad et al., 2009a). This is reflected by the introduction in the newspapers of new words such as '*konkurranseutsetting*' (exposure to competition) in relation to social and health institutions traditionally driven by the state or municipality, such as homes for elderly, and marked reduction in usage of words such as '*solidaritet*' (solidarity), '*felles*' (common, communal, shared) and '*velferdssamfunn*' (welfare society) (Nafstad & Blakar, 2009; Nafstad, et al., 2006). However, counter ideologies are also identified, often reflected in newly introduced words and expressions such as '*bestemor på anbud*' (the tendered grandmother) as an ideological reaction to homes for elderly being exposed to competition and '*kjøpepress*' (press to buy) as an ideological reaction to the currently predominant consumerism (Nafstad et al., 2009a). Moreover, changes in the societal contract between individual and society/community and the subtle balance between rights and duties are being identified: The usage of '*rettighet*' (rights) has increased whereas usage of '*plikt*' (duty) and '*ansvar*' (responsibility) has decreased (Nafstad et al., 2007).

This archive methodology can be adopted in comparative studies as well as in longitudinal analyses within one society. A methodological challenge encountered in comparative studies is that available search technologies are not equally designed or developed in all societies.[9] We have, for example, compared how the currently globalizing neoliberalism merges with local ideologies so that strikingly different ideological patterns result in Norway, a North European country compared with Ghana, a West African country: Whereas individualism increases in both societies in our era of strong, globalized neoliberalism (usage of words such as "I" , "me" and "rights" increases) and communal or collective values decrease in Norway (usage of words such as "we", "us" and "solidarity" decreases), communal or collective values increase in Ghana (increase even more than the usage of words referring to individualism) (Nafstad et al., 2009b). By this methodology we have also examined changing patterns of words with social, moral and political implications and consequences or ideological representations across time of sexual minorities (Roen, Blakar & Nafstad, 2011) as well as of various immigrant minorities (Phelps, Blakar, Carlquist, Nafstad & Rand-Hendriksen, submitted).

In affluent democracies hegemony does not imply only one discourse, perspective or meaning system on social institutions, social practices and social life. Continually, there exist predominant ideologies as well as minority voices or counter ideologies competing for dominance and framing influence (van Dijk, 1998; Nafstad et al., 2007). Yet, there are some ideological discourses that are more predominant than others. In our research within the Oslo Ideology Project we have, as briefly presented, demonstrated how the globalizing ideology of neoliberalism currently constitutes a highly predominant and strong discourse. Not only Norwegians, but increasingly more people all over the world are shaped by, and reproduce, this world view (Nafstad, 2002; Nafstad et al., 2007, 2009a, 2009b). Today's predominant neoliberalist market ideology may have positive effects for some sectors such as technology and economic interdependence. However, in our own research we critically argue that public discourses heavily prioritizing the values of materialism, consumerism, individualism and competition, gradually will dehumanize society, communities and individual humanity; reduce us to only social and material consumption beings without sense of community, justice and social responsibility. This ideological situation as a consequence affects the social contracts between individual and "local" community in ways that

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[9] Within the Oslo Ideology Project we have so far investigated ideologies and ideological changes within the following countries: China, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Ghana, Iran, Iraq, Korea, Norway, Pakistan, Sweden, Turkey and US.

can in fact radically change and disrupt social, collective or common arrangements and 'safety nets' such as labor unions and welfare provisions within a community. In particular, the ideal of social and economic equality to all members of society may be a value increasingly ignored in the Norwegian society.

As we see it, one task for critical national psychologies today is continually to expose and unmask the consequences of being embedded in contexts of strong corporate consumerism globalization. This endeavor, however, will not be easy. For as Bourdieu (1998, p.29) more than a decade ago pointed out: "Everywhere we hear it said, all day long – and this is what gives the dominant discourse its strength – that there is nothing to put forward in opposition to the neoliberal view, that it has succeeded in presenting itself as self-evident, that there is no alternative." One major task for critical psychology, for example in Norway, then is to enhance our awareness that today's strong neoliberalism is something made and remade by ourselves, rather than an impersonal machine we have to surrender. Before this article is closed, we will therefore now briefly analyze the current situation of critical psychology in Norway.

Critical psychology in Norway: A brief update

Of all the different psychological sub-disciplines, community psychology is likely to be the one most strongly associated with critical psychology. In their recent review of Norwegian community psychology, however, Carlquist, Blakar & Nafstad (2007) concluded that by a stringent definition of community psychology (CP) work, no or little community psychology is being undertaken in Norway. This general conclusion was elaborated and modified in ways that points to the absence of critical psychology: "… many Norwegian psychologists across a wide scope of fields integrate and adopt CP principles in their work. *Yet, the critical and political nature of CP has been absent*" (Carlquist et al., 2007, p. 282. Italics added.). This situation is here explained on the basis of the socio-cultural and political conditions in Norway. And Carlquist et al. (2007, p.282) continue: "The ideals of social justice and security, empowerment and community participation have been cornerstones in the development of the Norwegian welfare state. *CP-oriented psychologists in Norway have more or less tacitly taken for granted that they are part of a larger system or process – the welfare society - characterized by fairness and social justice*." (Italics added). Under these conditions the plea for critical psychology has in general not been very strong[10].

As underlined, during the past decades the neoliberalist ideology has increasingly dominated all over the (Western) world and has also become strongly influential within the traditional Norwegian welfare state (Carlquist et al., 2007; Nafstad et al., 2007, 2009a). This ideology does not pave the way for critical sciences. Quite to the contrary, the predominant neoliberalist free market ideology represents a hindrance for funding critical research. Moreover, during the past decades the hegemony in Norwegian psychology has shifted markedly away from a social, towards a more genetic-biological, neurological and cognitive science of psychology. This shift of ideological hegemony has also contributed to less focus on critical psychology's core issues of interest.

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[10] This situation is very different from the situation (social) psychology faces in Latin America: Montero & Christlieb (2003) maintain that "… there is also a Latin American Social Psychology, which, … is a social-political-community psychology of liberation, *born out of the critical standing assumed by many Latin American psychologists facing the social-political-economic conditions suffered by as much as sixty or eighty percent of the population*. So when speaking of Latin American Social Psychology, it is almost redundant to say that it is critical psychology. If it really is Latin American, it cannot be otherwise …" (p. 8, italics added).

Moreover, in our 2006 *ARCP* review of critical psychology in Norway we concluded that critical psychology was currently virtually absent within Norwegian psychology. This situation is not representative for Norwegian psychology historically (Blakar & Nafstad, 2006; Nafstad & Blakar, 1982). In the decades following WWII, psychology in general and social psychology in particular were established in Norway as critical disciplines aiming at resolving societal problems. Resolution of huge societal problems in the post WWII Norwegian society set the agenda for the concrete research. Another critical phase took place in the 1970's when psychology, as the other social sciences, was radicalized due to the international ideological movements associated with 1968 and the students' revolts. Whereas the critical attitude of the postwar period expressed a deeply felt need to develop a psychology enabling change and creation of a better society and in particular avoid new wars, it may be reason to ask if the critical attitude of the seventies more reflected a kind of superficial lip service to specific political ideologies. Partly as a reaction to the politicized seventies, psychology in Norway from the 1980's on has been striving towards the ideals of hard, 'neutral'[11] science, thus obscuring the basic fact that individual and society are "two sides of the same coin" thereby leaving no or little space for critical psychology.

Thus, it would have been naïve to expect radical changes in the vitality of critical psychology in Norway during the few years since our last review appeared. Even though a few new critical voices have been added to those described in our 2006 review, we have to wait a few years before it will be meaningful to prepare a complete update. However, one person, Ole Jacob Madsen, deserves particular mention for his efforts to promote critical psychology in Norway; in the public discourse as well as among colleagues. Currently he is editing a special issue on critical psychology in the Journal of the Norwegian Psychological Association. In his recent book, *Den terapeutiske kultur (The therapeutic culture),* Madsen (2010) has critically examined various consequences of the "success story" of psychology in our modern era. Moreover, he has become a very active participant in the public discourse posing critical questions about psychology's different roles in society. Madsen is also represented with an article on the therapeutic culture in Norway in this issue of *ARCP*. Moreover, critical gender research described in our 2006 review is still flourishing in Norway. Finally, it should be mentioned that critical psychology is gradually being taught at Norwegian universities. For example, at the University of Oslo the present authors give a course which is mandatory for all students who are going to be licenced as clinical psychologists in which different perspectives and horizons in psychology – including critical ones – are presented and discussed.

Carlquist et al. (2007, p. 295) expose the current challenges of critical psychology in Norway when they in their review of community psychology in Norway conclude that: "… community psychology in Norway must aspire toward a more prominent and *critical discipline* within Norwegian psychology in the years to come; explicitly focusing on and arguing for alternative values based on solidarity and social equality." (Italics added.) This is vital as the Norwegian society, traditionally a Scandinavian welfare state, increasingly prioritize neoliberalism with its strong individualistic ideology with the consequence of erosion of ideals of social responsibility and willingness to stand up for the core values of welfare societies: solidarity and social and economic equality.

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[11] From the perspective of critical psychology, all psychology, not only critical psychology, is value laden. Thus it represents an ethical imperative for every psychology to explicate its value basis and tacit assumptions (Nafstad, 2005, 2006, 2008).

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