

EDITORIAL

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Perspectives on Indigenous Psychology in Brazil: ethical and epistemological challenges

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In the last few decades, indigenous psychology has emerged as an international intellectual movement that offers resistance to the missionary proposals of psychologies, reflected or unreflected, to promote the Eurocentric tradition under the guise of scientificity. Debates about sociocultural specificities in the construction of psychological theories and systems have been raised since the foundation of psychology as a science and profession. However, indigenous conceptions have predominantly remained excluded, inferiorized or relegated to the periphery of debates in the field.

The effects of indigenous genocide and ethnocide persist in the structural and procedural, objective and subjective realities that permeate the concrete lives of all people in our society, regardless of whether they consider themselves indigenous or not. However, in Brazil, indigenous psychology is still a field of study and professional practice that is little systematized.

One of the aims of this dossier proposal is to introduce psychology scholars and professionals to a small panorama of perspectives on the diversity of indigenous reflections, seeking to reflect on the following questions: What is Indigenous Psychology? What is the specificity of indigenous perspectives on psychology? What is the specificity of theoretical, methodological and practical proposals in indigenous psychology?

The texts condense positions on the necessary epistemological, ontological and ethical changes that researchers and professionals need to make in order to build scientific knowledge and practices that are committed to the ways of being, feeling and thinking of the bodies and territories of indigenous people and communities.

Indigenous Peoples have made Countless Contributions that are Reflected in Contemporary Societies and Sciences

The invasion of Abya Yala - a Kuna term, a people originally from a territory that currently overlaps with Panama, which means "Mature Land, Living Land or Land

in bloom and is synonymous with America" (Porto-Gonçalves, 2009, p. 26, our translation) – ushers in the modern era with the largest genocide in human history (Todorov, 1982/2011). On the other hand, in order to deepen the debate on the relevance of the indigenous psychologies proposed in the dossier, it is important to relate some events that indicate the magnitude of the impact of this violent founding milestone of contemporary societies.

Park et al. (2016) discuss the impact of indigenous foods on the world diet, reporting studies that indicate that around 60% of the world's food supply comes from Amerindian peoples. Considering the linguistic and cultural diversities, in Brazil alone there are 305 peoples speaking 274 indigenous languages, and it is estimated that there were a thousand languages spoken in Brazil before the colonialist invasion (Brazilian Center for Latin American Studies, 2020).

Various Amerindian peoples understand the existence of at least six possible gender styles: woman; man; non-man - a biological woman who takes on some aspects of male roles -, non-woman - a biological man who takes on some aspects of female roles -, lesbian; and gay (Brown, 1997). Indigenous possibilities of gender identity and experimentation with sexuality were, for centuries, violently rejected by the colonizers (Fernandes & Arisi, 2017).

In addition, it is important to recognize the role of the Iroquois Confederacy in shaping North American democracy, which has inspired various democracies around the world. For indigenous people, broad participation and community consultation in decision-making processes are socially widespread practices that support individual freedoms. These practices are referred to in reflections on conceptions of society and significant democratization movements in the European world (Melo Franco, 1976). Thus, indigenous peoples have received recognition for their contributions to democracy around the world:

[...] there is no question that some of the Founding Fathers of the United States of America were very familiar with tribal government structures. Many Founders, for example, served as treaty negotiators and commissioners for tribal governments and actively studied indigenous theories of government. Additionally, many Euro-American settlers observed democratic principles and governance in action in indigenous governments. Ultimately, the Founders developed democratic political theories and principles that were hardly practiced in Western Europe. On the contrary, many of the principles that were incorporated into the U.S. Constitution were practiced by the indigenous cultures and governments of North America long before Europe. (Miller, 2015, p. 33)

In addition, they made contributions to various areas of knowledge, the arts, medicine and psychotherapy:

The Iroquois and Hurons of North America also practiced psychotherapy. When medicinal plants failed to cure a patient's illness, the Iroquois and Hurons believed that the illness was caused by feelings and needs that the sick person had not expressed. These emotions and desires were often expressed in dreams. If the soul's desires were not met, it became angry. This anger caused the illness. When the soul was satisfied, the person recovered. Modern psychologists call the part of the mind that hides memories and emotions from consciousness the subconscious. (Keoke & Porterfield, 2005, p. 100)

One of the critical aspects of developing scientific knowledge concerns the challenges of obtaining important information about knowledge that indigenous societies have built up throughout their existence, formulating it according to their own epistemological bases. When information is extracted without considering the indigenous epistemologies that allowed a given piece of knowledge to come to light, many misconceptions and contradictions can emerge. Evidence of this is the fact that indigenous territories are the areas that stand out in terms of preserving the world's biodiversity, and yet the widely held belief that scientific knowledge is superior to other knowledge creates barriers to meaningful collaboration between indigenous people and scientists (Sobrevila, 2008).

Emerging Challenges in the Construction of an Indigenous Science

In consolidating the epistemological foundations of the human sciences, the German philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911) criticized the subordination of the principles and methods of the human sciences to the principles and methods of the natural sciences, as well as the idea that the sciences were unique in both their principles and methods (Dilthey, 1896). For the philosopher, science projects the experienced world onto a horizon of theoretical, meta-phenomenal abstraction. This horizon transforms experience into the flow of life at the same time as it is dialectically transformed by the flow of sensitive, interested, socially and culturally valued experience. Thus, the main problem of any epistemology would be the relationship between experience and reason.

The diversity of experiences and interests brought into the field of personal and collective reflection has led to the emergence of diverse sciences that capture aspects of reality. However, no specific science can completely encompass reality or the world around it (Graeber, 2015). In their plurality, the sciences need to engage in reflective dialogues that make available the potential for mutual contribution to each other.

The epistemological openness envisaged here points to the inclusion of indigenous sciences in the plurality of other sciences, without homogenizing diverse knowledge. Therefore, indigenous sciences need to be considered in their heterogeneity and specificity. In the dialog between indigenous sciences and psychology, there would be an opportunity to cultivate indigenous psychologies in the plural.

Indigenous psychology, in the singular, needs to be understood, then, as a heterogeneous and lacunar field, in which the specificities of the diverse experiences arising from indigenous ways of seeing, feeling and thinking (Quintero Weir, 2021) allow for the cultivation of multiple explanatory and comprehensive routes to the phenomena in focus. It is also important to cultivate sharing processes that respect the specificity of the situations in which indigenous life is experienced and reflected upon.

In this dossier, Almeida, Carvalho and Silva propose rethinking social psychology based on indigenous knowledge, considering its potential to question the policies of subjectivation derived from the nature-culture, human-non-human dichotomies. Considering that these dichotomies have no connection with the experience reflected in indigenous communities, psychology must reorient its experiences to share the cosmo-ecologies located in indigenous territories and, potentially, unfold them in innovative ways for the area.

The indigenous population has the highest rates of notification of self-harm and suicide in Brazil. However, they also have the lowest hospitalization rates compared to the general population (Alves et al., 2024). On this subject, Baniwa and Calegare contribute with a reflection on the relevance of considering explanatory factors for suicide according to the indigenous point of view on this phenomenon.

Moebus, Barreto and Moraes point out that a psychology based on the cosmopolitical framework of the indigenous peoples of Brazil requires a turnaround in the psychological field itself. It is important to simultaneously criticize existing, dominant psychology and participate in indigenous resistance experiences and the struggle for good living in the territories, in order to foster the continuous movement of renewal in psychology.

Bairrão and Campos Silva use the ethnopschoanalytic method to bring out indigenous voices, going beyond the canonical biomedical narrative. The indigenous protagonism appears in the expression of the research participants and converges with the counter-hegemonic concerns

present from Wundt's psychology of peoples, to ethnopsychologies, intercultural psychologies and contemporary cultural psychologies, which reinvent or update the paths opened up by their precursors.

Gomes Souza, Sampaio and Tramontano suggest the use of audiovisual languages as a means of researching, documenting and deepening the dialog between academic and indigenous communities, providing mediation between different ways of understanding the historical world. Indigenous psychology is understood as a space for relationships between different epistemes, rather than a product or specialty in the field of psychology.

Assis, Gonçalves, Rodrigues, Vilharva and Nelson Barros stress the need to rethink psychology as a universal analytical tool, emphasizing the interaction between knowledge and culture, and seeking epistemic transit and integration. Indigenous people, as protagonists of their psychological care processes, reorient the discourses and practices with which they dialog.

Noal, Lacerda, Medeiros, Santos, Cardoso, Coelho and Schmidt offer support for the development of public policies that are in line with the socio-historical and cultural particularities of each ethnic group. They understand that the culture of Good Living is inclusive of indigenous spirituality, territoriality, collectivity and ancestry and should be the basis for preventing, preparing for and mitigating the occurrence of extreme events in the territories.

Indigenous people doing psychology and psychology based on indigenous conceptions

The articles published in the dossier show, among other things, that there are two simultaneous directions in which the field of indigenous psychology is heading. One direction is to use the methodological and conceptual tools of various psychological approaches to explain and understand aspects of indigenous experiences. Another direction is to make explicit the particularity of indigenous environments, practices and conceptions regarding phenomena focused on by psychology as a science and profession. These directions open up ways of criticizing hegemonic psychological discourses and practices, proposing a diverse field of possibilities encompassed by the label Indigenous Psychology.

Indigenous Psychology is that which is done by indigenous people, who in turn belong to a wide diversity of peoples and communities. In addition to community and ethnic heterogeneity, it is important to consider the heterogeneity between people from the same people or community. Attention to unique experiences should help to break down stereotypes and crystallizations of what it means to be indigenous. Indigenous practices and experiences in the multiple territories in which they multiply their lives are the basis for the reflexivity that enhances the transformation of psychology.

We are therefore approaching a paradoxical situation: since science is a field dedicated to the critique of tradition through methodical rationality, is scientific endeavor in inherent contradiction to indigenous traditions? A possible answer to this question is that the relevance of the critique of tradition by the sciences is inevitably an unfolding of the very tradition in which the critique is established (Gadamer, 1960/2008). In other words, the sciences deepen and strengthen the tradition of which they are an offshoot, by promoting critical reflexivity. Thus, understanding scientific discourses and practices depends on understanding the extra-scientific dimensions, which include the existential bases from which each tradition carries out its critical procedures that enhance the continuity of life in the face of the experienced world.

Epistemic plurality is linked to the fundamental meaning of science and the university, which is not restricted to the university campus or the experimental laboratory, but can be recognized in the community practices of indigenous peoples. Derrida (2003) points out that the philosophical meaning of the university is inclusive of the non-finite series of oppositions by which human beings determine themselves, of the right to question committed to the truth, beyond the limits of technical-scientific knowledge. However, we are only now beginning to build universities and psychologies in which indigenous truths participate and also raise questions.

The records of indigenous reflexivity on emerging experiences and practices in dialog with the field of psychology, which is also heterogeneous, allows for the training of people who, not necessarily indigenous, start to use this knowledge. It is important, however, that the indigenous roots of emerging discourses and practices are highlighted, contributing to coherence in the perspectives of integration between knowledges and knowledge anchored in different bases, preventing misunderstandings arising from unthinking eclecticism.

Recognizing the differences and the limits of rapprochement between indigenous epistemologies and the epistemologies currently predominant in psychology is one way of ensuring the indigenous relevance of certain ways of doing psychology, even if they are done by non-indigenous people. Epistemic relevance needs to be inclusive of indigenous worlds and their ways of being in their worlds, recognizing the specificity of each way of being collectively in each territory. Without indigenous worlds, there is no possibility of continuing to dialog in the field of indigenous psychology. Therefore, a primary task of the field is the commitment to the care and cultivation of indigenous worlds, according to their practices and customs.

Finally, indigenous sciences in dialog with psychology point to the constitution of spaces for sharing, without reducing heterogeneity into a homogeneous unit. Massimi (2018) points out that, originally, the university was a space for gathering spontaneously. An association of people dedicated to knowledge, from diverse backgrounds, promoting the circulation of varied cultures in the public space, open to the universality of people and the generality of possible topics to be addressed. Sharing experiences and knowledge for mutual contribution to the plurality of life forms in territories across the planet is the meaning of the ethical turn that points to the emergence of another world in which "All of Us" (Quintero Weir, 2021) is not at risk.

Indigenous Psychology, therefore, goes beyond the punctual and restrictive relationship of a psychology aimed at a minority. It points to the deepening of analytical-interpretative paths of epistemic violence that persist in psychological discourses and practices. It also meets indigenous ways of producing knowledge and cultivating their worlds. According to the ethic of sharing, it builds knowledge on how to provide for the coexistence of diversities without this resulting in domination of some over others and the production of the same. It is necessary to re-establish a dialogical balance in the academic-scientific territories where knowledge is legitimized. In order to do this, we need to address the pain caused by the colonialist backlash from which the modern sciences emerged and to which they contributed.

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