



## The Voice of the Pandemic Generation

Petar Jandrić<sup>1,2</sup>

Published online: 25 September 2021

© The Author(s), under exclusive licence to Springer Nature Switzerland AG 2021

### The Personal Is Political

In 1970 Carol Hanisch published the essay ‘The Personal Is Political’. Hanisch (1970/2006) does not take credit for the title, attributing it instead to editors Shulie Firestone and Anne Koedt, and similar ideas have been around at least since John Stuart Mill. Yet in the heated political climate of the early 1970s, Hanisch’s essay has hugely influenced feminist activism, practice, theory, and policy — it has become the voice of a generation. In the process, the phrase ‘the personal is political’ has opened up numerous questions and debates.

At a mundane level, women agonised about whether any expression of femininity (wearing lipstick, shaving hair) was a betrayal of feminist politics. ... A misrepresentation of the slogan also legitimised a particularly regressive form of identity politics in which only those with experience of race or gender discrimination, say, had the authority and authenticity to speak about it and whose opinions had validity simply because of the social position of the speaker regardless of their political stance. (Gupta 2015)

More than three decades after publishing her article, Hanisch revisited these ideas in her 2006 introduction to ‘The Personal Is Political’. She specifies that “‘political’ was used here in the broad sense of the word as having to do with power relationships, not the narrow sense of electoral politics’ (Hanisch 1970/2006) and explains that the paper was her ‘response in the heat of the battle to the attacks on us by SCEF and the rest of the radical movement’. She emphasises that it is ‘important to realise that the paper came out of struggle’, and that ‘it’s also important to realise the theory the paper contains did not come solely out of [her] individual brain. It came out of a movement ... and a specific group of women within New York Radical Women’.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> New York Radical Women (1967–1969) was a second-wave radical feminist group founded by Robin Morgan, Carol Hanisch, Shulamith Firestone, and Pam Allen. The Southern Conference Educational

✉ Petar Jandrić  
pjandric@tvz.hr

<sup>1</sup> Zagreb University of Applied Sciences, Zagreb, Croatia

<sup>2</sup> University of Wolverhampton, Wolverhampton, UK

Hanisch's 2006 reflection speaks to many questions and dilemmas inspired by her essay: the importance of context, the power of collectivity... Yet the slogan, 'The Personal Is Political', has grown far beyond Hanisch — it has become a collective piece of wisdom, and a buzzword that has been interpreted in radically different and often opposing ways. Analysing the dissonance between Hanisch's ideas and their usage, Gupta (2015) writes: 'All successful slogans are subject to misappropriation: it is a sign of their success. The personal is political — but mind the gap.'

## The Voice of the Pandemic Generation

Published in our precarious historical moment when the old normal is no more, and new normal is not yet, this issue of *Postdigital Science and Education* contributes to building the collective voice of our pandemic generation. Obsessing over this voice would be self-indulgent; ignoring this voice would be a missed opportunity. Articles published in one journal issue obviously do not represent the voice of everyone who experienced the pandemic, yet finding our collective voice in this narrow context is the first step towards a wider understanding of our reality.

Some articles in this issue directly engage with the pandemic (Rapanta et al. 2021; Jandrić et al. 2021a, b; Hurley and Al-Ali 2021; Hillman et al. 2021). Several articles engage with epistemology and practice of truth and deceit (MacKenzie et al. 2020; Cheng and Gonzalez-Ramirez 2020), and this line of research has been taken up further in a recent book in Postdigital Science and Education book series<sup>2</sup> titled *The Epistemology of Deceit in a Postdigital Era: Dupery by Design* (MacKenzie et al. 2021). Another prominent theme appearing in this issue, post/trans humanism (Fuller 2021; Malapi-Nelson 2021), has also branched into a dedicated book titled *Postdigital Humans: Transitions, Transformations and Transcendence* (Savin-Baden 2021).

This issue includes studies of postdigital theologies (Reader et al. 2020; Reader and Savin-Baden 2021) as well as articles using and exploring various artistic approaches (McLaren 2021; Pfohl et al. 2021; Wagener 2020). Finally, there are important contributions to postdigital labour theory (Green 2021; Ford 2021), post-digital theories of heterogeneity (Macgilchrist 2021), deschooling (Kostakis and Pantazis 2021), academic publishing (Besley 2021), and the history of postdigital

---

Footnote 1 (continued)

Fund (SCEF) (1942–1981) was an organization that sought to promote social justice, civil rights, and electoral reform in the American South. Carol Hanisch was the head of the SCEF New York office, where New York Radical Women organized their meetings.

In 1969, Dorothy Zellner of the SCEF wrote a memo about feminist consciousness-raising groups as being insufficiently political. Carol Hanisch wrote a response memo, 'Some Thoughts in Response to Dottie's Thoughts on a Women's Liberation Movement', which was republished in the book *Notes from the Second Year: Women's Liberation* (Firestone and Koedt 1970) under the title 'The Personal is Political' (Hanisch 1970/2006).

<sup>2</sup> See <https://www.springer.com/series/16439>. Accessed 18 September 2021.

thought (Cramer and Jandrić 2021). So what is it that links all these diverse interests and approaches?

## The Devil Is in the Detail

The questions of our day are uncannily similar to those identified by Hanisch. Lockdown experiences of teachers and learners, the struggle to find reliable sources of information, and various individual decisions, from wearing facemasks to vaccination, are typical examples of ‘the personal is political’. Troubling reports about female academics publishing less and starting fewer research projects than their male peers during lockdown conditions (Viglione 2020) add politico-economical insult to pandemic injury. And gender is just the tip of the iceberg of various reconfigurations at the intersections of numerous social categorisations including cultural and religious contexts (Hurley and Al-Ali 2021), social conditions and employment (Jandrić et al. 2021a), and postdigital positionality (Hayes 2021; Jandrić et al. 2021b). As the popular adage says, we are all in the same storm — but some of us navigate it on large cruisers and others navigate it on rusty dinghies.

‘The personal is political’ is just as true as 50 years ago, yet the pandemic has (yet again) reconfigured its implications. Therefore, real work does not start within Hanisch (1970/2006) phrase, but at its fringes and their nuances. The personal is political now operates within the context of postdigital intersectionality, where traditional social categorisations mix up in novel and unpredictable ways with new reconfigurations of relationships between biology, information, and society (Jandrić 2021). This is where the voice of Hanisch’s generation overlaps with the voice of our pandemic generation, sending us important lessons from the past and opening up room for our unique circumstances. Building on these powerful shoulders, we can hopefully avoid at least some of our predecessors’ mistakes and build a strong voice that accurately describes our present and shapes a better world in the future.

## References

- Besley, T. (2021). Postdigital Scholarly Publishing. *Postdigital Science and Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42438-021-00248-2>.
- Cheng, H., & Gonzalez-Ramirez, J. (2020). Trust and the Media: Perceptions of Climate Change News Sources Among US College Students. *Postdigital Science and Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42438-020-00163-y>.
- Cramer, F., & Jandrić, P. (2021). Postdigital: A Term That Sucks but Is Useful. *Postdigital Science and Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42438-021-00225-9>.
- Firestone, S., & Koedt, A. (Eds.). (1970). *Notes from the Second Year: Women's Liberation*. New York: Radical Feminism.
- Ford, D. R. (2021). Pedagogically Reclaiming Marx’s Politics in the Postdigital Age: Social Formations and Althusserian Pedagogical Gestures. *Postdigital Science and Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42438-021-00238-4>.
- Fuller, S. (2021). Cyborg Persons: Humanity Played in a Different Key. *Postdigital Science and Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42438-020-00214-4>.
- Green, B. (2021). Virtue Signaling: Problematizing Creative Labor Within Knowledge Socialism. *Postdigital Science and Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42438-021-00231-x>.

- Gupta, R. (2015). The personal is political: the journey of a feminist slogan. *Open Democracy*, 13 April. <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/5050/personal-is-political-journey-of-feminist-slogan/>. Accessed 15 September 2021.
- Hanisch, C. (1970/2006). The Personal is Political. <http://www.carolhanisch.org/CHwritings/PIP.html>. Accessed 15 September 2021.
- Hayes, S. (2021). *Postdigital Positionality: developing powerful inclusive narratives for learning, teaching, research and policy in Higher Education*. Leiden: Brill.
- Hillman, V., Martins, J. P., & Ogu, E. C. (2021). Debates About EdTech in a Time of Pandemics Should Include Youth's Voices. *Postdigital Science and Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42438-021-00230-y>.
- Hurley, Z., & Al-Ali, K. (2021). Feminist Postdigital Inquiry in the Ruins of Pandemic Universities. *Postdigital Science and Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42438-021-00254-4>.
- Jandrić, P. (2021). Biology, Information, Society. *Postdigital Science and Education*, 3(2), 261–265. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42438-021-00220-0>.
- Jandrić, P., Hayes, D., Levinson, P., Lisberg Christensen, L., Lukoko, H. O., Kihwele, J. E., Brown, J. B., Reitz, C., Mozelius, P., Nejad, H. G., Fuentes Martinez, A., Arantes, J. A., Jackson, L., Gustafsson, U., Abegglen, S., Burns, T., Sinfield, S., Hogan, M., Kishore, P., Carr, P. R., Batarello Kokić, I., Prinsloo, P., Grauslund, D., Steketee, A., Achieng-Evensen, C., Komolafe, B. F., Suoranta, J., Hood, N., Tesar, M., Rose, J., Humble, N., Kirylo, J. D., Mañero, J., Monzó, L. D., Lodahl, M., Jaldemark, J., Bridges, S. M., Sharma, N., Davidsen, J., Ozoliņš, J., Bryant, P., Escaño, C., Irwin, J., Kaur, K., Pfohl, S., Stockbridge, K., Ryberg, T., Pyyhtinen, O., SooHoo, S., Hazzan, M. K., Wright, J., Hollings, S., Arndt, S., Gibbons, A., Urvashi, S., Forster, D. J., Truelove, I., Mayo, P., Rikowski, G., Stewart, P. A., Jopling, M., Stewart, G. T., Buchanan, R., Devine, N., Shukla, R., Novak, R., Mallya, M., Biličić, E., Sturm, S., Sattarzadeh, S. D., Philip, A. P., Redder, B., White, E. J., Ford, D. R., Allen, Q., Mukherjee, M., & Hayes, S. (2021a). Teaching in the Age of Covid-19—1 Year Later. *Postdigital Science and Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42438-021-00243-7>.
- Jandrić, P., Bozkurt, A., McKee, M., Hayes, S. (2021b). Teaching in the Age of Covid-19 - A Longitudinal Study. *Postdigital Science and Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42438-021-00252-6>.
- Kostakis, V., & Pantazis, A. (2021). Is 'Deschooling Society' Possible? Notes from the Field. *Postdigital Science and Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42438-021-00228-6>.
- Macgilchrist, F. (2021). Theories of Postdigital Heterogeneity: Implications for Research on Education and Datafication. *Postdigital Science and Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42438-021-00232-w>.
- MacKenzie, A., Rose, J., & Bhatt, I. (2020). Dupery by Design: The Epistemology of Deceit in a Postdigital Era. *Postdigital Science and Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42438-020-00114-7>.
- MacKenzie, A., Rose, J., & Bhatt, I. (Eds.). (2021). *The Epistemology of Deceit in a Postdigital Era: Dupery by Design*. Cham: Springer.
- Malapi-Nelson, A. (2021). Is Transhumanism Necessarily Utilitarian? Recasting Alternative Ethical Systems Towards a Future Human Flourishing. *Postdigital Science and Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42438-021-00246-4>.
- McLaren, P. (2021). The Day They Brought Ol' Liberty Down: The Reality of the Threat. *Postdigital Science and Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42438-021-00215-x>.
- Pfohl, S., Ayers, B., Turner, A. R., Goodfreed, A. B., Zecchin, M., Borowski, M., Ito, K., Efeoglou, E., Moore, R., Wittig, M. D., Young, C., tujak, I., Thorne, A., Fletcher, B., Stevenson, E. D., Mañero, J., Maeso-Broncano, A., Mesías-Lema, J. M., Escaño, C., Hurley, Z., Spear, K., Brynjolson, N., Sanders, J. T., Lewis, T. E., & Blas, N. (2021). Simple, Dark, and Deep: Photographic Theorizations of As-Yet Schools. *Postdigital Science and Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42438-021-00233-9>.
- Rapanta, C., Botturi, L., Goodyear, P., Guàrdia, L., & Koole, M. (2021). Balancing Technology, Pedagogy and the New Normal: Post-pandemic Challenges for Higher Education. *Postdigital Science and Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42438-021-00249-1>.
- Reader, J., & Savin-Baden, M. (2021). Postdigital Theologies: Technology, Belief and Practice. *Postdigital Science and Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42438-020-00212-6>.
- Reader, J., Jandrić, P., Peters, M.A., Barnett, R., Garbowski, M., Lipińska, V., Rider, S., Bhatt, I., Clarke, A., Hashemi, M., Bevan, A., Trozzo, E., Mackenzie, A., Aldern, J.J., Matias, C.E., Stewart, G.T., Miika, C., McLaren, P., Fawns, T., Knox, J., Savin-Baden, M., Jackson, L., Hood, N., Tesar, M., Fuller, S., & Baker, C. (2020). Enchantment - Disenchantment - Re-Enchantment: Postdigital Relationships Between Science, Philosophy, and Religion. *Postdigital Science and Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42438-020-00133-4>.

- Savin-Baden, M. (2021). *Postdigital Humans: Transitions, Transformations and Transcendence*. Cham: Springer.
- Viglione, G. (2020). Are women publishing less during the pandemic? Here's what the data say. *Nature*, 581, 365–366. <https://doi.org/10.1038/d41586-020-01294-9>.
- Wagener, A. (2020). The Postdigital Emergence of Memes and GIFs: Meaning, Discourse, and Hypernarrative Creativity. *Postdigital Science and Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42438-020-00160-1>.