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Trends. False Consciousness and Contemporary Psychological Research

Editor

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Most professional psychological organizations purport to create knowledge and provide services for human welfare. Yet these organizations may support research traditions that can very easily be exploited by political authorities working to maintain political power and exploit citizenry.

A case in point is the academic area of organizational justice research. This research focuses on what dimensions of conflict adjudication--be it criminal, civil, or administrative--lead to perceptions of fairness. The typical dimensions studied include distributive, procedural, interpersonal, and informational justice. These dimensions are also linked to job satisfaction, organizational commitment, evaluation of authority, and organizational citizenship behavior, withdrawal, and performance.

A significant problem is that knowing how people arrive at judgments of fairness and of value concerning an organization in no necessary way relates to whether there is fairness and whether there is benign moral and ethical value. In fact, organization justice research can be viewed as generating a Machiavellian playbook--i.e., what one has to do to seize and maintain political power. Here one learns how to engender among the citizenry various types of false consciousness including (1) a social awareness imbued with ideology that both supports and reflects the power structure of a capitalist system or any politico-economic system; (2) a belief system that supports those in power to the detriment of those without power; (3) beliefs, attitudes, and opinions that one holds to one's detriment; and (4) a level or type of awareness that does not correspond to some functionally or phenomenologically constituted reality.

The question remains whether psychologists' belief in organizational justice research's contributions to human welfare is itself an exemplar of false consciousness. Given psychologists' still prevalent notion of the theorist/observer/experimenter as a valueless, independent, and objective research instrument, data to answer this question may need to come from outside their professional realm. (See Andrews, M.C., & Kacmar, K.M. (2001). Discriminating among organizational politics, justice, and support. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 22, 347-366; Augoustinos, M. (1999). Ideology, false consciousness and psychology. *Theory & Psychology*, 9, 295-312; Colquitt, J.A., Conlon, D.E., Wesson, M.J., Porter, C.O.L.H., & Ng, K.Y. (2001). Justice at the Millennium: A meta-analytic review of 25 years of organizational justice research. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 86, 425-445; Fox, D. (1999). Psycholegal scholarship's contribution to false consciousness about injustice. *Law and Human Behavior*, 23, 9-30.) (Keywords: Political Psychology, Psychological Organizations, Research.)