Peace Psychology Book Series

Series Editor: Daniel J. Christie

Maritza Montero
Christopher C. Sonn
Editors

Psychology of Liberation

Theory and Applications

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Maritza Montero • Christopher C. Sonn
Editors

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*To all those who have fought for liberation,
to all those yet struggling to have it, to all
those who have been partners in the pursuit,
thus helping humanity.*

Series Editor Preface

As series editor, I am delighted to see this fine book added to the Peace Psychology Book Series. The book editors, Maritza Montero and Christopher Sonn, have done a masterful job, making liberation psychology accessible to a wide audience while maintaining a scholarly focus throughout.

It is fitting that liberation psychology is center stage in the Peace Psychology Book Series because peace psychologists recognize that the sustainability of peaceful discourses and actions rests upon the continuous crafting of structures and institutions that are responsive to people's desire for voice and representation in matters that affect their well-being. Hence, the social justice agenda of liberation psychology is at the core of peace psychology.

The pursuit of social justice has not always been central to peace psychology. North American psychologists began to organize and identify themselves as "peace psychologists" in the 1980s during the Cold War. The Cold War featured a global power struggle and nuclear arms race between the United States and Soviet Union. A culture of fear pervaded and the problem of social justice was given short shrift in light of what seemed to be the preeminent concern of peace psychologists, namely, the prevention of nuclear war and the promotion of conflict management.

With the decline of the Cold War and the perceived diminution of the nuclear threat, security concerns were no longer organized around the US–Soviet relationship. Instead, Western peace psychologists turned their attention to ethnopolitical conflicts and, more broadly, the problem of intergroup conflict worldwide. Unlike the Cold War conflict, which invited analyses at the level of elite rhetoric and actions, the complexity of ethnopolitical conflicts required geohistorical considerations that embedded violent episodes in structural and cultural conditions. Clearly, a history of structural violence, marked by oppression and exploitation, was seen as a precondition for violent episodes in many parts of the world.

Besides having a concern about the roots of violent episodes, peace psychologists and liberation psychologists share the view that structural violence in itself is problematic not least because it kills people just as surely as direct episodes of violence. What differs is the means, with structural violence representing a pernicious form of violence that results in slow death through human need deprivation, oppression, and exploitation; a kind of violence that is normalized, impersonal, and built into the structures and institutions of the society.

Between the covers of this book, we are reminded that Latin America has been the engine for liberation movements that seek to redress the problem of structural violence. Rumblings of the movement in psychology can be found in the contributions of Latin American scholars such as Ignacio Martín-Baró, a social psychologist and Jesuit priest from El Salvador, whose ideas were central to the liberation psychology movement that swept across Latin America in the 1980s. These ideas continue to spawn emancipatory agendas all over the world, as illustrated by the chapters in this book, which look at Colombia, El Salvador, Mexico, Perú, and Venezuela, and also Australia, England, Malaysia, Philippines, Republic of Ireland, South Africa, and Spain.

In addition to demonstrating the global reach of liberation psychology and its varied manifestations, this book has theoretical and practical implications for the dominant voices in psychology, most of which originate in North America and Western Europe. Not surprisingly, the liberation approach does not always sit comfortably with mainstream psychology because the tenets of liberation psychology challenge the dominant Western psychological perspective, which embraces an individualistic, decontextualized, and objective view of the Other. In contrast, liberation psychology is committed to praxis which frames problems within the context of oppressors and oppressed and pursues theory and practices that benefit the oppressed. From the perspective of liberation psychologists, change happens on the personal and political levels and everyone is affected by the liberation process, even the oppressor who benefits by becoming emancipated from a sense of alienation.

Liberation psychology also challenges theory and practice in peace psychology, much of which is comfortably organized around a corpus of literature on conflict management and resolution, approaches to human relations that can be powerful tools of the status quo, at times reducing tension in conflictual relationships, while conveniently leaving the social order uncontested. Since the Cold War, it has become increasingly apparent in the peace psychology literature that sustainable forms of peace require not only the absence of violence (negative peace) but also the ongoing pursuit of social justice (positive peace) through nonviolent means that transform relationships and structures. Clearly, liberation psychology nudges peace psychology to shift emphasis from tension reduction to tension induction and from a reliance on the power of top-down approaches to bottom-up movements for social change.

Interest in the psychology of peace is often traced back to William James' publication more than 100 years ago on the "moral equivalent of war," a treatise that argued for the importance of providing constructive alternatives to war that would be capable of satisfying the kinds of needs that war fulfills. Montero and Sonn have given us a roadmap for such a "moral equivalent." Scholars and practitioners who adopt this roadmap will find their work advancing toward a major goal linked to the mission of psychology as a profession: the promotion of human well-being for all.

Daniel J. Christie
Marion, OH

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About Liberation and Psychology: An Introduction

Maritza Montero and Christopher Sonn

Introduction

The psychology of liberation, as the readers will find out in the first chapter of this book, has its roots in a paradigmatic change that started in the second half of the twentieth century, in Latin American social sciences. One could say that the idea of liberation arose from a fresh and renovating spirit that reflected the times as change traversing across the continent. And as also can be read in the chapters included in this book, there are certain characteristics that have marked those initial moments. During the 25 years between the sixties and the mid-eighties, when the creation of a psychology of liberation was proposed by its pioneer, Ignacio Martín-Baró, the disciplines of sociology, anthropology, pedagogy, philosophy, and theology, were introducing and discussing certain conceptions and ideas linked to social and political movements while denouncing oppression, exclusion, exploitation.

Liberation is a process entailing a social rupture in the sense of transforming both the conditions of inequality and oppression and the institutions and practices producing them. It has a collective nature, but its effects also transform the individuals participating, who, while carrying out material changes, are empowered and develop new forms of social identity. It is also a political process in the sense that its point of departure is the conscientization of the participants, who become aware of their rights and duties within their society, developing their citizenship and critical capacities, while strengthening democracy and civil society.

Liberation is directed to those sectors in society suffering from oppression and deprivation, and also seeks the emancipation of the oppressors from their own alienation, so they can understand that a just and democratic society is a better place to live and develop (Montero, 2000a, b). The concept of liberation has been developed as a praxis that has its point of depart in the victims (the oppressed, those in need, or excluded), rescuing their potential and resources for transformation, often invisible to them because of historical, cultural, and social conditions. Liberation is an ethical-critical-empowering and democratizing process of a collective and historical condition (Montero, 2007).

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Liberation ideas, with their critical vision of society and of the institutions sustaining it, have led to inclusion of the critique and transformation of notions such as power (Serrano-García & López-Sánchez, 1994), empowerment (Vázquez, 2004), participation (Hernández, 1996, 2004; Montero, , 2000a, 2000b, 2004a; Sánchez, 2004), engagement and commitment (Montero, 2004a–c), leadership (Hernández, 2004; Montero, 2004b; Sánchez, 2004), exclusion and inclusion (Sawaia, 2001, 2002), as they were defined by community and political psychology in many places in Latin America (Brazil, Colombia, Chile, Costa Rica, Puerto Rico, Venezuela). At the same time, in other parts of the world, similar critiques were being developed, as can be shown by Aboriginal psychology in Australia (Dudgeon & Pickett, 2000) or, the psychology of oppression in Canada (Prilleltensky & Gonick, 1993).

Those generative ideas, whose influence and adoption can be seen in the kind of community social psychology developed in Latin America, and other places around the world, can be summarized as:

- The need to engage in the transformation of societies marked by inequality and exclusion. As a consequence, the commitment of psychological practice to apply its knowledge for the benefit of oppressed minorities[1]; understanding that social change is simultaneously produced in different levels of action: both societal and individual.
- Strengthening of democracy and empowering civil society. Citizenry becoming conscious of their rights and duties. Increasing social participation and responsibility in the communities and individuals.
- A critical perspective of science and of commonsense, and of the ideological aspects that they may be transmitting. In this aspect, liberation psychology is part of the critical movement that began to be felt in the field of psychology since the second half of the seventies.
- The need to redefine psychology's practice and the role of scholars, researchers, and practitioners in the sense of becoming socially sensible to be able not only to read their societies but also to contribute to justice and equality among them.
- A dialogic orientation expressed in the need to incorporate the cultural knowledge and the people's voices. The need to understand that everything happens within social relationships, and that the other in those relations has to be not only acknowledged, but also heard and answered. A dialogue implies another person, an Other, who needs to be accepted not as a subject, but as a social actor, who must be respected, who constructs knowledge, who has a history. So there must be mutual respect. In those relationships, both the human actors and the very relationship changes[2]. As consequence, the Other is conceived as an active person, not a passive entity, a mere reacting being.
- The necessity to produce a science constructed by praxis. That is, practice that produces knowledge, and knowledge that turns into action – theory and practice

[1] The minority condition defined by the lack of formally established power, not numerically.

[2] This is part of an ontology and epistemology of relatedness, developed in Latin America in the last three decades (cf.: Dussel, 1974, 1988, 1998; Moreno, 1993; Montero, 2003, 2005).

informing each other. This idea is not new to sciences in general, although sometimes it seems to be forgotten in some academic contexts. Kurt Lewin's famous phrase "there is nothing more practical than a good theory," was then very well received and put into praxis with the addendum that nothing produces better theory than a good practice.

The Development of a Psychology of Liberation

Liberation ideas were abundant during the second half of the twentieth century, and liberation practices had been introduced in some applications of community psychology (Montero, 1994, 2003, 2004) as well as in other branches of psychology. One can also find applications in political psychology (Montero, 1984) and in other social sciences. Most publications were written from the perspective of the those who were suffering from oppression and colonization rather than speaking to the liberation that was to be constructed (Memmi, 1968), with the exception of Fanon (1965), who charted a path for liberation, and Biko (1986), who spoke about the meaning of liberation. But the idea of a psychology of liberation was pioneered by Ignacio Martín-Baró.

In 1986, in El Salvador, he published a paper entitled "Towards a psychology of liberation", in the *Bulletin of Psychology*, a journal published by the "José Simeón Cañas" Central American University, where Martín-Baró taught and served in diverse academic-administrative posts, in addition to tending to his ministry as a catholic priest (he was a Jesuit). In that paper, he presented three bases for such a psychology, whose need was argued in those pages:

1. "To foster a way to seek for truth from within the population masses" (Martín-Baró, 1986, p. 22). This idea came from the theology of liberation, one of whose principles states that in the voice of the oppressed, in the people masses, is where one can hear the voice of God.
2. "To create a new psychological practice in order to transform both people and societies, acknowledging their denied potential" (Martín-Baró, 1986, p. 22).
3. "To de-centre psychology's attention from its own scientific status, in order to devote itself to the urgent problems of the oppressed majorities, in Latin America" (Martín-Baró, 1986, p. 23).

Martín-Baró also included ideas that can be considered as liberation oriented in papers he wrote before 1986, and in two addresses given in 1987 in Costa Rica (Martín-Baró, 1987), and in 1989 in Mexico (Martín-Baró, 1990), again identifying the need for a psychology of liberation. A summary of his liberating ideas, taken from works published between 1980 and 1989, allows us to highlight three main areas of liberating action and research:

1. *The main role that the people and popular knowledge should have in liberation.* Common lore and the people's virtues should not only to be explored, but also incorporated, and the systematic study of the forms of expression of the people's

conscience, as well as grassroots organizations should be at the center of attention. In the latter, their identity, power, and activity should be closely examined (Martín-Baró, 1988, pp. 6–7).

2. *The creation of a psychological praxis that could be transforming and liberating*. This could be done through the study of power and the problems deriving from it; working in order to overcome existential fatalism (Martín-Baró, 1989), and to develop modes of control of their lives by oppressed groups, and personal and social dealienation.
3. *Setting three tasks for a liberation psychology*: To pay attention to, and work on the urgent problems of Latin American societies, detaching itself from scientific books and journals; to foster the recuperation of historical memory of the oppressed majorities, to overcome alienation and ideology. Thus, psychologists should engage in the liberation of the oppressed and the transformation of the oppressive conditions.

Some Words About Ignacio Martín-Baró and About the Academic Status of the Liberation Psychology

In the brief span of the last ten years of his life (1942–1989), Martín-Baró managed to draft the main lines that, according to his faith and his science, would imprint a liberating mark on social psychology. He was a priest and a social psychologist by training. After leaving Spain, his birthplace, he studied philosophy in Quito (Ecuador) and Bogotá (Colombia), and theology in Frankfurt (Germany) and Louvain (Belgium), between 1961 and 1970. In 1970, he began to study psychology in El Salvador, obtaining his degree in 1975. Between 1977 and 1979 he obtained a masters degree in Social Sciences and a Ph.D. in Social and Organizational Psychology at the University of Chicago. In 1981, he was appointed Vice-rector of the Universidad Centroamericana "José Simeón Cañas" (UCA), where in 1982 he was simultaneously directing the Department of Psychology and Education. In 1986, he founded the University Institute of Public Opinion (IUDOP). His work in this post was particularly irritating for the Salvadoran government, for he was presenting reliable and valid statistical data contradicting the official information. In November 16, 1989, he was murdered, but obviously, as is shown by this book and many other papers and publications around the world, his ideas were not silenced.

Martín-Baró always defined himself as a social psychologist. But when talking or writing he did not see liberation as a specific knowledge or practice, but as something that should be done by any psychologist as the ethical way to apply her/his knowledge and know-how. And, certainly, liberation psychology has not been developed and is not intended as a specific subbranch in the field of psychology. It is an orientation for psychological practice and reflection, a mode of doing psychology, a paradigm. This conception fits very well in certain fields of psychology that had been developing ideas concurring with the objectives of liberation as Martín-Baró envisioned them. That is the case, and has been the practice of Community

Social Psychology; of certain modes of doing Political Psychology and Educational Psychology. The paradigmatic character of the Psychology of Liberation is expressed in its orientation to practice, in the values it proposes, and in the relation between the knower and the known. And most importantly, it is expressed in the central role played by psychosocial processes such as problematization, deideologization, dealienation, and conscientisation, originally introduced by Freire (1970, 1973), which are the ways and the goals of liberation.

That paradigmatic condition is also manifested in its epistemological understanding of the knowledge producing relation, characterized by incorporating as cognizant beings, the people usually positioned as known objects. In this aspect, liberation psychology inserts itself within the epistemology of relatedness, an orientation with roots that go back to Paulo Freire, but also to certain European philosophers including Emmanuel Levinas and, before him, Martin Buber.

Who Liberates? Who is/are Liberated?

Community social psychology with a liberating sense and commitment is about working with the people, about talking to the people and hearing the people. That is, acknowledging the people's will and voice in a dialogue. From this conception, the object of psychology is to direct its work toward social transformations that enrich the quality of life and transform both society and its citizens with their active participation. This is a task that cannot be determined, directed, defined, and controlled by agents external to the conditions to be transformed. It is a collective task, and that means redefining both the notion of what used to be called subjects of research, and the role of psychologists, which become catalysts of social change. Subjects then come to be seen as active, dynamic beings, constructors of their reality. Therefore, they are active agents of their transformation.

The Liberation Psychology Movement

During almost ten years after the death of Martín-Baró, there was what could be called a latency period concerning the psychology of liberation. The only paper published about this type of psychology, which we have knowledge of, was written by Montero (1992), although there were a few papers and talks given here and there, and some academic theses written in the Spanish speaking realm.

Then in 1998, a first Conference of Liberation Psychology was called in Mexico, at Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, in Mexico City, as a way to commemorate Ignacio Martín-Baró and his work, and a nonwritten accord was established to celebrate subsequent annual conferences, in November. Later it was decided to do them biennially, and so far eight conferences have been held, having taken place in Mexico (3), El Salvador (1), Guatemala (1), Brazil (1), Costa Rica (1), and Chile (1). In November 2008, it was held again in Mexico.

These conferences have as objectives to create a space for the monitoring of advances and achievements made by the psychology of liberation; and to critically reflect about its praxis and hurdles, and its relationship to social movements, popular culture, and history. Concepts, epistemological questions, theoretical problems, modes of intervention are discussed at these events. But, there is a specific focus on exploring ways of carrying out a psychology moved by the ethical objective of collaborating in the conscientization process to produce liberating transformations in people and society. Publications derived from these activities increase, some of them are among our references.

The variety of methodological approaches to liberation praxis and the many tasks and problems dealt with illustrate the need for the liberation approach in the application of psychology, as well as how important it is to look at social issues with an ethical perspective expressed in the respect of the Other, and understanding that there is no liberation without the Other, whoever he/she is, because liberating oneself departs from the construction of the Other accepting his/her diversity.

The liberation psychology movement, although only 10-years old in terms of its public expressions (conferences, books, researches, academic interest, Web pages), has already been expressed in a diversity of psychology's branches, including educational, health, cultural, peace psychology, to name a few. But it is in the fields of community-social psychology and political psychology where it has had, so far, its most visible effects. Liberation ideas inform initiatives and movements concerning mental health service users, workers demanding better working conditions, and more broadly support people who are coping with the challenges that arise from working in poor conditions. It also informs initiatives that aim to improve relations between caregivers and clients.

Structure of the Book

In view of these developments in liberation psychology, we felt a need to produce a book giving a view of the complexity and diversity of the praxis of liberation, in and out of Latin America; thus showing the rich traditions of liberation work that have developed in different Latin American countries over the last 25 years; and in other countries around the world, such as Ireland and South Africa. The fact that in these three regions of the world, so far apart, with different cultural traditions, fight against oppression and exclusion have been at the motivating core for liberation practices and expressions, illustrates both diversity, complexity, and the ethical aspects afore mentioned. At the same time, in the other settings included in this book, we can see how different cultures, different political, economic, and social conditions of life can produce both original ways to seek liberation from, again, oppressive realities. They also show how different people in different contexts draw from the same ethical source to search for ways to construct societies where equity, equality, justice, dignity are common to all their members.

Related to that has been the effort made by the authors participating in this book to point out how liberation psychology has solid foundations in the different countries

where they have worked. It also will be noticed that the contributions of Ignacio Martín-Baró have played a pivotal role in the shaping of the psychology of liberation far away from El Salvador, where they were produced. In the chapters that follow we have sought to capture the breath of liberation psychology in terms of the epistemological, philosophical, and methodological traditions that have informed the development of discipline-based liberation praxis aimed at contributing to social change in different countries

Theory and methods, and the practice employing and generating them are explicitly and directly addressed in Chaps. 1–4. Liberation psychology has privileged the union of reflection and action proposed by Paulo Freire 40 years ago, as well as participation, changing the category "subject" to that of participant, and as has been introduced by community psychology, speaking of external and internal agents of change, thus pointing out that social intervention for change is achieved with the efforts of those involved in the situation to be changed and those coming from outside in order to research, intervene, or both. And there is the explicit warning that there are no recipes for liberation, as liberation is an ongoing critical pursuit, and not an end in itself (Chap. 5).

Articulation of the principles of liberation perspectives and analysis of how they have been produced through liberation oriented work in research and action are presented in very different contexts in 11 chapters. Oppression in its different expressions and how the liberation perspective is applied to denounce, fight, and counter its effects is central in the workings of racism in the production of knowledge in South African psychology and, in the introduction of the principles, practices, and initiatives developed to produce representative knowledge in South Africa (Chap. 5). Likewise in Australia, the issue of race and racism as a form of oppression affecting identity and community looms large for immigrants. The critical engagement of the notion of power and ideology, central in tackling racism through processes of deconstruction and reconstruction is discussed in Chap. 6. Another illustration comes in Chap. 7, where the historical relations of colonization, patriarchy, and contemporary challenges are addressed by Moane. She overviews key principles (e.g., exploring the links between the personal and the political, conscientization and related concepts, a bottom up view of change, emphasis on strengths) and offers a model that is concerned with consciousness raising about and acting to transform oppression.

Montiel and Rodriguez examine the social and psychological processes that take place for liberation movements after dictatorships fall, based on their experiences in the Philippines. They draw on Martín-Baró's notion of power and use positioning theory to explain these processes. They offer a reading of the complex layers of change across different level of analyses and different stakeholders such as the state and liberation movements. The work shows the powerful roles that liberation movements can play in achieving peaceful transitions to democracy and peace.

Sapene-Chapellin examines the effects of political polarization on children in Venezuela. She overviews the context of political polarization in Caracas and outlines some of the ways in which the divisions are achieved. Then, she introduces a participatory experimental educational experience in which she connects political

polarization with mental health highlighting the ways in which processes such as othering is used to justify ill treatment of people who come to be rejected by the participants. This requires the introduction of ethical–political suffering, a political dimension of mental health and offers a way to disrupt the effects of polarization through reflection and the possibility to voice feelings, thoughts, and critical observations. Liberation from political-induced hate is obtained.

Noor draws on liberation ideas to explore its potential and relevance in exploring the *hijab*, which has gained prominence in discussions about Muslim women and identity. She overviews the meaning of *Hijab* and discusses interconnections with other concerns such as racism, ethnocentrism, human rights, religion, feminism, colonialism, politics, economic and social injustice, and others. She focuses on connections among state, religion, and women, and explores the struggles around what the *hijab* symbolizes, the way in which these debates and struggles are gendered, and the deeper connections between religion and state. Noor then proceeds to explore how liberation ideas can be engaged to liberate the *hijab*.

Three chapters explore ways in which liberation approaches are engaged in working alongside individuals and communities that have been devastated by war, forced dislocation, and other forms of violence. Chauca and Fuentes-Polar report on the work of RED PARA LA INFANCIA Y LA FAMILIA-PERU (Infancy and Family Network – REDINFA – PERU) in accompanying those who have been affected by conflict. They overview the context and outline the mission and programs of REDINFA, while sharing the processes, challenges, and complexities of the work of the organization and provide a detailed analysis of the role of recovering historical memory as central to the process of liberation.

Also employing psychosocial accompaniment, Sacipa and colleagues draw on work with displaced communities in Colombia, exploring the reconstruction and integration of forcedly displaced persons. Their work is theoretically informed by social constructionism, the complexity paradigm, cultural psychology, and the psychology of liberation. They aim to empower the participants as citizens with the right to participate in the communities of insertion, as well as to be autonomous, while overcoming their loses and the cultural differences between the rural areas they had to leave behind, and the urban life they have to get adapted to. Reconstruction after a war of "minimal intensity," but with some 75,000 deaths, in El Salvador is no easy task, especially when one by-product of the aftermath are the fearful "maras," gangs of violent young delinquents. Chapter 13 tells of the challenges for the psychology of liberation in building frameworks for social coexistence in a country that is in the process of reconciling and reconstruction. She outlines the range of some development projects in part aimed at addressing issues of poverty, and fostering collaborative processes such as integration into the city, strengthening of social solidarity and, and promoting community participation.

Chapter 14 analyses and discusses the development of a new praxis for engaging with children who have experienced the life of the streets of Caracas. Llorens addresses the challenges and problems associated with trying to translate traditional psychological methodologies and techniques, and trying to develop psychotherapeutic ways of enabling children to deal with the real world to liberate children and

youngsters who are fleeing abuse and are prey for other forms of oppression and exclusion in a society that makes them invisible. Chapter 15 discusses conceptual and theoretical aspects of liberation psychology, which support the fieldwork carried out by a Spaniard-Salvadoran team. The setting is also urban, this time in Spain, where women in a poverty area of Seville, through mobilization of consciousness and participatory methods, including the problematizing discussion of their narratives of oppression, built liberating aspects.

As can be seen here, liberation ideas are behind, and also at the end, of initiatives and movements. Human relationships seem to produce both the best and the worst. The ethical condition of the liberating approach in psychology could be considered as the force and guide to avoid the multiple expressions of oppression and exclusion, demonstrating that to make a better world one needs the Other, a free Other, which asserts our own freedom (Montero, 2002). Or as Freire said: “No one is, that forbids others to be” (1973/1988, p. 41).

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Praxis and Liberation in the Context of Latin American Theory

Jorge Mario Flores Osorio

Myths are the folk's walking dreams…
They are rich sources of knowledge
for the people who have invented them;
to unravel them, one just has to interpret them,
to decipher them. In order to reach this goal,
there is only a valid method: to relate myths
to the real life of the people. Otherwise,
one just adds fiction to prior fiction,
mixes delusion with other delusions
(Albert Memmi, 1988, p. 139).

Introduction

This chapter discusses the epistemology and critique that developed in Latin America during the 1980s in opposition to the hegemonic scientific paradigm of mainstream social sciences. The notion of "Latin American theory" will be here employed to refer to the analysis of social inequities, thus addressing the challenges that Latin American social scientists posed, during the 1960s and 1970s, to the ethnocentric social sciences developed in Europe and the United States.

Theory of dependency (TD), theology of liberation (TL) and philosophy of liberation, Freirean popular education, critical or militant sociology, community-social psychology, and psychology of liberation (PL) are the theoretical orientations considered here, as they all express an empirical and intellectual need to comprehend the dynamics that occur between the oppressors and the oppressed. The consciousness developed by scholars as to the circumstances that generate oppression and exclusion spurs the construction of theoretical proposals which are oriented to understand reality in order to transform it. Within this framework, concepts of liberating praxis, conscientization, and commitment acquire identity not only as ways to do practice

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but also as theoretical constructs which become central for explaining psychosocial phenomena that prevail in the Latin American region.

The epistemological pathway that leads Latin American TD, philosophy, psychology, theology, education, and sociology to construct a theoretical–practical (praxis) corpus is focused on social transformation. With this goal, they propose to enact the 11th thesis of Marx about Feuerbach: "The philosophers have only interpreted the world: the point now is to change it" (Marx, 1975/1845, p. 428). Latin American praxis questions hegemonic conceptions of social sciences, taking as foundation an ethical and political project, as well as its contextual space–time dimensions. From this point, dialectics, Marxism, and hegemonic theology, as well as their different expressions, are reinterpreted. Emphasis is placed on the development of consciousness from those who are oppressed, analyzing the fatalism nourished by a belief in a Christendom whose values were biased to favor dominant sectors and their status quo.

Critical reflection about proposals developed within Anglo-Saxon and Francophone frames of reference, which are not suited to develop adequate responses for the problems generated among Latin American societies, becomes a *sine qua non* condition for building a Latin American science (Fals Borda, 1973). Marxism and theology are reinterpreted in Latin America from the contextual perspective to alleviate the needs of the poor and to promote better working conditions of peasant workers and native Americans. Focusing on these concerns, classic Marxism is oriented to analyze the fact that social contradictions are not reduced to *class struggle*. In the Latin American region, other conflicts appear, such as the tension among the native population ("Indians")[1] and ladinos[2], or the tension among colored and white populations, and struggles that generate a double process of exploitation and oppression. These reinterpretations, which will be discussed later, have meant the resignifying of central categories and concepts of Marxism and theology. Thus, dialectics as a tool for generating knowledge and the concept of praxis as a liberation principle are developed from a critical horizon, motivated by the need to understand the dynamics that occur among those who oppress and the oppressed, to explain such processes, and to transform it, demonstrating in doing so the human need to construct freedom as a historical need.

Dialectics and Knowledge

In Latin American social theory, dialectics is employed as a method and a rational strategy, which advances the notion of representation and moves it up from the notion of concept. Concept, in this light, would be a statement that contains as

[1] Common term used by the population in Latin American countries.

[2] Ladinos do not consider themselves as "Indians,", although they come from the racial mixing of native Americans and European colonizers, whereas the term native Americans groups a bigger diversity of ethnic groups whose historic background can be traced prior to Spanish presence in the continent. Nevertheless, Ladinos and native Americans share the double oppression condition as well as the cultural destruction produced through the independent and liberal and neoliberal or dependent phases of Latin American history.

many categorical relations as possible and which is reflected as a synthesis of multiple determinations. In spite of considering laws as basic for explaining the world, dialectics poses that knowledge is not generated unless it is mediated by social discourse. So, in order to produce knowledge it is necessary to consider mediations among individuals, nature, and society. Latin American scholars criticize dialectics as employed by Marxism–Leninism and they advocate a return to the Hegelian notion of reason, considering that overcoming contradictions means to reach the concept that contains them. This chapter follows the Latin American social sciences tendency to use Hegelian dialectics. Following Kosik (1967), reality is analyzed at the same time as the development, as well as the expression, of the being:

> Dialectics does not reach knowledge from the outside or complementarily, nor is one of its characteristics. Knowledge is dialectics itself in one of its forms; knowledge is the decomposition of the whole. Concept and abstraction, in the dialectical conception, have the meaning of a method to decompose the unitary totality, in order to mentally reproduce the structure of the thing, that is, to understand the thing (Kosik, 1967, p. 30).

In Latin American theoretical thinking, dialectics means mediation and synthesis of social praxis. It is a way to see through the immediately apparent and it is produced by a process of abstraction and concretion. Dialectics is a synthesis of the diverse or a synthesis of multiple determinations. Hegelian logic explains reality as both nature and spirit. Logic, according to Hegel (1982), is structured upon the Being, Essence, and Concept doctrine. These factors operate to explain the development of the real as the articulated wholeness of negation which prefigures the concept. In Hegelian logic the Being has three conditions (1) quality, (2) quantity, and (3) measure. In Essence, one can observe the existence, the phenomena, and the reality. In concept, there is the objective, the object, and the idea. Hegelian dialectics is a methodological alternative that overlooks the hegemonic social sciences bias that underestimates reality. It is an alternative to understand reality in its whole complexity and as a result of praxis. Dialectics, as philosophy of praxis, studies reality as the totality of the essence and the existence, of the essence and the appearance, as was written by Kosik:

> (…) reality is not originally presented to man in the form of an object of intuition, analysis and theoretical comprehension. An object whose complementary and opposed pole would be, precisely the abstract knowing subject that exists out of the world and isolated from the object; reality is presented as the field in which man exerts practical and sensitive activities, upon whose base surges the immediate practical intuition of reality (Kosik, 1967, p. 25).

In this sense, Latin American social sciences consider reality in the midst of its contradictions. It is reality reflected both in particular and universal senses: the fundamental and the secondary factors; identity and struggle of contraries; the complementary and the antagonist; negation and affirmation, all opposites are considered as moments to be transcended in terms of continents of synthesis of the diverse. Thus, dialectics becomes a rational instrument for investigation, one which furthers the present, the appearance of social reality, through a string of abstractions–concretions tending to transform reality.

The Concept of Praxis

Praxis is here defined as a principle of transformation and synthesis produced when the theoretical–practical contradiction is solved. It is manifested as the subversion of the prevailing mode of thinking and of the cognitive concretion. Concretion means the synthesizing judgment which expands the comprehension of a concept. Praxis represents the foundation to develop a critical consciousness and to transform the present as an action pursuing freedom.

In the Latin American theories analyzed here, the concept of praxis derives from two sources. First, it derives from interpretations of the Latin American Episcopal Councils (Buga 1967, Bogotá 1968, and Puebla 1970) regarding conclusions from the II Ecumenical Vatican Council (2003), which were in a first moment contrary to Marxism, and later theoretically linked to it. Second, it is based in the conditions of oppression and exclusion suffered by the majority of the population, as evidenced by the Marxist. Based on these two sources, for Latin American scholars praxis adopts the form of a tool for knowledge and a way to transform the oppressing reality.

Praxis as a transforming principle transcends the theory–practice contradiction and fosters the definition of interactions between action and reflection. Thus, the interpretative and speculative tendencies of theoretical philosophy are left behind. As Gramsci (1977) pointed out: “Philosophy of praxis intends to explain, and that is why it is a philosophy, an ‘anthropology’ and not a mere canon of historical research” (p. 233). So, praxis accelerates the process of historical transformation. When a theoretical position is organized and turned into action, reality as an object is transformed. This leads Gramsci to state that by identifying theory and practice, practice becomes rational, and theory becomes realistic and rational (Gramsci, 1998). In Latin American theory, the concept of praxis is cause and consequence of constructing consciousness and lays the foundations for a political and ethical position of Latin American scholars. By viewing reality from a frame of reference which is different to the one employed by mainstream social sciences (positivism, pragmatism, functionalism), Latin American thinkers intend to understand the present as a denied reality, one that has to be transformed.

Praxis is subjected to, and at the same time subjects, the transforming experience. Praxis is the unity of the diverse, reflected as a synthesis generated by a process that goes from abstraction, as an intellectual particularity, to concretion as an expression of thinking, which is to say, concretion as theory. Abstraction is defined as the moment when history is reproduced, and concretion is the reflection of the material moment. Thus, praxis assumes the sequential dialectical process of abstraction–concretion–abstraction (particularity–totality–particularity) oriented to totality. In this way, praxis is posed as a method, as part of an episteme, a way to know the mediated reality; and as a possibility to transform the world, while at the same time, as totality and particularity. Liberating praxis gives sense to Latin American social research when it elaborates active conceptions, founded upon the individual gaining consciousness of self and otherness, which is to say, when the person is

aware of the rich possibilities offered by society and the Other as generators of knowledge (Gramsci, 1970). Praxis as a liberating transformation principle is a tool to unravel factors that determine oppression and exclusion, the status quo of Latin American people.

In this sense, philosophy of praxis introduces the analysis of the social nature and historical development of human beings in the realm of knowledge. It assumes that practice is not independent of theory, for one is the base and consequence of the other. And likewise, the truth value of knowledge or of a theory depends upon their explanation being manifested in social practice. Such philosophy maintains that, in practice, humans perceive sensations and impressions. These are modified qualitatively by being reflected upon, and in the process become concepts, elements to comprehend the world in its complexity, in the unity of essence and existence, and in the relation of exteriority–interiority, concreted in the transformation of reality (Mao, 1972).

Praxis goes beyond the sensorial stage, it becomes the foundation for reasoning and the principle to determine mediations between essence and existence (reality); it forms a theoretical corpus (concepts, postulates, and categories) to apprehend reality. A theoretical corpus to comprehend the laws of the world, not a mere heuristic, interpretative activity, but as an action that transforms the world, in such a way, theory becomes a principle for transforming the present. But if a theory becomes a conversational topic, it may loose its meaning (Mao, 1972). The TD (Bambirra, 1983; Furtado, 1969; Gunder Frank, 1973; Marini, 1975), when it became a topic of university conversations, hence departing from praxis, probably illustrates this point.

Summing up, praxis is the notion that demonstrates reality as a dynamic continuum. Praxis should be considered as a principle that affirms and, at the same time, denies the present, transcending the individual to validate society. Praxis implies an infinite cycle of practicing–knowing–transforming, the cycle that builds the unity between knowing and doing. An example of this praxis is Freire's proposal of action–reflection–action, heavily influenced by Mao's idea about practicing–knowing–practicing.

Academic Context for Producing Latin American Theory of Liberation in Human and Social Sciences

During the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, the Latin American region experienced a deepening of its social and economic contradictions. The ensuing crisis manifested itself in popular actions and corresponding reactions of repression from governmental forces. The following are a few examples of popular actions: in Venezuela, military Dictator Marcos Pérez Jiménez was overthrown in 1958; in 1959, Cuban revolution toppled the Batista regime; and in the same lapse, several revolutionary uprisings speckled the Americas. On the other hand, several military dictatorships

got hold on Central and South American nations: Nicaragua (1933–1956), Guatemala (1954, 1963, 1982), El Salvador (1960) Brazil (1964), Argentina (1966, 1976), Uruguay (1972, 1974), and Chile (1973). In 1959, the government of USA planned and put into action counterinsurgent programs by creating experimental centers for training militia coming from different Latin American governments. Such actions were executed along strategic development programs like *Alliance for Progress* or the very same CEPAL model[3] that is analyzed later in this chapter.

When social problems were exacerbated, Latin American governments unleashed politics of repression and terrorism throughout the region; some famed leftist intellectuals assumed a militant position, and along with leaders of workers, Native Americans, progressive clergyman and farmhands organized revolutionary movements, or at least, movements to oppose authoritarian regimes. Some university students abandoned classrooms to enroll in armed groups and take to jungles and mountains away from urban centers of Latin America. These processes provoked intellectuals with an ethic compromise to adopt a critical position against the political–academic perspectives posed by communist elites of the region, thus questioning dogmatism and Stalinism. In 1967, the Latin American Solidarity Organization (OLAS by their acronym in Spanish) was created as a regional expression. Contradictions among young leftists and communist parties were aggravated. Upon reflecting about anticolonial African movements, *sui generis* interpretations of Marxism emerged, interpretations that pursued a reality beyond the struggle of classes. These Marxist interpretations found fertile ground in the Latin American region, which did not show strong industrial development and was populated by a significant Native American sector.

At the same time that student movements against the Vietnam war arose in the USA, several particular resistance organizations were developing around the world: African-Americans fighting for their rights; workers consolidating unions; the social upheaval of the so-called Spring of Paris in 1968; alongside workers, Native Americans, and peasants organized to tackle particular problems; and several student movements surged in Latin America. Some of these movements were organically linked to revolutionary processes. Others were simply searching for curricular reforms. In any case, such movements opened the way to develop a critical thinking in the region, a school of thinking that promoted social research with a compromise to transform reality, and a compromise with social processes of liberation. As Fals Borda wrote:

> One of the emerging themes for sociology would be, without a doubt, sociology of Liberation. I mean the use of the scientific method to describe, analyze and put in action knowledge to transform society, to subvert the structure of social classes and balance of power that mediates such transformation. Sociology of Liberation would enact all measures tending to ensure an ample and real satisfaction of all the people's needs (Fals Borda, 1973a, 1973b, p. 23).

In Nicaragua, after the execution of long ruling dictator Anastasio Somoza (1956), the popular and student movements got stronger, leading to the development of the Nicaraguan Patriotic Youth Movement (Juventud Patriótica Nicaragüense) in 1960.

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[3]Economical Commission for Latin America (CEPAL).

At the same time, construction workers and urban transportation drivers went on strike; the next year, 1961, different strikes were repressed by the Nicaraguan government. In Mexico, actions against the regime of the ruling party (Partido Revolucionario Institucional) manifested the citizenship's malaise. In 1968, students from the Instituto Politécnico Nacional and the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, along with a sector from the left took over the streets in huge demonstrations that were stopped by the Mexican government in the slaughter of the Square of the Three Cultures at Tlatelolco (Mexico City).

In the same year, Brazilian students were mobilized in search of academic petitions. Such movements spurred on other social actions: metallurgic workers went on strike and students and workers expelled authorities from their offices in Belo Horizonte and São Paulo. Following the thread of TL, ecclesial grass root communities emerged. On the academic field, a critical approach to social sciences was promoted. Both tendencies generated strategies for social community work, directed to transcend misery and exploitation and, thus, to create a theoretical–conceptual corpus adequate to Latin American reality.

Meanwhile, in Latin American countries suffering from military dictatorships (Brazil, Peru, Chile, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Colombia), parishes, ecclesial grass root communities and people fighting in the mountains became natural think tanks devoted to intellectual reflection. Peasants, Native Americans, and urban youngsters and scholars started to develop a liberating praxis. As stated earlier in this chapter, to know reality in the Latin American situation implied to transcend the traditional conception of class struggle (Proletarian-Bourgeoise), fundamentally because social problems evolved around the ownership of land, the dire need to live with dignity, the ethic imperative, and the possibility of producing and reproducing life itself (Hinkelammert, 1998). Criticism of communist parties' conceptions, which were considered incapable of theorizing their own reality, gave way to theories constructed by and within the oppressed (workers, peasants, Native Americans, students, and professionals). There needed to be social bases to comprehend the development of a dependent capitalism and the growing processes of exploitation.

Latin American theoretical production generated in the academic context, which assumed the commitment of denouncing the origins and consequences of oppression, became suspicious to the eyes of the USA government and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), which in turn promoted and financed a tough plan of action directed to attack state universities and leftist intellectuals. An example, the Universidad Centroamericana "José Simeón Cañas" in El Salvador, where PL was originated by Ignacio Martín-Baró in 1986, was shocked by the murder of Martín-Baró, and other fellow priests (Armando López Quintero, Ignacio Ellacuría, Joaquín López y López, and Segundo Montes) who were all practitioners of liberation theology.

It can be stated that due to social and economic problems prevailing in Latin America during the period under analysis, social sciences experienced an important moment for theoretical production and the region emerged as a focal point for diverse schools of social thinking (Osorio, 1994). Scholars linked up with social

and revolutionary organizations, aligning thinking and action at the service of social transformation, posing theories that consider the dynamics of oppression–exclusion, doing praxis upon a commitment with the population, generating ideas as new ways to conceive knowledge and questioning in practice the hegemonic modes of production of knowledge[4] that used to orient social thinking.[5]

The CEPAL Theory and the Theory of Dependency

During the last half of the twentieth century (1950–1970), a group of social scientists teamed up at the Economics Commission for Latin America (CEPAL, by its acronym in Spanish), who had abandoned the mainstream thinking, and full of enthusiasm due to the victory of the Cuban revolution (Bambirra, 1983; Domínguez Ouriques, 1994), assumed a different approach to analyze particular problems of the region. They took a Marxist critical perspective, mixed with functionalist and Weberian formulations (Osorio, 1994). This constituted the source for the TD. Thus, social sciences in the Latin American region advanced significantly with both formulations (The CEPAL theory and the TD), in terms of generating a critical, theoretical perspective, opposed to the hegemonic political practice. Both theories also parted with the conceptual and practical positions of Communist parties of the regions, heavily sustained by Stalinism (Núñez & Burbach, 1987). The first working period of CEPAL was signaled by the merging of similar schools of thinking; later on, theoretical and epistemological divergences emerged among their participants, which were expressed by contradictory findings and proposals (Bambirra; Osorio).

At a first stage, the formulation of the TD implied a break from the dominant perspective of the CEPAL, which gave space to other social disciplines that favored the construction of knowledge from a critical perspective. According to CEPAL, Latin American problems should be analyzed in terms of a center and periphery model, leading to a rupture with the CEPAL researchers. Such difference opened an autonomous thinking space for Latin American researchers (Osorio, 1994). The ideas from CEPAL were not consistent with marginality problems, the poverty zones surrounding the urban population, or the inability of private enterprises to generate jobs for the region. According to Hinkelammert:

> (…) Theory of Dependency surges from criticizing ideology. In relation to thesis like the one from the liberal politician cited here, such theory contended, during the sixties and seventies, that estimating the particular gain does not tend to obtaining any general gain or

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[4] Hegemonic is here employed in the sense of cultural and economic dominance of certain social classes.

[5] At the Universidad de San Carlos, Guatemala, a movement of professors and students broke up with the Humanities Faculty and created the School of Psychological Sciences, which in the seventies and eighties suffered repression because it was considered a center for subversive actions, due to the engagement the faculty and students had shown with the oppressed sectors in that country, by creating spaces for psychological care in marginalized zones.

common good (balance, as the economists pose it). Particular gain goes against the general gain, it is in the direction of what is bad for everyone (Hinkelammert, 1998, p. 182–183).

Rodríguez (1993) points out that the ideas from CEPAL are consistent with the classic and Keynesian economic theories, which consider growth as a process of capital accumulation of capital process, associated to technological progress. It poses a gradual growing of capital density and an increase of labor productivity, as well as a betterment of the quality of life. Nevertheless, reality was not consistent with those concepts, so the TD got better results.

Along TD ideas, the development of peripheral capitalism, or dependent capitalism, was analyzed. In Chile, a new organization was created, the Latin American Institute of Social and Economic Planning (ILPES, by its acronym in Spanish), which incorporated other specialists to ongoing discussions under a multidisciplinary approach, deepening the distance between the Latin American conceptualization and the hegemonic thinking promoted by organizations depending from the United Nations.

TD developed in three main branches: one oriented to Marxism, whose formulation states that dependency is directly linked to the accumulation and exploitation processes of global capital (Bambirra, 1975, 1978, 1983; Dos Santos, 2002; Marini, 1974, 1975, 1995, 1996). These authors emphasize the characterization and contradictions of dependent capitalism at its monopoly integration phase, as well as on the formulation of criteria to orientate in different ways tactical and strategic conceptions promoted by revolutionary movements, as a principle to produce a Marxist TD. The second branch is represented by Fernando Enrique Cardozo and Enzo Faletto (1974). It is closer to the developmental formulations of CEPAL. They assume the developmental thesis according to which social control of production and consumption is the basis for sociological analysis. This line of thought requires the analysis of the internal situation producing social tensions, as a foundation for the economic and political structure, which in turn will constitute nodes to comprehend and trace possibilities for development. The third branch was lead by André Gunder Frank (1973, 1974) and proposed that economic, political, and cultural dependency are derived from colonial underdevelopment and thus, structural dependency and exploitation in Latin American capitalism will only produce a substandard development.

The central themes of the TD are the economic and social history of Latin America; capitalism as a global system; the concepts of development and underdevelopment; international capital accumulation; the particularity of the Latin American capitalism, and the diversified industrial pattern as a model for development.

The epistemological production movement generated by theorists of the dependency generated explanations about the social and the global situation of Latin American which can be summarized as:

(a) Development is built upon the possibilities of relations among local social classes, local economies, and economies of national control. In this explanation the capital is foreign, and that promotes the exit of any surplus from the Latin American countries, thus reducing internal economic activities and inhibiting the development of the National State, the bourgeoisie, and middle classes. A second option poses that local groups take control of the main exportation

items, opening up bigger possibilities for expanding and diversifying the economy and social classes, so the State necessarily assumes the condition of State–Nation (Osorio, 1994).

(b) The center-periphery system is analyzed as a model for imperialist and dependent economies. From that point, the CEPAL theory is complementary to the Imperialism theory, by generating an explanation for the functioning of the capitalist system in underdeveloped countries.

Education for Freedom

Paulo Freire was the pioneer of an education for freedom. He grounds his proposal in the need for liberty of those oppressed. The pedagogy developed by Freire states the need to build new relationships between individuals and their knowledge. He stated that reflection will only come out as a transforming action. As an engaged thinker, Freire elaborated an educational project that implied a *practice of freedom* and developed the pedagogy of the oppressed, contradicting the dominant pedagogy. That pedagogy considers that it is through the subject gaining consciousness of his subjection, that he/she will accomplish liberation (Freire, 1970). The notion of liberation introduced by Freire influenced strongly Latin American social sciences (social work, psychology, critical sociology, theology, and PL).

Education for freedom questions the rigid, bureaucratic scholar daily life, as well as the schemes of knowledge-power which are manifested in the educational process.[6] Education for freedom seeks relevant strategies which propitiate the people's learning and discovering of new possibilities for autonomous action (Barreiro, 1985; Brandao, 2002; Freire, 1999). Education for freedom implies a symmetrical relation between the actors of the educational process, which through critical investigation, defined by Freire a liberating praxis, seek to transform the present (Freire, 1964, 1970, 1982; McLaren, 2001). According to the Freirean perspective, a person that educates is obliged to recognize the other, the person that is being educated, as an active protagonist of the process of constructing and appropriating culture, as a human experience that transcends the oppressor–oppressed contradiction. Following Freire (1999), to act politically, intellectuals, along with the oppressed, have to "read" the world, understand potential dreams, hopes, and wishes of liberation, to be able to interpret the way in which oppressors understand the world through school systems that do not permit to see the persons behind ideologies.

Praxis as a theoretical–practical synthesis is an important concept in education for freedom. It is a step to identifying the factors, conditions, and determinations that prevent peoples' participation in political life. Those factors keep them away

[6] The concept of knowledge-power in not analyzed here in the sense that Foucault posed, which is to say, considered as discourse, but as a practice that tends to preserve conditions of oppression and exclusion.

from knowledge, close to the ideology that masks the reasons that the capitalist society has to deprive them of their right to produce and reproduce life. Education for freedom (Freire, 1970) propels people to understand the meaning of oppressive actions, giving way to the construction of a reality whose center is the person. To reinvent the world and to establish symmetrical and inclusive relationships for participation is the project immersed in the liberating praxis. The epistemological conception that underlies such a formulation implies transforming ongoing school practices, which transmit dominant ideology (Brandao, 2002), in a systematic adventure with creative and critical proposals based on an active and shared process of teaching and learning, and thereby generating a liberating education oriented to build other possible worlds.

For Freire, conscientization is not a mere revelation of reality, because “its authenticity is realized when the practice on unveiling reality constitutes a dynamic and dialectic unity with the practice of transforming reality” (Freire, 1999, p. 99). That is to say that attaining consciousness means transcending the idea that unveiling reality does not mean an automatic transformation of it, that education is not only an act of knowledge, but also an act of transformation with respect to economical, social, political, ideological, and historical factors. It is an act that manifests the state of oppression of the person, which is thus in need of acting in order to transform such conditions. In this sense, the person is not considered as a passive viewer accepting an inevitable gap between her/him and what is to be taught. On the contrary, she/he is considered as an active person. Thus, education becomes a strategy oriented to teach the right that every individual has to live by creative acts “capable of unleashing other creative acts, in a literacy process in which man [sic], not being its object, develops the impatience, and the lucidity which is characteristic of the states of study, of the invention of vindication.” (Freire, p. 100). Education as a liberating praxis, by assuming an existential compromise with the oppressed, helps to understand the problems that are suffered by the population, becoming a counterideological strategy to transcend the thinking–action, theory–practice, and ideology–language contradictions. Therefore, in collective praxis it is:

> (it is…) as equivocal to separate practice from theory, as it is equivocal to separate language from ideology, or to separate the teaching of matters from the calling to the student to become himself the subject of learning by apprehending the teaching process. From a progressive perspective, one has to experiment the dynamic unity between the teaching of the matter and the teaching of what it is, and the teaching of how to learn. By teaching mathematics, one teaches also to teach and to learn, how to experiment the necessary epistemological curiosity for producing knowledge (Freire, 1997, p. 120).

In the education for freedom, literacy programs (Freire, 1977) aim further than just teaching to decipher texts. Those programs develop an ideal strategy to attain popular concientization, based on comprehending the colonial–historical process of oppression. Such programs assume that the present can be assessed as a logical consequence of the past and with a view to the future, unveiling in the reflection process the diverse ways in which oppression manifests itself. Thus, in education for freedom, Freire considers necessary that:

> (…) the teacher knows that when he says “here” and “now”, the one that is learning will frequently understand “there”. Even when the teacher dreams of putting his “here and now”, his knowledge at the service of the students, this desire will be overlapped by the teacher’s understanding of the different meaning of “here” for the one that is learning. At the very least, the teacher has to consider the existence of the difference of meanings and has to respect it (Freire, 1999, p. 58).

In the program for freedom developed by Freire, the teacher does not transfer knowledge mechanically to a passive and compliant subject; teachers work with a person with human potential to appropriate knowledge as a starting point for conscientization. Educative process has to look for mechanisms that propitiate people widening their worldview and opening their possibilities for transcending the present; education should advance from candid conscience to critical conscience, from the sensorial to the conceptual, from cognitive action to liberating praxis.

Critical Sociology

While Freire was developing educational concepts related to conscientization, thinkers in other fields were seeking for work strategies for the liberation project. According to Fals Borda (1985), in 1970s, objectives of the concientization model started to be biased, apparently influenced by Piaget, rather than influenced by Marx thereby losing contact with the need to transform social and politic reality. In the late 1950s (Fals Borda, 1959) and early 1960s, a new strategy of sociological research was developed. It was first called action research (AR), and later named as participatory action research (PAR). Montero (2006) states that the name of PAR was introduced in 1970 by Marja-Luisa Swantz describing her work in Tanzania, but Fals Borda (1985) claims that Bangladeshi sociologist Anisur Rahman was the one who first proposed the notion of PAR. Such a proposal implied a conceptual definition. Fals Borda contends that the conceptual substitution of AR by PAR generated some confusion, since after the 1977 Cartagena International Conference on Critical Research, “…the idea of action research was adopted by many researchers which were not thoroughly informed” (Fals Borda, 1985, p. 490). Thus, PAR was introduced under circumstances that implied the need to build an epistemological frame of reference oriented to break the dual character of the subject–object of investigation posed by mainstream science (Fals Borda, 1985).

Orlando Fals Borda (1973a, 1973b, 1981, 1985) criticizes traditional sociology, proposing its reorientation and justifying a rebel science. He suggested that as Latin American reality is transformed, it needs particular ideas for its definition, which in turn requires a particular methodology. Such a critical position “will lead us to quarantine, as a starting point, those concepts that we have learned in texts and classrooms” (Fals Borda, 1973a, 1973b, p. 79). That is the way to develop social research that is engaged with the oppressed, employing

strategies to transcend practices that had transformed the conscientization model in discourse, and thus depriving it of its liberating sense (Fals Borda, 1973a, 1973b). According to Fals Borda (1985), the liberating sense was reintroduced in Latin American social sciences by going back to the Marxist concept of praxis, which from the beginning was immersed in the conscientization practice, although not clearly defined, perhaps due to the lack of sociological research methods. Fals Borda (1985) states that: "The philosophical stone for transcending a paradigm was founded on the idea that knowledge for social transformation did not lie in the training of consciousness for liberation, but on the practice of such consciousness" (p. 489).

Orlando Fals Borda (1981) defines PAR as the necessary action of knowing in order to transform based on five characteristics: authenticity and commitment; antidogmatism; systematical devolution of the knowledge produced in the research with the people's participation, feedback to organic intellectuals; balance between action and reflection; and a modest science based on dialogical techniques. He states that militant sociology must: "Determine real starting points (levels of conscientization for vindications that might push successive struggles for justice, schooling, health care, etc.) to advance toward class struggles oriented to more fundamental, strategic changes" (Fals Borda, Bonilla, & Castillo, 1972, p. 50).

Militant sociology pursues scientific strategies at the service of the people, thus contributing to transform social structures (Jacob, 1985; Jiménez, 1994). Militant sociology helps to know reality with and within the people, countering, as a principle, actions and ideas from dominant scientific frames of reference. While training social scientists, militant sociology should explain to students how to transcend the split between subject and object, and to build a different notion of scientific objectivity founded on praxis and ending in a process of social liberation. "Study and action combined to work against exploitation and dependency conditions that have characterized us so far, with all the degrading and oppressive consequences of poverty and the culture of imitation" (Fals Borda, 1970, p. 25).

Fals Borda considers important that universities leave behind ideas about knowledge being generated exclusively in developed countries (Fals Borda, 1985). He thinks necessary that Latin Americans realize that it is feasible to produce knowledge from action based on the engagement with the oppressed ones, in interdependency with scientists from diverse areas and from a multidisciplinary work. Thus "making up for the scarcity of resources, while at the same time approaching the time of a real step of the underdeveloped countries toward better levels of conviviality" (Fals Borda, 1973a, 1973b, p. 7).

Fals Borda (1973a, 1973b) claims that an important set of theories built upon a liberating political process were generated at the onset of a crisis in the Latin American social sciences. Liberating theories surge as a consequence of the thesis that to change the world, it is necessary to understand it. That is why sociology of liberation is in itself an act of scientific creation at the service of social transformation and, consequently, theory and practice, idea, and action are synthesized as liberating praxis.

Theology of Liberation

The origins of TL (1968) are in the First Latin American Episcopal Conference (CELAM by its acronym in Spanish), at Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (July 25th to August 4th, 1955), after the Eucharistic International Congress. In that conference, matters pertaining to the clerics, monks and nuns, seminars, masonry, the surging of Protestantism in Latin America, laicism, superstition, communism, and immigration were discussed. The meeting was also the chance to present to the Vatican the CELAM project, approved by Pope Pius XII on November 2nd, 1955 in the Rio Conference, opening the way to develop concientization of the bishops with respect to Latin American reality.

After the founding of CELAM, in 1967 (Buga, Colombia), and the Conferences in 1968 (Medellín, Colombia) and 1970 (Puebla, México), the Catholic Church started critically reflecting on the dominant pastoral positions in Latin America. This reflection considered the situation of the people from the perspective of their conditions of oppression. Theoretical conceptions different from the ones posed by dominant theology, and even different from the ones used in universities, were then constructed. This new ecclesial position started from an analysis of justice and the problems of poverty, considering community as the space where freedom can be realized. López stated:

> Our reality, seen through the spectrum of underdevelopment, with all the inhuman drama it implies; because of the economical, political, cultural dependency; because of the severe and growing inequalities; because of the drama of frustrations, our reality is interpreted by priests as a "sinning situation" (López, 1980, p. 221).

The II Ecumenical Vatican Council made by Latin American bishops was carried out in four stages. The first one was headed by Pope John XXIII during the summer of 1962. At his demise (June 3, 1963), the other three stages were conducted by his successor, Pope Paul VI, until the closing of the deliberations in 1965[7] (CELAM, 1977, 1968, 1996a, 1996b, 1996c; López Trujillo, 1980). The interpretations of the priests were influenced by the conditions of regional underdevelopment, oppression, and exclusion suffered by large sectors of the population (Native Americans and workers). Such interpretations were also influenced by theoretical postulates from the TD and the so called Easter experience[8]. That experience is the basis for the concept of liberation as a tendency to a deep social and individual conversion that leads to structural change (CELAM, 1977), a concept developed in Medellín, linked to the life saving action of Christ, to his death and resurrection, considered in large sectors of the Catholic church as related to liberation. Thus, it was stated that:

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[7]Reflections from the II Vatican Council were the base for the meeting of the Latin American Episcopal Conference (CELAM), celebrated in Medellín, Colombia 1968 and Puebla, México in 1970.

[8]Easter experience is the interpretation that theologists of Liberation give to the death and resurrection of Christ, to which they assign the meaning of birth of the new man and construction of freedom.

> Liberation is not something exterior to man, something received passively by man, without his interventions; liberation is a process that surges from the Easter mystery of Christ, in which man is called to participate in a radical conversion effort, a permanent assimilation of Christ dying and coming back to life (CELAM, 1977, p. 57)

Under the rule of John XXIII "the dominant matrix of theology is broken. A new matrix is founded. One not based in power, but in no-power, not on domination but on subjection, not from above but from below" (Dri, 2001, p. 291). Thus, in the II Vatican Ecumenical Council, European theologists look toward the construction of a new church, and to regain the dominance of the catholic. Whereas the Latin American bishops, gathered in the Latin American Episcopal Conference (Medellín, Colombia, 1968) stated that "poverty marginalizes large groups. Poverty as a collective act is an injustice that claims to heaven" (CELAM, 1968, p. 51). TL emerges in light of this and postulates that:

> To know Jesus we have to penetrate, guided by the Spirit, in the mystery of his life, his message and his liberating action. Such knowledge will lead to follow him closely, in the concrete space of the history of this people which, with non-diminishing patience and spirit of faith, look forward to a better future (Hernández, 1997, pp. 13–14)

As it can be observed, the global social crisis of the decade of the 1960s was particularly acute in Latin America and was the frame for the emerging of the TL, during the Second Latin American Episcopal Conference in Medellín, Colombia (1968). Nevertheless, also in Colombia, Camilo Torres (1974) had professed praxis on the basis that faith without practice is nonexistent and that praxis without theory is a gimmick for the conscience. In the CELAM (1968) meeting, a document was issued in which Latin American bishops consider that the notion of development does not contain the aspirations of Latin American church, goals, and aims that are included in the concept of liberation. These aspirations are described as follows.

Aspirations of the Theology of Liberation

- Choosing man, choosing our people integrally conceived
- Choosing love for the poor
- Choosing integral liberation
- Overcoming social injustice and hate originated in selfishness
- Practical definition of the engagement as educators of consciences
- Denouncing everything that goes against justice
- Acknowledging the lack of political conscience of the people and assuming political participation in the public life of the nation

As it is clear, TL emerges from confrontation and from the need of the Church to acknowledge its mission at the service of the poor, the oppressed, and the marginalized, an option that cannot be understood as exclusive. It stated its option for the poor, who have been suffering underdevelopment, who are victims of injustice in different ways, and it is an option that does not ignore other sectors of the population.

The pauperization process being lived by Latin American people, and the manifest need to build a liberation project with and within the oppressed is postulated as the center of attention for theologists' of liberation. In this sense, Gutiérrez (1999) states that: "Theology of liberation is one of the forms in which the adulthood that Latin American society and its church are reaching has been expressed during the last decades"(p. 31). Coinciding with Paulo Freire, TL searches for the conscientization of the oppressed, while stating the responsibility of catholic priests in building a world in freedom, a world where the poor get back human dignity from the solidarity founded by theologists

> The call to follow engages us in a task of service and solidarity with the poor and the marginalized. We have solidarity when our life links with the human being in a dire situation, unable of coping with it by himself [sic]. In the words of the Jesuit martyr, Ignacio Ellacuría: "solidarity is taking care of the younger brother" (Hernández, 1977, p. 61).

In 1979, the Second Latin American Episcopal Conference was held in Puebla, México (CELAM, sf), and the conditions of extreme poverty of Latin American people were once again analyzed. It was concluded that such conditions must be transformed and that the church has a commitment to do it. Documents issued in that Conference become important foundations for reflection about the role of Catholic Church in the construction of a just society. The preferential option for the poor is defined in terms of considering that in the very faces of the poor it is possible to recognize Christ suffering, and thus transforming the imposed colonial system.

As noted earlier, TL surged from a dialog with social scientists that have as a reference a preferential option for the poor and an epistemological perspective built upon Latin American interpretations of Marxism. Theologists of liberation consider that the oppressed are the subjects of the Kingdom of God, and a fundamental condition to organize a society which respects spirituality and freedom. Praxis of the TL is concreted through the organization and the work carried out by ecclesial grassroots communities, conceived as the church born from the people in order to liberate itself, and people born out of the renovated Church, developing a solidarity identity in its active presence in the world of the poor (Castillo, 1991; Saravia, 1986). Ecclesial grassroots communities do not seek haven on a religious perspective, they claim for justice and liberation through collective praxis.

The pathway traced by TL does not imply an instrumental act, but the construction of an ethical–political position, oriented to interpretation and denouncing of the conditions of oppression. Praxis is carried out in structuring a dialogical–hermeneutic model referred to concrete historical subjects with a particular conception of the world, in which poverty, oppression, dignity, and liberation will be fundamental referents.

Philosophy of Liberation

Likewise, in the field of Latin American philosophy an intellectual work linked to the liberation process of the people has been developed, under a critical, ethical–political paradigm, known as philosophy of liberation. It started with the TD

applied to the regional analysis and the conscientization of some Latin American philosophers with respect to the social, economical, and political situation of the region, specially the conditions of oppression and exploitation suffered by marginalized sectors. Mario Casalla (1973, 1975, 2003), Augusto Salazar-Bondy (1985), Leopoldo Zea (1965, 1985), Enrique Dussel (1987, 1988, 1990, 1998, 2001), Franz Hinkelammert (1974, 1995, 1996, 1998, 2002), and Horacio Cerruti (1983, 1986, 2000, 2001) are eminent representatives of this tendency. According to Zea (1965), Latin American philosophical thought presents three stages, which have as its highest point the philosophy of liberation (Cerruti, 1983), a term that appeared in1973, to describe the philosophical work developed in Argentina by Dussel (1975) and Scannone (1975).

Philosophy of liberation states that reality can be thought from the particular history of peoples and from a critical and creative space which can be useful to transform that history (Cerruti, 1983). Such philosophy contends that no national liberation is possible without freedom of those oppressed, which implies going further than the philosophy of identity, probing deeper than Western ontology and rationality, starting from an ethical–political commitment a process ending in the resolution of the interiority–exteriority contradiction. Latin American philosophy of liberation redesigns philosophy around the concept of the Other, the poor, the oppressed. It is theoretically and practically integrated with communities that need to transform their oppressive conditions of submission. From that point emerges the need to reflect about the peripheries and reflect from the perspective of the oppressed, orienting action toward the center, which is to say, toward the one that dominates, to whom a critical and subversive message must be delivered.

Philosophy of liberation does not pretend to ignore occidental traditions, but to transcend them and to denounce them as forms of ideology that masks social reality and puts it at the service of the centers of power. To that end, philosophy of liberation proposes to analyze social–historical reality, affected by the human and affecting humans in terms of survival.

Community-Social Psychology[9]

From the 1960s, some psychologists (Quintal de Freitas, 2000; Serrano-García & Vargas, 1993) in Latin America working with other social scientists began developing a practice immersed in the community (Arango, 2007). From the start, community psychology had a rapid growth, making difficult its characterization and thus, putting obstacles to identify it as a new discipline (Serrano-García & Vargas) and to delimit it theoretically and conceptually. Places that have been signaled as foundational for its development are scattered through the Americas (Montero, 1994; Montero & Varas Díaz, 2007; Serrano-García & Vargas). Montero (1994)

[9]In this section, I refer specifically to community-social psychology and not to all practice of psychologists or social scientists in the community, oriented by diverse theoretical perspectives, even from hegemonic frames of reference of psychology and social sciences.

states that in various "Latin American countries the subdiscipline had been adopted, either as part of the general programs of social psychology (Brasil, Colombia, México, Venezuela, for example) or as community oriented courses" (p. 23). The term community-social psychology, accepted as an academic discipline, appears for the first time in Latin America, in the 1970s (Montero, 1994, 2004; Sawaia, 2001), when in 1975 the Program of Community-Social Psychology was created at the Psychology Department of Universidad de Puerto Rico (Montero, 1994, p. 22).

Community-social psychology was generated as a counter expression of the mainstream models of the discipline (Ussher, 2006), oriented to the study of individual behavior and processes of behavioral interaction (Serrano-García & Vargas, 1993). It is a consequence of the need to transform the oppression that characterized existence of large sectors of the population (Montero, 2004). This particular need implied a critical revision of the methodological–theoretical sources, starting from concrete links with poverty and oppression in Latin America. By looking at this reality, some social psychologists question a psychology oriented to the individual "…practicing with utmost care fragmentation, but not giving answer to social problems" (Montero, p. 43), and they deem necessary to work with the oppressed, considering their social engagement as the principle for action (Montero; Sánchez, 2001).

Those questions were behind the impulse toward community work, under the premise that knowledge must be produced by a direct relation with the people's problems, originated by the dominant socioeconomic structure (capitalism), pondering the impact that structure has on the social formation (Montero, 1994; Rivera-Medina, 1992; Rivera-Medina & Serrano-García, 1990; Sawaia, 2001). In the process, psychologists step out of the classrooms (Giuliani & Wiesenfeld, 1997), developing a praxis linked to problems deriving from oppression and exploitation (among peasants and workers). As Sawaia (1998) states: "The surging of community psychology is due to the same forces that, at the late seventies, catapulted different social sectors to street demonstrations, as well as pushed scientific academy to level up the equality of rights" (p. 179).

In that frame, community psychology directs its work toward the study of psychosocial factors that sustain, develop, foster, and maintain the control and the power which people can exert over their environment. It also helps to develop consciousness of the people's possibilities for solving their main problems (Montero, 2004). This is done due to social commitment, which is to say that psychologists must be engaged with transformation and social change, according to Montero (1998):

> It is the development of a way of doing directed to develop, along with members of the community, critical processes through which action, its causes and consequences are subject to analysis, so as to unveil hegemonic ways; interests leading to mask certain relations, impeding the comprehension and transformation of circumstances on which those facts are produced, naturalized, and generate paralyzing explanations that block changes (pp. 256–257).

By practicing CSP, and as consequence of popular education and PAR, the professional that employs this discipline becomes a facilitator of popular organizations, of promotion and participation. He/she is transformed into an organic intellectual

(Buci-Glucjsmann, 1978), who contributes to seeking collective strategies to solve community problems from critical praxis.

In the first stage of its development, CSP merges concepts and tools of disciplines like sociology, political science, economy, popular education, and social work, (Rivera-Medina & Serrano García, 1990; Wiesenfeld, 1994) not necessarily generated in Latin America. As Montero (1996) writes:

> (…) there is influence from Latin American sociology, which at that time proposed the TD analyzing relations between center and periphery and their effects on underdevelopment; from Marx and Engels (*Economical–philosophical manuscripts of 1844*); from the Lewinian concept of action-research, rapidly transformed in the sixties and seventies by social researchers like Fals Borda and Paulo Freire into participatory action-research. There is influence of social constructionism, as formulated by Berger and Luckman; influence of Marxian philosophers and sociologists like Goldmann, Gabel and Habermas, or influence of Marxists like Gramsci (p. 28).

It is clear in this statement that the dynamics of oppression, colonization, and exclusion suffered by Latin American people for centuries, and particularly acute in the 1960s, were a determinant factor in building CSP, a discipline developed as a consequence of the commitment to transform conditions promoted by the multinational discourse. A discipline building and giving new meaning to concepts, in direct relation with problems generated by a society that by including, excludes. In the 1980s, CSP started to produce a particular theoretical–conceptual frame of reference (Lane, 2000; Montero, 2003; Rivera & Serrano, 1989), without leaving behind proposals presented by critical sociology and education for consciousness, to which, nevertheless it added changes produced in practice.

In brief, CSP employs the concept of praxis and the dialectic thesis with a different framework from the one so far employed in the mainstream. CSP talks of an epistemological praxis which allows one to interpret concepts differently, as direct consequences of conditions of underdevelopment, oppression, exploitation, exclusion, and poverty on which most of the people lived; such interpretations also include specific conditions of the zones where researchers worked (Central America, South America, or Puerto Rico).

Psychology of Liberation or Social Psychology of Liberation

In this section I refer to the construction of PL, departing from the work Ignacio Martín-Baró. Psychology of liberation or social psychology of liberation (SPL) is not exclusive of the Latin American ambit. There are experiences of PL in Africa, such as the work carried out in the Northern part of that Continent by Franz Fanon[10] (1965, 1973, 1974), as well as the work of Albert Memmi (1969, 1988), and in the Southern part, such as those of Stephen Biko (1986) and of Chabani Manganyi.

[10] Fanon did also work at the Caribbean region.

There are also liberating ideas in the work of Alberto Merani (1973) in Latin America. The proposal of Ignacio Martín-Baró (1983, 1986, 1989, 1990), besides the opus of the aforementioned authors, is motivated by the need to seek an intellectual project linked to the liberation of people oppressed and colonized by USA and European ideas.

Martín-Baró (1986) considered, as community psychologists also did in the 1970s and 1980s, that the best findings of the psychology developed in Latin America emerged from the relation with social conceptions like the ones coming from the TD dependency, TL, critical pedagogy, and critical sociology. To those should be added contributions coming from the philosophy and ethics of liberation.

PL intends to uncover psychological processes to decolonize oppressed people; in that sense, it directs its praxis to psychosocial problems generated by the social formation imposed and developed in the Third World. PL proposes goals to analyze manifestations of power and their incidence on the worsening of living conditions; to reject the situation of the oppressed and to defend the right to live in dignity; to unveil circumstances affecting the people's health; to generate strategies to develop collective consciousness; and to transcend ideological mechanisms provoking immobility and passive acceptation of oppression and exclusion all over the world.

The analysis of the ideological–political conditions in which the psychology developed in a neocolonial system, as well as its application within a destructuring and alienating framework, produced in practitioners–intellectuals a necessity to look for mechanisms, strategies, and epistemological conceptions to build a theory with, for, and from the oppressed, based on a liberating praxis; because as a group, the contributions of the psychology so far made to the history of Latin America, could not be seen neither in their action nor in their practice (Martín-Baró, 1986). Reasons that explain why psychologists were simply reproducing foreign theories are found within the dependency of the discipline regarding forms of posing and solving research problems taken from other cultures and other societies and forms which could not answer to the demands coming from popular movements – of trade unionists, of peasants, of students – in Latin America. As Martín-Baró (1974) states:

> Paucity of the contributions of Latin American psychology is better understood when it is compared to other fields of intellectual work. For instance, TD has been an original effort of Latin American sociology to explain the *raison de être* of the underdevelopment in our countries, without recurring to explanations derogatory of Latin American culture, linked to the «protestant ethic» conception (p. 765).

Hence, PL seeks concrete options to transcend oppression and exclusion, situations that are manifested in unemployment, lack of housing, health and nutrition. For PL the ethical–political dimension is a principle for action, which demands to question instrumental positions and individualizing mechanisms propelled by the neoliberal school of thinking. Thus, it requires that practitioners question the psychology that was being taught at many Latin American universities, so detached from reality. A psychology that was according to Martín-Baró doing the following:

> (…) to look up to the Big Brother, already respected in the social and scientific fields, borrowing from him its conceptual, methodological and practical assets, waiting for a chance to negotiate at the social instances of each country a social status similar to the one obtained by their North American colleagues (Martín-Baró, 1986, p. 220).

PL opens the way to daily reflection–action with the oppressed–excluded, criticizing at the same time its own discipline. In that process, praxis facilitates breaking up with the slavery to the colonial discourse, which imposes mercantilism on the society and on the individual. According to Martín-Baró (1986, 1989), to build a PL requires a decolonization process, as well as to forge close links with the excluded. PL demands that psychologists be aware of the role they have played as agents of hegemonic powers in the Latin American region, by doing a reality-veiling practice; and strengthening alienation (i.e., consumer-oriented psychology, mental health psychology, certain psychosocial interventions), instead of uncovering it.

For Martín-Baró (1986), Latin American psychology must renounce to attain a privileged rank in the scientific hierarchy and to receive social status conferred by communities operating with the discourse of power. Instead, Latin American psychology should generate knowledge at the service of the popular sectors, in order to solve their problems. This means to assume an ethical–political compromise to build with the excluded ones a dimension different from the present negative reality.

Conclusion

Summing up, I can state that the TD, critical sociology and critical pedagogy, the PL, TL, and the philosophy of liberation, as well as community-social psychology are disciplines that generate theoretical and empirical answers in which the notions of dialectics and the concept of praxis are employed in a different way to those employed in many European and North American ambits; although in Latin American social sciences, there also are lively critical discussions of social and philosophical theoretical elements coming from both those regions. To dialectics and praxis, Latin American thinkers add work categories such as poverty, oppression, dignity, and the need for liberation. Thus, scientific action is linked to an ethical–political position as factors for transformation.

The notion of praxis in Latin American theory emerges from a dialogic–hermeneutic perspective created between the oppressed and organic intellectuals, oriented to produce knowledge capable of transforming the present. Liberating praxis implies the need to rethink problems, with and from, the oppressed; with a commitment to unveil and characterize conditions of oppression and exploitation suffered by large sectors of the population.

In this chapter, I have presented the notion of praxis as cause and consequence of the conscientization process, a process built and developed by theoretical–conceptual traditions based on an ethical–political perspective and on the critique of hegemonic frames of reference (positivism, pragmatism, functionalism, instrumentalism,

among others). Likewise, I have shown praxis as an attempt to comprehend the present as a reality to be refused in order to transform it, through a process that implies apprehending for transforming.

Liberating praxis, as a result of the action–reflection–action process is central to research cultural mediations and to overcome dualistic oppositions present in positivist science (organic–spiritual, individual–society, body–soul), so as to build a practical–theoretical perspective from which historical sources blocking the production and the reproduction of different life conditions may be explained (Dussel, 2000). Thus, praxis becomes the founding stone for Latin American liberation. Finally, I suggest that conditions of oppression and exclusion in which most of Latin Americans live, demand from practitioners and researchers, work explaining the history of the successive modes of colonization, and constructing cultural identity as a principle to transcend the present, to leave behind the dominant rationality and to integrate reason, emotion and ethic values.

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Ignacio Martín-Baró's Social Psychology of Liberation: Situated Knowledge and Critical Commitment Against Objectivism

Bernardo Jiménez-Domínguez

In his book Acción e Ideología. Psicología Social desde Centroamérica [Action and Ideology: Social Psychology from Central America] (Martín-Baró, 1983), Ignacio Martín-Baró defined his critical social psychology as a discipline whose objective is to examine the ideological component of human behavior. It assumes that all significant human action attempts to bring society's interests in line with those of the individual. Thus, social psychology represents the moment in which society's interests become one with the individual and individual interests become one with the society.

In Latin America, a critical social psychology would demonstrate how an oppressive social system is enabled and justified by elites who promulgate the belief that people are passive, submissive, and fatalistic in regard to the prospect of changing society toward a more socially just arrangement. This would be his contribution to a critical social psychology and to a vision of a true democratization process that is both participatory and popular. Deideologization occurs when the assumptions of the ruling class are exposed.

Critical Commitment and Social Science

As proposed by Ignacio Martín-Baró (1985b), *deideologization* assumes a critical commitment which gives back to the people the knowledge they have gained of their reality. It assumes that power and knowledge are of the same substance. If social psychology studies the ideology in human behavior, its best contribution to democracy in Latin America would be to unmask all kinds of elitist ideology; that is, the assumptions that are treated as common sense (or in Garfinkel's words, quoted by him, common culture) and which justify and operationalize an oppressive system as normal and natural, being the main ground of ruling ideology. In short, the task of a liberating social psychology is to uncover the alienation in

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daily life, the roots of people's passivity, submission, and fatalism (Martín-Baró, 1985b). Thus, in cases where public opinion polls are used as a tool, "deideologization" implies a monitoring of public opinion which gives that opinion a voice. This is not the same as opinion publicized in the media by the powers that be. Ignacio Martín-Baró (1985a) developed a critical use of neopositivist research methods to confront those powers. He considered neopositivist methods very useful once they were separated from their epistemological assumptions. For example, Martín-Baró viewed opinion polls as a tool that could contribute to such a process, allowing social organizations to enter into a constructive dialog aimed at the formation of a new collective identity (Martín-Baró, 1985a). He thought that one contribution social psychologists could make was a "deideologization," the aim of which was conscientization of the collective conscience (to inform and educate, making people aware) by challenging the ruling ideological discourse and by activating the dynamics of a dealienating process. The role of the social psychologist must be defined according to the circumstances of the people in question, not to solve their collective problems, but to search for a solution with them and from their own perspective as a way of helping the people overcome their alienated personal and social identities by transforming the oppressive conditions of their context. Consequently, psychologists must adopt the perspective of the popular majorities and follow them on their historical path toward liberation (Martín-Baró, 1985c).

Drawing on Liberation Theology, Martín-Baró (in Dobles interview, 1986) pointed out that Latin American psychology must identify the virtues of the oppressed people and adopt a critical commitment, defined as identification with the oppressed, and at the same time, a necessary distance to examine with critical eyes the proposals emerging from their own praxis (meaning a conscious practice): A psychology of the oppressed, in the same manner as the Freirean pedagogy of the oppressed (Freire, 1970), must fight for a liberation which goes beyond individual oppression but which includes the whole people in a shared practice. This involves breaking the chains of social oppression as the general aim of a psychology of liberation.

As in the action turn of participatory research going beyond the linguistic turn in social sciences, liberation psychology must recognize the importance of combining both the knowledge of academia and of the people in popular praxis and struggles. This critical commitment combining the logic of action with the logic of research is the basis of a new ethics. As Fals-Borda (2000) puts it, it is important to recover altruism and solidarity by learning how common people resist adverse circumstances through their use of cooperative practices that build countervailing forces and leadership at the grassroots level in communities, villages, and slums.

Montero (2004) has described the characteristics of an altruistic community leader from a low-income Venezuelan community, as a person who goes beyond duty, who sees his own leadership status as part of a collective movement having a specific role, and who encourages others to participate. These leaders are respectful of people and have altruistic feelings, expressing their solidarity with others in the community, sharing joys and sorrows with demonstrations of fraternity within a deep religious framework. They are creative and imaginative people who display a great deal of energy. They have an optimistic view of the future, a strong desire for knowledge and

they reject authoritarianism, exclusion, and exploitation. These virtues are extraordinary but they do exist amidst the heroes of everyday life. Ignacio Martín-Baró found altruistic community leaders in his work with the poor, but he was also an example of it, according to those who knew him at the university and in the poor villages where he worked alongside the people (Pacheco & Jiménez, 1990).

In a coherent manner, Martín-Baró (1985a, 1985b, 1985c) redefined traditional categories of social psychology such as prosocial behavior with a critical and a historical sense, proposing instead typologies more consistent with the daily experience of the poor in El Salvador. From a sociohistorical perspective, he distinguished three kinds of prosocial actions: acts of cooperation, which contribute to social unity and give priority to the common rather than individual good; acts of solidarity, which contribute to the development of just structures through the support of the weak; and acts of altruism, which contribute to the sustenance of society by solving difficult problems.

Ignacio Martín-Baró understood very clearly the difference between political activism and his own commitment to social reality as an academic. In particular, he said that scientist political neutrality was ethically unacceptable. However, he also said that political commitment endangered the social psychologist's objectivity (Martín-Baró, 1990b). He made that remark the year he died in 1989. In other words, he was clearly aware that objectivity must not be confused with impartiality. One cannot be impartial in the face of injustice. However, in order for our efforts to be effective and to fulfill their aims, we must not collapse into a subjectivity, which leads to political pamphleteering or mere public catharsis. Ignacio Martín-Baró's experience led him to believe that political activists' lack of independence and their obedient adherence to a party line can leave them with only one eye at best, if not completely blind. Precisely because a political party splits us into two, it separates us from the flow of reality, which is continuous and changing. Reality does not generally fit into an airtight compartment of party discipline. Moreover, Ignacio Martín-Baró believed it was necessary to integrate the politics of psychology with the psychology of politics in order to overcome that obstacle.

A few years later, at the formal opening of the World Congress for Participatory Convergence in Knowledge, Molano (1998) argued that participatory action research (PAR) had survived the wreck of the grand theories because it had been alert to unsatisfied needs and to the reconstruction of ordinary people's lives, thereby putting ethics in research as advocated by Martín-Baró. One consequence of this is to go beyond the dominant idea that political parties are needed for any form of action and intellectual work. Instead, researchers were interested in walking next to ordinary people rather than one step ahead. Molano also reported how difficult it had been during the 1980s to the 1990s to be among the opposition and to criticize the powers that be for their involvement in torture, disappearances, and the killing of activists. This meant that action research was not just a scientific challenge but practically also a suicidal endeavor in countries like Colombia at that time, when a weak political system trying to strengthen its position gave gangs of hired killers license to kill, which ironically further weakened the political system. Many human rights activists were killed just for reporting on the situation.

Researchers had to be cautious observers from afar; otherwise their lives would be in danger. In the case of Martín-Baró, he did not accept the position of observing from afar although he was conscious of the risks – indeed, he was advised by his own colleagues and friends from other countries that he should leave the country for a while.

Martín-Baró was not even doing action research, but rather practicing in a peaceful way his own situated definition of social psychology as a social science committed to the poor using the empirical tools at his disposal at that moment to unmask the repressive character of the government and to challenge the lies of the State through opinion polling. This was the real reason for his assassination by an elite force of the Salvadoran Army.

His vision was that the Latin American social scientist should assume a critical commitment to the process of change; "commitment" because we cannot ignore the injustice which affects the majority, but "critical" because we must establish both a way to analyze reality and to develop a process to change it. If commitment demands participation, then the critical stance demands independent criteria. Thus, what is important is not impartial, aseptic objectivity (which in practice becomes just the opposite), but a systematic respect for the historical realities of ethical and political choices. The critical nature of scientific commitment implies an ongoing deideologization. This would be the equivalent of objectivity, and it consists both of dismantling the justifications, which mask historical reality, and of removing the rationalizations of everyday social life.

According to Martín-Baró (1990a), critical commitment entails a new kind of rationality, based on the sociology of knowledge, focused on understanding and interpreting concrete and historical beings from within the social process, rather than explaining and formulating general principles. This alternative perspective shows that all reason is situated and that the locus of one's knowledge determines not only how someone perceives things, but also which things are perceived. As Haraway (1988) clearly established from a feminist perspective, all vision is embodied, particular, locale and finite – thus only an *embodied objectivity* is possible and only *partial perspectives* and *situated knowledge* promises an objective vision.

Objectivism and Psychology

According to Martín-Baró (1985a, 1985b, 1985c, 1990a), objectivity is different from impartiality and the conflict between science and commitment is a false dilemma, because objectivity is simply to be faithful to reality in itself. In the social sciences, this means, clarifying the interrelation between the researcher as a person and social being with a reality that is also human and social. In other words, this refers to the well-known concept of reflexivity in social science and qualitative research.

This critical perspective coming from the sociology of knowledge has been developed in an original and convincing way by Bruno Latour in his sociology of studies in science and technology (STS). In one article, Latour (2000) says that

psychologists and other social scientists who adopt natural science methodology as a model fall unwittingly into a chain of errors. Because such scientists put their faith in philosophers of science, they accept their version of the scientific method without ever having applied their tools to natural objects. They believe the great superiority of physics and natural scientists lies in their having been able to dominate the objects of their studies. But the objectivity social scientists are dealing with has a very different nature. Objectivity does not involve a specific state of mind or an internal sense of justice and impartiality. Rather, it involves the presence of objects that are capable of *objecting* to what is said about them. According to Latour, the paradox is that when social scientists copy natural science methodology, they block out precisely those characteristics that would make their disciplines truly objective. In order to achieve scientific objectivity in psychology, traditional researchers seek out cases in which human subjects will have the minimum amount of influence on the results. The solution is not to tell the subjects what kind of manipulation they will be subject to. This scenario appears to be ideal for producing hard science using human subjects; that is, a kind of science that is comparable to the sciences that study natural objects, because the human subjects have no influence over what is said about them. But, as Latour concludes, although these methodologies smell and taste like pure science, they are all-terrain approaches that actually result in a farce, a cheap imitation. There is a very simple reason for this: If the object loses influence over what people say about him or her, as the quantitative researchers so proudly proclaim, what we also lose is objectivity.

In the words of Martín-Baró (1986), the natural science methodology is methodological idealism. It is idealism because theory is giving priority over a situated analysis of social reality, not going beyond the content of the hypothesis in question. For him, practical truth has primacy over theoretical truth.

The role of experimental subjects is that of idiotic objects. In order to be fully compatible with the critical perspective to research advocated by Ignacio Martín-Baró (1985a, 1985b, 1985c), a social scientist who wishes to be objective would need to find a complex environment in which the subjects of the study could object to what was said about them, an environment in which they could be as disobedient as possible within the experimental protocol. Furthermore, the subjects must be able to pose their own questions on their own terms, not on the terms of the scientist whose interests they have no reason to share. What Latour teaches us is that there is not a single way of conceptualizing objectivity or science, but different political and epistemological perspectives and some of them come to be dominant in certain periods.

Based on the critical perspective of Martín-Baró, objectivity is necessarily redefined as a matter of ethics, such that the researcher takes a situated standpoint on the side of the oppressed, and includes reflexivity and subjectivity as alternative to individualism and ahistoricism in mainstream psychology. Value neutrality serves only the interests of the ruling ideology. Social psychologists must abandon the notion of objectivity or of neutral value objectivity, but rather explore subjectivity in a reflexive and conscious manner. The illusion of full researcher objectivity and an approach to social analysis produces both a subject and a researcher who is a statistical artifact amputated from social relations, history, and context (Fine, 2004).

As Martín-Baró stated, to be truly emancipatory, psychology must be first liberated from its own ideological chains; thus, a psychology of liberation inspired by the theology of liberation needs first to be liberated from psychology itself (Martín-Baró, 1986). Something similar has been proposed by Sampson (1999, a critical psychologist Martín-Baró used to quote) who argues that a psychology useful for the majority of the world's peoples, must be liberated from the form it has adopted in serving the interests of the ruling power. We must liberate psychology in order to build a liberating discipline.

Theology, Philosophy, and Psychology of liberation

The closeness of Martín-Baró's perspective to that of the theology of liberation is quite clear. His psychology of liberation makes a preferential option for the poor like the theology of liberation. According to Duque (2001), the theology of liberation is a concrete theology. It is a reflection on poor communities' stories of faith, hope, and their experience of God amidst them. Theology of liberation speaks from outside the institution. A liberating theological reason is a critical reason, situated within the poor and speaking from their location, not that of the s*tatus quo,* because it is a tool for liberation.

A known criticism of the theology of liberation is that it could be seen also as teleology of liberation. As Montero (2003) explains from a secular perspective, there is the danger that researchers and practitioners believe they are instruments directed by the left hand of God. That is, they want to do good, no matter what people may think, say or do, because they know better and are able to decide what is needed, by whom, where, when, why, and how much.

This is reminiscent of well-known populist political practices in Latin America political history. However, it can be applied also to the populist strand within the philosophy of liberation and the moral figure of the prophetic philosopher, Enrique Dussel (1985, 1988, 2003) and his philosophy of Latin American philosophy, recently regarded by his fans as "the" philosopher of liberation. He argues that the ethics and the popular culture of the oppressed should be taken as the foundation of a Latin American philosophy of liberation, which would be the philosophy of the dominated, as contrasted with western philosophy, which would be considered the philosophy of the dominant countries. But, he is rather cosmopolitan and draws liberally on European philosophy (Kellner, 2001), mainly on Levinas first philosophy ethics. He has been strongly criticized on this point in the debates between the different versions of the Argentinean philosophy of liberation, as has been narrated by Cerutti (1983), who identifies himself with the transformative subsector. The problem, according to Cerutti, is Dussel's ethicist self-image of moral superiority and his religious leanings which prompted Dussel and his "populist sector" to advocate their philosophy of liberation as an alternative to Marxism and substitute class analysis with a careful philosophical analysis based on the populist rhetoric of "the people."

This debate has been presented in English by Barber (1998), quoting also the criticisms of the feminist writer Ofelia Schutte (1991). According to them, Dussel

defends a self-sufficient and fundamental knowledge (like Heidegger's fundamental ontology), a first philosophy superior to the sciences and immune to their critique. But, as Kellner explains, philosophy is an expression of the philosopher limited by his own experience and history. He gives an example of Dussel's (1985) statement on eroticism, where he sees base human sexuality in a natural relation between man and woman and also, to ground heterosexuality, marriage and child-raising in a discourse of nature, suggesting that abortion (and also divorce in Schutte criticism) is against nature. Schutte accuses Dussel of a tendency to set himself as the errorless Other, as against an evil oppressive system. In that line, philosophers identifying with the Others (the people) of that system become uncritically deified and ethically and "politically correct" in the name of "God," "liberation," and so on. Schutte goes beyond and says that the Other is used symbolically by Dussel as a "God-substitute." Paradoxically, the Others (the people) are also seen as weak and incapable of thinking by themselves and the experts assume the role of speaking for the Others (Barber). Dussel adopts an attitude of superiority over science, unlike well-known pioneers of liberation theology like Gutiérrez, according to Cerutti (1983).

In Kellner's view, the articulation between theory and practice is the most unsatisfactory part of Dussel's philosophy of liberation. Thus he is often scholastic and highly expository. Gutiérrez (1971) rejects the idea that theology is a systematic collection of timeless and culture-transcending truths that remains static for all generations. Rather, theology for him is in flux; it is a dynamic and ongoing exercise involving contemporary insights into knowledge, humanity, and history, coming mainly from the critical social sciences. In his thinking, praxis is the starting point for liberation theology. A "preunderstanding" of a preferential option for the poor is the very heart of liberation hermeneutics. The new political context in many parts of Latin America has led liberation theologians to talk about building a "participatory democracy" from within civil society (Rhodes, 1991). Therefore, a possible solution to the dilemma of teleology in the case of theology and praxis in the philosophy of liberation could be to assume that the oppressed must liberate themselves first, be open to criticism, avoid dogma, and incorporate the symmetrical communication and extended epistemology of PAR, as Martín-Baró has done in his proposal for constructing an emancipatory psychology. Fals-Borda (1998) quotes Girardi who stated that participatory methodology in his turn should be part of an alternative and liberating culture based on the propositions of commitment with social justice found in the theology of liberation to avoid the tendencies to co-opt PAR coming from institutions from the first world.

Participatory Action Research and Psychology of Liberation

The psychology of liberation set forth by Ignacio Martín-Baró complimented the cultural and popular psychology proposals of Jerome Bruner (1990). However, Ignacio Martín-Baró focused on the debate within social science about how to resolve the dilemmas of commitment and relevance through PAR. He had previously established that psychology must go beyond a scientist obsession with objectivity and instead focus on the urgent needs of the poor majorities in Latin America and find

new ways of (re) searching the truth from their own perspective. Thus he defined a new praxis for psychology linked to social transformation (Martín-Baró, 1986). Although he did have reservations about activism in research and the scarce production of PAR in psychology, Ignacio Martín-Baró was convinced that participatory research was the correct path for his proposal of a popular psychology and the proper alternative to the positivist, aseptic tradition that continues to dominate the training of Latin American psychologists today. One of the books he brought with him to Guadalajara in 1989 and that he recommended highly was the anthology by the sociologist Orlando Fals-Borda: *Conocimiento y Poder Popular* [Knowledge and Popular Power], in which Fals-Borda discusses experiences with PAR in Mexico, Nicaragua, and Colombia.

In this field, Ignacio Martín-Baró's vision has been borne out in practice, because PAR has been used extensively in various disciplines and applied to various problems. Much has happened since the first international symposium on PAR in Cartagena, Colombia, in 1977. At that time, the primary emphasis was on activism, about which Ignacio Martín-Baró had his reservations, and these reservations were borne out in subsequent critical evaluations (Martín-Baró, 1990a). Twenty years later, the international symposium on PAR was held once again in Cartagena, chaired by Orlando Fals-Borda and attended by 1,850 people from 61 countries. Fals-Borda then published a volume of symposium proceedings, *Participación Popular: retos del futuro* (*People's Participation: Challenges Ahead*), which appeared simultaneously in Spanish and English in 1998. It is interesting to compare the prologue of this book with that of the 1977 proceedings, because it allows us to see very clearly the changes and developments in the theory and the practice of PAR. There has not been any move to abandon PAR itself, although there have been changes in the dominant conceptualizations of activist commitment. There is no single interpretation of PAR concepts, it does not follow one line of thought, nor is it based on one unique and universal truth. PAR was presented as a new approach that was more critical and closer to reality, a new way of looking at things and, above all, a new way of listening. PAR has survived the collapse of the great theories to which it was linked, and it has survived alongside popular movements. Of course, we must recognize that there are other, more aseptic versions of PAR that are used in institutional, multinational environments. According to Fals-Borda (1998), participatory research combines an evaluative structure with a critical attitude toward the use of knowledge, the social context and cultural patterns in need of change, using varied methods based on a holistic approach. Participatory research is defined by him as a method both of study and of action with an altruistic philosophy of life aimed at improving collective situations. The participatory researcher must base his/her conclusions on living and sharing the community's experience when producing situated knowledge, while keeping alive the existentialcommitment to social change. If PAR is looking not only to explain but also to change situations, its holistic or extended epistemology refers to dialectic where *what is* can only be defined in the context of *what should be*.

Martín-Baró (1990a) discussed the international debate triggered by Gergen's (1973) argument that social psychology could only be a way of doing history. He said that this was quite obvious, if we assume that the human beings are essentially historic then, there is no other way of learning about them. On whether we should explain

or comprehend, Martín-Baró argues that comprehending – and even better, interpreting – is the best way of doing psychology. At an early stage then, Martín-Baró called for the kind of reflexivity and qualitative epistemologies that now form part of the core of critical social psychology. Martín-Baró again quotes Fals-Borda when he says that "science doesn't have an absolute value", science is, instead, a "valid knowledge useful for certain goals working with relative truths" put to the service of "those that produce and control it." Psychology in that sense must be rebuilt on the basis of the interests, suffering, and historical hopes of those majorities. Figure 1 is a summary of the proposal for a liberation psychology according to Martín-Baró (1990a).

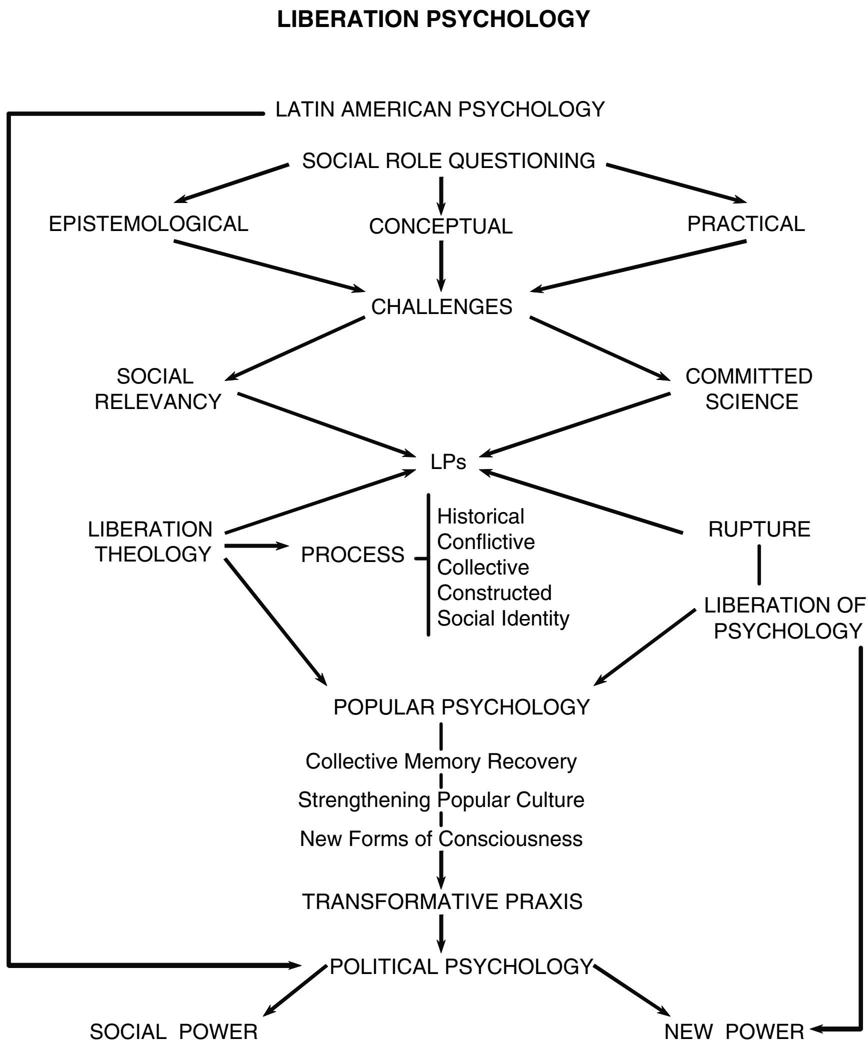

Fig. 1 Liberation Psychology (Based on Martín-Baró, 1989, 1990a)

According to his proposal (see Fig. 1), to develop a liberation psychology in Latin America demands, first, the epistemological challenge of the liberation of psychology itself to transform it into a committed science with social relevancy. He acknowledges that this proposal is inspired by the teachings of theology of liberation in its deep link with the Latin American reality of oppression. From here he goes to propose the configuration of a popular psychology with the aim of studying systematically all those aspects of the psychology of our peoples that could contribute to their historical liberation. This psychology implies the recovery of the historical memory of our people, along the same lines proposed by Fals-Borda's PAR. Second, psychology must recognize and strengthen the virtues of our peoples. Third, psychology would explore new forms of conscience in a transformative praxis of the social world. This must go beyond political parties in order to produce a political psychology, a psychology of social power and the development of a psychosocial identity for our peoples and a new power. In other words, we would see a popular psychology that could contribute to the historical liberation of our peoples.

Bombings, Killing, and the Peaceful Work of Ignacio Martín-Baró

Ignacio Martín-Baró wrote a letter to me in August, 1989. About 2 months after the June 22, 1989 bombing that largely destroyed the printing equipment at the Universidad Centroamericana (UCA) Press. He told me how costly the bombing had been because of the extensive damages in the print shop. However, he said: "we have moved forward and will continue to move forward. These attacks confirm that our activities at the university, which we have conducted peacefully, are challenging our oppressors at their very core." At the end of the letter he told me how he had used his own personal computer to complete the process of analyzing the data from the last opinion poll he had conducted. "Not bad, is it?" he remarked. He said, "We have moved forward," because since 1976 the paramilitary groups had set off bombs in the UCA library, print shop, and computer center, and in 1980 the Jesuit residence was machine-gunned and later raided four times, dynamited twice and bombed once again in 1983. All of these attacks took place prior to November 1989 when the military, frustrated by their inability to silence the Jesuits' voice, decided to literally "blow their brains out" to try to end their intellectual critical but peaceful work. Thus, did El Salvador's army dispose of the priests who had so obsessed "natural-born" killers such as Roberto D'Abuisson, a fanatical though mediocre soldier who was behind the death squads. These death squads were the only effective tool that the country's various security forces had been able to create in the name of what, ironically, was known as "military intelligence." Ignacio once told me, sarcastically, that D'Abuisson had tried to get into the UCA but had been unable to pass the entrance examination.

But what was it that turned peaceful people like Ignacio Martín-Baró into such fiercely persecuted enemies? In an environment of psychological warfare, the

media were key to winning the hearts and minds of the people through a partisan framework for presenting facts. This consisted of silencing public opinion and viewpoints through opinion polls, which were a way of presenting a particular ideological framework as something objective, as a truth constructed by the powers that be. When the UCA decided to create the Instituto Universitario de Opinión Pública University Institute of Public Opinion (IUDOP), it did more than simply create a source of truthful, valid, and reliable information. It also created a channel for Salvadorans to express what they felt without partisan filters or interference. In this way, the public opinion polls that the government had used to maintain the established order were refashioned into a tool to thwart official discourse, its lies and deceptions. Ignacio Martín-Baró saw the public opinion poll as a powerful tool in the confrontation of ideologies. He explains this concept in the first book that the IUDOP published in a series on Salvadoran public opinion, which he composed on his own computer in 1987, thanks to the technical support provided by a German foundation (Martín-Baró, 1987). It must be said that Ignacio was always up to date with all aspects of computer science (and in this he was ahead of his time and environment). That very knowledge enabled him to continue publishing despite the bombs and the attacks. When he was in Guadalajara, Mexico in 1989, he set aside time to contact computer companies, and he also sought donations and found people who would assist him with his academic projects. He was not satisfied with conventional wisdom. Moreover, he was open to innovation, and he had the capacity to integrate everything that would strengthen his critical work despite the polarized context of his adopted country.

Seventeen years after Ignacio Martín-Baró's senseless death, the example here does more than bear witness to a particular situation and validate his conceptual recommendations and methodologies concerning a professional practice applicable to our reality. It also shows us that his methods constitute a living school of thought, but one that must be brought up to date – and creatively so – on an ongoing basis. That is precisely what the International Congresses of Social Psychology of Liberation have been demonstrating since the first congress in Mexico in 1998 up to the eighth one in Santiago de Chile in November 2007. The content of these congresses demonstrate that it is not enough to repeat his words ritually, like gospel truth. Through the works of creative colleagues and through students who are educated actively and with a sense of "situation" – that is, students who are not simply passive recipients of information – the challenge left to us by the work of Ignacio Martín-Baró (1990b) remains alive. As Martín-Baró explained:

> It involves bringing to the task of psychology a clear consciousness of its political repercussions, as well as bringing a consciousness of the psychological dimension to the task of politics. We would say that it means creating a political consciousness for psychology and devising a psychology for political consciousness. The problems are vast, both in theory and in practicality, and we have barely begun to take the first steps. It is not easy to combine commitment with objectivity, to combine practical involvement with the necessary calm and critical distance for theoretical reflection. Beyond that, the need for an interdisciplinary approach is easier to propose than to carry out. And to make matters even more difficult, we know from experience that encouragement of this discipline can give rise to problems, at least for those who do not put it to the use of the established power structure. Psychology

> does not stipulate, nor does it try to contribute to, suitable solutions for the serious structural, group and individual problems that overwhelm most people. Still, it does have a contribution to make, however minimal. Whether we Latin American psychologists make this contribution depends, without a doubt, on the future of the discipline of psychology in our countries. Above all, the integrity of the liberation we achieve may hinge on that contribution, and, therefore, on the human quality of the collective word pronounced by our people. This constitutes not only a challenge, but also – and in a very primordial sense – a historic responsibility to psychology in Latin America (1990a, pp. 112–13).

Ignacio Martín-Baró was a visionary who traced out possible, situated routes and courses of action that – based on the deconstruction of mainstream psychology – could form a starting point for the creation of a critical social psychology which would be situated and emancipatory, thus following in the tradition of our own culture and history.

Conclusions

In Martín-Baró's vision, Latin American psychology must identify the virtues of the oppressed people and adopt a critical commitment, defined as identification with the oppressed, and at the same time, a necessary distance to examine with critical eyes the proposals emerging from their own praxis. If commitment demands participation, then the critical stance demands independent criteria. This critical stance implies an ongoing deideologization. It would be the equivalent of objectivity, and it consists both of dismantling the justifications, which mask historical reality, and of removing the rationalizations of everyday social life. This alternative perspective shows that all reason is situated. Thus, only partial perspectives and situated knowledge promises an objective vision.

In the case of Martín-Baró, he did not accept the position of observing from afar although he was conscious of the risks. He was not even doing action research, but rather practicing in a peaceful way his own situated definition of social psychology as a social science committed to the poor using the empirical tools at his disposal at that moment to unmask the repressive character of the government and to challenge the lies of the State through opinion polling. Social psychologists must abandon the notion of objectivity or of neutral value objectivity, but rather explore subjectivity in a reflexive and conscious manner.

The closeness of Martín-Baró's perspective with that of the theology of liberation is quite clear. A liberating theological reason is a critical reason, situated within the poor and excluded and speaking from their location because it is a tool for liberation. The concept of liberation in Ignacio Martín-Baró comes from this context not from the philosophy of liberation. He focused on the debate within social science about how to resolve the dilemmas of commitment and relevance through PAR. His main proposal is that for psychology to become a tool of liberation, it must first liberate itself from its own chains and configure a popular psychology based on the recovery of the historical memory and a political psychology of power of our peoples to contribute to the development of their conscious identity and historical liberation.

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Towards a Really Social Psychology: Liberation Psychology Beyond Latin America

Mark Burton and Carolyn Kagan

Introduction

In this chapter, we will explore the implications of the Liberation Psychology (LP) that developed in Latin America for psychological theory and praxis in what we call the Core Capitalist Countries (CCCs). To do this requires the identification of the key characteristics of those countries, of Latin American Liberation Psychology (LALP) itself, and of the main characteristics of already existing psychological alternatives in the CCCs. It is our view that psychologists in the CCCs can learn a great deal from the experience of LP and specifically from the example of its key originator, Ignacio Martín-Baró. We can use that learning in the development of a progressive applied social–political–psychological practice. However, our reading of LP is done from a perspective that is situated outside the Latin American cradle of LP (Burton, 2004a) and is peculiar to our own experience and outlook.

Nature of the CCCs

We use the term Core Capitalist Countries to describe Western Europe, Canada, the United States, Australia, New Zealand and Japan, countries that are at the centre of the globalised system for capital investment, extraction of wealth, accumulation and reinvestment. These countries share a number of features, none of which are unique to them, but which exist here in a uniquely concentrated form (Amin, 1997; Chossudovsky, 2004; Petras & Veltmeyer, 2001; Wallerstein, 1996). Similarly, there are significant differences among these countries, for example in the extent of State intervention, public policy and welfare provision, in the composition of capital and the style of capitalist enterprise and in the political and social movements and their traditions.

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Why Liberation Psychology is of Relevance for the CCCs

The characteristics of LALP are discussed at length in other chapters, however, it is worth briefly identifying what we see as the most relevant characteristics of LALP in relation to the project of learning from it, using and developing its ideas in the CCC context. We have previously identified three key reasons for its relevance to the CCC context (Burton & Kagan, 2005).

1. As a response to criticisms of traditional psychology:
   Much of the work that underpins LALP developed in response to the "crisis of social psychology" of the 1970s that was experienced in Britain and North America (Armistead, 1974; Parker, 1989), but also acutely in Latin America (Jiménez, 1990; Montero, 2000). It may be summarised in terms of five problems with empirical social psychology (de la Corte Ibañez, 2000; Parker, 1989, Strickland, Aboud, & Gergen, 1976):

   (a) *Its social irrelevance* – social psychology did not seem to be producing much practical knowledge that addressed social problems either in the societies in which it was being developed or elsewhere.
   (b) *A parochial context of discovery combined with pretensions of universal validity* – social psychology was over-dependent on studies of particular populations in artificial settings (especially undergraduate students in formal experiments), but it nevertheless suggested general social psychological principles that would apply to all people in all contexts.
   (c) *The imitation of scientific neutrality* meant a denial of the moral dimension – a supposedly value free position.
   (d) *A restricted repertoire of investigation* with a reliance on the parlour game like methods of experimental social psychology.
   (e) *A focus on the micro level and a related dominance of individualistic ideology* so that "social psychology" was in a real sense not social at all.

   However, the route taken by LALP in responding to such challenges differed from that in the CCCs, where much of the critical effort has remained within the academic community at a highly theoretical level, making little impact on psychological work in the field (Burton, 2004b). In the LALP movement on the other hand, there has been a focus on developing a psychology that is theoretically and practically adequate to the profound social problems of Latin America.

2. As a model for working with oppressed groups:
   LALP developed specifically in relation to the problem of the "popular majorities," the oppressed, socially marginalised, impoverished, excluded masses in Latin America. But in the "developed" economies too there are significant populations of people who are marginalised and oppressed on the basis of disability, age, ill health, nationality, appearance, gender, sexuality and poverty. Psychology as a whole has neglected this fact of exclusion; it hardly is making an entry into its formal literature (Kagan & Burton, 2004). The special conditions in Latin America, particularly the experience of state and paramilitary terror in many countries, also make LP a

valuable resource for our context, whether working with refugees fleeing persecution and torture, or trying to help rebuild fractured communities.

3. In the global context:
   Latin American psychologists working with a liberatory orientation tend to see themselves as part of a broader movement for social and economic justice. Key areas addressed in LALP include commitment, ideology, subjectivity and identity. These are fundamental to any collective action that mobilises people and especially that which emphasises unity in diversity. The recent mass mobilisation of people against new wars of imperial conquest, and the ongoing struggle to protect public services are two examples of resistance to the globalising neo-liberal phase of capitalist expansion for which a LP orientation could be a helpful resource.

Differences in Context

It is important to recognise that LP developed (as LALP) in a very different context to that of the core countries. The societies of Latin America are far from identical, but are all characterised to a greater or lesser extent by endemic poverty and exclusion often affecting the majority of the population. This is a result of both the dependent and neo-colonial nature of their economies (Galeano, 1998) and severe internal inequalities (Sánchez & Wiesenfeld, 1991). Intellectuals are often less integrated into the state's systems than in the CCCs and this has often allowed a certain freedom to develop autonomous approaches that do not serve the state or oligarchy (Jiménez, 1990). Latin American intellectual traditions in psychology and social science, while influenced by those from the English speaking world (especially North America) also differ, with a greater influence of European continental traditions (especially phenomenology, psychoanalysis, critical theory and Marxism and structuralism). However, as de la Torre (1995) demonstrates, dependency has been a powerful theme in the psychology of the region.

LALP should be understood as part of a broader intellectual and political movement that began in Latin America in the 1960s and continues with renewed vigour 40 years later. All of its currents have been concerned with rethinking and reconstructing particular disciplines (education, theology, psychology, sociology and philosophy) from the perspective of the poor, the excluded, marginalised or oppressed,[1] in large part doing this in a process of engagement and solidarity with these groups. The emphasis has been on the popular majorities of Latin America and the "two-thirds world" (see the chapter by Flores-Osorio for a detailed discussion of this wider project).

[1] These terms share a meaning but also have rather different resonances which will not be explored here, except to note that more recent writers have tended to prefer victims/victimiszation and the excluded/exclusion rather than use the broader categories of the poor or the oppressed.

The institutional and societal context for the development and application of contemporary psychology has obviously been different in the CCCs. After the second world war, there was a "post-war settlement" between capital and labour, which allowed the development of what has been called "welfare capitalism," where the State intervened in the economy both to support capitalist development, and to ameliorate its effects, through universal education and health care, welfare benefits and so on. This began to break down at the end of the 1960s as the falling rate of profit led to a reshaping of capitalist strategy in the form now called neoliberalism. The election of the Thatcher conservative government in Britain in 1979, in the context of a reaction by the forces of capital to advances by labour nationally and internationally, marked the advent of a selective neoliberal restructuring to reduce the ameliorative socially protective role of the State, to bring market mechanisms into the health, education and welfare systems, and to reduce the power of organised labour. Similar policies were enacted in all the advanced capitalist economies to varying extents, by conservative, Christian democrat, social democrat and socialist parties (sometimes even with the collaboration of communist or former communist coalition partners).

The impact of these changes was sufficiently softened by the presence of factors that often rendered radical change invisible and for many, painless. (1) the maintenance of a high level of relative affluence (in large part because of the exportation of exploitation); (2) the continuation of a residual welfare system; (3) the gradualness of the transformation that still continues and that focused initially on easy targets (e.g. organised sections of the workforce, public monopolies where state investment has been restricted and customer service poor).

Some other characteristics of these societies are also important. The system of liberal representative democracy has been in place from at least the end of the Second World War in most places, and from the mid-1970s in Spain and Portugal. It provides a cloak of legitimacy for the destructive social policies, in part sustained by the mixed nature of the State's policy complex, which generally includes some elements of positive reform. The manufacture and reproduction of consent is carried out through the educational system, the abundance of the capitalist system itself, the media and the all permeating dominant discourses of affluence, progress, democracy, responsibility, yet always with the possibility of coercion in the background. With exceptions on the peripheries (e.g. Australia's treatment of indigenous Australians, British and Spanish treatment of insurgent nationalists, the victimisation of the Roma, asylum seekers and refugees in most states) the populations of the CCCs have experienced nothing like the savagery of the State in so many Latin American countries (Agger & Buus Jensen, 1996; Hollander, 1997), although the altogether sharper regime of accumulation in the USA contrasts with that of Western Europe and Canada. Setting aside for a moment the distortion of humanity that capitalism imposes on everyone, the oppressed within the CCCs are typically minorities rather than majorities.

The experience of these regions then has been of the selective adoption of neoliberal models, but with continuing "no-go areas," the best example being the

British National Health Service, repeatedly altered, reformed, modernised, but despite the incursion of private finance and the contracting out of some services, it is only now in the New Labour third electoral term being fully submitted to the ravages of capital (Mandelstam, 2006; Pollock, 2004). As a result, the social welfare system is still large and contradictory – having both a benign, ameliorative, helpful side, as well as one that is all to do with reproducing the system and controlling the population (Gough, 1979). It is in that system that most psychologists work. Intellectuals and professionals in CCC societies therefore exist in a complex situation. They are integrated in complex ways with the system on which they depend upon for their livelihoods. To the extent that they align themselves with critical traditions these will be feminist, left liberal and socialist, and Marxist (the latter more in continental Europe than in Britain). This would seem to contrast with the USA where the integration with the State and society is also strong, but there is so little of a socialist and Marxist tradition, and with Latin America, where there are strong socialist and radical traditions, but much weaker integration with the State and its agenda (Jiménez, 1990).

The above, necessarily outline analysis of the differences in context between Latin America as source of LP and the CCCs as potential site of application, indicates that even if it did exist as a coherently transportable body of theory and practice, the concepts and methods of LALP could not be simply applied directly to the contexts of liberatory work in the CCCs. To do so might almost seem like repeating in reverse the error of uncritical borrowing and application that the LALPs have so thoroughly criticised. The difference of course is that the application of this "subaltern psychology" would be in the pursuit of social justice with those sections of the CCC population that are also most vulnerable to the effects of the capitalist–imperialist–patriarchal–ableist nexus. In order to try to carry out this task, we will present briefly what we take to be the most relevant aspects of LALP for the construction of a LP in the CCCs.

Key Elements of PL for the CCC context

In our previous attempts (Burton, 2004c; Burton & Kagan, 2005) to incite interest in LP among English speaking psychologists we identified five core elements of the approach. This list is neither meant to be exclusive nor wholly definitive, instead it represents our own reading and judgement, as to the aspects that when working together make LP so innovative, from a perspective outside Latin America. They are:

1. Conscientization
2. Realismo-critico and de-ideologisation
3. The social–societal orientation
4. The preferential option for the oppressed majorities
5. Methodological eclecticism

Conscientization

In his programmatic statement on LP, Martín-Baró (1986, 1996c) highlighted Freire's concept of the process of conscientization (there is not a better English translation) as a centrally important resource and it is almost inconceivable that there could be an extended discussion of LP where the idea was not featured. A key theme in LA liberation thought is that liberation has its origins in the interaction of two types of agents or activists, external catalytic agents (organic intellectuals, activists, committed professionals) and the oppressed groups themselves. A strategic alliance is proposed between these two sectors where conscientization is fundamental to both the relationship and the overcoming of the distinction between the two sets of actors. Martín-Baró (1986) explained *conscientization* as follows. The human being is transformed through changing his or her reality, by means of an active process of dialogue in which there is a gradual decoding of the world, as people grasp the mechanisms of oppression and dehumanisation. This opens up new possibilities for action where new knowledge of the surrounding reality leads to new self-understanding about the roots of what people are at present and what they could become. The conscientization concept has had some dissemination in the CCCs, especially in adult education contexts. Other examples of the process include the increase in confidence and self-understanding often experienced by activists in user (self-advocacy) or survivor movements through developing an understanding of the sources of their marginalisation and organising together to do something about it. As Martín-Baró and Montero have both stressed, ultimately this would imply the liberation of the oppressors too.

Conscientization then is a key concept in LP and in liberatory praxis more generally and we regard it as a necessary element for the development of a LP in the CCCs. We would even suggest that if there are social–psychological principles that have a wide cross-cultural application, then this is one, which seems to capture a basic truth about liberation with diverse groups who become self-aware and system-aware actors in diverse situations.

Realismo Crítico and De-ideologisation

Martín-Baró established a distinctive position on the role of *theory*, one that is broadly followed by those working within this paradigm: "It shouldn't be theories that define the problems of our situation, but rather the problems that demand, and so to speak, select, their own theorization" (Martín-Baró, 1998, p. 314).

Theory therefore has a supportive but not a fundamental role, as a kind of scaffolding to guide action. This orientation he called as *realismo-crítico* in contrast to the more usual approach which he called as *idealismo-metodológico* (methodological idealism). The obvious translation to *critical realism* would risk confusion with the work of Roy Bhaskar in the philosophy of science and social science (Bhaskar, 1997,

1998). C*ritical realism* in this sense, although not inconsistent with Martín-Baró's concept, has a distinct meaning and therefore the Spanish phrase is retained here.

However, *realismo-crítico* is not a naïve realism: the nature of the social reality can be difficult to apprehend, not just for the people, but for the theory and the practice of psychology itself. It is therefore necessary to de-ideologise reality, to peel off the layers of ideology (for Martín-Baró the disguised exercise of power) that individualise and naturalise phenomena such as the fatalism of Latin American societies (Martín-Baró, 1987, 1996a) or the individualism in the CCCs (Cromby et al., 2006; Moloney & Kelly, 2004).

The direction of travel sounds at first like that in Grounded Theory approaches to qualitative research (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), where theory is meticulously built up from the ground of information collected by the researcher. The differences are first in a dialectical relationship between reality and theory – for Martín-Baró there are certain meta-theoretical suppositions (for example the conflictive nature of society) that precede the elaboration of theory, and theory interacts through action with reality. Second, the theory has a role of de-ideologising reality – this is a critical thrust often missing from phenomenological orientations. We could see a parallel to *realismo-crítico* in Britain in the development of the social model of disability (Chappell, Goodley, & Lawthom, 2001) from the disabled people's movement: The theory was based on the real problems facing disabled people and served to counter an ideological account that conflated impairment with the experience of segregation (of which more later).

A Social–Societal Orientation

Throughout LALP, there is a thorough critique of the individualism found so strongly in North American (and indeed in British) psychology. Martín-Baró's two social psychology textbooks (Martín-Baró, 1983, 1989b) are perhaps the most sustained, thorough and engaged critique. This social or societal orientation is also historical, with a constant sense of how things got to be the way they are, and how this history is ever present in the subjectivity of the people. LALP practitioners have drawn on a variety of approaches: Marxism, psychoanalysis, Vygotskian theory, social representations and social constructionism. But the social orientation is not just a matter of theory: LALP is an *ethical* project (Montero, 2000a). The commitment after all is to liberation.

There are several aspects to this thoroughly social version of psychology. The recognition of the conflictive nature of society and the omnipresence of power is fundamental; there are distinct social interests that give rise to conflict. Power is to be understood not just on an interpersonal basis but in terms of its organisation in society. Conflict and power have both economic and ideological dimensions, the latter analysable using concepts from psychology. We will return to this point.

Taken directly from liberation theology is the *preferential option for the oppressed majorities* (Originally this was the "preferential option for the poor,"

Gutiérrez, 1997). Psychology had to give up its obsession with its internal problems and focus on serving the needs of the popular majorities: it was their real problems, not those that preoccupy people elsewhere that should be the primary object of Latin American psychologists' attention. As the fulfillment of their needs depends on their liberation from the social structures that keep them oppressed, then that had to focus the concern and effort of psychology (Martín-Baró, 1986). The perspective and knowledge of the oppressed both provides content to psychology and sets a criterion for the "practical truth" of psychology's offerings.

In the CCCs, the notion of the oppressed majority requires some development and reinterpretation. On first sight it might be said that there are oppressed minorities in the CCCs, but not majorities, but a more global orientation would contest this boundary around the CCCs. We can restate the issue as follows. There is a need to test psychology against the experiences of those whose lives are distorted by the accumulation process and its correlates – the excluded, the marginalised and the oppressed included (Dussel, 1997, 1998). But it is also important to recognise that those groups are diverse and fragmented. Disabled people in an urban suburb, migrant workers in a country town, "surplus" people in a poor neighbourhood, victims of domestic violence, Indonesian textile workers producing cheap clothing for a high street chain in the CCCs (and middle income countries), Iraqis and Palestinians bombed by weapons from the CCCs, or traditional farmers (for example in Mexico and India) impoverished and displaced by cheap grain imports from the US: all these are part of the oppressed majority that are the proper focus of engagement for a globally literate LP practised *from* the CCCs (Sloan, 2005).

Methodological Eclecticism

In LALP traditional techniques (e.g. surveys, use of official statistics, content analyses) are combined with "new paradigm" approaches (e.g. social representations, use of interviews and testimonies, collaborative photography, textual analysis and drama), as well as "ideology critique" that draws on both Foucauldian and Marxian approaches. There is, however, an emphasis on both the Freirean commitment to reflection–action–reflection (Freire, 1972), and to participatory action research (Fals Borda, 1988; Fals Borda & Rahman, 1991; see also Montero, 1998a, 2000). This seems to contrast with much of the critical psychology practised in Europe, especially that which relies on textual criticism, in that LP seems more open to the use of methods that stem from diverse paradigms (methods that also exist in the CCCs: Reason & Rowan, 1981; Reason & Bradbury, 2001). Perhaps this is because the pressing social problems require a methodological pragmatism where the eclectic use of different methods is less problematic than in more theory driven contexts, and the commitment to and engagement with the oppressed prevents isolation in an academic purism.

LP in the CCCs, Some Emerging Examples and Some Gaps

In this section, we will explore briefly three areas of work that are most consistent with LP, and which in effect could be relabeled as LP from within the belly of the imperialist beast – LP for the CCCs. These are community social psychology, social model approaches in disability and mental health, and emerging critical work on social policy and State security. For the purposes of illustration we will predominantly use examples from our own work and that of associates, but this is not to suggest that there is no other similar work being done elsewhere in the CCCs. Far from it, to review work with an anti-oppressive orientation being done in the diverse contexts of the CCCs would require a separate chapter at least.

Community Social Psychology

Community social psychology appears elsewhere in this book, in its Latin American context. Here we are concerned with what can be identified as a family of approaches to community psychology, sometimes known as "Critical Community Psychology," that may be contrasted with the dominant tendencies of North American Community Psychology (Burton, 2004b). These approaches are to be found in continental Europe, Britain, Australasia, South Africa as well as in Latin America (Reich, Riemer, Prilleltensky, & Montero, 2007). In these countries, as in Latin America (Montero, 1996), community psychologists are keen to distinguish their orientation from that which has developed in North America. The emphasis varies, with Australasian and South African community psychologists emphasising the indigenous perspective and the complicity of mainstream psychology in racial injustice (Bishop, Sonn, Fisher, & Drew, 2001; Seedat, Duncan, & Lazarus, 2001; Sonn & Green, 2006) although other roots are shared. European community psychology is diverse, and the differences of language make co-operation relatively difficult. However, the attempt to set out and practice a distinctively European community psychology is a common feature with emphasis on structural social system analysis, on collective social forms and struggle, on cultural diversity, and on methodologies that emphasise phenomenological understandings of social psychological experience (Francescato & Tomai, 2001; Fryer & Fagan, 2003; Kagan, 2002; Kagan, Evans, et al., 2004). Not everyone within the networks would adhere to such a critical orientation, however. To these may be added approaches in North America, especially those that have focussed on work with populations who owe their presence to past and present imperialisms (African US-Americans, Latinos) and native North Americans (Perilla, 1999; Van Uchelen, Davidson, Quressette, Brasfield, & Demerais, 1997; Watts, Williams, & Jagers, 2003) or who are otherwise disadvantaged within the territory of the dominant economic world power. Two recent text books of Community Psychology (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2004; Seedat et al.) both utilise explicitly critical and emancipatory frameworks. Both have roots

outside the USA, the former in Canada and Australia with contributors from a variety of countries and the latter in South Africa (not a CCC in itself, although there are contributions from Australia and the USA).

An example of work from our group of community social psychologists in Manchester will perhaps illustrate the distinctive nature of some of this community social psychology/critical community psychology. Over a period of 10 years what can (in hindsight) be described as an action and research programme on multiple deprivation has been going on (Boneham, Goldring, & Sixsmith, 2003; Boneham & Sixsmith, 2006; Burton & Kagan, 1996; Kagan, 2000; Kagan & Burton, 2004; Kagan, Castile, & Stewart, 2005; Kagan, Evans, et al., 2004; Kagan & Siddiquee, 2006). There have been a number of strands:

- Understanding people's situation through studies on witness support, first hand testimonies of "living poverty," and empirical and conceptual research on the nature of participation, involvement and activism.
- Evaluation and analysis of particular programmes and their impact on people and their environment including neighbourhood nuisance, policing, support for elders, arts interventions.
- Work with particular groups on understanding their situation and taking different kinds of action
- Work with professionals and development managers to improve understanding of the situation and to change practices.
- Support to local people in undertaking their own research and capacity building for evaluation in local groups and projects.
- Harnessing of university resources to promote work on things that matter to people and groups from these areas.

Taken together this work crosses a number of levels (micro, meso and macro), foci (policy, research and practice) and domains (crime and disorder, neighbourhood regeneration, health and mental health and community organising). In so doing it cumulatively builds up a systematic approach to the understanding of multiple deprivation in relation to (a) its structural and cultural dimensions, (b) the lived experience of the affected (whose identity is centre stage) (Edge, Stewart, & Kagan, 2004), (c) the "official" policies and interventions on offer (in their positive and negative aspects), and (d) the dynamic relations among these sectors. To do this required a diverse repertoire of personal, professional and political skills backed by a methodological pluralism engaged with workers from other disciplines and from none. It meets our definition of LP in that it involves conscientization with our project partners, its construction of theory is led by engagement with practical social problems ("realismo-critico") and the work involves "de-ideologisation" of the "official story" about multiple deprivation and the policy and practice solutions on offer. The orientation is social–societal while not losing sight of the lived experience of the affected, the oppressed victims of the political economy of this CCC for whom we maintain a preferential option, and as noted above we adopt a methodological eclecticism that goes well beyond the qualitative–quantitative debates in psychology (Burton & Kagan, 1998), adding a utopian and systemic dimension to

action research while adopting methods and concepts from other disciplines (Burton & Kagan, 2000; Kagan, 2007, Kagan & Burton, 2000; Kagan, Burton, & Siddiquee, 2008; Kagan, Caton, Amin, & Choudry, 2004, Kagan, 2006).

"Social Model" Approaches in Disability and Mental Health

Exclusion and oppression is a recurrent experience of people who are disabled. Moreover, traditional medical and psychological approaches have tended to emphasise individuals' impairments as both synonymous with and causative of their disablement. In contrast, an approach from the standpoint of disabled civil rights activists (Finkelstein & French, 1998; Oliver, 1990) has argued that disability is a socially defined experience, where the experience of not being able to participate in community life and have control over key aspects of ones life is a result of the particular social arrangements in society. These activist theorists have articulated this account by drawing on explicit political analyses including Marxism. This broad approach has become known in the UK (Shakespeare & Watson, 1997) and elsewhere, (Aramayo, 2005; Rapley, 2004) as the social model of disability. Given the critique of individualising psychologies that tend to "victim blame" there is an obvious connection between LP and the cause of disabled people's emancipation (Burton et al., 2001).

Work of ourselves and colleagues (Burton et al., 2001; Burton, 2002; Burton & Kagan, 1995; Burton & Kellaway, 1998; Chappell et al., 2001; Goldbart & Sen, 2005; Heaton, Kagan, & Lewis, 2001; Kagan, 1993; Kagan, Lawthom, Duckett, & Burton, 2006; Sixsmith & Sixsmith, 2001; Starling, Willis, Dracup, Burton, & Pratt, 2006) has combined analytic and conceptual work on the nature of oppression and exclusion of people who are disabled as a result of intellectual impairment, with empirical and action orientated work to investigate specific aspects of the way in which social arrangements disable people and to make changes and evaluate. As an overall organising framework our approach has been what we call "prefigurative action research," that is, an approach that adds to action research an ethical horizon, simultaneously learning about how to move towards better social arrangements (exploring both necessary actions and the forces that oppose them) and about what such a "better" would mean (Kagan & Burton, 2000). This "project" has close connections with community social psychology (Goodley & Lawthom, 2005), and we have sketched an agenda for this work (Kagan & Burton, 2005) (see Table 1).

A similar orientation has been evident in liberatory work in the field of mental health. An example is the work of critical psychologists in Britain with the movement of survivors of mental health services (see Parker, 2006). Professionals who want to practice in non-oppressive ways are keen to understand the experience of those who have been subject to the mental health service system, indeed some professionals are themselves survivors of the system. In the UK, for example there is a network of activists connected with *Asylum*, the magazine for democratic psychiatry. It consists of survivors and users as well as professionals and activists based

Table 1 Community psychological work with people with learning difficulties

Strategy for intervention	Content and method
Furtherance of critical consciousness	Working to develop dialogical relationships, which enable group conscientization, and possibilities for change? Sharing "expert" voices and remaining open to learning. Understanding experience from the person's point of view, listening and enabling people to get together to share common concerns and solution. For example, health awareness groups, citizen, and self-advocacy. Education, hobby, and leisure opportunities and participation in local campaigns (for example, to keep post offices open) and organisations such as civic societies
Creation of new forms of social relations (new social settings)	Facilitating the bringing together of people with common interests, and their allies, and helping them connect with others for greater power to change. For example self-advocacy groups, linking these to other local civil rights organisations, transport lobby groups, and neighbourhood groups. Developing new projects which seek to include people with learning difficulties and other people, such as residents' associations, park users' groups, walking or fitness groups, arts projects
Development of alliances and counter systems	Working to develop alliances that will challenge the status quo, build a counter system and form part of wider emancipatory social movements. For example, facilitating links between user groups and local women's groups; combining pressure for better continence services with environmental campaigns around personal hygiene products; enabling people with learning difficulties to make links with other groups of marginalised people through the Internet; linking with local campaigns and information projects around unemployment and contributing to national and international movements on labour conditions

Kagan and Burton (2005), p. 34

on universities or outside the formal service system. *Asylum* makes an explicit connection with the political sphere, which is seen as intimately connected with the mental health system. The magazine is closely linked with the network, *Psychology, Politics Resistance*. It is chiefly concerned with opposition to the orthodox psychiatric system, with particular emphases on electroconvulsive treatment, the domination of practice by the drug companies and the powers of the State over people with mental health problems. An important emphasis of those within these movements is on recovery from mental disorder/illness. That this is scarcely mentioned in orthodox mental health praxis is noteworthy. However, a crucial further distinction is made between medical and social definitions of recovery. This latter case mirrors the praxis of the disabled people's movement and the social model of disability: the

emphasis is on social change to accept, include and adapt to people with unusual mental health, rather than expecting conformity from them. In this context, the Hearing Voices Network is worthy of note for its work to demonstrate that the experience of auditory hallucinations is a common one rather than inevitably pathological, while offering practical support and alternative strategies for those troubled by their voices.

These social approaches to disability and mental health again share elements in common with LP, including conscientisation and de-ideologisation along with the preferential option for the oppressed and a social–societal orientation.

Critical Policy Studies

A further area of work that could be identified with LP is an emerging field of critical policy studies carried out by psychologists. While mainstream psychology has from time to time identified public policy as a legitimate field for psychologists to contribute to (Keisler, 1980) and psychologists have shaped public policy almost since the birth of the discipline (Danziger, 1990; Rose, 1985), in these critical studies psychologists work to de-ideologise (Martín-Baró, 1985, 1996b; Sloan, 1993) official statements and formulations of policy, as well as implicit and covert policies and aspects of policy. This work has ranged from social policy to State security.

A variety of work has been conducted on all areas of social policy. Some works, for example on mental health law reform in UK has focussed on the rights of the psychologically disordered and the dangers of new forms of social control. A surprisingly small body of work by psychologists has critically examined aspects of social policy in relation to neoliberal "public sector reform." In the former case, the issues are perhaps more obviously "psychological," since they affect the individual who has mental health problems, their civil rights and the relationship with professionals. This latter aspect poses the problem of the dual role of professionals in the Welfare State, both as agents of assistance/amelioration and as agents of social control. Without a structurally informed understanding of the professions in the societal processes of production and reproduction (Corrigan & Leonard, 1978; Therborn, 1980), however, this work is likely to remain fundamentally ameliorative/defensive, rather than transformative/assertive.

In the latter case, the policy analytic work by those with a nominally psychological identity or affiliation can be similar to those from those other disciplines that at least in the UK dominate the field. However, we would argue that it is legitimate to conduct an analysis that connects three things (1) the "bigger picture" of ruling class accumulation strategies (political economy in neoliberal times), (2) the management of those social sectors whose neediness challenges the market economy, whose presence is inconvenient, or whose behaviour challenges the social order, (the terrain of social policy) and (3) the experience, aspirations, characteristics and needs of the affected (the more traditionally psychological area of focus). This is what we have been attempting in our own critical work on social policy for intellectually disabled

people, urban regeneration and crime and disorder (Burton and Kagan, 2006; Burton and Kagan in submission).

We turn now to critical policy analyses in relation to the authoritarian and violent aspects of the State. Here psychologists have been active over several decades. Thompson (1985) working with a number of contributors, produced a small book on the psychological aspects of nuclear war. The book was notable in being sponsored by the British Psychological Society and adopted as a Statement by its General Council on 13 October, 1984. The book reviewed (a) likely psychological reactions in the event of a nuclear attack, (b) problems of human fallibility in making decisions under crisis conditions, and (c) the psychology of negotiation and conflict resolution. While eschewing a stance on the morality of nuclear war as a policy option the cumulative effect of the book's content was such that the reader could have no doubt that nuclear defence as a policy was no less than a total folly. As such it had the important effect, in the context of an unprecedented social mobilisation against nuclear weapons (especially the deployment in the UK of US cruise missiles), of adding to the unmasking of the faulty assumptions of government policy. That is to say it was a work of de-ideologisation.

Over a period of some 35 years, psychologists have conducted analyses and exposés of the use of psychological methods by State security. This work of course has a close affinity with that of the LALP movement for which the themes of torture and political violence have been of great importance (Agger & Buus Jensen, 1996; Hollander, 1997; Lira & Castillo, 1991; Lira & Weinstein, 1990; Martín-Baró, 1988, 1990). One area of concern has been the use of psychology in coercive interrogation and torture. In the UK a group of members of the British Society for Social Responsibility in Science (BSSRS, 1974) exposed the interrogation techniques being used by the British for republicans in Northern Ireland who had been imprisoned without trial. The techniques used built on the sensory deprivation experiments at McGill University in Canada that had received interest and probably funding from the CIA (McCoy, 2006; Watson, 1978). The link was made by Tim Shallice, an academic neuropsychologist in an article in the journal *Cognition* (Shallice, 1974), but the use of the techniques and their consequences was made known through the BSSRS pamphlet and subsequently through other publications (Ackroyd, Margolis, Rosenhead, & Shallice, 1977, by the group that produced the BSSRS pamphlet; McGuffin, 1974, a book that was banned by the British government). The techniques, although later banned by the British government were nevertheless to be used elsewhere, most recently at US occupied Guantánamo Bay and Abu Ghraib (Harper, 2004; McCoy; Physicians for Human Rights, 2005), despite their censure by mainstream medical opinion (Rubinstein, Pross, Davidoff, & Iacopino, 2005) and by the United Nations (United Nations, 1985). The scandal of psychologists participating in interrogation at Guantánamo has led to a debate on both sides of the Atlantic, with the craven position of the APA leadership coming under attack (Anderson, 2006; Psychologists for Social Responsibility, 2006a, 2006b; Soldz, 2006a, 2006b). Moreover, the institutional links between orthodox psychology and the military industrial complex have also been explored (Burton & Kagan, 2007; Gray & Zielinski, 2006, Roberts, 2007).

Another body of work should be noted, that has emerged in post-colonial or newly CCC context of the Republic of Ireland. This has been orientated to the understanding of power differentials within a broad appreciation of the societal dynamics of power and the construction of the person, articulating the relationship between systems of oppression and psychological patterns. It has made explicit reference to the work of Martín-Baró among others, emphasising the importance of internalised oppression (Madden & Moane, 2006; Moane, 1999; Ruth, 2006).

On the basis of the above areas we would want to assert that a kind of LP already exists in the CCCs. Its concerns overlap with that of LALP, but inevitably there are different emphases. It is rarely self-defined as LP, and its effort is somewhat fragmented, with the critical and liberatory effort split between groupings, networks and individuals that tend to have little interaction (Burton, 2004b), although there are exceptions (Parker, 2006).

A Really Social Psychology?

The implicit question posed in this chapter has been "can there be a liberation psychology for the CCCs?". We prefer to pose a different question that does, however, suggest a qualified "yes." The alternative question is "what would be the characteristics of an adequate psychology that avoids the errors of individualism, relativism, value freedom and parochialism?" and our tentative answer is that it would be what we call a "really social psychology."

Psychology in general has often put social and economic factors beyond its disciplinary boundary, preferring instead to look to intra-psychic explanations. A minority has always worked in other ways but such approaches have always been outside the mainstream individualistic approach. In keeping with that minority view we see the human being as becoming who and what they are through the process of interacting in a socially organised and socially defined world. This is not to deny the bodily reality of humans as a kind of great ape with brains, eyes, ears, hands and so on, but to suggest that the nature of our species is such that we are pre-prepared to enter into a social milieu, *and* that in doing so we become what is distinctively human, and our psychology, including our most private and personal experiences (Burton & Kagan, 1994), is rooted in, dependent on and structured by this. But these social relations are not just a matter of interactions between people, or even groups (Bhaskar, 1998; Danermark, Ekström, Jakobsen, & Karlsson, 2002). This is where psychologists have had most difficulty understanding the nature of the social, and in trying to articulate a social approach that is distinct from individualism. We have to understand how the social system is structured and how it works, how social phenomena that exist at a level of analysis beyond the interpersonal nevertheless enter into the construction and functioning of human actors, their ideas, desires, prejudices, feelings, preferences, habits, customs and culture (Burton and Kagan; Leonard, 1984).

The really social approach has another key feature. It has an explicit value base which it takes to be an integral part of itself. Unlike the traditional model of "positivist" or "empiricist" social science that maintains a clear line between facts and values, we see facts as value laden, as human situations inconceivable without values and value conflict (along with conflict of needs and interests) as inherent in the kind of social world in which we live. That social world is an unfair one. It is one founded on exploitation, on inequality, on oppression, and on the hiding of this from much day to day consideration. Just as Marx showed how the theft of labour from the worker was inherent (but hidden) in the commodity that was sold by the capitalist, and in the profit made, so it has also been shown that the actions of our governments and the corporations that govern our world are based on maximising the extraction of wealth to continually make profit that fuels the perpetuation of the system and extraction from countries and populations (nations, classes, genders) at their expense. Organised myths and propaganda disguise this (Carey, 1997) and also allow the system to perpetuate itself through education and other forms of socialisation (in families, shops, churches and so on). Those processes of economic, cultural and ideological domination are the real stuff of psychology, and a really social approach does its best to understand how they operate through people, both as separate and collective subjects.

A Really Social Psychology then has the following characteristics:

1. A value base of liberation, wellness, equality and empowerment.
2. An epistemology (theory of knowledge) whereby knowledge is socially negotiated and contextually understood – co-constructed and from the perspective of the affected.
3. An ontology (theory of how the world is) that assumes a material world, that although socially made and saturated with ideology is real, and in which people hurt, feel and struggle.
4. An ambition that is about the transformation of this world and the lives of the people in it, but also about supporting and being with the affected as they work on transformation. Social transformation is a co-operative project that cannot be given to people, although the psychologist can be helpful in that project.
5. A structural–historical understanding of the society in which people live and of how people are formed, reproducing and transforming that society as they live their lives under asymmetrical conditions of power and wealth.
6. A method that is eclectic in the sense of *bricolage* or DIY – using whatever tool is available to do the best job. It is sceptical about a lot of psychological "expertise" but it does not throw it away, instead raiding it as a resource (along with others from outside psychology).

Really Social Psychology, then, draws on and extends LP. It learns from its example but it also has a broader scope, both in terms of its conceptual basis and its terrain of application. We regard it as a generative approach that can guide the development of an adequate psychology, one that is realist, thoroughly (really) social in construction and relevant to real social contexts and problems, offering a unifying framework that while escaping the error of relativism (through its realist ontology

and explicit moral project) does not dictate nor homogenise the ways of doing psychology in different contexts.

However, Really Social Psychology is constantly eroded as a distinct discipline since the disciplinary boundaries of psychology are enforced by a whole set of institutional factors (professional organisations, publications, the research evaluations, etc.). The alternative is interdisciplinary/transdisciplinary working (Kagan, 2007), and perhaps this is where liberatory psychologists should be focusing their efforts to better use their limited weight in national and world contexts where there is rather a lot to do.

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Methods for Liberation: Critical Consciousness in Action

Maritza Montero

Many Latin American psychologists have chosen social transformation as the main goal for the field of social psychology in its community and political branches. Doing psychology for social transformation means that, whatever the object of psychology as a science is – be it the study of the psyche; of individual or collective behavior; of ideology; of language or verbal behavior; of the so-called cognitive mediating processes; of emotion and motivation; and so on – it will always be at the service of social transformation. Social transformation in this context refers to changes in the dominant structural and cultural institutions of a society seeking more equitable and sustainable social arrangements that satisfy the basic needs of all people. It also is an endless cause as every transformation carries within it the germ of new ones, because there is no such a thing as a perfect society. In this context, social transformation is understood as a result of processes initiated by those who are oppressed by the dominant social structures and cultural narratives of a society. Chief among the forces behind social transformations are the processes of conscientization and problematization.

Conscientization, Problematization, and the Dynamic Character of Liberation

Psychologists wanting to produce social transformations have discovered, as other social researchers have done before, that consciousness is involved in the process. Freire (1973/1964) and Vieira Pinto (1964) created the concept of conscientization, a process necessary to generate social changes, carried out by the people who should benefit from the changes. Conscientization has been defined as a mobilization of consciousness aiming to produce historic knowledge about oneself and about the

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groups to which one belongs, thereby producing a different understanding, and giving sense to one's temporal and spatial place in the society, and in one's specific life-world.[1] Conscientization develops critical capacity allowing consciousness to be liberated from the dominant conceptions given by society, and by people's life-worlds, responding to interests' alien to one's living conditions. It is not restricted to cognitive aspects for it also mobilizes emotion in order to attain awareness about the circumstances influencing one's living conditions.

Methods directly related to conscientization, specifically generated to produce that process are difficult to find, if nonexistent. Usually, conscientization is approached by way of programs or actions directed to transform everyday life situations and specific problems present in them. There are not directions to be followed, techniques to be employed according to manuals, or carefully developed and tested directions. These may be useless because underlying that sort of methodology is the conception of conscientization as a unitary process.

The mode of community psychology and of critical psychology developed in many Latin American countries, and the psychology of liberation (or social psychology of liberation as it is also called), have openly manifested social transformation as their ultimate goal. But what is not so clear is the way in which that goal is to be obtained, for so far, there are no methods explicitly formulated with that task in mind. In the many papers presented in the International Conferences of Social Psychology of Liberation that have been held since 1998 in several Latin American countries, a good number of them make use of participatory action research (PAR) and social psychology methods employed with a liberating sense and direction. What predominates in them is:

1. *PAR and other participatory methods*. This is easily explained by the fact that incorporating the participation of the people suffering adverse social conditions, being in need or excluded from social benefits, constitutes a source of transformation not only regarding that very situation upon which they act, but also for them as active participants. Community psychology is full of examples illustrating this point (Montero, 1994a, 1994b, 2006; Rodríguez Gabarrón & Hernández Landa, 1994; Santiago, Serrano-García, & Perfecto, 1992).
2. *Biographical methods (life histories and narratives; autobiographies, field notes)*. This approach also places both the researchers and the people whose lives are researched in a relationship of coparticipation and collaboration. It allows a form of historic recuperation obtained by way of a critical reflection revealing the meanings and relations hidden by the censorship of forgetfulness or oblivion that protected the people from sorrowful memories of painful facts thereby impeding them from confronting those events. Consciousness in these methods is expressed through the critical analyses and subsequent understanding

[1] Concept introduced by A. Schutz and T. Luckmann (1973). Life-world (*lebenswelt)* is understood as the ambit of reality which a normal conscientious person considers as part of common sense and where she or he can influence and be influenced by others. It includes those objects and events in one's psychologically immediate environment.

that go along with the memories brought back. Used with a liberating sense, these methods open the gates of remembrances allowing the critical acknowledgment of those facts, recognizing oneself as a main actor; as a victim or as the responsible person; as excluded or as the excluding one, and with that knowledge begin the transformation of modes of relation, of identification, of action, and of being; and simultaneously transforming one's environment.

Methods directly related to conscientization, specifically generated to produce that process, are difficult to find, if nonexistent. Usually, conscientization is approached by way of programs or actions directed to transform everyday life situations and specific problems present in them. There are not directions to be followed and techniques to be employed according to manuals and carefully developed and tested directions. These may be useless because underlying that sort of methodology is the conception of the universal character of the phenomena to be intervened or manipulated in order to correct or extinguish them.

However, there are some general principles derived from practice developed by Paulo Freire (1970): A sequence of actions and reflections, through dialog, about those actions (action–reflection–action). Social transformation and consciousness of its effects, as well as the construction of meaning for what was transformed and what has been made, have its base in doing and reflecting about that. This is praxis.[2] So, this praxis-based approach to transformation is neither totally abstract nor totally empirical, but the union of both sources changes. It is practice within the social conditions to be changed, and reflection is used to problematize these social conditions, a process that produces deideologizing and dealienating by way of a process of critical reasoning leading to a new way of understanding what is happening in the life-world. Deideologization is, then, the conscious construction and reconstruction of an understanding of the world one lives in, and of one's living circumstances, as part of a totality (Montero, 1994, 2004). Dealienation is understood as the process through which the relation between consciousness and the historical and social living conditions of a person and her or his role in them are established, so that person is aware of that relation.

Problematization erodes the foundations of certain beliefs and habits, and there could not be a change in consciousness if that first step, if that attitude is not generated in people. Otherwise, we would be dealing with an uncritical acceptance of ideologies, or what has been called indoctrination. Liberation then has a dynamic character and starts with problematization, that is, the critical and puzzling doubting about the knowledge so far considered as the way for things to be.

Because there is very little guidance with regard to methodologies that promote social transformation, in this chapter I present some methods which currently are very popular in liberation psychology, and then, devote the better part of this paper to problematization and a discussion of the possibility of following a systematic path for something which is not controlled or under the absolute direction of psychologists or other external agents

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[2]Practice informing theory and theory generating practice.

Participatory Methods and Liberation

Participation is basic for liberation. As the Freire quotation in the chapter "Introduction" implies, liberation is not something someone possesses and grants, lends, or bestows to some other people. Liberation is collectively and individually built, obtained, and won. That is the reason for participation to be a *sine qua non* condition, and it explains why liberation psychology has adopted and employs participatory methods.

Those methods generally used in anthropology and in some sociological research, have been present in psychology, but not exempt of certain distrust due to their qualitative nature. This began to change some 30 years ago, and in Latin America, as far as the end of the 1950s, when critical sociology studies were carried out by Orlando Fals Borda and other sociologists, members of the La Rosca group in Colombia, who began to create what is known today as PAR. The idea of action research came from a posthumous paper by Kurt Lewin published in the *Journal of Social Issues* (Lewin, 1946), where he coined the idea of action research. But what those sociologists did was different: They included the so-called research subjects in the decisions and actions concerning the research tasks; hence, the term "participatory." This way to research, and as a result to produce transformations, did not have a name for13 years (1957–1970). Fals Borda (1959) simply called it action research, in spite of *participation* being its main feature. So it was not until the 1970s (Fals Borda, 1978) that there was recognition that sociologists, anthropologists, and Freirian educators throughout Latin America were engaging in a different kind of method.

Participatory action research (PAR) is:

> a methodological process and strategy actively incorporating those people and groups affected by a problem, in such a way that they become co-researchers through their action in the different phases and moments of the research carried out to solve the problem. Their participation places the locus of power and of control within their groups (Montero, 1980, 1984), mobilises their resources, leads them to acquire new ones, in order to transform their living conditions, their immediate environment and the power relations established with other groups or institutions in their society (Montero, 2000, p. 134).

An important characteristic of participatory methods fostering liberation is related to the role power plays within its goals. Participation empowers the people, and as is the case of PAR, it is also directed to their conscientization. As liberating methods, participatory modes of research may then include the main process leading to liberation. In the case of PAR, its emancipative character is evidenced in its capacity to empower participants, strengthening their resources and developing their ability to acquire new resources and redefine themselves as able citizens with rights and duties, and the capacity to defend their achievements and demand what is due to them. And it is also a democratizing instrument, as this type of collective action and reflection strengthens civil society.

Discursive Aspects of Liberation Methods

If participation is the cornerstone for methods developed in community-oriented work with a liberating aim, dialog is its complementing aspect. It introduces polyphony as the multiple voices of the participants are heard and responded to. Again, this owes its introduction to Paulo Freire, who also insisted in incorporating the people's knowledge, and its divulgation to Fals Borda and critical sociology. Psychology, specifically in its community branch, adopted it around the mid-1970s, and it was embraced by the psychology of liberation from its beginning in 1986. In community psychology, much of which has been carried out with a liberating sense, professional and scientific expertise is added to the participants' expertise about their culture, their lives, and their community know-how; thus giving way to new forms of knowledge.

Dialog means a relationship between researchers and external agents in general, and people (internal agents of change as they are called by community psychology) engaged in transformation programs, expressed by horizontal communication carried out in discussions, opinions, debates, and collective and individual reflection. Aspects provided by discourse and conversation analysis, deconstruction of discourses, and understanding of rhetoric and its discursive strategies are needed in collective discussion, not for the better manipulation of groups, but in order to reveal their meaning-creating ways and to introduce their effects into the discussions. And if this sounds very sophisticated, it is not. Rhetoric is used everyday by all kinds of people, even if they do not know the names of the figures and tropes they are using. We all unknowingly use rhetoric in our daily lives. And we all are able to discuss its effects and its modes of generating sense. The role of the psychologist is to reveal the discursive mechanisms being used in order to defend, hide, show, or create interest during conversations.

Critique and Liberation Methods

Participation and dialog during action and reflection in equal conditions of expression are complemented by critique. Critical modes of carrying out transformative research were already being used in social sciences since the 1960s (Albó & Barrios, 1978; Barreiro, 1974/1986; Demo, 1985; Freire, 1973/1964; Parra, Hoyod, Roux, & Jaramillo, 1978; Rodríguez Brandao, 1981, 1987; Vio Grossi, 1981). Critical in the context of liberation means the capacity to discuss, conscientiously dissenting or agreeing, in such a way that a situation or piece of knowledge is restructured according to the results of comparing, contrasting, and analyzing a variety of viewpoints coming from the discussants. It can also lead to radically change the way of considering and understanding things, relations, and events in our life.

Critique is not good or bad in itself, it is just part of the complexity of the world we live in, a reminder that social phenomena and events in daily life can have more than one definition; more than one interpretation, and that there is a reason behind every one of them (Montero & Fernández Christlieb, 2003). But critique is always disturbing and irritating, in the sense that it stirs, ruffles, and agitates the still (and deep) waters of quotidian life. It disturbs the apparently peaceful kingdom of certainties. That is its task, and that is why the psychology of liberation includes critical methods; because in order to transform many things it has to move into the first place, consciousness. Critique then is an important tool for conscientization and for the processes leading to it, including problematization which is methodologically and epistemologically discussed in this chapter.

Consciousness in Action

The conscientization process begins with the people's participation and the discussion–reflection which is part of the sequence action–reflection–action (in organized community groups or in other forms of gathering). This supposes a variety of ways to problematize naturalized modes of understanding and interpreting daily life and events happening within it. Problematization is a way to challenge accepted explanations for those phenomena that have been assumed as normal and logical in daily life, but which make people's lives difficult; even painful, unfair, and hard. Therefore, problematizing leads to a subprocess of denaturalizing what has been defined and imposed as the natural way for things to be. It is the consideration of something created according to certain specific interests, as if it were essential. This entails breaking some habits deeply socialized and some beliefs deeply embedded.

Why is it needed to denaturalize those beliefs and habits? If they have been considered as the natural way of things to be, probably one can imagine that there has been a very convincing reason to begin with. Besides, the word denaturalization really sounds antinatural. Everyday we get to know daily things and events, and as part of quotidian life we assimilate them to other objects already known and accepted. Those are ways to facilitate our relationships with what is new, strange, or different; ways to make acceptable those circumstances, therefore internalizing this "familiarized knowledge" considering it as part of "the way the world is" (Montero, 2004), making them habitual. The explanation for this resides in the psychosocial processes linked both to the modes of knowing and to the ideologizing mechanisms accompanying those modes; joining then certain interests to cultural ways in order to impose some ideas and explanations over others. As not all forms of naturalizing are negative or evil, because naturalization is a normal and necessary process within daily life; the process of deideologizing through reflection and dialogical discussion is needed to find out those modes linked to exclusion or oppression.

Deideologization is then another subprocess in the overall general process of conscientization. It consists of rejecting the hegemony of certain ideas justifying and naturalizing forms of social oppression, by showing how certain interpretations and

senses, socially constructed and taught, operate in people's daily life. This supposes the need to separate negative forms of naturalization depriving people from the possibility to attain a different kind of life, or of exerting their right to have social benefits.

From these ontological, epistemological, political, and ethical bases, originally developed in community psychology praxis and understood with a liberationist character, problematization has been developed as part of putting into action what is being promoted as the discourse of social transformation. It should be considered as part of a general methodological proposal more than a specific technique. This does not means that technical forms of carrying it out cannot or should not be created; but as it is an approach to be applied as a function of specific situations what I am presenting here is not to be considered as a set of procedures. It is just the paradigmatic framework for problematization within a liberation perspective.

Problematization as a Methodological Tool

As a critical process, problematization generates disagreement, doubts, and discussion, as simultaneously, it starts a process of consciousness mobilization leading to conscientization, inducing transformations in the modes of understanding certain phenomena.

The Origins of Problematization

The concept of problematization was constructed by Freire (1970) in relation to what he called a "banking education," which he opposed. By banking education Freire understood a type of education in which, as happens in banks when people deposits money, the students were turned into a sort of deposit for other people's ideas, and remote forms of knowledge, without discussing their meaning and usefulness. That is, students were a sort of knowledge piggybanks, receiving but not digesting. As Freire said, education thus understood is a form of oppression to which he proposed a problematizing and liberating education, one which would generate "consciousness about consciousness" (Freire, p. 85). Hence, education is not an end in itself but a means to produce knowledge in both members of the educational relationship: the educator and the person being educated (Freire). That relationship is not based in the superiority of the former and the inferiority of the latter, but in their dialog.

What is Problematization?

For Freire, then, problematization is a process produced within a dialogical relationship carried out in "reading circles," that is groups of people in the adult education programs he created in Brazil and other Latin American countries, as well as

in Africa and Asia. It should be added that it is a strategy for developing a critical consciousness which while taking place during both action and reflection, transforms through them the naturalizing and alienating circumstances. Problematization sensitizes, denaturalizes, and establishes the cognitive and affective bases necessary to motivate changes thus inducing concrete transforming actions.

In community social psychology to problematize is to generate situations in which the people involved are forced to review their actions and opinions about daily life events considered not only as ordinary circumstances, but also as inevitable because of their attributed essential way of being. This happens in such a way that their critical discussion leads them to being aware of the oppression, exclusion, undervaluation, or uncritical reproduction of information received which has negative effects for their daily lives. And, in so doing, they also examine the relation between that knowledge and other temporally and spatially contextualized possibilities for living and knowing, and their possible transformation.

The mobilization of consciousness moves the person or group from the uncritically accepted version of reality to the possibility of transforming life into better living conditions. It also may alert the person or group about the existence of situations and forms of oppression, acquiring in this way a liberating and deideologizing character. This happens because the consciousness movement generates new knowledge and awareness about certain social relations, questioning at the same time the hegemony of certain ideas maintaining or justifying specific situations. In this sense, problematization fosters the production of a political standing understood in the wider meaning of the term "politics"; because it impels the construction and reconstruction of an integral consciousness and an understanding of the society one lives in as a totality.

This ends in what Freire (1970, 1997) called the "domestication" of mind and action. That is, the repetition of certain living routines maintaining and reproducing daily life circumstances, in spite of the limitations and misery they may occasion. That is, the repeated and meaningless gestures, the senseless words stating that nothing is problematic because a specific way of life is and its problems are part of the nature of life.

Domestication is characterized by the submission to what psychological attribution theories have denominated the Powerful Others: Facts, personages, phenomena external and independent of the people affected by them, which are attributed the power responsible for the success or failure of people's actions. So, people do not consider themselves actors and constructors of their realities, but just passive receptors of the good and evil emanating from those superior entities, owners of the first and last word.

What is the Object of the Problematization Process? Who are its Subjects?

The object of problematization is the circumstance, fact, or mode of knowing producing stereotyped explanations or versions perpetuating certain conditions affecting specific groups or individuals. It is a concrete, tangible, and lived fact. There are

two subjects: The people affected by a particular condition of domination or oppression and exclusion, and those who pretend to facilitate or catalyze a liberation process. That is so because in order to be a problematizing agent it is necessary to have an ethical approach including respect for human, social, civil, and political rights. If that agent neither understands the situation nor knows the objective to meet, that means that he or she has naturalized the object to problematize, and he/she needs to problematize that circumstance him/herself.

Problematization is a total process, one cannot be partially problematized, or problematized now and then, regarding a specific issue. It is a process happening within relationships. It happens in the relationship between external agents (psychologists or other people) and internal agents (those living or believing something that is painful or harmful for them), in which consciousness is mobilized for its transformation. It is also a process of mutual apprenticeship produced through dialog that exposes the naturalizations, the beliefs, and the arguments in general concerning a specific issue. That is why this method has no techniques or instruments or procedures that can be generalized to every possible situation. It only has principles upon which practice can be constructed.

Conditions for a Problematization Process

1. *Listening.* Whoever pretends to problematize must know to listen. Freire (1997) said that it is by listening that one can learn how to talk with people. And that is because only when we listen we can detect the naturalized aspects in the reasoning being expressed, therefore being able to pose the questions, that induce the problematizing process leading to conscientization.
2. *Dialog*. Listening is not enough. If one does not establishes a dialogic relationship, one is leaving the other outside, separating her/him from the research/intervention process which affects that person.
3. *Taking care of the ways to participate in that dialog.* One should not talk in a scholarly manner, using an imposing tone of voice and mannerisms. This does not means to diminish the quality of language, as some people do when talking with people carrying some sort of incapacity or difference. One should never talk as if the other person could not understand or learn what we are saying. If one uses some technical word or abstract concept, it should be illustrated with examples and should be analyzed and discussed with the interlocutors. Understanding is not an academic or restricted privilege.
4. Dialog means *communication.* That is the bilateral relationship exchanging knowledge. It is never a unilateral form of reception or transmission. There must be the possibility to dissent, discuss, respond, and ask. There should be place for curiosity and creativity and for humor and emotion.
5. *Humility and respect.* This also is a bilateral condition. In a dialog participants must mutually respect each other. No one is superior to anyone; we all have the right to be different, while being equals.

6. *Critique*. This should be understood not as destructive commentaries, but as a form of analysis revealing the sense being constructed within the dialog. The critical content of problematization unchains the denaturalization and deideologizing processes. That critique is not dictated by the external agents, but is generated by the problematizing effect reached by questioning and by reflective discussing. These can be induced by freedom to speak out and also by techniques which, by way of metaphors incorporated to action, force people to review their knowledge and beliefs about some circumstance or event.
7. In this sense, problematization is a process beginning within a dialog but developed in the conscience of its participants. It is first evidenced by the silence produced when one cannot continue arguing with the naturalized forms of knowledge one may have, because one can neither reason nor provide new answers for a discussion, evidencing the contradictions and relationships so far not perceived.
8. As said before, problematization *always refers to specific concrete situations* in everyday life (what is called real) within the people's environment and to the knowledge employed to refer to those circumstances.
9. Problematization has a *reflexive character* because its main function is to generate the critical examination of the problematized action or situation.
10. It is related to what Goldmann (1972) called *possible consciousness*, referring to other possibilities to understand what is happening in our lives. That possibility for change is part of the *transformation* process since it allows understanding the unacceptable condition of the situation or the action examined. This aspect may lead to what Freire referred to as defining the situation as the *limit* of what is to be suffered or accepted. It motivates actions aimed to change the negative conditions. But results do not depend exclusively on consciousness and liberating and transformational motivation, therefore changes can be partial or slow, according to the specific conditions of each particular setting and the resources obtained and mobilized. This aspect has to be taken into account in order to avoid the uncritical risk of falling into romantic or "heroic" positions, unrelated to concrete material situations.

The Problematizing Process

Problematization begins when a question or action induces doubt about a specific version or explanation for a fact or event in everyday life. This could be called the "trigger effect" starting a critical process of analysis of that circumstance. The question or reflexive comment or action could be directly posed to someone or directed to a group which can be addressed both by external or internal agents[3] working with them.

[3]*External agents*: psychologists, other social workers, NGO's workers, all those who come to a community from some institution or organization not belonging to the community. *Internal agents*: community stakeholders and organized groups.

The problematizing process is both emotional and cognitive. There are links between cognition and affectivity inducing people to critically examine and discuss concrete conditions of life, leading thus to the possibility of rejecting explanations and beliefs so far sustained.

The cognitive and affective mobilization in this critical process induces the questioning of naturalized conceptions about a certain circumstance by showing its contradictions and its relationships with certain social, economic, or political interests. Also forms in which power is being exerted and its consequences may be understood in a different way, as well as the weak points in that mode of reasoning. In this way begins the rejection or change of ideas about the object discussed (critical mistrust or rejection). That is, people start to consider that those ideas are not the natural way to think and speak about something, and that is deideologizing.

Thus, problematization contributes to transform negative or limiting situations, allowing people to become conscious about their possibilities, their rights, and their capacities for transformation but not in an immediate and direct way. Problematization liberates their possibilities for human, civic, and social action, while also widening their cognitive field. An illustration of this can be seen in the way this method has been used by community psychology research and action in order to collectively assess community needs (Montero, 2004), producing reflective decisions, while at the same time sensitizing the people about normative needs concerning health.

Some Problematizing Procedures

The procedures presented here are illustrative of what has been said, but they should not be considered as general modes of action to be canonically applied in a variety of situations. They are not recipes, they are just a way to show how the critical character of problematizing procedures can be put into action in a way that has been useful for certain specific situations. As already said, problematization has to be carried out as a function of a concrete situation, taking into account the particular conditions of each situation. These are conditions inherent to the critical character of this procedure, as dialog and participation also are, meaning that psychologists should be well informed about each concrete situation and carefully listen and observe the people they work with. They must keep a critical observation of them, reflecting about why and for whom they are doing this. A good way to do this is to keep a log or field notebook registering every step and intervention, reflections made both by the external and internal agents, and share those notes with the people one is working with, discussing them and the questions that may come out of those reflections.

Problematization needs participation as a base for action. The people involved in the process must be able to intervene with freedom, although respecting the same right in others. Everyone should have the opportunity to speak, everyone should be heard. All opinions should be noted or recorded and as is usual in group discussions, turns to speak should be respected. Criticism should be reasoned as it is important to create a reflexive climate where the topic discussed, situated in its

context, is analyzed by all the participants discussing its causes and consequences and its relation with their lives as well as with other interest and their sources of power in society; their resources and their needs. External agents should be careful to not impose their prestige (as practitioners, as scholars, or as members of funding institutions).

Some examples of problematization procedures are presented, analyzing their methodological aspects.

Analysis of Symbolic Representations of a Specific Problem

Sometimes there are particular circumstances where the negative effects must be understood in order to change the situation. It may be useful to ask the people affected to describe in symbolic form how they see the situation or how they would like it to be. That symbolic representation may take the form of individual productions such as drawings or writings (for example, a poem, an advertisement, a tale); or making comparisons between a current situation and different possibilities for that event.

There also could be collective productions such as collages produced by several people, accompanied with a verbal explanation of what they did and why they did it in that particular way. In these cases, the people participating in the collective task have to organize their work strategy, deciding what to do and how, selecting materials, and reaching accords about how, where, and why to use them. This procedure already is part of the critical discussion about the issue to be represented.

Representations of specific situations in everyday life with some of the participants as actors in a play, later discussed by the whole group also produce interesting discussion topics. These sociodramatic representations should be short, directly related to the issue critically discussed and they should feature the role playing dramatizing concrete situations lived by the participants.

These are projective situations, in which through "exercises" or "games," drawings, and narratives, people express their feelings, their beliefs, their opinions, and general knowledge about an issue or a condition in their lives. As they produce concrete productions, they may be compared with later creations, and rediscussed, showing how perceptions and opinions about a particular issue have changed, and why.

What happens during the process of production of symbolic representations is as important as the discussion about them that follow. Questions to be posed during that discussion may arise from the relations and the mode of construction of those representations. During this type of activity there should be a careful distribution of the time to be spent in it, determining with the participants how much is going to be employed, and making a good distribution of it. There should be time to introduce the activity and to allow for the participants to introduce themselves and their expectations in case they do not know each other. This should be followed by a period for explaining what is to be done and the rules regarding that task, as well as clarifying any doubt that may surface and hear ideas and make decisions. There must be time to carry out the task; time for the group to explain what they did, and

why they did it in such a way, and finally, time to discuss and reflect about the task and the explanations, and to close the session.

Triggering a Problematization Process

This refers to ways of inducing the reflexive process of critical doubting that should happen both in group discussions and within its individual members. External agents or community leaders could use what could be called “triggering devises” for beliefs, representations, stereotypes, or images about a specific issue, problem, situation, institution, relation, or idea which are important for a community.

As triggering devices we can mention the forms used to symbolize a relationship or a circumstance or the community. That is, the symbols used to represent the community and organizations or circumstances related to it. The power of those symbols resides in their capacity to condense all the attributes that make up the totality of a whole object, therefore they allow to understand how that object is seen and felt.

Thence, close attention should be paid to words used to define a problem, a situation, expectation or community life circumstances, those words freely used during discussions, and thought-provoking words intentionally chosen. Also colors and images and other graphic elements used to describe an aspect or situation being discussed also can be a source for a problematizing reflection.

In my practice a specific “technique” has proved useful for the generation of problematizing processes: The use of “problematizing questions.” That is, the sort of question which cannot be answered by usually accepted explanations, whose origin and explanatory capacity are uncontested. These questions do not accept the commonplace answers, they probe, gently and incisively, once again insisting on why and how until there is silence. When habitual commonplaces cease, when nothing is to be said because usual explanations fail, reflection begins and some other reasons and answers begin to emerge. Perplexity arises when everyday accepted explanations are not useful and confrontation between different ways to understand a problem or a situation has to be addressed and sorted out in order to go ahead, to solve a problem or to take a decision. Inconsistencies are found and new aspects and new modes of interpreting the object of discussion and analysis begin to be proposed and tried; so uncritical acceptance of the knowledge previously received as the hegemonic way to understand certain aspects of our daily life begin to be doubted and may be rejected. It is in that way that it is said that consciousness is mobilized.

Although, problematizing questions are specific to each particular group situation and specific discussion, there cannot be something like a standard sort of question. As an illustration of what has been presented, I will describe a case in which two specific problematizing questions were used, and the process that followed during the discussion of the answers given by the group. In one project in a low-income community on the outskirt of Caracas, Venezuela, I was working with a group of women and men dissatisfied with the education their children were receiving

at the local public school. At the end of one of the meetings in which the mistreatment and deficiencies of the school were being discussed and a strategy to obtain a better service was being organized, the following questions were posed:

What did I learn today?
What did I teach today?

These questions were written on a piece of paper that left enough space for the people to write answers, but which was not very large because the people did not like to write long texts; some of them felt intimidated by writing tasks and in general, they have not the habit of writing, although all knew how to do it. They had about 6–8 min to give their answers. The first question they found very easy to answer. They knew quite well what they had learnt at that particular session, and many referred to specific items of the discussion and information exchanged during it. But, the second question caused much perplexity. Some of them said that they had nothing to teach, in spite of having actively contributed to the previous discussion and having given useful ideas for the actions to be carried out. Some even said they could not teach, because they hardly had formal education (referring to the little schooling they had). In the ensuing discussion another question was posed, this time confronting that sort of response with what other people had said they had received. Other participants would say what they had learnt from those who thought they had nothing to teach. The reflections centered on the coexistence and usefulness of several types of knowledge, and how they complement each other. It emphasized the capacity of every person to draw knowledge out of their experiences that can be shared, contributing thus to the community wellbeing. A general conclusion was that they should pay attention to what others were saying regardless of their scholar or popular wisdom status, and that being poor was not equivalent to being unable to think.

These questions, by inducing the problematizing process, aim to obtain conscientization. They are part of the process of mobilization of consciousness leading to liberate. A liberation that is not generalized and undefined but specific to the situation. It should always be taken into account that liberation is not a one-act performance, it is a process.

Those questions have a critical and free condition expressed in the fact that they have not a specific structure to be followed. There are not standard problematizing questions. Such a thing would be absurd because it would suppose that problems are similar across cultures, time, societies, and places. Poverty is a calamity extended across the world, but the ways to naturalize, explain, and even adapt to it, also vary across the world. That is why it is in dialog where the problematizing agents can catch the particular mode of expression where they can insert the question.

Problematizing questions may be posed within dialog, at any moment. They do not have a fixed moment, they should seize the opportunity when verbal or action discourses show the presence of ideas that maintain privileges, oppression, and exclusion and present oppressive power relationships as natural. But if they are idiosyncratic, there are some aspects, deriving from their critical character that should be observed by the problematizing agents when posing them.

These agents should confront the person answering, and the group participating in the discussion, with the knowledge so far received and applied to the understanding of

the particular topic being discussed. It is as if each person begins to question herself/himself about why what she/he knows is not enough to answer the question posed. What is the origin of what I know? For what is it useful? For whom is it useful? Trying to find an explanation for these questions unchains a process that should lead to the verification of the inadequacy of what one knows for answering the problematizing question.

Problematizing questions are not contentious. This means that they do not attack by disqualifying what has been said. It could be posed from the surprise or astonishment of what was said, or from the contrast with what is in the immediate context where the opinion or explanation had been produced. Working with children also in a slum in Caracas, I found that in a program where they had the freedom to draw and color something related to their "barrio" (neighborhood), they uniformly repeated the drawing of a house with red pitched roof in a garden with a tree full of apples. There are no apple trees in Venezuela, there are no gardens in the slum, where no house has a red tile pitched roof. Instead of saying that those houses did not exist in their neighborhood, the question was: Those are interesting houses, are they around here? The children began saying in a doubtful way: "Hmm … yes…," and some said: "That is the way houses are." The agent's answer was: "Mine is not like that, let us go to the window and see if we can see them around here." Silence ensued, and then a child said: "There are no houses like that around here, that is the way they teach us to paint them at school," and another one said; "and they are in television too." A short reflective discussion ensued, and after that they began drawing in a different, more creative way. Later, discussing how to transform their environment in the future, and how they would do that, they drew from the present, but transformed it in a place full of color, with a wide paved street, houses decorated with light bulbs (they choose Christmas time in 2015); big Christmas trees where every child would receive presents from the Child Jesus; a square with the statue of the woman who directed the constructions of stairs and pathways when the neighborhood had been constructed; a nursery and… a barrier with a guard regulating the entry. This last feature copied the practice of high income neighborhoods in the city. This was also discussed, but it is another story.

Therefore, the problematizing question does not assume the naturalized explanation as a point of discussion and confrontation, but as a point of inquiry and verification. In that sense it is persistent and insistent, it does not accept naturalized answers; it is nonconformist. The question tries to generate reflection in the interlocutors, contrasting opinions in such a way that they have to think about the contrasts and find by themselves, new explanations while submitting their previous answers to critique. This approach, developed within community psychology work, when adopted with a liberating intention seeks then that the mobilization of consciousness leads to transforming actions.

Discussion–Reflection Meeting

Group dynamics and social psychology have provided abundant information about what to do whenever one needs to work with groups. It is common psychosocial lore that in every group meeting one has an introduction in order to get people to

greet each other or to know who is who, and then the topic to be discussed and the rules organizing the meeting are presented, taking into account the time the meeting will take.

The rules guaranteeing full participation and respect for all participants are to be observed. They should know why and how to observe them. Lack of organization will arrest participation, decisions and discussions, boycotting the goals of the meetings, and discouraging people. A rigid and authoritarian structure will inform, but block participation again. In these meetings, aspects related to the objectives to be reached should be respected. Actually those meetings should be planned along with the participants, who can thus begin reflecting about the topic to be discussed. The objectives should be clearly defined, because something to be avoided is to mobilize people just to have a more or less nice chat.

Facilitators should not monopolize the discourse. They should allow opportunities to speak to every participant and never impose their viewpoints, although they have the right to present them. Both the participants and the external or internal agents facilitating discussions should depart from the notion that all people have opinions, that knowledge can be of different kinds and is present in all people, and that everyone have feelings. All that will be part of the process of consciousness mobilization that is to be started by the problematizing process. But this process is both collective and individual. The diversity of opinions produced about a certain topic can be enriched by that diversity, but the problematization happens within every participant, and is neither uniform nor univocal confirming that every individual process is social and every social process is made up of individual contributions. A discussion–reflection meeting should be democratic, yet very well organized; easygoing yet productive. A meeting without conclusions, where nothing is clear or where the agenda was not covered will give the participants a sense of futility and even irritate them, inducing lack of interest.

The facilitator's questions and observations or information should be made only when pertinent to what is being discussed. And, of course, they should not repeat or paraphrase what is being said. That can be bothersome. But they also should control the verbosity of people who tend to take too long, and foster the participation of the shy. They should understand that questions, specially problematizing ones are placed to induce denaturalizing and deideologizing reflection.

It is important to understand that sometimes a topic, due to its relation to a problematic aspect, or to expectations linked to community needs, will not be dealt with in just one session. It may take much longer, sometimes needing different forms of approach and a lot of patience.

Conclusion

It is not easy to write about methods that, although strictly following the order characterizing any methodological task, do not establish specific rules to be followed. That means that we are not dealing with techniques. And it is something

which should be easily understood when talking about liberation, but not so easily put into practice. These methods do have rules but they are not of the kind to fill handbooks or practice manuals. They also have certain shared characteristics: *They are dialogical*. They happen through conversations in which two or more people exchange ideas, discussing them, rejecting some or every one of them, and producing new ones. That means *they are participatory*. It is impossible to produce liberation in a one-sided way, like it is impossible to have a conversation where only one person talks. *They happen within processes*. They do not produce magic episodes where things suddenly change. They cannot be carried out in a sole performance. They cook slowly and *each process has its own timing*, so we cannot say that liberation will be produced in a fixed number of sessions. They are at the same time *collective and individual*, for as a group moves forward in the search of a certain liberating goal, at the same time but with different rhythm, unique for each member, the participants process their own individual changes toward liberation. *They also are historical*. These methods search to include a biographical perspective and in that sense they need to explore memories and to advance visions of the future, so they can build on reality as it has been constructed by each group and each person of that group, and on the possibilities that guide action toward liberation from the conditions of that reality. *They have a holistic phenomenological perspective*. They try to understand each situation as a whole, seeing it in its context, situating it in time and space. And although they are linked to specific situations, having thus a concrete base, at the same time *they use as the main ground for action, each person's thoughts*. Michel Foucault (1984) said that to think is to change the meaning of thoughts, for he considered problematization as a method for thought. We can say that *these methods both move thoughts and actions*, the latter providing the circumstantial framework for the mobilization of consciousness. *They also are critical*. As discussion and reflection within dialogs are happening, a process of evaluation provides the opportunity to find out the origin and causes, as well as the consequences of certain events.

The methods presented here do not pretend to have covered the methodological panorama in the psychology of liberation. Another characteristic already insinuated at the beginning of these conclusions, is that according with the conditions mentioned, each researcher, with her/his participants will have to create the ways or modes of liberating. Therefore, responding to culture and to the specific conditions of each group and situation is necessary. In some places, such as some Venezuelan rural areas, women would only respond and talk to other women; they would not be the ones raising their voices and be first in line. But nothing would be carried out if they did not agree with what was going on. They had a kind of power that they used in an invisible way (Briceño-Leon, 1990). In some Bolivian rural areas, people would not answer questions, but they would willingly respond to puppets representing the same situations they wanted to change (Vio Grossi, 1981). Children easily respond to pictures or drawings, or to stories read and discussed, so through the metaphors they begin to critically relate to the situation to be discussed. Telling about an unfinished situation or presenting it as a comic strip and asking the people to provide the end, or asking questions about possible conclusions may raise lively

discussions among some groups. But these triggering devices are not recipes to be mechanically applied. They provide an opening to hear what people say, observing without preconceptions about them; talking and keeping both eyes and ears open can provide the useful and adequate ideas and questions and the modes of implementing them. Research for liberation needs creativity in order to be effective.

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Liberating South African Psychology: The Legacy of Racism and the Pursuit of Representative Knowledge Production

Norman Duncan and Brett Bowman

Introduction

South Africa's first nonracial, democratic national elections in 1994 brought to a close the period of legislated racism that had rendered the South African state one of the most reviled of the twentieth century. However, despite these watershed elections and South Africa's new constitution, which expressly proscribes any form of racism, South African society continues to be strongly characterized by the power of "race" and racism as determinants of social division, interaction and identity. This is manifested in a variety of ways, including ongoing residential segregation based on race, the persistent racialized patterns of friendship, the usage of public spaces, and the consistently negative portrayal of blacks (albeit increasingly covert) in the media (Dixon, Tredoux, & Clack, 2005; Duncan, 2003; Durrheim, 2005; Foster, 2005).

However, perhaps the most salient and debilitating manifestation of the enduring impact of racism in South Africa are the persistent racialized patterns of poverty and privilege that still typify this context. For example, in 2000, May, 6 years after the dismantling of the apartheid order, Woolard and Klasen reported that the income of the average white household was five times higher than the average household income of black[1] families. Data released by Statistics South Africa in 2005 reveal that the rate of unemployment among Africans currently stands at 26.7%, compared to 18.6% and 15.4% for coloreds and Indians, respectively. The rate for whites is 4.4%. Commenting on these figures, Pakendorf (in Pienaar, 2005, p. 8) observes that "No matter how you look at it, black people are still worse off in contemporary South Africa than whites."

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[1] In this chapter, the term *black* refers to all people of color, i.e., all people categorized by the former apartheid regime as "African" (i.e., indigenous African people), "'coloured"' (people of "'mixed race"'), and "'Indian"' (Asiatic).

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Despite these patterns of ongoing racialized inequality and the myriad psychosocial problems that these entail, there is insufficient generative psychological theory and productive psychological research to counteract the ongoing deleterious influence of racism in South African society (Duncan, 2005; Foster, 2005). This is despite the fact that psychology in South Africa currently positions itself as the discipline and profession best placed to address these problems. In all likelihood, South African psychology's inability to contribute in any significant manner to the eradication of these problems is partly due to the prevailing effects of the apartheid regulation of the "sociospatial economy," which kept blacks and particularly poor blacks firmly on the periphery (both figuratively and geographically) of mainstream South African society (May & Rogerson, 2000). This has rendered many of the enduring manifestations of racism invisible to those inhabiting the sheltered halls of the academy, located as they are at the center of the historically white geosocial spaces in South Africa. However, in this chapter we argue that South African psychology's manifest inability to deal with issues of racism and its consequent reproduction of the phenomenon are also strongly linked to its historically racialized demographic profile as well as its history of complicity with the racism of the preapartheid and apartheid states (Bowman, Duncan, & Swart, 2008). It is to these issues that we will next turn our attention. However, it will be apposite to first briefly define two key concepts that are critical to the discussion to follow, namely, the concepts of racism and liberation psychology.

Defining Racism and Liberation Psychology Racism

There can be no denying that racism is an extremely complex phenomenon. It is therefore little wonder that there exist so many definitions of the phenomenon. Through the years, many of these definitions, especially those emanating from the discipline of psychology have tended to construct and examine racism in terms of individual racial beliefs and feelings (see, for example, MacCrone, 1937). However, since the 1990s various social scientists (Essed, 1991; Van Dijk, 1991) increasingly have criticized the tendency of many social scientists to construct racism as an individual attribute rather than emphasizing the historical, social, and institutional determinants of racism. The former belief reduces racism to individual attributes and inevitably results in blaming individuals. For the purposes of this chapter, we define racism as:

> An ideology through which the domination or marginalization of certain racialized groups by another racialized group or groups is enacted and legitimated. It is a set of ideas and discursive and material practices aimed at (re)producing and justifying systematic inequalities between racialized groups (based on the definition formulated in Duncan, van Niekerk, de la Rey, & Seedat, 2001, p. 2).

Thus, this chapter eschews the assumption that racism is simply an individual aberration, rather than a social and systemic phenomenon. If we acknowledge the systemic nature of racism, then we by the same token acknowledge that the

ideology is sustained or perpetuated by means of a multiplicity of interactional, converging practices and institutions, including educational institutions and practices. Indeed, it can be argued that racism is as deep-rooted and pervasive as it is because of the broad range of institutions and practices through which it is reproduced.

Another central assumption informing the contents of this chapter is that racism is reproduced though both discursive acts and material practices (cf. Therborn, 1980). However, it is important to emphasize that it is largely through discursive practices such as conversation, political discourses, research, and publication endeavors that the oppression of the Other is justified and reproduced (Stevens, Duncan, & Bowman, 2006a, 2006b).

A third assumption on which this chapter is based is, in the words of Skutnabb-Kangas (1990, p. 80), that "racism presupposes a discourse of 'race' [or whatever term it is substituted with]." However, we want to add the important qualification that within the discourses underlying racism, the "race" of the Other is necessarily negativized. Indeed, it is essentially through the negativization of the racialized Other that the asymmetrical relations of power integral to the phenomenon is legitimized or justified. Certainly, racism is reproduced by means of various other processes as well, including the engendering of systematically asymmetrical relations of power between "races" through various material and social practices. However, in this chapter we focus on the role of the construction of the racialized Other in the reproduction of racism. Specifically, we focus on the construction of blacks as the negative Other in South African psychology's responses to "race" and racism.

Liberation Psychology

Liberation psychology has been defined as a form of psychology that concerns itself with the "processes, dynamics, capacities, and practices through which people may achieve emancipation, freedom, liberation, and escape from particular power structures of oppression and exploitation" (Foster, 2004, p. 560). In terms of the problem of racism, therefore, liberation psychology, according to Foster, would seek to understand the ways in which racism impinges on the freedom and wellbeing of people, so as to contribute to the elimination of this phenomenon. Differently stated, liberation psychology would seek to reveal the ways in which racism reproduces systems of oppression and exploitation so as to combat the phenomenon. In this sense liberation psychology's agenda overlaps to a significant extent with that of critical psychology and critical social science, both of which have been underscored by an actively antiracist position in South Africa. While racism forms but one of the many ideologies that have and continue to oppress and marginalize individuals and groups within the body politic, it was this form of oppression that most visibly and systematically cleaved and organized South African society. In the section "History of Racism in Twentieth Century South Africa," we focus on the historical conditions from which South African psychology emerged in an attempt to illustrate

the formative intersection between conditions of oppression and the development of psychological research and practice in South Africa.

History of Racism in Twentieth Century South Africa

Racism is one of the more noxious and ubiquitous problems that characterized the world during the twentieth century. However, in no country was it maintained and reinforced by as extensive an arsenal of explicitly discriminatory laws as in South Africa. Some of the most notorious of these laws included the *Mines and Works Act of 1911*, which rendered it illegal for blacks to be employed in skilled jobs in South Africa's extensive mining sector as well as in various sectors of the public service; the *Native Land Act of 1913*, which effectively restricted Africans to the least habitable one-fifth of South Africa; the *Native Urban Areas Act of 1923*, which required Africans to carry identification "passbooks" in their country of birth; the *Representation of Natives Act of 1936* and the *Separate Representation of Voters Act of 1951*, which summarily deprived all blacks of an unqualified franchise; the *Population Registration Act of 1950*, which categorized all South Africans into four principle "races," namely "whites," "Africans" (i.e., autochthonous Africans), "coloreds" (i.e., people of so-called mixed "race"), and "Indians" (i.e., people of Asian origin); the *Reservation of Separate Amenities Act of 1953*, which restricted most and the best public amenities for the exclusive use of whites; and the *Group Areas Act of 1950*, which regulated racially segregated residential areas and which consequently saw millions of blacks over several decades summarily evicted form their homes and relocated to government-created ghettoes and *bantustans* or *homelands* (Davenport, 1977; Giliomee & Schlemmer, 1989).

The laws were legion and their effects were consistently devastating. According to Baldwin-Ragaven, de Gruchy, and London (1999), racism, as it was institutionalized in South Africa, constituted one of the principle sources of physical and psychological ill-health among blacks in this country during the twentieth century. The special brand of institutionalized racism that the world knew as *apartheid*, through its consistently pernicious effects could also be held accountable for the massive economic and social dislocations and problems that characterized black communities during the twentieth century, resulting in runaway levels of crime, community violence, and poverty (Duncan, 1994). Indeed, when we consider current racialized patterns of crime, disease, violence, and poverty[2] still confronting South Africa (see, for example, Burrows, Bowman, Matzopoulos, & van Niekerk, 2001; Dorrington, Bourne, Bradshaw, Laubscher, & Timaeus, 2001), and when we consider the extent to which the scientifically and socially fraught notion of "race" still exerts its hold on South Africans' sense of self and of being, we have to acknowledge that apartheid's reach has extended well beyond its official demise in 1994.

[2] With black South Africans bearing the brunt of these problems.

South African Psychology and its Responses to Racial Oppression During the Twentieth Century

Psychology as a formal discipline emerged in South Africa in the early 1920s, with the establishment of the first psychology departments at the Universities of Cape Town and Pretoria, among others. Of particular pertinence to this chapter is that from its very establishment, South African psychology, like psychology in many other parts of the world, appeared to be inordinately preoccupied with the measurement of "racial" characteristics and, simultaneously, manifestly ambivalent about the study of racism (Howitt & Owusu-Bempah, 1994). This was partly a reflection of the preoccupations of South African society of the early twentieth century in general as well as the preoccupations of the primary forum for psychological research prior to the 1920s, namely the South African Association for the Advancement of Science (SAAAS) (cf. Rich, 1990). For the purposes of this chapter we will consider the history of psychology's responses to issues of "race" and racism in terms of four broad temporal categories – a typology which we have previously employed elsewhere (see Bowman et al., 2008), namely, the 1920s to the end of the 1940s, the 1950s and 1960s, the 1970s and 1980s, and then finally, the 1990s and beyond. However, before we proceed, it is important to draw attention to the following caveat.

A close reading of history would reveal that South African psychology's relationship to "race" and "racism" was neither monolithic nor static. The history of South African psychology was in fact characterized by various subtleties, disagreements, contestations, and structural and discursive complexities. Nonetheless, in this section we present what we deem to be the guiding and predominant nodes in this history over time. In this sense, our historical account, as is the case with many historical synopses, reflects a simplification of what were undoubtedly extremely complex historical interplays, formations, and discourses.

1920s–1940s: Psychology and the Otherization of Blacks

Psychological research, training, and teaching during this first period were largely confined to the psychology and other cognate departments at the Universities of Pretoria, Rhodes, Stellenbosch, and the Witwatersrand (Louw & Foster, 1991). Available commentaries and accounts suggest that from their inception, these departments exhibited an obsession with the study and measurement of "race." To a certain extent, the foundations for this focus or fixation were laid just prior to the 1920s with the research of Loram (1917). During the late 1910s, Loram had administered a series of intelligence tests to Indian, White, and African school children in an effort to establish the extent of racial differences in childhood intelligence. Based on this research, he argued that African children were, as he put it, "much less efficient" and "much slower in their thinking" than the other children tested (in Louw & Foster, p. 62).

This research appears to have set the scene for not only South African psychology's initial preoccupation with "race," but also its apparent preoccupation with proving the superiority of the white "race" in relation to all other "races" in South Africa. Thus, in the 1920s, Fick (1929), on the basis of his research argued that only a small percentage of isiZulu-speaking African children could reach the medians attained by white children on a selection of intelligence tests. Much similar research saw the light of day subsequently, including the research of J. A. J. van Rensburg (in Dubow, 1995), who held that African children's performance on four learning tasks was significantly inferior to that of white children, and that this difference in performance became more pronounced with the passage of time. Intelligence testing and research were relentlessly pursued by many psychologists of the time, ostensibly because such testing and research held the key to developing the most promising strategies for advancing education and occupational policies as critical areas of social intervention (Rich, 1990) (We know of course that the primary motive of intelligence testing and research at the time was not in the interest of education and vocational policies as much as what it was in the interest of advancing the interests of whites in relation to existing education and vocational policies).

Much more forthright, Loram (in Dubow, 1995) argued that it was through the development of measures to test the racial differences between whites and blacks that the scientific community could be of best service to the white government of the day. In 1921, he was recorded to have remarked that the prevailing dearth of knowledge concerning "the psychology of the Bantu,[3] and the want of usable facts in this connection is hampering…legislation and administration at every turn" (Loram, in Dubow, p. 211). Developing appropriate legislation and administration, he suggested, could best be served by psychologists developing measures to assess the "Bantu's" unique (or inferior) psychological constitution. By "appropriate legislation and administration" he of course meant legislation and administration that would advance the interests of white South Africans.

Louw and Foster (1991) correctly maintain that research of the nature conducted and proposed by the likes of Loram and Fick was not aimed simply to advance social policy development, but also resulted in the scientific endorsement of the widespread belief among whites of their superiority and the inferiority of blacks. Very importantly too, as Chisholm (in Dubow, 1995, p. 235) incisively observes, this type of research also played the critical role of identifying socially and economically marginalized whites so as to ensure their incorporation into the "white body politic while preserving a racially stratified…society." And indeed, much of the racial intelligence research on whites at the time played the important surveillance function of ensuring the identification of whites whose functioning and positions in society would compromise the myth of white superiority. Thus, much of this research was also used to develop interventions aimed at drawing "deviant" white groups (such as poor and illiterate whites) from the margins into mainstream privileged white society, largely so as to distance them from the "inferior" black

[3] The term *Bantu* is one of the many names given to indigenous Africans by the colonial and apartheid regimes.

Other and to entrench notions of white superiority (Bonner, 2007; Dubow). This attempt at "rehabilitating" or controlling "deviant" whites, points to one of the key features of racism identified by Miles (1989). According to Miles, the ideology of racism has a fundamentally "dialectical character in so far as the representation of the [dominant "race"] serves simultaneously to refract a representation of the [Other]" (p. 79). Thus, through the process of constructing whites as a superior "race" blacks are simultaneously constructed as an inferior "race."

However, the research and views of Fick, van Rensburg and their ilk did not go completely uncontested. As in the USA and Europe (see Benjamin, 1997; Dubow, 1995; Zuckerman, 1990), these views and research provoked a protracted debate over whether assumed racial "differences" were a consequence of hereditary or environmental factors. On the one hand, those such as Fick (1929) and Robbertse (1967) argued that Blacks were intellectually "inferior" to whites because of genetic differences, and on the other, psychologists like MacCrone (1937), Malherbe (in Rich, 1990), and Biesheuvel (1972) held that studies such as those conducted by Van Rensburg, Fick, and Loram did not provide sufficient evidence of innate differences between Blacks and whites. Despite these relatively liberal (for the period) stances, both MacCrone and particularly Biesheuvel have also been accused of advancing South African psychology's obsession with proving racial differences in some of their work (cf. Cooper, Nicholas, Seedat, & Statman, 1990; Dubow; Rich, 1993).

Nonetheless, in the final analysis, it was South African psychology's commitment to white superiority and interests that prevailed, as amply illustrated by the rationale for the establishment of the Carnegie commission of enquiry into the "poor white" problem. In 1927, the South African psychologist, E. G. Malherbe was approached by the President of the Carnegie Corporation, F. P. Kepple, to identify the most pressing social problem in South Africa. The corporation would then make the necessary funds available to allow for research on the problem (Cooper et al., 1990). Malherbe without hesitation identified the "poor white" problem as the most pressing social problem in South Africa (Malherbe, 1981). More specifically, the problem, as he saw it, was that South Africa at the time had more than 100,000 so-called "Poor Whites" and that they were "becoming a menace to the self-preservation and prestige of *our White people*, *living as we do* in the midst of the native population which outnumbers *us* 5 to 1" (Malherbe, p. 119, emphasis added).

In the event, the Carnegie Corporation made substantial funding available for research on this problem (Cooper et al., 1990; Louw, 1986). Through his identification of the "poor white" problem as the most significant social problem of the day (and this in the face of the fact that it was essentially blacks who bore the brunt of the burden of poverty at the time, largely due to them being dispossessed of their land by the then government) (Fleisch, 1993; Louw), Malherbe, in the words of Dubow (1995, p. 171), signaled that white (as opposed to black) poverty was "both anomalous and unacceptable." Furthermore, as we have reported in an earlier publication, Malherbe and the other psychologists who contributed to the Carnegie Commission, through their identification of the "poor white" problem as the most critical problem of the day:

> Laid the foundations for the ideological trajectory of psychology as a discipline that apparently would not have any qualms about privileging the concerns and needs of whites over those of blacks; i.e., a discipline that would not have any qualms in advancing the fundamentally racist social order in which it was located (Duncan, Stevens, & Bowman, 2004, p. 277).

By way of concluding this section it should be observed that while South African psychology between the 1920s and 1940s was a relatively small discipline, it was served by a very influential cohort of protagonists that not only set the parameters of the discipline's agenda at the time but was also very influential in social policy development (Louw, 1986), offering support to the aspirations of the government of the day for an enduring system of racial separatism. In the main, the agenda that South African psychology seemed to pursue with relentless energy was that of the examination of racial differences and the upliftment of white South Africans. That the research and policies that resulted from this agenda were to be harnessed for the scientific justification of formal apartheid and apartheid policies at a later stage, in our opinion, should speak volumes of South African psychology's role in the development – rather than, as received wisdom would predict, the elimination – of institutionalized racism in South Africa during the early decades of the twentieth century.

1950s and 1960s: The Otherization of Blacks Continued

While research aimed at establishing racial differences continued well into the 1940s, as early as the 1930s already, MacCrone (in Rich, 1993) argued that it was more critical for South African psychology to start focusing on interracial problems and relationships. Very importantly too, he argued that these relationships and problems are best understood by considering the cultural and psychosocial conditions of their development. And indeed, MacCrone's research on intergroup relations shifted the focus of South African research on "race"-related matters significantly (Bowman et al., 2008). Moreover, this focus received substantial impetus in the 1950s following a visit to South Africa by the American psychologists, Thomas Pettigrew and Gordon Allport (Bowman et al. 2008).

Here it should be noted that South African psychology's gradual disavowal of its obsessive preoccupation with racial differences was partly in reaction to the realization in South Africa and elsewhere in the world that finding proof for the existence of a relationship between putative biological "races" and psychological attributes was a futile exercise. Furthermore, it has to be remembered that following the excesses of Hitler's government and colonial governments in Africa, Asia, and South America, the scientific community, internationally, became increasingly wary of, or averse to, notions of "race" and racial differences (Dubow, 1995; Duncan, 1994).

Following the visit by Pettigrew and Allport as well as various internal developments in South African psychology (see Louw & Foster, 1991), the 1960s saw the emergence of several South African studies on "race" relations. Specifically, Pettigrew's research on authoritarianism and prejudice stimulated a range of cognate

South African psychological research, most notably by van den Berghe (1962, in Foster & Nel, 1991) and Morsbach and Morsbach (1967, in Foster & Nel) (see also Duckitt, 1991). Additionally, a range of studies on ethnocentricism and "racial" identification or misidentification in children (Gregor & McPherson, in Bowman et al., 2008; Meij, 1966) also saw the light of day during this period. Tellingly, however, psychological research related to racism during this period appeared to continue to focus on racism as an individual problem or aberration characteristic of a small group of backward Afrikaans-speaking whites (Duncan, 1994). Very revealingly too, many South African psychologists, through their research endeavors (particularly their research on racial identification) and practices were continuing to reinforce the notion of the existence of "races" – in contradistinction to social scientists elsewhere in the world who were increasingly distancing themselves from this fraught concept (Duncan).

Of note too, during this period, in response to the needs of apartheid capitalism, psychology appeared to increasingly turn its endeavors in relation to research on "race" and racism to the industrial labor arena. Indeed, according to Hayes (1986), South African industrial psychology was a major representative site of the intersection between race psychology, apartheid, and capital in South Africa during this period. This intersection was nowhere more pronounced than at the National Institute for Personnel Research (NIPR). Founded in 1946, the NIPR has been identified as the birthplace of professional psychology in South Africa (Louw, 1986; Terre Blanche & Seedat, 2001). A title analysis of the research conducted by the Institute between 1946 and 1984 (Terre Blanche & Seedat) produced several telling findings. First, according to Terre Blanche and Seedat, research undertaken by the NIPR appears to have continued with Psychology's early preoccupations with "race" and on furthering the "racial differences" thesis developed by South African psychology during the 1920s to 1940s. Specifically, much of the Institute's research during the period under consideration seemed to endeavor to find support for the notion that the "black" personality is a distinct and differentiable type. Second, researchers within the Institute seemed to be intent on discovering the mechanisms for the optimization of black labor that would more cost-efficiently serve the interests of apartheid capital. According to Bulhan (1993), during this period, NIPR research and significant sections of South African psychology invariably constructed blacks in a manner that did not only negativize them, but in the process, also served as a means of justifying their subjugation and exploitation by the white minority.

1970s and 1980s: Aspiring to Scientific Neutrality and Silence

As in the earlier periods described above, the focus of psychological research in relation to "race" and racism-related phenomena during the 1970s and 1980s was on individual attributes and differences between putative "race" groups, rather than on an examination of racism and the manifest corrupting nature of this phenomenon. In the main, during the 1970s, psychological research on "race" and racism-related

issues continued to focus on "racial" identification or misidentification in children, as exemplified in the work of De Groot (1978), Melamed (1970a, 1970b), as well as studies by Bhana and Bhana (1975), among others.

Although, at the level of knowledge production, both in the authorial and output domains, psychology did not appear to oppose the racism of South African society, there was a discernible and ideologically significant shift in the historical alignment between state racism and psychological science during this period. However, rather than an overt or radical realignment, this shift took the form of a marked silence and a telling inclination to defer to scientific neutrality when the discipline was directly confronted by political questions concerning the manifestly pernicious psychosocial effects of apartheid on the black population. Such stances were championed by some of the most widely published psychologists of the time (see, for example, Biesheuvel, 1987). Important to note in this regard is that through its ostensible neutrality or silent indifference to the impact of institutionalized racism on the psychosocial well-being of South Africans, South African psychology continued its complicity with the racist apartheid state.

1990s and Beyond: Visions of a Psychology of Liberation

In a recent study, Stevens (2003) undertook a critical review of trends in the construction of "race" and racism in South African psychology from the 1990s. In this study he found that during the 1990s, South African psychology, as during earlier periods, continued to privilege research on "race" attitudes and stereotypes, racism scales, and authoritarianism in relation to the study of racism. Furthermore, he found that the continued uncritical acceptance of "racialized" categories in South African psychological research still continued.

On a more progressive note, however, Stevens also found that during this period, South African psychological research and publications were increasingly focusing on providing critical evaluations of psychology's history and relevance as a discipline. This emancipatory orientation was often expressed in the form of exploring the social relevance of psychology from a material and historical perspective. Furthermore, he found that South African psychology during the 1990s was increasingly turning its attention to the study of the experiences of blacks and whites in South Africa, particularly in relation to issues such as reverse racism, affirmative action and minority access to resources in the context of increasingly contested and reconfigured "racialized" power relations. Related to this shift in attention was a gradual move from the predominantly positivist paradigm that had dominated research in earlier periods toward greater levels of methodological pluralism. Rather than an unquestioned commitment to positivist methods, the Stevens (2003) study identified three other major methodological trends that were evident in research on racism and related issues in South African psychology during the 1990s. These were the use of a critical historical and materialist approach, emphasizing psychology's potential role in social change and its historical embeddedness in perpetuating "race" and "racism" in the past, a renewed emphasis on the use of

models of intergroup relations and social identity toward reconciliation, and the use of critical modernist and postmodernist perspectives.

The Stevens article points to some promising features of South African psychology after 1990, despite the empirical orthodoxy that characterized its past and that still dominates it. The reflexivity prompted by a gradual discursive turn in the 1990s, together with South African psychology's forays into formerly taboo territories such as liberation and critical psychology, bode well for the *potential* scope, and mission of the discipline.

Despite these glimmers of transformation, however, as Stevens (2003) notes, South African psychology, in the main, remains largely fairly conservative and patently unable to deal with issues confronting the increasingly growing numbers of poor and marginalized South Africans, including issues of "race" and racism. Indeed, currently, we note a perceptible return to a more conservative psychology that is preoccupied by "first-world" research agendas and less inclined to engage with issues that will improve the lived reality of the poor and marginalized in South Africa (the majority of whom are black). Of note too, is the increasing reinscription of "race" in South African psychology. While 10 years ago only the most conservative of academics in South African psychology employed "race" as unquestioned entity, we are currently witnessing a strong resurgence of "race" as a primary social identifier or group descriptor.

South African Psychology's Complicity with Racial Oppression

There can be no denying South African psychology's complicity with the racism of previous South African governments through the manner in which it has engaged with issues of "race" and racism through the years. Indeed, South African psychology at various points in its history was a key role-player in the development and refinement of racist state policies – from its prioritization of the study of "race" differences, to its reification of racial categories, to its patent neglect of the study of racism and its deleterious impact on the lives of South Africans.

Psychology has traditionally been held out as a discipline and profession that is defined by an orientation of caring and the alleviation of human suffering or, as Nell (1990) argues, at least seems allied to a broader vision of humankind moving toward "a shining new world of ease and liberty" (p. 129). If this is true, then it can obviously be asked why South African psychology for much of its history has been marked by its service to institutionalized racism? To our mind, there are various factors that contributed to this state of affairs. In view of space constraints, we briefly explore only four of these factors below.

First, since its earliest years, South African psychology has always had a strong link with psychology internationally. For example, Malherbe and Fick, both critical actors in the establishment of South African psychology's racist agenda in the early twentieth century, had received their training in psychology in the USA, as did Malherbe. Importantly, as Howitt and Owusu-Bempah (1994) observe, psychology

internationally at the time was not untainted by racism. Indeed, these authors provide an extensive expose of North American and European psychology's involvement in racist research. Our argument here is that given its reliance on international psychology, it is unlikely that South African psychology would not have been influenced by the nascent racist tendencies evident in international psychology at the beginning of the twentieth century. In some ways then, South African psychologists acted as relays for the preoccupations with "race" and eugenics evidenced by Euro-American psychology during its formative years. As the primary producer of prototypical psychological "knowledge," Euro-American theory and practice was merely reinscribed in South Africa by the majority of South African psychologists that had studied and practiced abroad.

The second reason for this state of affairs relates to the demographics of South African psychology. For much of South African psychology's history blacks were significantly underrepresented in the discipline and profession. Indeed, by the early 1990s, blacks constituted less that 10% of all registered psychologists in South Africa (Baldwin-Ragaven et al., 1999), despite constituting the majority of South Africa's population.[4] Thus, whites were traditionally overrepresented in South African psychology; and indeed, for the better part of the twentieth century, whites almost exclusively authored and practiced the discipline. Given that they were the principle beneficiaries of the racism of the old order it was unlikely that many whites would have been strongly driven to opposing in any meaningful manner the institutionalized racism that came to characterize South Africa. As Seedat (1990) observes, psychology in pre-1990s South Africa was almost exclusively populated by researchers and practitioners that crafted the scope, agenda and methods of the discipline with "white hands" and in their own interests.

Third, even if significant sections of South African psychology would have wanted to expose and oppose the apartheid order, the state had an arsenal of legal deterrents at its disposal to bring significant pressure to bear on those who opposed it. Various histories of the social and medical sciences in South Africa (Baldwin-Ragaven et al., 1999; Duncan et al. 2004; Savage, 1981; Welsh, 1981) are replete with examples of the apartheid state's draconian responses to those who opposed its racist policies. These responses included the banning of literature critical of apartheid racism and the prosecution and relentless persecution of the authors of these texts (Duncan et al.).

Thus, the superstructure of South African psychology was inextricably harnessed to the apartheid project in multiple forms. Many of its agents held key portfolios in the apartheid government (Magwaza, 2001). Its practice tended to privilege the therapeutic servicing of a small white minority over the life-threatening needs of a black majority, and its knowledge was, by and large, both produced and consumed by white interests. In short, psychology and psychological discourse were both instruments and effects of power (Foucault, 1980) in the formulation and consolidation of the

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[4] According to the 1996 South African Census results, 77.4%, of South Africans classified themselves as African, 11% classified themselves as white, and 9% as coloured. Self-classified Indians/Asians represented 2.6% of the overall population (Statistics South Africa, 1998).

oppression of South Africa's majority. South African psychology as a vehicle for knowledge production and a key agent for psychosocial and political regulation through individually centered therapeutic practices was born both as a result, and an extension of, the conditions of possibility for oppressive governance.

Fourth, currently, there appears to be a general reticence in South Africa to deal with the pervasive racism still characterizing this country. This reticence is also evidenced by South African psychology. Elsewhere it is argued that this unwillingness to deal with the racism endemic to our society may be influenced by a sociopsychological need to deny or obliterate memories of the atrocities that litter South Africa's past (Duncan, 2005). More specifically, it is argued that this widespread disciplinary amnesia may perhaps reflect an a posteriori attempt to mitigate the full horror and barbarism of the pre-1994 racist apartheid policies and practices and the sizeable contributions of many psychologists to the production and maintenance of earlier forms of institutionalized racism. Clearly, if the impression could be created that racism is no longer a problem in contemporary South Africa, then it would be reasonable to infer, by extension, that the racism of the pre-1994 period was not as horrendous and enduring in its impact as history unequivocally suggests. Thus, perhaps many South Africans' and more specifically South African psychologists' inability to acknowledge and deal with current instances and processes of racism may be inextricably linked to an inability to acknowledge and deal with their individual and collective pasts (cf. Derrida, 2004).

The question that logically arises here is: how can the continuing effects of the racism that has characterized South African psychology's past be effectively addressed? We believe that a fundamental break with South African psychology's past can only take place in any substantial manner if the significant underrepresentation of black people in South African psychology and particularly psychological research and knowledge production and dissemination is redressed. Furthermore, we believe that this endeavor would be most effective if it takes place within the framework of liberation psychology. The logic of this assumption should become clear in the discussion to follow.

The Role of Liberation Psychology

According to Seedat (1997), liberation psychology should heed the following imperatives in relation to contexts characterized by racism. First, he argues, liberation psychology should be orientated toward the lived experiences of the oppressed. This obviously makes sense, given that one of the primary effects of racism is to silence the victims of the ideology (Van Dijk, 1991).

Second, and related to the previously stated imperative, Seedat (1997) argues that liberation psychology should strive to ensure the centralization of the oppressed in knowledge production. As indicated above, it is our contention that in the context of South Africa, the marginalization and underrepresentation of blacks in the academy played no small role in the conservative slant that South African psychology has

traditionally adopted in relation to the study of racism. This is based on the assumption that given that they were on the receiving end of apartheid racism, black psychologists, if they were significantly represented in South African psychology, are very likely to have contributed to the emergence of a different type of engagement with issues of "race" and racism.

Third, according to Seedat (1997), liberation psychology values theoretical and methodological pluralism. For most of its history, South African psychology has been dominated by a positivist orientation to the study of individual and group phenomena (Cooper et al., 1990). While positivist research obviously has value, it has to be acknowledged that this orientation has through the years been harnessed quite disingenuously by South African psychology to avoid or neutralize the study of racism through systematically presenting essential contextual influences such as history and economics as confounding issues in supposedly objective studies of the South African population and extant racial problems.

The politics of knowledge production and dissemination form a critical thread through all of the above imperatives. Importantly too, as Seedat (1990) argues, the situation where "white academics, irrespective of their class and ideological commitments, continuing to theorize about the oppressed while excluding blacks themselves" are untenable in an antiracist and liberatory psychology agenda (Seedat, p. 39).

In view of the above, it should be clear why liberation psychology offers an appropriate theoretical framework for addressing social problems such as racism, as well as South African psychology's responses to such problems. Below, we present an example of the type of intervention that can be employed to deal in a practical manner with the impact of apartheid racism on scholarship in South African psychology. The intervention had been broadly located within a liberation psychology framework. Before we describe the intervention, however, we wish to note that multiple interventions would be required to definitively address the legacy of South African psychology's racist past. Thus, the following intervention should be seen as one potential intervention among many possibilities.

An Intervention: The Psychology Research and Authorship Development Forum

Cognizant of the abject underrepresentation of blacks in psychology and particularly in psychology publications, the obstacles encountered by blacks wishing to have their work published, as well as the resultant skewed research on and representations of "race" and racism-related phenomena characterizing South African psychology, a group of predominantly black psychologists in the Western Cape in the mid-1990s decided to establish a research and authorship initiative aimed at increasing the representation of blacks in psychology publications in South Africa. This group of psychologists realized that if they were to have any influence on the way in which South African psychology deals with issues of racism and indeed the manner in which South African psychology itself perpetuated the ideology

of racism, then blacks would have to participate in a more meaningful manner in local psychological research and publications. In short, the group realized the importance of black people themselves exerting greater control over the manner in which South African psychology not only dealt with racism but, at a more fundamental level, also how the discipline constructed blacks.

Thus, in June 1995 this group formally established the Psychology Research and Authorship Forum (hereafter referred to as the Forum). The structure of and rationale for the Forum were broadly based on principles similar to those identified by Seedat (1997) as key to emancipatory psychology. In essence, the Forum endeavored to give substance to these principles through increasing and strengthening research and authorship initiatives by black scholars in psychology. The establishment of regional research and publications self-empowerment networks was to constitute the principal means whereby this would be achieved. It was envisaged that the self-empowerment networks would assist black scholars in challenging the ongoing racist tendencies of research in South African psychology, the structural conditions perpetuating extant racialized research, and simultaneously assist in increasing black scholars' research and publications outputs.

As conceptualized within various disciplines within the social sciences, self-empowerment collectives are voluntary structures (usually formed by peers) aimed at mutual assistance and effecting personal as well as social change (De la Rey, 2001; Katz & Bender, in Orford, 1992). The participants in these collectives are normally people who "perceive that their needs [and aspirations] are not, or cannot be met by existing social institutions" (Katz & Bender, in Orford, p. 224). Given that this perception is not simply a consequence of individual inefficacy resulting from a sense of disempowerment, but most frequently also of extant social arrangements, Rissel (1994) argues that empowerment should involve a social action component aimed at dealing with the social conditions which contribute to and structure people's sense of "disempowerment."

While acknowledging the importance of social action in empowerment initiatives, Orford (1992) notes that the benefits of self-empowerment collectives are also linked to their unmistakable capacity to provide a range of social support functions to marginalized individuals and groups who "have special reasons to be in need of them" (p. 225). These functions include the provision of role models, adequate explanations for the marginalization of those seeking membership of self-empowerment groups, ideas about increasing personal and group efficacy and influence, affirming group members' competencies, and increasing the individual and/or the group's sense of control, particularly in relation to self-representation (De la Rey, 2001; Nichols & Jenkinson, 1991; Orford; Smith, 1995). Theoretically, therefore, self-empowerment collectives could address many of the obstacles that are perceived to prevent particularly black social scientists from becoming full participants in processes of knowledge production and dissemination in South African psychology; and by extension they could facilitate a shift in how South Africa psychology has traditionally engaged with issues of "race" and racism.

In keeping with its belief that authorship capacity building cannot really take place in abstracto, the Forum over the last 12 years initiated five major publishing

initiatives to drive its research and authorship self-empowerment collectives: the first was a textbook-writing project, the second was a project aimed at providing "emerging" black authors with the opportunity and the necessary skills to have their work published in a mainstream psychology journal, the third involved the writing of a volume based on research dealing with the impact of "race" and racism on knowledge production in South African psychology, the fourth was a special issue of a psychology journal reflecting on attempts to transform South African psychology, and the fifth involved the writing of an interdisciplinary volume examining social differences and various forms of oppression.

All five of these initiatives were fairly successful, both in terms of product outputs and content. The first initiative resulted in the publication of a textbook on human development, namely, *Contemporary Issues in Human Development: A South African Focus* (De la Rey, Duncan, Shefer, & van Niekerk, 1997). Written from the perspective of scholars located at the margins of South African academia, this volume included the work of nine black writers (out of a total of 22 contributors), six of whom could be considered "emerging" or "nonestablished" authors. Three of the four editors of the book were black and two were women.

The second initiative resulted in the publication of a special issue of the *South African Journal of Psychology* titled, *Black Scholarship* that examined the obstacles to research and publications faced by black and women academics in South Africa. The issue, which appeared in 1997, included the work of 15 black South African psychologists (out of a total of 20 contributors), at least 11 of whom can be considered "emerging" authors. All seven of the editors were black and two were women.

The third initiative resulted in a volume entitled, "*Race,*" *Racism and Knowledge Production in South African Psychology* (Duncan et al., 2001). This volume, which was published in 2001, examined the role of psychology in the development of the ideology of racism in South Africa. The volume included the work of ten authors, eight of whom are black and four women. While all four the editors were black, unfortunately only one of the editors was a woman.[5]

The fourth initiative resulted in the publication of a special issue of the South African Journal of Psychology, titled, *South African psychology: Reviewing the first decade of democracy.*

Finally, the fifth initiative produced a volume titled *Discourses on Difference, Discourses on Oppression* (Duncan et al. 2002). This volume examined the intersection between the increasing valorization of, inter alia, cultural, identity, language, ethnic "differences," and the reinscription of "race" in the social sciences in South Africa. Twenty-two of the 25 authors whose work is contained in this book are black and nine are women.

While the above-mentioned projects led to the publication of a series of refereed publications, it is important to note here that the publications in and of themselves were infinitely less important than the fact that they served to open crucial debates

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[5] While the Forum's primary objective is to address racialiszed patterns of authorship, it simultaneously endeavours to address other asymmetries (particularly gender imbalances) in authorship trends.

on issues of "race" and racism and very importantly, the representation of blacks in South African psychology. Additionally, it is important to note that all the authors who had contributed to the publications that ensued from these projects subsequently continued to publish in a range of formats. Very importantly too, many of these authors proceeded to produced key works that influenced the study of racism, the construction of people of color in South African psychology and the emergence of a psychology of liberation in South African psychology in significant ways. These include Cheryl de la Rey, Adelaide Magwaza, Cheryl Potgieter, Mohamed Seedat, Garth Stevens, Shahnaaz Suffla, and Tamara Shefer (see for example, De la Rey & Duncan, 2004; Magwaza, 2001; Potgieter, 2002; Seedat, 1997; Stevens, 2001, 2003; Suffla, Stevens, & Seedat, 2001; Shefer, Shabalala, & Townsend, 2004). While these texts were certainly not simply a result of the Forum's activities, we would like to believe that the Forum created a space in which critical psychology texts on "race" and racism could be published with a greater measure of confidence in a context that was and, to a certain extent, remains fairly hostile to a liberation agenda.

Conclusion

Whatever the debates on the researcher and author functions in the modern production of knowledge and texts (Foucault, 1977), there can be little doubt that the "white-hands" that had both crafted and sustained South African psychology formed part of a broader set of oppressive political conditions that had incubated the discipline. However, as our discussion has shown, the systematic exclusion of the majority of South Africans from the development of the theory and practice of the discipline was integral to the maintenance of such conditions in a number of ways.

By virtue of its elevation to the mouthpiece of the social sciences focusing on psychosocial issues in the early 1920s, South African psychology provided the scientific lexicon to justify the then government's prioritization of the systematic negativization of blacks and the social, political, and economic advantaging of a white minority at the expense of an already oppressed majority, setting in motion the wheels of separate development, the ideological lodestar of apartheid oppression. As a consequence of this, the institutional exclusion of the majority from public and academic psychological life fostered the further canonization of white theorists and individual-level therapeutic practitioners. Together, these fundamental conditions estranged black voices and black hands from the very modes of material and institutional access required to contest the confines of its knowledge and practices. Research and authorship were keys to the disruption of this dialectic. The mobilization of black voices and hands towards a more equitable production of psychological knowledge at the tipping point of South African history is paving the way for a more critical psychology, a space in which the discipline is increasingly being compelled to acknowledge its erstwhile complicity with racism and apartheid, as well as reflect on its potential to anchor a psychology of liberation.

It is through such authorship initiatives that South African psychology is now fashioned by South African rather than white hands, suggesting that the systematic barriers to full participation in the knowledge economy can be collectively engaged and ultimately overcome.

However, as recent trends in the discipline in reclaiming various "race-ist" constructs (such as ethnicity, as a new and covert marker for "race") and methodologies for patently conservative or regressive ends indicate, a psychology of liberation will inevitably remain merely an ideal in contexts of institutionalized inequality. So, rather than harnessing a psychology of liberation toward any utopian vision, our South African example demands that we cast it as an ideological platform from which oppression in its inevitable multiplicities should be perpetually engaged.

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Immigration and Identity: The Ongoing Struggles for Liberation

Christopher C. Sonn and Raylene C. Lewis

Immigration and Identity: The Ongoing Struggles for Liberation

> *"Each life represents a unique narrative which reveals how we cope with and combines within specific socio-historical circumstances, the components of our personal and collective history, how we build our personal and social identities, and how we make use of the freedom the socio-historical environment leaves us" (Apfelbaum, 2001, p. 172).*

In this chapter, we draw on our research with our community of origin to deepen our understanding of the multiple responses to the immigration-settlement processes within a broader context of race relations in Australia. One study explored the notion of sense of community and its role in the settlement of South African immigrants in Australia (Sonn, 2002; Sonn & Fisher, 1996, 2003, 2005) and the other explored the ways in which South African women are negotiating identity through the dimensions of race, and ethnicity in Australia (Lewis, 2008). Key aims are to highlight the dynamic and complex nature of social identity construction and to clarify ways in which people go about constructing subjectivities in the new country. Specifically, we explore these issues by bringing into focus a liberation perspective that considers issues of power and histories of colonization and oppression in understanding individual and community responses in new contexts.

[1] This chapter is based on an earlier piece titled: "*Multiple Belongings?: Reflecting on the Challenges of Reconstructing Apartheid Imposed Identities in Australia after Immigration* that appear in Stevens, G., Franchi, V., & Swart, T. (Eds.). (2006). *A race against time: Psychology and the challenges of deracialisation in South Africa* (pp. 335–348), published by the University of South Africa Press. Small portions are redeveloped with the permission of UNISA press.

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Immigration has been a central feature of many countries for centuries. People choose to leave their home countries for many different reasons. Some choose to leave; others are forced. For many there are strong social, political, and economic pressures including oppression based on race and religion, which impel them to seek different futures for themselves and subsequent generations in new communities. The experiences of immigration and settlement are ongoing, and often involve dislocation and the loss of taken for granted resources and systems of meaning. It also means gaining new opportunities for participation and resources for living. In the new country, people are faced with the challenges of settlement, remaking lives and integrating their valued identities and experiences into the new context. This may mean that valued social identities constructed in the home community may be challenged and reconstructed in the new community because there are different social and cultural narratives that position self and others, and a different history of intergroup relations.

There is a strong body of work that has contributed to an understanding of the challenges that follow immigration and contact and subsequent settlement (Berry, 1997; Bulhan, 1980, 1985; Tajfel, 1981). Central to this work are questions of identity, in particular the shifts that occur because of acculturation, responses that flow from continued contact between groups (Graves, 1967). Some responses include assimilation, integration, marginalization, and separation and these reflect different levels of identification with the home and new communities (Berry, 1997, 2001). These models have been useful in highlighting the challenges of settlement and the varied outcomes that may follow. However, they have also been criticized because of the tendency to rely on static conceptualizations of culture and using Western culture as the point for comparison (Bhatia & Ram, 2001; Hermans & Kempen, 1998; Sinha & Kao, 1997). Among others, Bhatia and Ram highlighted the fact that this orientation does not give adequate attention to issues of power and histories of colonization and resistance, which may be central to understanding the multiple ways in which communities and individuals may respond to new and changing contexts.

The writing about colonialism and the psychology of oppression provides insight into implications of cultural domination for social identity development and the various ways in which individuals and communities respond following change (Bartky, 1990; Bulhan, 1985; Fanon, 1967a, 1967b; Memmi, 1967, 1984). Fanon's writing has been central to conceptualizing the complex responses among the oppressed in contexts of dominance and subjugation. There are different phases in the process of political awareness, including immersion, romanticization, and liberation (see also Bulhan's, 1985, writing developing Fanon's work). In this work, identity is seen as socially constructed; that is, it is produced within specific social, cultural, economic, and historical contexts and people have differential access to identity resources because of power relations (Hall, 2000). From this vantage point ethnic, racial, gender, and other dimensions of diversity are constructed and negotiated in specific sociohistorical contexts. Because of sociohistorical processes and dynamics of oppression, some communities' symbolic and cultural systems of meaning are privileged while others are devalued and silenced. Moane (2003) has highlighted the mechanisms of control in colonialism and patriarchy used to oppressed groups based on race, ethnicity, and gender. Therefore, it is important to find ways of understanding

the complex ways in which people and broader systems are connected, and to explicate the ways in which people are able to disrupt oppressive ideologies and narratives and how they create identities within different contexts.

In this chapter, we want to explore the issue of immigrant settlement; in particular the challenges for social identity construction, by drawing on different theoretical resources that can help articulate a liberation perspective. We build on our research with South African immigrants to Australia to explore the multiple ways in which people construct social identities within a new context of race relations. We are specifically interested in exploring the ways in which people identify in Australia, the different social, cultural, and symbolic resources that informs this identification, and the possibilities for liberation practices. Therefore, we are dealing with the issue of social identity construction in the context of intergroup relations from the perspective of immigrants to Australia.

A Liberation Perspective: Power, Identity, and Critical Race Perspectives

In different countries there are many who are concerned with engaging in research and practice that is aimed at transforming and disrupting oppression based on race, class, gender, and ability and promoting social justice (Burton & Kagan, 2005; Christie, 2006; Martín-Baró, 1994; Montero, 1998, 2005, 2007; Seedat, 1997). For example, Montero (2004) brought together three ways in which psychology has been conceptualized to respond to the needs of people in Latin America. She compares and contrasts these psychologies, their mutual influences, and how they are configured, and she distils a neoparadigmatic way to respond to the Latin American context and societies. In Australia, there are also different disciplines that have contributed to understanding the immigrant settlement processes. Here we want to elaborate some theoretical and conceptual resources that are drawn from critical race theory (Ladson-Billings, 2002, 2003) and race and gender perspectives (Hooks, 1990), critical whiteness and feminist studies (Fine, Weis, Powell, & Mun Wong, 1997; Frankenberg, 1997; Hutardo & Stewart, 1997), and liberation and critical psychology (Martín-Baró; Parker, 2005; Sloan, 2000) that have been central to our evolving understanding of the immigrant settlement process and potential for liberation. Below we describe some of these concepts and their connections with a liberation perspective.

Teo (1998) has argued that the notion of power is central to disrupting oppression and the advancement of liberation. He draws on both material and representational understandings of power in developing a theory for liberation. Power is not something that is fixed with an individual; it is constituted within relations between people within broader historical, social, cultural, economic, and political contexts (Martín-Baró, 1994; Parker, 2005). From this perspective, in different societies social group memberships, based on race, gender, or ethnicity, afford social identities and differential privilege and power within particular sociohistorical circumstances.

Here power is produced in and through cultural and symbolic means, which are differentially distributed because of different histories including colonization and ongoing dynamics of oppression. The differential access to resources for living can manifest in everyday interactions.

Those who have written about liberation perspectives have highlighted the role of ideology in maintaining and obscuring relations of power (Martín-Baró, 1994; Montero, 1990, 2007). Ideology is a central notion for liberation perspectives and comprises "stories, narratives, discourses, as well as practices which construct subject positions for both rulers and ruled" (Foster, 2004, pp. 1–7). Consequently, from a liberation perspective there is a focus on deconstructing ideologies, narratives, and resources for identity that are negative and engaging in processes of reconstruction in order to promote liberation and opportunities to self-determine identities and futures (Freire,1972; Watts & Serrano-Garcia, 2003). Deconstruction is central to the disruption of internalized oppression because it is concerned with disrupting negative social and cultural scripts and taken-for-granted social and political understandings that inform identities. Through this process critical consciousness is raised, and what has been seen as natural and taken-for-granted is problematized. The multiple resources, ideologies, and narratives that inform our own social identities – that is, our multiple subjectivities are brought into focus (Freire, 1972, 1994; Mama, 1995; Montenegro, 2002).

As part of the broader movement to promote liberation and disrupt racialized oppression, critical race theorists strongly argue that issues of race and racism continue to be central to understanding intergroup relations that have been characterized by racism and oppression and continuing social inequity (Omi & Winant, 1994; Twine & Warren, 2000). Ladson-Billings (2002, 2003) writes that critical race theory often takes the position that race and racism is a normal occurrence. A key aim from the critical race perspective is to make visible ways in which racialized oppression is reproduced through cultural, social, and symbolic means and the implications for living, and to disrupt cultural hegemony. In efforts to disrupt oppression there is also a focus on valuing and producing knowledge and different ways of knowing by those who are marginalized that centers their experiences and voices. This is in line with the strong body of work in the area of feminist methodologies. In this regard, there is strong attention given to decolonization and forms of praxis that interrogates and transforms oppressive practices at multiple levels including processes of knowledge production (Smith, 1999).

Critical Whiteness Studies and Critical Race Theory

The area of critical whiteness studies potentially complements the agenda of critical race theory and the liberation agenda because of its focus on interrogating and transforming dominance and privilege including the intersections between race, gender, and ethnicity (Fine et al., 1997; Frankenberg, 1997; Green, Sonn, & Matsebula, 2007; Moreton-Robinson, 2004). Frankenberg (1993) wrote that whiteness can be

broadly defined as "…the production and reproduction of dominance rather than subordination, normativity rather than marginality, and privilege rather than disadvantage" (Frankenberg, p. 236). In Australia, whiteness is something that places white people in dominant positions, grants white people unfair privileges, and this dominance and privilege is not always visible to white people. Nicalocopoulas and Vassilacopoulas (2004) write that "whiteness is historically and socially constructed through processes that at once position Indigenous peoples as non-Australian and designated migrant groups as what we might call 'perpetual foreigners within the Australian state'…." (p. 32). Although whiteness cannot be separated from hegemony, the relations of power within whiteness are not monolithic, complete, or uniform (Frankenberg; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1998). Whiteness is multifaceted, situationally specific, and reinscribed around the changing meanings of race in larger society. There is no single metanarrative of whiteness, rather the meaning of whiteness varies in relation to context and history, as well as in relation to gender, class, sexuality, region, and political philosophy.

Some have written about whiteness studies as a different lens for pedagogy in the context of Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations in the Australian context (Aveling, 2004a, 2004b) and for exploring the workings of power in the context of race relations and reconciliation (Green & Sonn, 2005, 2006). Others (Hage, 1998) have looked at whiteness in relation to immigration and ethnic community formation in Australia. In Australia, many ethnic groups are labeled black, often against an implicit, unnamed, and different "white" dominant culture and sometimes Indigenous Australians. Thus, "race" is important; even if only because it is part of the everyday understandings of ethnic and Indigenous others. Some have commented about the responses of "so-called" mainstream Australians to refugees (Hage, 1998; Pettman, 1992; Vasta, 2000). These authors highlight the growing exclusionary responses and cultural racism that is visible in media representations of Aboriginal people, refugees and voluntary immigrants. Hage (1998) argued that there are deeper fantasies of a white Australia rooted in the past that persists and is reflected in "white" Australian responses to a rapidly changing community. There is a yearning for what once was and the loss of an idealized community because of multiculturalism. Similarly, Vasta suggests that immigration has meant a disruption of a hegemonic national identity that has often resulted in resistance expressed as racism against newcomers. This identity is structured into dominance, into a taken-for-granted and normalized "white" Australian identity. Arguably, this deeper racial formation (Omi & Winant, 1994) has implications for immigrant communities settling and remaking communities as well as the host community in Australia.

Whiteness, Critical Race and a Liberation Perspective

The work in the areas of whiteness and critical race theory can contribute to a liberation perspective because it focuses on understanding and disrupting the cultural and symbolic means through which race and racism are produced and how they

shape our subjectivities. There is a shared concern for promoting ways of engaging in research and practice that is transformative of oppression. This includes engaging and promoting epistemologies and methodologies that have the capacity to promote voice and that give legitimacy to lived experiences and many groups who are excluded because of race, gender, class or ethnicity (Seedat, 1997; Sonn & Green, 2006). This is part of the business of a liberation perspective as well as peace psychology (Christie, 2006) – to explicate the embodiment of power in the context of intergroup relations as part of the process of challenging oppression.

Our research in the area of immigration and settlement has allowed us to explore the multiple ways in which individuals and communities respond. The experiences of dislocation that follow immigration can be profound; identities and many taken-for-granted sources of meaning and support are disrupted. The process of identity construction is challenging and continuous. It involves negotiating aspects of the home and the new community, including histories of race relations and colonization. For many, the process of immigration entails liberation, new opportunities for belonging and fulfilment; it can also mean ongoing oppression because of the nature and history of race relations in the new context. In the following sections, we will explore the challenges and complexities of immigration and settlement from the perspective of South Africans living in Australia.

South Africans in Australia

Recent statistics paint a picture of Australia as very diverse, both culturally and linguistically. Thomas (2004) highlighted Australia's diversity stating that people who live here come from 232 different countries, that we speak 193 different languages, and that Indigenous people have lived here for thousands of years. Among other immigrants, Australia has provided a destination for many who left South Africa to make a new life elsewhere. South African immigration to Australia reached a peak in 1986–1987, decreased after that, but increased again in 1992–1993 and in subsequent years (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1999, 2001). There were 79,000 South Africa-born persons in Australia according to the 2001 Census. However, there is no indication of the different "ethnic" groups that make up this number.

Census figures of 2001 shows that 11.2% of the South African population of 44.8 million classified themselves as "Colored," 79% as Black African, 10.4% as White, and 2.6% as Indian/Asian (Statistics South Africa, 2003). According to Yarwood (2006), and others, the ambiguous place of those who were once classified colored must be understood within a complex history of race relations stretching more than 300 years since European arrival. Following Cheryl Hendricks, she writes that:

> Coloured identity is a complex, historically located identity that stems from the process of slavery, genocide, rape and perceived miscegenation. Certainly, all formerly colonised countries have produced a racially creolised population, but because of the hardening of this category through the racial classification of Apartheid, coloureds are unique in many respects (Yarwood, p. 49).

The "colored" community was defined under Apartheid, which included the cornerstone legislation: Population Registration Act, Immorality, Mixed Marriages, and the Group Areas Acts that were introduced in the late 1940s and early 1950s. The Group Areas Act resulted in people being forcibly removed from areas reclassified for whites. With the implementation of the Apartheid system, the group was assigned a racial identity label and status that separated them from black and white groups. After the implementation of the Population Registration Act (1950), "race" was defined according to physical appearance and social acceptance or rejection. The institutionalized identity label, "colored," and the accompanying racial status in the hierarchy, signified the political construction of the "colored" group. It meant the creation of a heterogeneous, nationally subjugated group. In many ways the label had a homogenizing effect, masking the multiple layers of social, cultural, political, and material sources that textured the subjectivities of people who were positioned as "colored."

Research (Sonn, 1995; Sonn & Fisher, 2003) with South African immigrants to Australia suggested that participants responded differentially to the imposed identity label and status. For some there was a sense of being forced to be in-between the black and the white community, to have "a middle of the road existence," as one participant remarked. Others resisted and rejected the identity label arguing that it was used for political ends, to divide the black community. Importantly, participants also indicated the significant role various political projects, such as the Black Consciousness Movement in the 1970s played in raising awareness about Apartheid realities and transforming racial identities. These multiple responses were context-bound and reflected multiple ways for negotiating Apartheid. Moreover, those participants' responses highlighted the contested nature of both the label and status and accentuated the multiplicity of responses and identifications within this heterogeneous group.

The demise of Apartheid has arguably meant a more significant change in terms of the removal of the racist legislation if not the material, social, cultural, and structural realities that resulted because of the system and subsequent adaptations during and post-Apartheid for many who were positioned and constructed themselves as "colored" (Erasmus, 2001; Yarwood, 2006). There are ongoing discussions about the nature and existence of colored and other identities in the Rainbow Nation and the multiple ways in which people are responding to the removal of imposed identities and nation building in the post Apartheid South Africa (Erasmus; Grunebaum & Robins, 2001; Stevens, Franchi, & Swart, 2006).

The transition in South Africa, immigration to Australia, and settling and living in Australia have presented new challenges for identity construction and community making. In section "The Complexities of Identity Construction Post-1994 and After Migration" we explore the complex ways immigrants from South Africa talk about the meaning and content of social identities and the dynamics of identity construction within a broader context of race relations. The data that we use for illustrative purposes comes from two projects; in one we investigated sense of community in the settlement of South African immigrants to Australia (Sonn, 1995) and a current project investigating the experiences of second generation South African

women living in Australia (Lewis, 2008). There are no studies that we could find in Australia that have specifically explored the experiences of South African women. The current research study was inspired by Lewis's own lived experiences as a black woman in Australia and the work of Amina Mama (1995) who explored subjectivity of black women in the UK. Participants in Lewis's project were interviewed about their understandings of their community of origin and their ethnic self-definitions in Australia. Most of the women arrived in Australia during adolescence or in their early to middle 20s, and some arrived in their early to middle childhood years. They have all lived in Australia since 1985 and on average have lived here for 17 years at the time of interviewing. All except for one person from Johannesburg came from Durban.

The Complexities of Identity Construction Post 1994 and After Migration

The label "colored" was officially removed with the demise of the Apartheid system and this has ushered in new opportunities for identity and community construction. Several authors have written about the complexities of the liberation processes and have raised questions about the possibility of shedding Apartheid related understandings of self and others (Erasmus, 2001; Stevens et al., 2006). For many people there are ongoing challenges for belonging and identification following the liberation and reconciliation processes in South Africa. For some there is the ongoing ambiguity implied in the position of colored, they are neither "white" nor "black" – they are both.

Others are reconnecting with indigenous identities such as Khoisan (Indigenous people popularly known as Bushmen); some are identifying as black; and some are using "bruin people" (meaning brown people) as a category for self-definition (Yarwood, 2006). And there are others still who assert colored as different wanting to hold onto privilege. These responses are textured by the different social, economic, and other resources that people are afforded and they function to achieve different outcomes. Among other things, the responses reflect issues of belonging, maintenance of and loss of privilege, and the legacy of colonization and Apartheid and the new possibilities in South Africa (Sonn & Fisher, 2003).

Moving Identities: Reconstructing Identities in Australia

For those who have immigrated and settled in Australia there are different challenges and opportunities for identity construction. Immigration and settlement meant change and challenges, including the racial formations (Omi & Winant, 1994) in the new country. In Australia, there are different discourses that work to position "others" in relation to a powerful white majority, the dominant ethnic

group. Here the externally imposed label "colored" is disrupted. There is a shift from being labeled "colored" to being positioned as "black" in terms of the discourses of race. The meanings and implications of being constructed and constructing oneself as "colored" and black in South Africa was evident.

Lewis (2008) explored the way in which South African female immigrants who were classified as so-called "coloreds" in South Africa constructed their subjectivities in the Australian context. She was specifically interested in gaining an understanding of the social, cultural, and historical resources that the women used in the process of constructing their identities. Her findings suggest that some women who spoke about being identified as black in Australia, but these women did not themselves self-identify as black. Rather they described a kind of resignation or acquiescence to being identified this way by outsiders. In this context the meaning and significance of the label "Colored" became problematic in the face of the dominant discourse of the white and black race relations. This is reflected in the following excerpt:

RAYLENE: In terms of yourself, have you ever seen yourself as a Black woman?
SAMANTHA: As a Black person…I always joke and say "yeah I'm Black" and stuff, but I mean again it doesn't bother me if someone says "ah she's Black" cause I know that a lot of people don't know how we got classed, so basically I mean I am looked at as Black
RAYLENE: Yeah, but you yourself, do you see yourself as Black
SAMANTHA: No like I say, I'm just me. Yeah!

There are multiple dynamics evident in Samantha's response that reflects ways in which she is engaging issues of identity. She reframes the question of the interviewer and disrupts the signification of being a woman. She also does not self-identify as black, but says that she is positioned by others as black. Blackness is outside her identification, something other people attribute to her. At some level she is not aware of her multiple positions and the possibilities for self-determining those identities.

Race and racism continue to be significant because they structure subjectivities for many ethnic and indigenous "others." In Australia color, appearance, and "culture" are markers for racism and exclusion. Many different ethnic groups, mostly based on skin color, have been labeled "black" and "other" at different historical moments (Sonn & Fisher, 2005). In fact, Indigenous people are labeled black and racial ideologies, which positioned Indigenous people as inferior, have played a central role in the colonization of these peoples in Australia (Hollinsworth, 2006). Many authors (Dodson, 2003; Pettman, 1992) have written about the different policies and practices that were developed to deal with Aboriginal people that reflected these inherent understandings. Australia also promoted policies at different times that privileged "white" migration up until the 1970s when there was move toward multiculturalism. The discourse of multiculturalism shifted the focus from notions of race and emphasized culture and ethnicity.

This is part of historical context within which to understand practices of exclusion and "othering" against an implicit, unnamed, and different "white" dominant culture. White European culture and worldviews are often taken-for-granted and used as an implicit standard for comparison (Jones, 1997). Those who belong to

this group are typically not asked to reflect on their cultural identities because their culture is the norm, the dominant group. Thus, whiteness is often invisible and members often blind to the privileges that they have by virtue of their group membership. The invisibility of whiteness is what makes it so powerful; people are rendered blind to the ways in which culturally sanctioned social and psychological practices can work in an exclusionary and often colonizing manner. This is where the strategies of conscientization and social identity construction based on a critical understanding of dynamics of oppression are central to the settlement process.

In her study with South African women living in Australia Lewis (2008) found that some of her participants spoke of not being able to identify as Australian because they were not born in Australia, and white Australians and other outsiders to the South African community never identifying them as Australian because of their physical appearance. Those participants who self-identified as Australian simultaneously held the hyphenated identity of South African-Australian, or identified as South African-born Australians. This hyphenated identification was used when the women were called on by outsiders, both in Australia and when traveling abroad to further explain their background or origins, because their physical appearance was used as a marker to position the women as ethnic other. A participant expressed this issue in the following manner:

> BEVERLY: No I never say that…. I'm only just thinking that now that you're asking me. I've never said like "ah I'm Australian" because they look at me like, well you don't look White or whatever, you obviously come from elsewhere, so I am Australian, but no I wasn't born here… but I've always said that I'm South African. Because like people ask you that like, "ah you kiwi" and I say no I'm South African. But yeah, I live here, I'm an Australian resident, yeah that's an interesting question, but I always do say I was born in South Africa…

Beverly echoes the complexity of negotiating identity and belonging in and as Australian. For her, place of birth affords a right to identify, and even though she also sees herself as Australian, the assumed power of white people to determine belonging is evident. For participants, local shared understandings about who is Australian and who is outside play an important role in constructing subjectivities. These deep understandings are rooted in notions of race and the way in which many Australians continue to construct the nation as stereotypically white and Anglo-Celtic (Hage, 1998; Zevallos, 2003). These understandings do have implications for immigrants constructing communities and identities, especially the extent to which these communities can belong.

Skin color and appearance are not the only way in which race structures experiences and subjectivities for different groups in Australia. Some have commented about the responses of "so-called" mainstream Australians to refugees, variously labeled "boat people," "illegals," and "queue jumpers" (Hage, 1998; Pettman, 1992). Muslim refugees from the Middle East have also been constructed as other. These representations of people seeking asylum is a means of othering and excluding people. Hage (1998) argued that there are deeper fantasies of a white Australia rooted in the past that persist and are reflected in "white" Australian responses to a community that is rapidly changing because of immigration, and other processes

related to globalization. He argued that "whiteness" in Australia is expressed in terms of white people's assumed sense of belonging to and participation in the imagined nation and their control over "others" feelings of belonging and participation. There are those who feel that they are empowered to manage the space and those who are managed. For the South Africans in these two studies and in other communities, race remains significant because of whiteness, and because their social locations in Australia matter in different ways.

Multiple Resources for Identification

As noted in section "Moving Identities: Reconstructing Identities in Australia" and reflected in the literature on immigration, for most people identities constructed in the home community are often disrupted following migration. As part of the process of settlement there is the challenge of constructing identities in Australia. Sonn (1995) surveyed 123 South African immigrants who grew up during Apartheid and were so-called "colored" about sense of community, community involvement, and identification. Forty-five percent of the participants reported they were from the Durban area, Forty one percent said they were from the Cape Town area, and the rest named Port Elizabeth and Johannesburg as cities in which they lived before emigration. Participants indicated that they often socialized with other South Africans in social and sporting clubs and through extended family networks. In response to questions about identification, it was found that identity labels namely South African, Australian, "colored," and black were used by participants to signify self. Most people identified themselves as South African (66%) instead of using the label "colored." We did not find a systematic difference between how males and females engaged the labels and this warrants further investigation. South African and South African-Australian signify an ethnic identification and are intelligible in terms of Australia's discourses of multiculturalism and the notions of ethnicity and culture that are central to this framework. The rationale for using South African was because it signified a shared place of origin, heritage, and country of birth.

Immigration brings into play different resources that are important in the construction of identities. In Australia, "colored" has a different meaning – as in South Africa it is negative and relates to efforts to assimilate Aboriginal people of mixed ancestry (Reynolds, 2005). The label "colored" is contested and mostly rejected in favor of South African and Australian as markers for self. There are some who use it and arguably the aim is not to reproduce racism, but its use may unintentionally have that effect. It does so because at some level it remains a product of colonialism and of the Apartheid ideology, which may find expression in social relations in the new context. However, in this context it does not carry the same meaning or the relative symbolic power that it had in the South African context. Here it is not imposed; it is used internally, as a signifier of a shared story, and some people choose to use it.

Some use the label “colored” and have come to see it as natural; they have become habituated (Wolf, 1986) as evidenced in comments such as: “This is just what I am” or “deep down I know I am ‘colored’” even though they don’t like the label. Others make the connection back to the fact that they have parents or grandparents who are from different ethnic groups. For them, to say they are “colored” means being of “mixed” ancestry. For example, a participant in Lewis’s (2008) research stated that:

> YVETTE: Well if someone asks me, I’d say Coloured, and when they look puzzled, which they always do because not a lot of people, like, Coloured what’s that? I just explain that basically it stems from one of my ancestors being Black and one being White and it’s of mixed race. Yeah, a Coloured woman. I just normally I just go, I say Coloured and then I go to explain well its from Black it stems from a Black person and a White person.

For Yvette there are multiple resources that influence her self-identification including her knowledge of her history in South Africa and knowledge of the meanings of race in Australia. It appears that racial mixing taints blackness more than it does whiteness reflecting historically constructed ideas of white supremacy (Perkins, 2005).

The complex processes of social identity construction are dynamic and context dependent. Race labels such as “colored” are either displaced, rejected, or are used by people in very specific circumstances. The use of multiple identifications to speak about self and about being South African immigrants in Australia was also evident in Lewis’s (unpublished) work. For many, identity is situated, negotiated in context; they use different markers for self, depending on the context (Lykes & Mallona, 1997). The identifications used include South African, Australian, Black, and “colored.” Some of the women said they want to just be seen as people and not use markers that are racialized or ethicized.

As part of her research, Lewis also explored race, ethnicity, and gender as interlocking structures in the lives and experiences of the women. The women spoke about their lives as “Colored” women being a stifling one, constrained and limited under the system of Apartheid. Migration to Australia and their experiences of living here are viewed as providing opportunities for personal growth and development, and a chance to try to reach ones full potential. Migration is seen by the women to have provided opportunities to escape what was perceived as stifling gendered expectations of living, and the adoption of alternative self-selected fulfilling ways of being. They talked about the stifling expectations and included the fact they were not expected to proceed beyond the level of high school and if they did go beyond that the opportunities were confined to specific careers. The women also spoke about the division of labor within families and most duties within the home falling to women. Some also mentioned the issue of alcohol abuse and domestic violence in their communities of origin. Upon reflecting about how their lives would have been had they stayed, they often mentioned that they may have had a child at a much younger age. The women felt that migration meant a change in life chances including access to social and economic opportunities as well as a shift in cultural scripts that work to oppress women. Lewin (2003) investigated identity making of Anglo-Indian women in Western Australia and reported similar findings

with respect to women. She described that migration and living in Australia has provided increased opportunities for personal development and reduced constraints on women in such areas as workforce entry and occupational choice.

The process of immigration may reflect the search for different life opportunities, often for future and subsequent generations. It is a difficult process that is not without sacrifices, but it also presents an opportunity for the construction of social identities in a new context. Arguably, the reconstruction of imposed identities and retelling of histories that takes place as part of the migration-settlement process involves reworking identities and subjectivities within a different social, political, and historical context. Expatriates have been able to draw on different markers for self and others, those that are part of the new social and cultural context, and are producing and reproducing cultural practices and identities in their new context.

However, what may still be required is the retelling of pre-Apartheid history. For many people, identity and memory starts and ends with Apartheid. As Yarwood (2006) has noted, there is a much longer history that provides the context for understanding responses post-Apartheid. The post-Apartheid period has brought in a new freedom for self-definition. Yet, this process is not unproblematic because transformation and disruption of identities and creation of identities will require speaking about them, about race, ethnicity, and Apartheid and pre-Apartheid South Africa. Martín-Baró (1994) stated that: "The recovery of historical memory supposes the reconstruction of models of identification that, instead of chaining and caging people, open up the horizon for them, toward their liberation and fulfillment." (p. 30). This is a challenging task because so much of the social historical reality has been about disenfranchisement and oppression that devalued other cultural forms relative to a superior and dominant white group. And as Durrheim and Mtose (2006) have shown, even though black people speak positively about there black identities there is still a tendency to use the discursive resources and language of white supremacy. Others (Ndletyana, 2006) have highlighted problematic issues inherent in claiming authentic black identities as based on culture. According to Ndletyana, this agenda may inadvertently reproduce the essentializing practices characteristic of imperialism.

This work to date, and the developments in South Africa and in Australia in terms of race relations, presents interesting challenges to understanding social identity and community construction in "postcolonial" contexts. The recovery of historical memory is not about retrieving a romantic past. It is about knowing the historical conditions that are central to our subjectivities and to create spaces for participation and opportunities for constructing new discourses and conditions for the oppressed and excluded to self-determine identities (Hook, 2005). As we see it, decolonization includes finding ways of thinking beyond dualisms and engaging the complex intersections of dimensions of diversity including engaging with dominance and privilege (Sonn & Green, 2006). This is where the whiteness literature has been useful because it as allowed us to explore practices through which many immigrant groups are "othered," constructed as multicultural ethnics, in relation to an unexamined whiteness from our vantage points (Hurtardo & Stewart, 1997).

Summary and Conclusion

In this chapter we sought to articulate a liberation perspective to explore the issue of immigration and settlement. We used our work with a specific group of immigrants, people who were historically "so-called colored" in South Africa to explicate the ongoing challenges for liberation and self-determination, for this community and others who have left their home countries. In our view the strong body of writing in the area of acculturation, which in some ways has dominated understandings of cultural change processes in psychological research, has significant limitations because it does not adequately deal with issues of power and oppression. The writing in the psychology of oppression and liberation brings into focus the issues of power and identity that are central considerations for a liberation perspective.

We describe some of the theoretical and conceptual resources that we have drawn from different disciplines that have helped us formulate a position to advance a liberation perspective. These resources include an epistemological orientation that views identities as socially constructed within specific social, cultural, and historical circumstances and that the social, cultural, economic, and symbolic resources for identity construction are differentially distributed because of different histories including colonization. Therefore, some communities' ways of being, knowing and doing are taken for granted and others are silenced and excluded. This has implications for social identity construction. A liberation perspective is concerned with explicating those ideologies and systems of dominance and oppression and identifying practices that promotes liberation and self-determination.

Making Visible and Challenging Issues of Race and Race Privilege

A liberation perspective requires that we consider the experiences of immigrant communities in the context of its own histories and the history of race relations in the new country. For examples, in Australia and South Africa, race has played a significant role in shaping the experiences of both black and white communities. But, the dynamics are different. In South Africa, white people represented a numerical minority that held power, until the demise of the Apartheid system. In Australia, "whiteness" is reflected in the dominance of Anglo-celtic systems and ways of being (Hage, 1998). The notion of whiteness can extend the liberation perspective because it is concerned with making visible the taken for granted nature of "race" privilege in different contexts and how this privilege is expressed and embodied in everyday practices. By drawing on this writing we do not solely focus on the experiences of settlement and social identity construction from the vantage point of settling communities, but we also bring into focus the host community and the ways in which this community responds to newcomers and protect its privilege. These strategies of privilege protection can be expressed through racism and racialized

exclusion, which have implications for immigrant community belonging. Zevallos (2003) have shown that people Latin American background (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and El Salvador) identify as Latin Americans living in Australia, partly because of othering which has at its roots in the normative stereotype of the Anglo-Celtic Australian. Therefore, in our view it is imperative that hegemonic cultural identities are disrupted as part of the process of engaging in research and practice that will contribute to the building of a multicultural society that is inclusive and values racial diversity. As we have done here, engaging in ideology and cultural critique, which is central to discourse analysis (Parker, 2005; Parker & Bolton Discourse Network, 1999; Sloan, 1996; Sonn & Green, 2006), is one strategy that will bring into focus how macrolevel social structural dynamics are brought into micro everyday constructions of self and other. From this perspective, discourse and social structure is connected, and discourse analysis can be a form of social action, concerned with deconstructing ideologies and systems of meaning that are pivotal to oppression and also liberation (Montero, 2007; Parker; Parker & Bolton Discourse Network).

Histories as Resources for Identity Construction

A liberation perspective also places emphasis on deconstructing and rearticulating histories and collective memories. For immigrant communities and subsequent generations relocation can be demanding. But, their may be opportunities for retelling stories about the home country as part of the process of social identity construction.

This may happen in different ways including in and through the development of social, cultural and other settings, which provide connections with the new and home communities. As part of the process of deconstructing and rearticulating histories new resources for belonging and identity are constructed. It is also within these settings where identities are affirmed and through cultural practices subsequent generations are able to maintain connections with their community of origin. This opportunity for agency, reconstruction, and appropriation of symbolic and cultural resources is central to social identity construction within a broader context of race relations.

We have begun to explore the issues from the vantage point of South African's, Pakistani Muslim women (Fijac & Sonn, 2004) and, currently second generation Cypriot-Turkish people (Ali, 2006), in Australia. For many of these people, immigration affords opportunities for self-determination, constructing social identities, and realizing aspirations. However, it is often a challenging process that involves more unitary outcomes of acculturation. People have different social, cultural, economic, and other resources; in essence they occupy different social positions and that has implications for how they construct identities and subjectivities. It means the complex interplay of past, present, and future, which includes negotiating histories and memories of the home country and the discourses in the new

country that are central subjectivities. Our research shows that people respond in multiple ways to the challenges of immigration and settlement. A liberation perspective is powerful because of the emphasis on deconstructing race and racism, and other oppressive ideologies based on gender and religion, that will allows us to forge new ways of thinking and being. For us there are many questions that we need to consider in light of our emerging orientation to liberation. These include questions about the ways in which second and subsequent generations have constructed and are constructing identities. What are the ways in which color privilege find expression in Australia? How do South African and other immigrant communities position themselves in relation to Indigenous peoples? What are the ways in which the shared agenda of liberation can be promoted across different countries in the global South? From our vantage point there are important connections to be made because of the shared histories of colonization in the different contexts and the shared agenda of liberation.

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Reflections on Liberation Psychology in Action in an Irish Context

Geraldine Moane

Approaches to a psychology of liberation in the Irish context have their roots in anticolonial and other antioppressive movements in Ireland and also globally. They reflect the many strands of historical resistance to colonialism over hundreds of years, as well as ongoing efforts to attain peace, equality, and social justice in the twentieth century and beyond. The Irish context is thus one of complex and interrelated movements of oppression and liberation, with colonial struggles providing an overarching theme for much of its history. In the early twentieth century, the island was partitioned and both parts developed separately. Legacies of history continued to play themselves out along with the emergence, abeyance, and reemergence (particularly in the 1960s) of liberation movements which included women's liberation, socialist and trade union movements, civil rights, gay and lesbian liberation movements, and many more. Historically and currently, social and political movements have been constantly active, providing both historical memory and many models of antioppressive practice and intervention. My location in the Republic of Ireland, my experience as an activist within some of these movements, and indeed family stories of resistance, as well as my more academic theory and research (Moane, 1999) provide the framework for the developments in liberation psychology described below.

Many of these movements and interventions can contribute toward the goals of liberation psychology and peace psychology, both of which aim to bring about political and cultural change. Liberation psychology aims to transform oppression from the level of internal oppression to the structural or systemic level (Montero, 2007), and many projects in feminist psychology and community development in Ireland share these aims (Madden & Moane, 2006). Peace psychology has developed to address forms of direct and structural violence as well as conflict resolution and peace building (Christie, Wagner, & Winter, 2001), and again there are many relevant projects particularly in Northern Ireland (Cairns, Hewstone, Niens, & Tam, 2005). However, projects focusing on theory and concepts directly related to a psychology of liberation are still scarce in Ireland. My principle aim here is to provide insight into and elaboration of key concepts in liberation psychology as

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they apply in the specific context of running courses and workshops in the Republic of Ireland, hopefully furthering developments in liberation psychology and in peace psychology in Ireland and more widely. I will begin with a historical overview of the Irish context, and then review some key concepts in liberation psychology which have informed my work. I will describe the application of these concepts and then consider the role of liberation psychology more generally.

The Irish Context

In the month in which this chapter was completed (May 2007), two sets of events occurred that are of particular relevance for peace and social justice in Ireland, an island some 174-miles wide and 300-miles long that had been partitioned in 1921 following centuries of colonialism. One event was the first official meeting in Northern Ireland of the two leaders of intractably opposed groups within Northern Ireland. Their purpose was to form a political administration under a new agreement that had been negotiated in 1997 between the leaders of Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, and Britain. This meeting marked a further step in a Peace Process which had begun some 13 years earlier when ceasefires were called after more than 25 years of armed conflict in Northern Ireland. The agreement involved a particular power-sharing arrangement in Northern Ireland, and the establishment of all-Ireland political, economic, and cultural structures. It was a turning point in the relations between Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, and Britain which was also marked this month by the first address to the combined British houses of parliament by an Irish *taoiseach* (prime minister).

The other events are of historical and symbolic significance. One involved a meeting between the leader of the Republic of Ireland and the leader of Northern Unionists at the site of the Battle of the Boyne. This battle had occurred in 1690 and marked the beginning of unionist dominance in Northern Ireland. Reenactments of this battle continue to form part of annual parades in Northern Ireland. The other involved commemorations in the Republic of Ireland of the 400-year anniversary of the "Flight of the Earls" in 1607, a term used to refer to the final exodus from Ireland of the leaders of the Gaelic or native Irish society, marking another step in the colonization of Ireland by England.

These events show both the lengthy colonial processes and the postcolonial legacies that continue to manifest themselves in Ireland. The flight of the Earls in 1607 came after more than two centuries of struggle against English military campaigns and seizure of land for plantation by settlers. Colonial domination became more repressive over the following two centuries, involving, along with military violence, exclusion from political power, seizure of land and appropriation of wealth, attempted erasure of language and culture, and the production of an ideology that emphasized the inferiority of the natives and the superiority of the colonizers (see Fig. 1). While armed resistance continued, other forms of resistance such as noncompliance, boycotting, secret societies, and coded ballads and poetry developed (Curtis, 1994).

Mechanism	Colonialism	Patriarchy
Violence	Military force	Battery
	Police	Rape
	Violence	Harassment
Political Exclusion	No voting rights	Limits on
	Restrictions on	voting
	assembly	Attitudes
Economic Exploitation	Seizure of land	Economic
	Low paid labor	dependency
	Charges/taxes	Low/unpaid labor
Cultural Control	Control of	Erasure
	education	Exclusion
	Stereotypes	Media images
Control of Sexuality	Control of Marriage	Double standard
	Enforced Motherhood	Birth control
Fragmentation	Enforced	Tokenism
	Migration	Competition

Fig. 1 Six mechanisms of control found in colonialism and patriarchy

Political and economic policies resulted in forced migration and poverty and created total dependency on the potato among millions of peasants. This culminated in a disastrous series of potato famines in the 1840s, and resulted in the loss through death or emigration of one half of the population that has been estimated at 8 million.

Following this calamity, sustained movements of independence which ranged from mass meetings to parliamentary strategies to armed uprisings resulted in a negotiated agreement between Britain and Ireland in 1921. The island was partitioned into two distinct political entities. These were the 26 counties that comprise the Republic of Ireland (often referred to simply as Ireland) that established independence with dominion status in 1921 and became a Republic in 1949, and the 6 counties of Northern Ireland that remained in a union with Britain. This arrangement resulted in a civil war in the Republic in 1921–1922 and ongoing difficulties with partition throughout the twentieth century, while Northern Ireland has been a site of conflict since, culminating in over 25 years of armed conflict (1968–1994).

Legacies of colonialism continued to unfold in the years following 1921, which were difficult times for the Republic of Ireland, with decades of underdevelopment, poverty, disease (TB in particular), and large scale emigration. Within that context the Catholic Church became increasingly dominant (itself a legacy of colonialism), and society remained highly patriarchal, with women effectively excluded from public life. In Northern Ireland, a highly sectarian society with anti-Catholic discrimination and ongoing resistance by nationalists developed. When a civil rights movement emerged in Northern Ireland in the late 1960s it was met with forceful opposition, the most dramatic at that time being the killing of 26 civil rights demonstrators by British soldiers in Derry in 1972 on a day which became known as Bloody Sunday. Armed conflict continued until the 1990s, involving British military forces, Northern Ireland security forces, and paramilitary groups linked to (mostly catholic) nationalists and republicans who wished to end the union with Britain and (mostly protestant) unionists and loyalists who wished to retain the union.

Progressive movements in the rest of Ireland continued to gain momentum despite ongoing conflict over partition and economic difficulties with very high unemployment right through to the end of the 1980s. My research with Irish activists reflecting on this time indicated that the high levels of poverty and social injustice (especially related to women) provided a strong incentive to get involved in activism (Moane, 1999). Additionally, the long history of resistance to colonialism with the accompanying myths, stories, songs, and music was a source of inspiration for many. With the election of Mary Robinson as a progressive woman president in 1990, there was considerable hope and vision for a more just society that gained further momentum when a ceasefire was called in Northern Ireland in 1994.

The 1990s brought massive social change in the Republic of Ireland, driven by very high economic growth, fueled by globalization, which propelled the country into the top wealthy countries globally. Alongside this were other dramatic changes, all in the 1990s, in longstanding historical patterns. These included the loss of credibility of the Catholic Church, primarily through exposures of child abuse; a shift from emigration to immigration and the presence for the first time of large numbers of ethnic minorities; major shifts in gender relations including two women Presidents; and the continuing development of European integration. The famine, which had been ignored during the 100th year anniversary in 1945, was commemorated in Ireland and abroad, generating major debates on colonialism. Questions regarding responsibility for the tragedy, the nature of forgiveness, the role of commemoration,

and the processes involved in healing from historical trauma were publicly discussed in Ireland and among the Irish diaspora. The Peace Process made further gains with a new agreement that reshaped the political and constitutional relations between the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland, and Britain and ongoing but failed attempts (until May 2007) to form a devolved government in Northern Ireland involving unionists and nationalists.

This period of massive change may yet be an opportunity for the development of a society close to the ideals of equality and cultural flowering among those who had sought independence (Kiberd, 1995). Unfortunately, as elsewhere, globalization has exerted tremendous economic and cultural influence in Ireland, threatening to replace the dominance of colonization with the hegemony of a new world order in which global and local inequalities become intensified. I have argued that countries (specifically Ireland) with a history of colonization may be more vulnerable to domination in a globalized economy and culture due to cultural weaknesses and pathologies related to colonization. At the same time the long history of resistance and counter cultural activities in such countries may provide rich resources for movements for resistance and transformation (Moane, 2002). I believe that liberation psychology, with its emphasis on historical memory, conscientization, and radical social change can play a key role both in addressing inequalities and social injustices within a given context and also in transforming legacies of history and building global alliances.

Liberation Psychology: Theoretical Developments

Liberation psychology has emerged in many different contexts, as this volume will undoubtedly show, including Latin America (Martín-Baró, 1994; Montero, 2007), South Africa (Biko, 1995), Ireland (Moane, 1994; Ruth, 1988), and the US (Bulhan, 1985; Starhawk, 1987). My engagement with liberation psychology began through my attempt to identify common threads in writings in feminism (Chesler, 1972; Miller, 1986), colonialism (Fanon, 1967; Memmi, 1968; Nandy, 1983), and the (social) psychology of oppression and liberation (Bulhan, 1985; Freire, 1973; Martin-Baró, 1994). Liberation psychology as it developed in Latin American contexts became a key influence because of a number of themes that were particularly well developed there (Martín-Baró, 1994; Montero, 2007). Here I review seven major themes that have influenced my work, namely: adopting a systemic level of analysis; exploring the links between the personal and the political; conscientization and related concepts; a process view of agency and of taking action; a bottom up view of change; emphasis on strengths; and relatedness and/or solidarity (Moane, 1999).

The recognition of oppression as involving power differentials at all levels of society, but particularly at the systemic or structural level, is a starting point for liberation psychology, and is accompanied by the understanding that the personal and the political levels are interconnected. Patterns such as sense of inferiority, helplessness, and alienation have their origins in the social conditions of powerlessness and

degradation associated with oppression. Liberation must therefore involve transformation of what Martín-Baró refers to as personal oppression, or internal oppression (Montero, 2007), as well as transformation of social patterns of oppression.

A key process in liberation is the development of consciousness, which includes a social analysis of the systemic nature of oppression and a capacity for action. The feminist movement uses the term consciousness-raising to refer to a process whereby women in groups make links between the personal and the political and gain an understanding of the common basis of oppression by sharing their experiences and then becoming involved in action (Freeman, 1975). In the Latin American context, the interrelationship between consciousness and action became uniquely captured in the phrase conscientization, referring to a cyclical process in which awareness and action feed each other (Freire, 1973). This process must be grounded in the lived experience of the oppressed, and should arise out of their own experience of reflection and action (praxis). In developing their understanding of conscientization, Freire (1973), Martín-Baró (1994), and others (Montero, 2007) emphasize the importance of a critical analysis of the world and one's place in it (problematization). Such a critical analysis itself requires denaturalizing or challenging the taken-for-granted.

Conscientization and its related concepts draw attention to large scale challenges and critiques of the social order as well as to the importance of taking action to bring about change, yet also acknowledge what may be called a developmental process of agency and action. Freire (1973) highlights the manner in which this process develops over time, as oppressed groups reflect on or problematize their specific or limit-situation; take some action in relation to that; reflect on this process and thereby further develop their analysis and their capacity for action. There is thus a developmental, cyclical, or capacity-building component to conscientization; people must start at their own level of consciousness and abilities to take action and ultimately aim to develop their own potential and to achieve social justice. This process is not one that is imposed on people but rather is developed by them through their own agency, a position that challenges the very role of the psychologist (Comas-Díaz, Lykes, & Alarcon, 1998; Lykes, Blance & Hamber, 2003; Martín-Baró, 1994).

It follows from this that liberation psychology approaches change from the bottom up (Montero, 2007), aiming to empower people to develop agency on their own behalf. This is in contrast to many traditional approaches to political change, which emphasize top down influences on change. As Martín-Baró points out, narrow top down definitions of political as involving the apparatus of the State are part of what maintains alienation and powerlessness. Political education, exploring definitions of the political and of action and change are part of liberation psychology. Martín-Baró (1994, p. 53) concludes that: "A behaviour is political when it plays a role in the social confrontation of class and group interests," thus acknowledging a systemic dimension and also a broader bottom up dimension to political change.

An important insight of Miller (1986) writing in a feminist context and Martín-Baró (1994) from the Latin American context is that the oppressed develop strengths through their experiences of oppression and of resistance to oppression. Miller argues that subordinates have highly developed capacities for empathy and

connectedness, and also for creativity. Likewise, Martín-Baró writes of the capacity to work for the common or collective good and of the faith in and hope for a better future. This focus on strengths provides a balance to characteristics such as helplessness and despair that are often associated with oppression; the oppressed are not seen as passive victims of oppression but as active agents negotiating personhood in solidarity with each other.

Liberation is a necessarily collective enterprise that involves relationships, or relatedness, as Montero (2007) emphasizes. It is through interaction with each other, with discourses and the state that oppression is enacted and liberation is attained. Interpersonal relationships, group and community contexts, and acting in solidarity are examples of relational processes involved in liberation that are the opposite of the isolation and fragmentation that accompany oppression. Developing support and solidarity and acting in groups are thus further elements in liberation psychology.

These understandings of liberation obviously pose a challenge to the role of the psychologist as expert and as part of a privileged class; rather the psychologist becomes an ally or facilitator – as Comas Díaz et al. (1998) point out that she or he "accompanies" the people rather than acts on their behalf. And it follows from the above assumptions that those who enact oppression are also shaped or socially constructed by their status. Many writers, most notably Miller (1986), Memmi (1968), and Nandy (1983) have written of dehumanization, suppression of vulnerability, and capacities for denial that may accompany positions of domination. Reflexivity or what I have referred to as "interrogation of privilege" is therefore part of the praxis of liberation psychology.

These key concepts that emerged from a review of the literature on oppression and liberation and from research interviews and focus group discussions were incorporated into a model for education and intervention which I have applied in the Irish context over the last 7 years. The aim of the courses and workshops is to raise consciousness about oppression with a view to taking action to bring about change. The structure of the workshop incorporates three elements. The first is a social analysis which emphasizes the systemic nature of oppression (see Fig. 1). The second is a cycle of oppression which examines the links between political and personal oppression, and the third is a cycle of liberation which focuses on change at three levels, the personal, the interpersonal, and the political (Fig. 2).

The social analysis provides a clear framework for focusing on the social conditions associated with oppression, and on the systemic or structural nature of oppression. There have been several attempts to provide a social analysis that would incorporate a systemic level and also allow movement from the political to the personal level (Mullaly, 2002; Young, 1990). I focus on what I term six mechanisms of control (Fig. 1), namely violence, political exclusion, economic exploitation, and control of culture, which have been acknowledged in many approaches, and add control of sexuality and fragmentation (divide and conquer) which seemed particularly relevant from feminist and postcolonial perspectives (Moane, 1999). An analogy between patriarchy and colonialism is particularly useful in the Irish context given the historical experience of colonization, enabling the exploration of

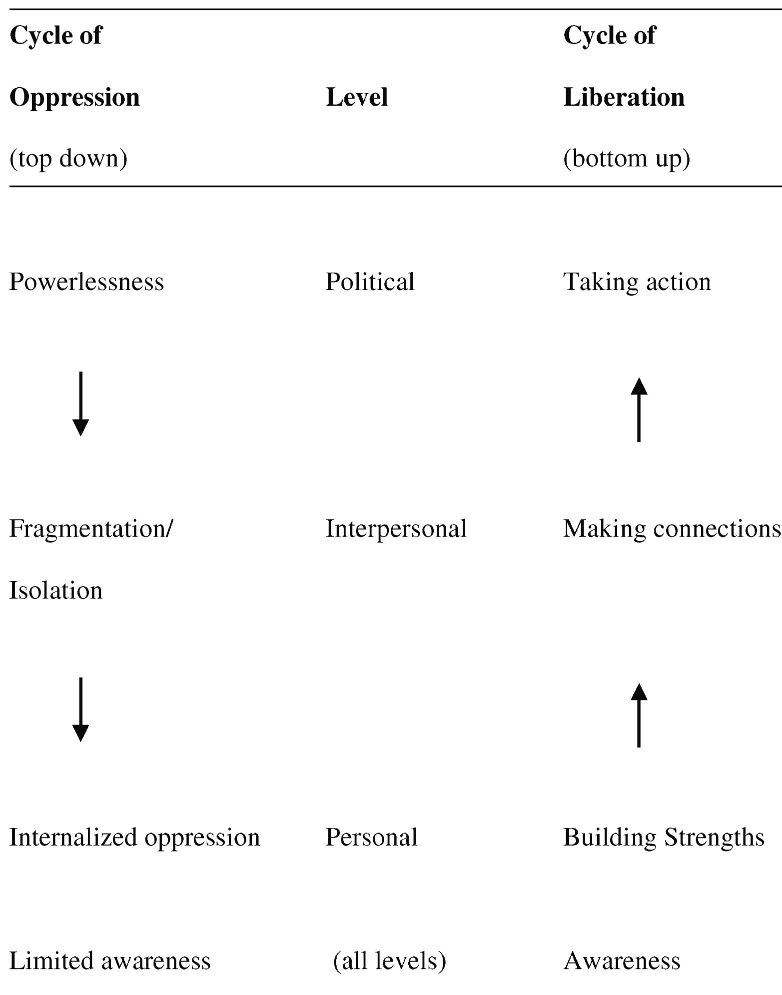

Fig. 2 The cycle of oppression and the cycle of liberation

the concept of system of oppression, and also of the six mechanisms of control and their interlinkages.

In the cycle of oppression, links are made between the political and the personal by exploring how sociopolitical patterns shape psychological reactions. Reactions to oppression which recur in the literature include what may be called negative patterns such as anger, fear, helplessness, sense of inferiority, and also what may be called

positive reactions or strengths, which can include courage, resilience, perseverance, and generosity. These strengths, of course, can be a resource for activism and change. As Fig. 2 suggests, oppression is maintained in part through undermining the capacity of those who are oppressed to take action at community and systemic levels.

The cycle of liberation focuses on building on strengths and taking action for change. It attends to three levels or areas of change that have been commonly identified namely the personal level of the individual, the interpersonal level of relationships and community, and the political level of systems and structures. The phrase "cycle of liberation" is used to suggest that getting involved in change may be a developmental process whereby change may be needed at the personal and interpersonal levels prior to or along with getting involved in action for political change. I identify four underlying process in liberation linked to each level, namely developing awareness, building strengths, making connections, and taking action (Fig. 2). These may be seen as antidotes to patterns such as limited awareness, psychological vulnerabilities (internalized oppression), isolation, and powerlessness and helplessness that are associated with oppression. Changes in each area can be interconnected to form a positive feedback cycle that I have called the cycle of liberation. Each step in building awareness or developing strengths facilitates making connections and/or taking action; these in turn facilitate greater awareness or develop greater strengths and so forth.

Liberation Psychology in Action

The delivery and evaluation of courses and workshops based on this model provides the basis for considering the above theoretical concepts in action in an Irish context. Courses and workshops were delivered over a 7-year period to three groups, namely women living in deprived communities, women who identified as lesbian, and women who formed a community of interest to achieve social justice goals.

Liberation Psychology for Women

A first course, "liberation psychology for women," was delivered over several years to five different groups of 12–20 women aged from early 20s to mid 50s who were living in deprived communities and who had second level education. Community centers in these areas had received funding for educational courses, and had approached the women's studies center in University College Dublin (UCD) – Women's Education Research and Resource Centre (WERRC) – with a view to developing accessible and relevant course in women's studies which would be provided locally and could be an access route to further education. A Certificate in Women's Studies was developed and has been delivered since 1997. The certificate uses radical pedagogy and active learning methods, providing a back-up team to

each group taking the certificate that provides support in terms of study skills and essay writing. The community group or resource center also provides support in terms of a community support worker, resources, and personal support. In preparation for delivering this course, I undertook training in feminist groupwork skills with a community support agency in Dublin (Prendiville, 1995), which along with workshop skills I had developed through political activism proved to be a vital addition to teaching skills developed over years of undergraduate, postgraduate, and adult education.

The course "Liberation psychology for women" proved to be particularly popular because of the combined emphasis on the personal and the political apparent from the course title and from the course outline. The structure of the course was based on the model outlined above, and covered 12 weeks, beginning with a social analysis in the first few weeks, and then examining the impact of oppression on specific areas of psychological functioning such as body image, anger, sexuality, and spirituality. This involved analysis of how experience in each area is shaped by society and what alternative models and experiences in these areas could be explored. The final part of the course focused on change at the interpersonal level of community and at the political level of system change. Methodologies employed on the course included a structured input on a topic, small group discussions and exercises, role plays, drama, energy exercises, meditation, slide shows, and open discussion. The assignment for the course primarily involved a written account of an experience of oppression and the links between this personal experience and the social analysis provided in one of the readings for the course (Moane, 2003).

The course thus incorporated the core elements of liberation psychology: a social analysis; a link between the personal and the political; and an emphasis on change, action, and engagement. The relevance and accessibility of the course are reflected in the very high take up and completion rate. Evaluations for the courses consistently indicated that participants (1) felt that they benefited from the links between the personal and the political which they gained from the course; (2) were able to identify specific changes they would make in their lives; and (3) had stronger motivation and interest in getting involved in political activism.

During these courses it became clear that the concept of "system of oppression" was easily accessible and readily understood by the participants, who had experienced poverty and discrimination throughout their lives. They knew it, and at the same time they benefited from the opportunity to concretize and specify the manifestations of oppression in their own lives through exemplifying the six mechanisms of control in small group discussion. However, they did not have a well-developed view that their own psyches are shaped by social conditions and that this awareness could enable them to become agents in their own socialization. The example of anger may illustrate this: the social construction of women's anger was explored through the work of Jean Baker Miller (1991) allowing the restrictions and constrictions of anger to be identified (the psychological analysis) and a healthy experience and expression of anger to be explored (the personal level in the cycle of liberation). Sexuality was likewise examined, with healthy expression of sexuality explored through energy exercises. This could be seen as a form of

denaturalization. From this the goal of protecting psyches from damaging messages and nourishing psyches through positive images and discourses could be developed, thus providing participants with some agency at the personal level.

A theme which emerged repeatedly during the workshops and in evaluations was a sense of relief that "it's not my fault" both in relation to social oppression and to individualized experiences of depression, frustration, body image, and other areas. The self-blame associated with oppression was released, and this was accompanied by a sense of hope and agency. Furthermore, participants were able to see that "it's not just me" in hearing the experiences of other women in the group. This broke their sense of isolation, allowed them to develop solidarity on the basis of shared reactions, and brought attention to the external shaping of their reactions.

An area which provoked much discussion and debate throughout the courses concerned the understanding of change and particularly of political change. This arose through the focus on change in the cycle of liberation. Participants recognized the importance of the political or system level of change, but felt alienated and disempowered by the political system. A broader view of change was proposed, based on Martín-Baro's definition (see p. 140). A greater variety of actions, many of them historical examples, could be seen as political, including those undertaken in sites not traditionally considered political such as the family, neighborhood, school, or church. Looking at change from the bottom up through the cycle of liberation brought an appreciation and enthusiasm for what were labeled "small acts" and the hope that small acts could accumulate into system change (Moane, 2006).

Liberation Psychology: Lesbian and Queer Perspectives

A course on liberation psychology was then offered through the WERRC Certificate in Lesbian and Queer Studies. The course, entitled "Liberation psychology: lesbian and queer perspectives" was advertised in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered community news and in the local resource center. It was offered in 2-hour sessions over 10 weeks, and nine participants, all lesbian identified, completed the course. In this instance, the specificities of lesbian and gay oppression were addressed through adapting the social analysis to focus on homophobia and heterosexism and their manifestations as part of a system of oppression. The psychological analysis attended to shame as a key emotion in this context. It examined the social forces involved in shame, the psychological patterns, and ways of transforming shame, particularly what was termed the antidote to shame, namely pride. This exploration thus raised awareness about the social construction of shame, the personal experience of it, and provided a perspective and motivation for participants to participate more in Pride and other community events. It provides an example of an underlying process in liberation psychology classes and workshops, namely a move from an outer focus (the development of a systemic view) to an inner focus (awareness of the personal impact of the political) and back to an outer focus (what actions can be taken to bring about change). A particular outcome in this course was the

sense of freedom gained by considering the fluidity of gender and sexual orientation, in contrast to the fixed and dualistic categories offered by society.

A further application in the context of lesbian and gay oppression was a weekend workshop (Friday to Sunday) also entitled "Liberation psychology: lesbian and queer perspectives" and also offered as part of a WERRC certificate. In this instance, a lesbian resource center outside Dublin invited WERRC to offer the certificate in a local venue. Emphasis was placed on experiential learning and on developing a sense of community and community activism. In partnership with Joni Crone, a lesbian feminist activist and community development worker with training in psychodrama and image theater (Crone, 2001), we adapted the course for a weekend structure (nonresidential, Friday evening, Saturday and Sunday daytimes) while maintaining the structure of social analysis, the cycle of oppression, and the cycle of liberation. The workshop involved 23 participants aged from early 20s to late 50s and incorporated more experiential learning particularly through role plays, image theater, and energy exercises. One session each was devoted to the social analysis and the psychological analysis, while the cycle of liberation was explored in detail, starting with the personal level of change, moving on to change at the community level, and finally to change at the political level.

Obviously the weekend workshop format and the shared experiences of and focus on homophobia and heterosexism created a more intense and energetic atmosphere than that of a 10-week course. Humor became a key element throughout as participants varied from the joys of gaining insight, the anger and sadness of facing oppression and the difficulties it posed in their own lives, and the energy that comes from recognizing shared oppression and developing solidarity and hope for change. Even though many were already politicized and were aware of homophobia, they had not often adopted a systems perspective, and the social analysis also enabled them to see connections with other forms of oppression such as poverty and racism.

In the cycle of oppression, a number of emotions including anger, shame, sadness, and isolation were explored, highlighting the very strong emotions which accompany oppression. The value of naming and venting emotions was evident; participants had the experience of "clearing the air" and were better able to move on to the more positive focus on change. The value of focusing on strengths was also evident in this workshop. Having named and vented "negative reactions and patterns associated with oppression," participants were then asked to explore "strengths which they might have gained from their experience as an oppressed group." These strengths include pride, courage, hope, solidarity, belonging to community, and a sense of the long history of lesbian and gay activism. The naming of these strengths shifted the group on to the cycle of liberation, which began with the personal level of building on strengths, and then moved on to community and political levels.

Two daylong workshops on liberation psychology were later delivered by me to different groups using the same model and process adapted for a 1-day workshop on homophobia. One of these daylong workshops was evaluated by an MA student who also participated and who later wrote a thesis on the workshop (Keane, 2006). This evaluation involved in-depth interviews with 7 of the 13 participants, and thus provides a richer understanding of the processes and outcomes involved. Both the

questionnaire evaluations from the first and second workshops and the in-depth interviews from the third workshop indicated that these workshops had been a very valuable experience for participants with many of the processes and outcomes outlined above evident in this context as well.

As with the courses outlined above, participants first indicated that they had developed greater awareness of oppression. Interviews highlighted the benefits of this awareness. Participants felt that they could understand the systemic nature of oppression and had a better analysis that they could apply not only to homophobia but also to other areas of their lives. They felt that the opportunity to focus on oppression was beneficial. Rather than increasing the negative impact of oppression, such awareness helped to remove self-blame, and broaden a sense of understanding and solidarity. Their understanding of oppression gave them more choices and enabled them to be clearer about their lives.

Participants also benefited from seeing the connection between the personal and political, both in the sense of their identity and emotions being shaped by oppression, and in the sense that the personal level of change is linked to the political. Interviews again revealed a common theme here of relief that "it's not all my fault" gained by realizing that some of their emotional experiences were related to external sources of oppression rather than some intrinsic weakness. They were also able to observe the reactions of others in the group which validated their own experience. Observing the varied reactions and experiences in the group was also associated with appreciation of diversity. Sharing of experiences thus led to greater understanding, tolerance, and solidarity.

Finally, participants also expressed a strong wish for more involvement in change. They saw that they could shift the dynamic of oppression in their own lives through a variety of actions. These could involve: taking steps to develop a broader and more positive view of lesbian existence through cultural activities such as reading, education, and video; being out and speaking up more as a lesbian; being more involved and supportive of lesbian and gay community; and looking for opportunities to get involved in political activism. However, rather than pressure to "take on the world" they felt more focused in where they could take action.

Informal feedback as well as the in-depth interviews indicated that the group context was itself a source of support and solidarity for participants and increased their appreciation of the value and importance of support and solidarity. Participants made connections through forming friendships and contacts in the community, and some later initiated or increased their participation in community events and in activism. These workshops thus facilitated movement through the cycle of liberation from awareness to taking action.

Liberation Psychology with a Community of Interest

A third application of liberation psychology involved a community of interest which had experienced a history of oppressive practices contextualized within the

broader experience of postcolonial Irish society, and also had experienced betrayal and loss of hope. They wished to explore oppressive aspects of their history with the aim of transforming their impact, building community, and taking action for social justice in line with their original intentions. A workshop was designed specifically for this group.

The social analysis focused on describing the patterns of oppression from the past. An innovation in this session was to begin by focusing on the sources of strength their context might have provided (e.g., resources and support) before proceeding to the oppressive aspects of their context. The psychological analysis (cycle of oppression) allowed an open discussion of the reactions and patterns that might have developed in response to these oppressive patterns, and which manifested themselves in both individual and in community functioning, ending with a discussion of individual strengths that might have been gained. The cycle of liberation identified concrete possibilities for change at the personal level of individual patterns, the interpersonal level of the community, and the political level of decision-making structures and society generally. Here there was considerable focus on change as a bottom-up process since in the groups that took these workshops there was sense of helplessness at the possibilities for change at community and systems level. Over a 5-year period I facilitated a number of workshops using this format. Most of the themes already discussed arose in this context as well; here I will attend only to themes that can enhance the preceding discussion.

The experience of the workshops themselves and the questionnaire material from evaluations consistently demonstrated the value of a process that enabled participants to focus on oppression in a group context with an emphasis on action and engagement. Insights into oppression and a sense of solidarity were gained from the social analysis which itself contributed to a shared sense of history, and proved particularly valuable in bringing together formerly disparate groups. Feedback indicated that the focus on strengths was particularly important in providing a balance to the focus on oppression. Because of the low self-esteem and sense of worthlessness related to their history this group found it valuable to have the opportunity to focus on strengths such as courage, humor, commitments, and skills that they might have gained from what appeared to be a very oppressive experience. The diversity of experiences, reactions, and strengths again facilitated tolerance and appreciation of diversity. In the cycle of liberation, the understanding of change was highly relevant to a group who were not particularly politicized. It demystified the nature of change, enabled them to see their role in change, encouraged them to become conscious and assert agency in their lives, and provided a sense of hope and dealienation. The workshop thus facilitated breaking through the ahistorical sense of inevitability that oppressive systems engender.

These workshops were part of a process undertaken by the community (with many other elements) resulting in significant shifts within the community that manifested in concrete changes in pubic policy and practice. Following these changes, and with a view to "giving liberation psychology away" I then provided training for suitably experienced members of the community to deliver workshops themselves and adapt the model more specifically to their context, language, and understanding.

This training included a weekend residential workshop to develop further understanding of the model and a weekend training in groupwork facilitation. This group went on to offer workshops using the model, and also incorporating their own elements into the workshops. The group are currently planning to move forward from a focus on the past to a focus on the future that will involve forming alliances and working directly on social justice issues. In their view, liberation psychology has facilitated an acceptance of the past among the community, the implementation of changes within the community, a revitalization of their original sense of purpose, and a readiness to look to the future and work on the changes they envision.

The Future of Liberation Psychology

The preceding account of liberation psychology in action provides more in-depth understanding of liberation psychology concepts and the processes involved in the path to liberation. There can be little doubt from the experiences of running these courses and workshops, from informal feedback, and from essays and evaluations that these courses and workshops made a considerable contribution in facilitating the key processes that were identified earlier, namely developing awareness, building strengths, making connections and taking action, all important components of liberation psychology. Awareness was developed not just through the social analysis and the links from the political to the personal observed in the cycle of oppression, but also through the group involvement and the broader (bottom up) understanding of change developed in the cycle of liberation. Acknowledging strengths in the cycle of oppression itself was a source of strength, along with the motivation and determination for taking action that became apparent in the cycle of liberation. Making connections occurred both in the immediate group and community contexts in which the courses and workshops were offered, and in the sense of solidarity with other oppressed groups. A sense of agency was fostered through the understanding of change that resulted in a strong motivation to make changes at least at the microlevel of family and close relationships in the case of educational courses, and in workshops was followed by actual involvement in change. The outcomes and evaluations show the effectiveness of this approach and illustrate the strength and relevance of liberation psychology. Three strengths which I believe differentiate liberation psychology from other approaches to social justice, inequality, and conflict are (1) a specific focus on oppression and liberation at a systemic level; (2) attention to the personal as well as political levels of oppression; and (3) an emphasis on action and engagement.

As noted in the introduction to this chapter, there are many examples in both parts of Ireland of projects that aim to empower and to bring about social justice. Specific examples of work that explicitly engages with psychologies of oppression and liberation in the Irish context include the work of Sean Ruth, who has developed theory and practice from an integration of co-counselling and radical psychology perspectives which is also grounded in understandings of colonial relations (Ruth, 1988).

His current work involves raising awareness about the dynamics of oppression and liberation especially as they apply to leadership in organization and community contexts, but also in relation to social inequalities such as sexism and racism (Ruth, 2006). He argues that leadership is an essential element in liberation, and recently has developed a detailed understanding of how leaders may be undermined, and has devised policies and practices which could support leaders for liberation. He has also developed an analysis of the dynamics of oppressor status, with particular attention to class and to men's experiences. Another example is Joni Crone, who developed her analysis in the context of lesbian feminism (Crone, 1988), and later trained in psychodrama and in image theater. Working in both parts of Ireland, she is involved in teaching and community development, and we have collaborated on several occasions. She is particularly interested in using image theater for political education and empowerment (Crone, 2001). An example from Northern Ireland is Marie Quiery, who applies gestalt psychology in group and community contexts to work with the dynamics of oppression and liberation, and is also involved in postconflict community building projects in Belfast (Quiery, 1999).

There are also a number of peace building projects in Northern Ireland that specifically aim to build community across sectarian lines, to offer sanctuary and support to ex-prisoners, or to families who have been bereaved or victimized through violence. Cross-border projects have also been developing over the course of the Peace Process. The peace-building aims of these and other projects include cross-community healing of trauma, reconciliation both within Northern Ireland and between Northern Ireland, The Republic of Ireland, and Britain, and the construction of all Ireland institutions and cultural projects (Cairns et al., 2005). These peace-building projects can clearly contribute to an integration of peace psychology and liberation psychology and can interact with existing movements for equality and social justice throughout Ireland.

Liberation psychology offers a new and dynamic approach to social justice and peace building which is grounded in both the local and the global, and which offers well-developed concepts and models for intervention. In reflecting on the particular power and effectiveness of liberation psychology, not just in my work and in the Irish context but also internationally, it seems to me that the explicit focus on oppression and liberation is itself one of the strengths of liberation psychology. Liberation psychology arises from contexts of resistance and struggle, in which theory and practice have developed based on grassroots experience as well as on theory and research. The considerable elaboration of processes and practices involved in oppression and liberation that has developed out of such contexts, particularly in Latin America, provides a more complex and also more real approach that has its own language and conceptual framework. Furthermore, the concepts and practices of liberation psychology are readily accessible and applicable in many contexts. And although liberation psychology will undoubtedly develop further into the future, I would hope that it would retain its accessibility, and along with other practices which increase accessibility, aim to use language that fits with varying literacy and educational levels (e.g., plain English for English speaking contexts, Cutts, 1996), a challenge for many approaches in psychology.

Another strength of liberation psychology is its capacity to bridge two domains normally separated, namely that of the personal and the political. The separation of these two domains is itself a form of social control. The interconnections of the personal and the political domains call for transformation of patterns at both levels in the attainment of liberation. The emphasis in liberation psychology on activism and social change is a further strength gained from its embeddedness in contexts of oppression and liberation. This focus on action and engagement differentiates liberation psychology from psychotherapy, personal development and empowerment projects which emphasize only personal development, while the related bottom-up view of change provides a framework for agency, solidarity, and strategy development.

Liberation psychology also aims to be collective in its focus, and must be collective if it is to achieve its goal of social transformation. As Bulhan (1985), a relatively early writer on the psychology of oppression and liberation writes, a psychology of liberation “would emphasize how best to further the consciousness and organized action of the collective” (p. 259). Likewise, feminist and activist Starhawk (1987) writes: “a liberation psychology is more concerned with ways of creating communal healing and collective change” (p. 23). Consciousness, itself a collective concept, is at the heart of liberation psychology. I would hope for greater development of understanding and new thinking about liberation and transformation at the collective level. Duran and Duran (1995), for example, in developing a Native American postcolonial psychology, argue that concepts such as “soul wound,” which operate through myths and dreams are better suited for collective liberation. In the Irish context, I have applied concepts related to intergenerational transmission of colonial patterns and argued for a collective reflection on legacies of history (Moane, 2002).

Conclusion

Liberation psychology is a dynamic and developing field with wide application in the twenty-first century. It offers a truly politicized psychology, which in my view is essential for effectiveness in all situations, but particularly in situations of inequality, oppression, conflict, and warfare. Even in less politicized fields such as counseling and psychotherapy there are increasing calls for more effective means of addressing the problems associated with advanced capitalism and globalization (Goodman et al., 2004). Areas such as feminist psychology, community psychology, peace psychology, political psychology, and critical psychology share an emphasis on critical analysis and social transformation. These areas have been challenged to become more relevant, accessible and practical, and particularly to engage more fully with legacies of colonialism, imperialism, and globalization, which are of central concern to liberation psychology. At this moment in time the Irish experience demonstrates the possibilities for transformation of these legacies and also, like many other areas of the globe, calls for new practices which can maintain the path toward liberation and promote equality, justice, and peace.

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Liberation Movements During Democratic Transition: Positioning with the Changing State

Cristina Jayme Montiel and Agustin Martin G. Rodriguez

Liberation Movements during Democratic Transition: Positioning with the Changing State

Liberation psychology emphasizes social psychological processes involved in dismantling social inequities and exclusion, giving voice to the politically and culturally silenced, and fusing theory with practice through conscientized praxis. One cannot speak of liberation without confronting power-related phenomena. For example, groups in the dominant structure tend to control legitimate arsenals and use these to silence social resistance. The liberation process necessitates the production, distribution, and utilization of social power. Hence, a psychology of liberation addresses that which is subjective among individuals and collectives engaged in public power.

One example of a liberation process involves the large-scale political process of toppling a dictatorship, and building more inclusive political systems. Admittedly, democratic transitions rarely produce marked restructurings in wealth distribution. Democratic transitions out of authoritarian regimes are celebrated because they reconfigure state systems toward a wider distribution of political power. During a dictatorship, the state monopolizes political power, in a narrow circle composed of the dictator's family, cronies, and military backers, excluding all others in the civilian population. Issues of giving voice to the politically silenced, sharing political power, and protecting human rights dominate discourses among prodemocracy and liberation movements, especially as the dictatorship weakens.

During the Cold War, peoples in the Majority World[1] endured unspeakable oppressions under authoritarian regimes that were puppets of superpower antagonists.

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[1]The Majority World includes countries whose political histories are marked by foreign occupations and whose economies involve widespread poverty. In the past, these societies fell under the rubric of Third World and Developing Societies. The descriptive label Majority uses a lens that weighs in numerical rather than political or material considerations.

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By the close of the twentieth century, major shifts in global and domestic political configurations had taken place, as the Cold War fizzled out. Under the weight of domestic freedom movements, many local dictatorships collapsed in Eastern Europe (Bennett, 1997; Clemens, 1997), Latin America, (Chuchryk, 1997; Powers, 1997; Rojas, 1997), East Asia, (Dong, 1997), Southeast Asia, (Macapagal & Nario-Galace, 2003; Mercado, 1986; Satha-Anand, 1997), and South Africa (Thompson, 2000). But what happens to liberation movements as they entangle with an authoritarian state? This chapter looks at social psychological processes of liberation movements during democratic transitions, using recent propositions emanating from positioning theory (Harré, 2004; Montiel & Christie, 2007; van Langenhove & Harré, 1999).

In the first half of this paper, we lay down our conceptual map. We start with a brief definition of political terms, differentiating three analytically embedded units namely the social movement, prodemocracy movement, and liberation movement. We then establish the theoretical lens that we use to view changes in liberation movements. We note the agentic nature of liberation movements vis-à-vis a rigid and heavily armed authoritarian state, and then illustrate relative positioning across analytical layers in a rapidly changing political arena.

The second half of our paper uses Philippine examples to punctuate our conceptual points. Although our focal analytical unit is the liberation movement, we likewise include changes in the democratizing state, to present a more complete picture of the political terrain of liberation movements. We summarize this segment with a detailed positioning matrix to view liberation movements during democratic transitions.

Authors' Reflexivities

In order to elucidate our conceptual points, we insert anecdotal narratives and insights from the Philippine experience. Stories about the Philippines come not only from published materials but also from our personal experiences, because some things that happen in liberation movements do not reach print. Both authors participated in liberation and prodemocracy movements.

During the Marcos regime, Montiel carried out her liberation work through *Kapulungan ng mga Sandigan ng Pilipinas* or Confederation of Philippine Mass Bases, (KASAPI), a social democratic movement that included both an open-struggle nonviolent wing and an underground armed faction. After the People's Power in 1986, she operated as political ideologue of the left-of-center Pilipino Democratic Party (PDP). For around 10 years, she managed the national headquarters of PDP. During postdictatorship electoral exercises, she led PDP campaign operations among youth organizations, former underground elements, and grassroots cooperative movements. On the other hand, Rodriguez participated in the 1986 People Power Revolution as a nonaligned university student. His main involvement in liberation movements since 1987 was as a professional NGO worker in the areas of human rights, rural development, good governance, and urban poor housing issues. He likewise joined party-list political parties as a political analyst, researcher,

lobbyist, and popular educator. He has worked with electoral left-of-center political parties in their political reform campaigns.

Definition of Political Terms

Democratic Transition

We use democratic transition as a political term that describes state-change, from a repressive structure to a more open system. The modifier *democratic* refers to both the means and ends of the political transition, involving nonviolent political strategies aimed at destroying an authoritarian system and building a more open configuration of political powers.

Democratic transitions typically include different political stages. Ironically, the birth of democracy is conceived in the dark womb of a ruthless dictatorship, as liberation movements take on antidictatorship scripts, especially among new recruits from the middle class. The second and third stages arise when prodemocracy forces challenge the authoritarian regime in more open political confrontations, win the contestation, and assume state power (Kuzio, 2001; Linz & Stepan, 1996). After democratic victory, the new state waddles in the vortex of militarized onslaughts from the right and the left. A fourth stage in democratic transition is marked by state and nation building, or making the new state work well both as a democratic political unit and as a collection of different peoples.

Liberation Movement

We define liberation movements as a political type of social movement. Social movements are pluralities of individuals who move collectively. Synchronized group actions of social movements emanate from identical collective goals (Klandermans, 1997) and a shared collective identity (Polletta & Jasper, 2001; Simon & Klandermans, 2001; Taylor, Bougie, & Caouette, 2003).

Liberation movements are social movements that move in a synchronized manner in the political arena, with collective action frames largely influenced by Marxist–Leninist–Maoist thoughts. A number of liberation movements in Catholic societies like Latin America, Philippines, and East Timor also borrowed heavily from Gustavo Gutierrez's (1973) Theology of Liberation paradigm. Collective action frames of liberation movements include economic and political independence from foreign and domestic exploitations, and profound social change toward an equitable social configuration benefiting the masses of poor people (MacFarlane, 1985). Such extreme social change is referred to as revolutionary, and entails restructuring established social systems. The collective identity of liberation movements is embodied in a political party or movement which extracts intense commitments from its members, and operates through legal-nonviolent and paralegal-armed struggles.

Philippine liberation movements were divided into two factions – national democrats and social democrats – that contended for liberation-oriented political space during the darkest years of martial law. Although the dictatorial state labeled all liberation movements as communist, in-group labeling among liberation forces referred to national democrats as communists and social democrats as socialists.

National democrats borrowed political models from communist countries Russia and China, and pushed for armed struggles. Their movements' collective action frames emanated from influential readings like Mao Tse Tung's *Quotations* (1967) and Franz Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth* (1963). Social democrats came under the influence of Theology of Liberation ideas from Latin America and social democratic models of Western Europe. They pushed for socialism through politically democratic means. The collective action frames of social democratic movements were based on readings such as the Latin American Bishops' 1968 Medellin statement, Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), and Saul Alinsky's *Reveille for Radicals* (1969), mixed with social democratic political scripts from Western Europe.

Prodemocracy Movement

Prodemocracy movement is another type of political social movement. Such a movement holds a predominantly antidictatorship collective action frame, and aims for political change in terms of the downfall of an authoritarian regime. The dominant mode of struggle of a prodemocracy movement is nonviolent, using as its primary source of force peaceful street assemblies of large numbers of people. Such large-scale nonviolent forces are sometimes called People's Power.

Prodemocracy movements stand as a united front against the dictatorship. Behind such a united front are various types of politicians and movements, with their idiosyncratic collective action frames, class and gender compositions, and comfort-zones vis-à-vis political violence.

Liberation movements participate in prodemocracy movements. Our experiences with liberation movements in the Philippines show that from the view of prodemocracy movements, liberation movements are a subgroup of the larger united front, while from the lens of liberation groups, prodemocracy movements serve as one of the many other political outlets of liberation goals.

We advance the proposition that power sharing between prodemocracy movements and liberation groups vary according to the amount of democracy available in the state. This sharing includes openness to each one's collective action frames and mode of struggle. In general, powers of liberation movements (vis-à-vis prodemocracy movements) increase along with state authoritarianism, and decrease with the rise of the state's political democracy, while powers of prodemocracy movements (vis-à-vis liberation movements) vary in the opposite way, increasing as democratic space opens up.

Conceptual Frame

Bandura (2001) claims that theorizing in psychology has bifurcated along two routes: the more micro and basic mechanisms of human functioning on one hand, and macroanalytic paradigms for socially contextualized factors related to human behavior and mental processes on the other hand. We take the second theoretical track. In order to understand the social psychological processes of liberation movements during democratic transition, we refer to macrophenomena like political power, collective agency, and varying analytical layers beyond the person.

We use a conceptual frame based on power fluidity across contextual power configurations, as such relationships change across historical time. First, we assert the agentic power of liberation movements in relation to the authoritarian state that embeds the contentious movement. Next, we posit that political power is produced in relation to other entities in one's context (Martín-Baró, 1994). Third, we define contextual entities as different analytical layers like the state, prodemocracy movement, liberation movement, and activist-leader, as positioning each other across historical time (Montiel & Christie, 2007).

Agentic Nature of Liberation Movements

Bandura (2001) elucidates on the nature of human agency as the capacity "to intentionally make things happen by one's action" (p. 2). Core features of personal agency include intentionality, forethought, self-reactiveness, and self-reflectiveness. Although Bandura's discussion dwells largely on the person, he likewise pushes the agency discourse beyond the individual analytical unit and recognizes the phenomenon of collective agency.

Liberation movements demonstrate human agency on a collective level. In spite of their embeddedness in a harshly repressive state, these contentious movements challenge the state's status quo and are able to make things happen by their synchronized mass action. Their collective action frame embodies shared scripts among cadres that are marked by intentionality (destroy the authoritarian state) and forethought (build a more open political system). Their mass actions are expressions of organizational rather than personal reactivity that link their collective thought to collective action, while organizational reflexivity is demonstrated by the changing discourses and internal debates within liberation movements as they grapple against the state.

The nature of agentic change by liberation movements during democratic transition stands relative not only to external conditions in the state, but also to internal power configurations within the social movements. Further, external and internal conditions of liberation movements are not separate phenomena. They simultaneously cause and affect each other, as both the state and the liberation

movement take reciprocally continuous positions in time-contiguous and intensely fluid power-events (Montiel & Christie, 2007). We now proceed to discuss the nature of power.

Political Power is Context Dependent

Martín-Baró (1994) emphasized that political power does not reside in a political actor, but is rather produced in the configuration of a political setting. He claimed that:

> Power is a feature of relationships between persons or groups. Every relationship is defined largely by the power present in the confluence of the actors and the interests they embody…. The actors do not shift their power from one relationship to another, but rather their power or lack of it comes into play by the very fact of their entering into relationship with others, and can vary accordingly (pp. 61–62).

Hence, rather than asking whether this or that actor carries political power, one may need to query whether this particular setting allocates power to this or that political actor.

What feature of the actor-setting relationship defines power allocation across actors? Access of the political actor to resources in the setting. Martín-Baró (1994) claimed that:

> Power is based on the resources available to the actors in a particular relationship. It must be stressed that resources are not power but are the basis of power…. In social relationships what counts is not so much the number of resources…the actors have at their disposal as the relationship between the resources and the actors; that is which actor can bring more resources to bear in each case and situation (pp. 62–63).

We utilize Martín-Baró's understanding of the nature of political power, but tweak the meaning of political actor. Instead of referring to an individual as the only possible unit of a political actor, we use analytical layers that vary across size but are embedded in each other. More succinctly, we use (from largest to smallest unit) the state, prodemocracy movement, liberation movement, and individual activist as political actors in a fluid setting of democratic transition. As an authoritarian regime falls, each analytical unit defines its political nature in relation to the rapidly changing setting of the largest unit – the domestic state – and also undergoes shifts in resource access with each alteration in the power configuration of the state. As an analytical unit embedded in a transforming setting, the liberation movement alters its nature and powers during the process of state democratization.

Positioning Theory

Positioning theory explains the nature of changes in the liberation movement, as it continues to play in the political arena of a democratizing state. In the original psychological forms of positioning theory, a position refers to a mental representation of a set of rights and duties to enact certain social behaviors, associated with

the nature of a person's occupation of a strip of life. Positions are relational, acquiring meaning only in relation to other elements that are activated during discourse or conversations (van Langenhove & Harré, 1999). Further, positions may be claimed by a person, or may be assigned to the person by others (Harré, 2004).

We borrow from positioning theory's relativism, but broaden the analytical unit beyond the individual to the collective. For example, we expand individualized mental representations to social representations (Moscovici, 1988) shared by political collectives such as liberation movements. We look at subjective changes in liberation movements, as they reposition themselves in their strategic political conversation with the democratizing state, when an authoritarian regime falls.

During democratic transitions, the state, prodemocracy movement, liberation movement, and activist-leaders take on rapidly changing positions in a fluid political setting (Montiel & Christie, 2007). The process of political positioning is reciprocally continuous (Elder, 1998), and can be viewed as a series of turn-takes in a macroconversation by political actors in public space. Each political act or "utterance" arises as a response to a previous move, and may trigger a consequent move by any other actor in the arena. The power of positioning theory lies in its capacity to analyze serially occurring human phenomenon that interact with each other across analytical layers during democratic transitions (Montiel & Christie). Figure 1 shows the different embedded analytical layers activated during democratic transition.

As we examine changes in liberation movements during democratic transition, we posit that the nature of these changes is relational-to-the-state. More specifically, changes in liberation movements arise as these contentious groups position

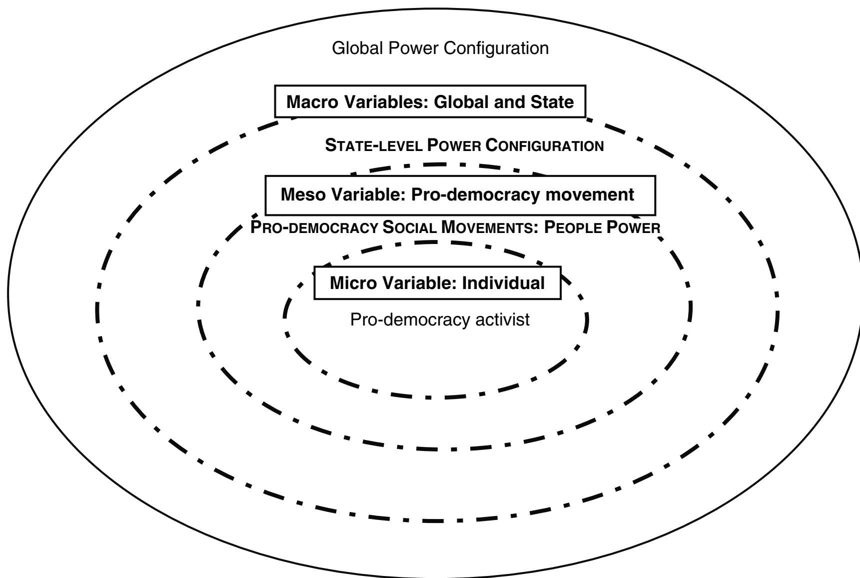

Fig. 1 Analytical units in a nested and interactive model of a psychology of democratic transition (Montiel & Christie, 2007)

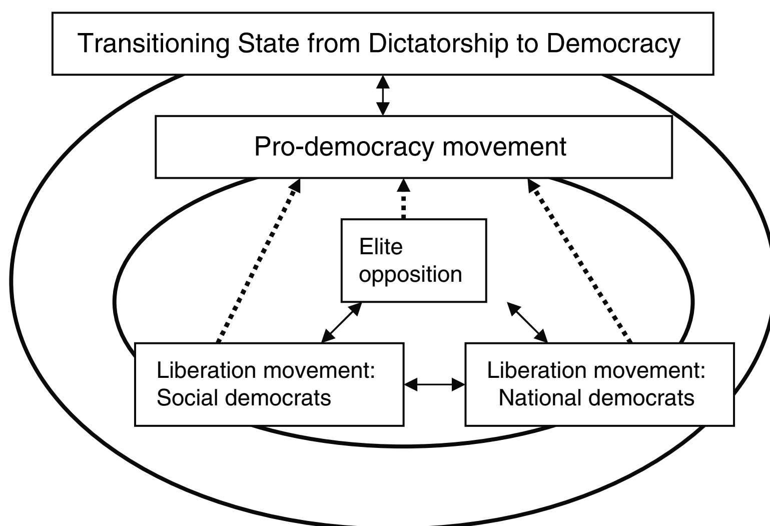

Fig. 2 Embedded analytical layers: Positioning of liberation movements vis-à-vis a transitioning state in a public-power discourse

themselves vis-à-vis the state. As the state changes from authoritarian to democratic, liberation movements likewise change as part of their conversational political discourse vis-à-vis the state. Figure 2 focuses on one juncture of the larger analytical model, the nexus between the state and political movements. It is at this juncture that there is optimal discursive activity during a democratic transition.

The Marcos Regime: A Brief Overview

To elucidate positioning of liberation movements after the downfall of an authoritarian regime, we present examples from the Philippine experience. President Ferdinand Marcos imposed martial law in September 1972. He then cracked down on youth activists and other oppositions, through massive detentions, tortures, and mysterious killings. Farmers and workers were often driven from their land or forced to work for unjust wages because the government would not tolerate organized dissent. This was a time of great insecurity for anyone working against this unjust system because one did not have any legal protection against state violence. Thus, it was imperative for liberation groups to struggle against the dictatorship, dismantle the state apparatus, and reconfigure the distribution of political power.

The decade of the 1970s marked the darkest years of the Marcos regime. By January 1980, and under severe foreign and domestic pressures, Marcos lifted martial law but kept his militarized hold on Filipinos. The early 1980s saw the rise of more open anti-Marcos demonstrations. The flagrant assassination of oppositionist

Senator Benigno Aquino in 1983 brought millions of nonviolent protesters to the streets. In February 1986, the Philippines' People's Power pushed Marcos to leave the country and fly to Hawaii, and catapulted Benigno's widow Corazon Aquino to the presidency.

Positioning of Liberation Movements vis-à-vis the Changing State

Because we posit that changes in liberation movements arise as they position themselves in relation to a transitioning state, we divide our description of liberation movements into four stages of state-change. In the Philippines, we time-bound these stages as (a) Stage One (1972–1980): The darkest years of the Marcos dictatorship; (b) Stage Two (1980–1986): Building up the pressure to destroy the authoritarian state; (c) Stage Three (1986): Euphoric victory over the Marcos regime by People's Power; and (d) Stage Four (1987 to present): State building.

We likewise identify positions taken by each analytic layer in relation to the state. Although we recognize four embedded layers during democratic transitions, namely the global, the state, the social movements, and the activist-leader (Montiel & Christie, 2007), this section focuses on the macropolitical conversation going on between the state and social movements, as the dictatorship falls. We differentiate social movements into prodemocracy elite oppositionists and liberation movements. For further analytical refinement, we recognize a liberation movement bifurcated into the national democratic or communist track, and the social democratic or socialist orientation.

Stage One (1972–1980): The Darkest Years of the Marcos Dictatorship

During the Cold War, the imposition of a dictatorship in the Majority World was usually supported by a global superpower. For example, Marcos' martial law enjoyed US support. American backing of the Marcos regime became more obvious in 1981, when Vice President George H. Bush visited Manila and offered a toast to Marcos' "adherence to democratic principles" (Karnow, 1989, p. 401). During Marcos' 1982 state visit to Washington, DC, President Ronald Reagan praised the Filipino dictator as "a respected voice for reason and moderation" (Karnow, p. 388).

At the height of the authoritarian state's ruthlessness, opposition from the elite was mute, while liberation movements increased antistate contentions, and built up their underground arsenals. In the late 1970s, the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) had expanded its membership and fortified its guerrilla strength into a formidable revolutionary force. Before 1980, the CPP presented itself as

the most effective threat to the Marcos Regime, and the party believed it was on the verge of a historical politicomilitary victory over the authoritarian state (Weekly, 2001).

Stage Two (1980–1986): Building up the Pressure to Destroy the Authoritarian State

A second stage of state-change arose when the dictatorship yielded some democratic space by calling for showcase elections. As more democratic space opened up, elite-opposition politicians and groups positioned themselves as leaders of an election-geared prodemocracy movement, increasing nonviolent contentions with the Marcosian state.

The state's opening up of elections under a largely dictatorial backdrop sent double messages to liberation movements, and triggered serious ideological and political cracks in previously solid socialist/communist groups. The fractious internal debates revolved around whether or not to participate in elections, and the use of armed or nonviolent confrontations with the authoritarian state.

Stage Three (1986): Euphoric Victory over the Marcos Regime by People's Power

At the point of elated political success, prodemocracy forces fused with the new state, and stood in the vortex of state power. Their collective political script changed from a simplistic antistate stance to complex organizational and personal positioning over access and use of state resources.

A triumphant People's Power also ushered in an extremely unstable new democratic state. The wobbly state positioned itself as a liberal and open government in order to draw support from the impoverished sectors and the liberation movements that claimed to represent the interests of the poor. Liberation movements took on various positions vis-à-vis the new democratic state, causing intense organizational in-fighting. At this point, liberation movements had to decide how to position themselves in a newly democratized state.

Liberation movements also had to position themselves with regard to people's organizations. Influence over grassroots groups was needed for liberationists to be able to project themselves as a significant entity that the state had to engage with seriously. Grassroots organizations' concerns focused on access of resources, and movements had to position themselves as useful to the cause of the people's interests. Liberation movements needed to demonstrate to people's organizations that engagement with the new state would deliver access to needed government resources and services, reform in land tenure, or even enact economic reforms that would bring about livelihood.

Social democratic forces generally agreed to lay down armed struggles, but organizational factions arose over the debate on whether to join the new government or stay outside the state as a critical political movement. On the other hand, the position available and taken up by the communists was the opening up of peace talks with the new government. The national democrats offered a ceasefire in exchange for political concessions along a national democratic frame.

Recognizing opportunities in the opening of democratic space, the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) entered into negotiations with the government. This was decided by the party partially because of their recognition of a weakened influence over the broad democratic movement due to the cooptation of their leadership by elite politicians and partly because they needed to support the opening democratic space (Rocamora, 1994). This period of positioning was particularly difficult for the communist party because it felt that it had misread its tactics during the historical time leading to People's Power. The CPP held internal debates within its ranks and allies, to reflect on their mistakes and to correctly choose their position in the period of democratization (Rocamora).

Social democrats, on the other hand, were more closely involved with the prodemocracy movement behind People's Power. They worked with anti-Marcos groups that were perceived from a liberation lens as traditional politicians and economic elite (Pandayan, n.d.). Thus, social democrats muscled some influence in the Aquino government. Other loose socialist coalitions like Pandayan and BISIG operated to gain political influence in the Aquino administration. They used mass actions to show critical support for the new Aquino government, while pushing their agenda in the areas of political and economic reform (Boudreau, 2001).

Stage Four (1987 to Present): State-Building

The year 1987 marked the formalization of the new state led by the Aquino presidency, with a freshly crafted constitution, as well as an elected Senate and Congress. A landmark Local Government Code was legislated to redistribute political power in the state to local governments. A few progressive local government officials were also elected to office and the government bureaucracy was regularized (Boudreau, 2001).

However, liberation movements felt that as the Aquino government stabilized, traditional politicians and economic elites achieved control over the new state. Hostilities intensified between the government and leftist elements, particularly the communist movement. With the murder of some of its more prominent leaders and the massacre of members of its farmers' organization during a protest in the seat of government power, the Communist Party of the Philippines resumed its armed struggle and the national democratic groups openly declared its rejection of the Aquino government (Boudreau, 2001). This was a depressing period for the communist party because from 1987 to 1990 the total party membership decreased by 15%, the army by 28%, and rural mass organizations by 60% (Rocamora, 1994).

At this time also, the communist party suffered serious and demoralizing mass purges to rid itself of suspected deep penetration government agents. Mutual suspicions raged among its ranks, and many members were lost through horrendous deadly organizational purges. On top of this, there was a serious debate within the party on the right balance between military action and political work which would engage other liberation forces to achieve political change (Rocamora, 1994).

The social democrats of various denominations chose to continue their engagement with the Aquino government. For example, when the democratic space opened, KASAPI no longer kept a cadre organization focused on underground revolutionary activity. Instead it continued its existence through organizations that were independent and pushed the KASAPI agenda mainly through development work and lobbying. One predominant concern was to locate the socialist struggle in the context of work that was more developmental and less in the form of political antagonisms.

Other independent socialists who came together as BISIG were able to maintain their organizational identity at this time with a core of loyal cadres. BISIG thrived with the government's early openness to state-friendly liberation movements. However, as the Aquino government turned more conservative and distanced itself from progressive movements, BISIG repositioned itself as "a long-term organization with a developed line of struggle, a well-consolidated mass base, and a strategy that looked past the immediate future" (Boudreau, 2001, p. 139).

Other socialists looked at the opening democratic space as an opportunity to gain mainstream political power in order to realize their liberation agenda. Toward this end they formed themselves as the Partidong Democratiko ng Pilipinas (PDP) and partnered with the mainstream LABAN political party. In this way, they positioned themselves as a socialist electoral party. However, in their infancy they had to partner with LABAN, the seemingly more progressive of the elite opposition parties populated by traditional politicians. The PDP provided the organized grassroots base in the partnership. With this, PDP wished to project itself as the progressive political party able to push forward a socialist agenda. However, in this partnership with LABAN, the members of the PDP who were politically inexperienced in traditional politics gradually took on everyday political habits of a traditional electoral system, like vote-buying and patron–client relationships with the poor people.

Theoretical Summary: Positioning for a Clearer View

We propose a conceptual matrix of public and collective utterances that depicts the complex macroconversation among embedded political units across stages of a democratic transition. Such a matrix will be defined by {stages in a democratic transition} × {embedded analytical units}. Table 1 presents a 4 × 4 matrix that juxtaposes each embedded analytical layer across time-dependent stages of democratic transition. The rows are disaggregated into the nested analytical units namely

Table 1 Describing positioning discourses of embedded political layers across stages of state transition

	Stage 1: Dictatorship peaks	Stage 2: Build-up of people's power	Stage 3: Victory of people's power	Stage 4: State-building
State	*Marcos and cronies* Acquire/grab government resources and lucrative businesses Label any opposition as "communist" Terrorize opposition by detentions, tortures, village strafings etc. Maintain US-support of dictatorship	*Double-message* Continue terrorizing political opposition Run showcase electoral exercises (to maintain US support of Marcos)	Marcos and family fly to Hawaii in a helicopter allegedly provided by the US embassy	New state fuses with (former) elite opposition Establish open political systems: write the Freedom Constitution, free political prisoners, free media, reduce military powers
Prodemocracy Movements (a) Elite opposition	(Silence)	Participate and win in elections Collaboration with liberation movements in order to mobilize grassroots support during elections and anti-Marcos street protests	Full participation of forces in People's Power	Internal organizational and personal conflicts over: Who will get what government position? Scramble for posts that have (corrupt) access to state resources like the Bureaus of Customs and Internal Revenue

(continued)

Table 1 (continued)

	Stage 1: Dictatorship peaks	Stage 2: Build-up of people's power	Stage 3: Victory of people's power	Stage 4: State-building
(b) Liberation movement: Social democrats	Socialist discourses about distribution of wealth and power Build grassroots bases; organize the urban poor, farmers, workers, fisherfolk, students Internal organizational debates: Use of armed vs. nonviolent means Maintain political and ideological ties with Western Europe and Latin America	Continue building grassroots bases with socialist and anti-state scripts Collaboration with elite opposition, bringing in electoral agenda about the distribution of wealth Internal organizational debates: Boycott or participate in showcase elections?	Full participation of forces in People's Power	Run for elections and join the government bureaucracy especially on the local levels Build NGO and development-related collective scripts Internal organizational debates: Join government or stay in the movement/NGO/development-oriented world?
(c) Liberation movement: National democrats	Communist discourses about distribution of wealth through democratic centralism Organize armed cells especially in the countryside Maintain political and ideological ties with China and Eastern Europe Organizational debates: Use of armed vs. nonviolent means	Continue organizing and conscientizing armed cells in the countryside Organizational debate: Boycott or participate in showcase elections?	(Absent from 4-day People's Power saga)	Initial opening-up to peace talks Continued armed struggle and anti-state scripts Serious internal rifts over remaining dogmatic or opening up to more democratic political strategies; purges involving assassinations and counter-assassinations

the state and the prodemocracy movement, with the latter embedded in the former. In turn, the prodemocracy movement nests three subunits namely the elite opposition, social democrats, and national democrats. On the other hand, the four stages of democratic transition run down each of the four columns of the matrix.

In order to understand the narrative of one analytical layer, say the state, the reader would need to read the story across a row. If one wanted to view the political diaspora of all embedded political players at a single historical point, say during the Marcos Dictatorship, then one would need to read the stories down a column. However, positioning dynamics can be seen only by reading the entire matrix as one narrative, to understand how different analytical units converse with each other across political time.

The conceptual matrix likewise embodies a subtext about the agentic nature (Bandura, 2001) of social movements in the face of a relatively rigid authoritarian political structure. This is because during democratic transitions, the state and prodemocracy movements are engaged in an intense and reciprocally continuous (Elder, 1998) macroconversation in publicly contested political space. Hence, both the state and the prodemocracy movements are causes and effects of each other's political utterances across time.

However, the very act of agency changes not only the target but also the agent. For example, as liberation movements conversed contentiously with a democratizing state, the internal debates about positioning vis-à-vis the changing state rocked the social movements. Such organizational fractiousness ranged from mere splitting up into different political wings, to more serious bloody purges within the ranks of the underground.

Concluding Remarks

Liberation movements demonstrate how collective human agency can transform a ruthlessly authoritarian political apparatus to a more open system. As liberation movements puncture an oppressive state, their political discourse and behaviors are not constant but variable, changing with every action and reaction of the state, other elite oppositionists in the prodemocracy united front, and factions within the political movements. For example, once a dictatorship collapses and a new democracy is established, formerly antistate groups may rise to power in the new state and take on political scripts different from their liberation orientation.

Contributions to Liberation Psychology

The theoretical contribution of this chapter lies in its paradigmatic innovations about social movements in general and liberation movements in particular. We show conceptual maps that can open up new horizons for empirical work on the

psychology of social movements as agentic instruments of transformation against oppressive social systems. We propose ways of understanding human interactions across analytical layers like the state and the liberation movements. Even further, we highlight that the very act of agency changes the agent. Hence, one should likewise attend to organizational alterations within social movements as they dance with their enemy, especially during moments of social transition.

In relation to methodology, we expand the use of conversation analysis and turn-taking to more macroanalytical units, beyond interpersonal conversation. We define political conversation as the series of discourses associated with each embedded collective unit – the state, democracy movement, and liberation movements – as they interact with each other across time in public space. The identification of macroutterances and actors opens up various liberation-related human processes to the analytical techniques of conversation analysis.

On a more practical level, we show that liberation movements and other home-grown social movements can successfully alter an authoritarian political system. Thus, they offer a viable alternative to the specter of foreign-backed political change that again looms its ugly head in the second millennium. For example, foreign militaries have invaded Afghanistan and Iraq, on a political script about destroying authoritarian governments and establishing so-called authentic democracy. But foreign-backed political change relies heavily on firepower and traumatizes local populations, revitalizes imperialism, and silences local political culture and identity.

Liberation movements and other local social movements present themselves as viable alternatives to foreign invasions in the name of democracy. However, local contentious groups grapple not only with external enemies, but also with internal fractiousness, as they change during power shifts. This paper identifies areas of human change associated with agentic social movements during power shifts, in the hope that democratic transitions may be understood and managed more successfully as dictatorships fall.

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The Game of War: The Liberating Action of Games in a Context of Political Polarization

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The demand for a social reconciliation…is socially impossible to construct as long as there exists the illusion or pretension that forgiveness and forgetfulness can be constituted through a mere act of will, without the mediation of a collective process of re-significance of ominous facts (Kovalskys, 2006).

This chapter deals with the impact that a process of political polarization can have on children who live in such a situation. The subject is here approached through the perspective of liberation psychology. Hence, I sought to raise a form of consciousness that would alert the children about the effects of political polarity, allowing them to maintain a peaceful and rational position, even in a context of violence.

Research Context

Between May and June 2006 I carried out a research in Caracas, capital city of Venezuela, where I live, about the above-mentioned phenomenon. Since his election campaign and the beginning of his government, President Hugo Chavez (HC) has fostered an atmosphere of political polarization that has become part of everyday life. President HC's speech usually presents threatening phrases (Montero, 2003). At the same time, opposition groups have made continuous alerts about the communist danger, as well as the immediate possibility of a democratic break followed by a dictatorial regime. Moreover, his main contender during the 1998 elections, Irene Sáez, accused candidate HC of still having blood on his hands because of the deaths that happened during the failed coup d'Etat he led in 1992. So already in 1998, during the presidential elections, the political atmosphere was beginning to be polarized, showing a clear division between the adversaries and the followers of Lieutenant Colonel Chavez.

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Following the election of 1998, President Hugo Chavez first year in office was marked by an atmosphere full of expectation in which an important sector of the population decided to support more explicitly his political project. The most evident break point in terms of social polarization occurred at the beginning of 2001. In that year, a social movement, associated with political opposition groups, started to publicly protest against a Decree proposed by the Minister of Education. This Decree mentioned the government's control over the schools. As a Venezuelan journal published on a note referring to these protests:

> Even though the pretext was to deliver the educational law project written by the civil society, thousands of parents – in their majority middle class mothers and members of private schools communities – took advantage to express, in front of the Legislative Palace, seat of the National Assembly, their disagreement with the Decree 1011 and manifested their fear towards the "students indoctrination and the schools' 'cubanisation'" (*El Nacional*. Retrieved July 20, 2007. In: http://www.el-nacional.com/especiales/findeano2001/enero/1011.asp)

Consequently, a series of social conflicts started. The main manifestations were two strikes (2001, 2002) summoned both by industrial entrepreneurs and coalitions of labor Unions (FEDECAMARAS and CTV, respectively), along with other political and social groups. Their protest concluded in an opposition march against President Hugo Chavez' government on April 11, 2002, which ended after snipers killed 19 people.

Such facts led to the strongest crisis Chavez' government had to face so far, forcing him out of office for 40 h. This event, as the previous ones, was marked by the two polarized views that have dominated this conflict. The social discord achieved a new peak at the end of 2002, when the opposition movements convoked a second indefinite strike that had a strong effect over the country's oil production. The president's response was the massive dismissal of all of the oil national enterprise's (PDVSA) workers. In 2003 the opposition began demanding a recalling referendum, a constitutional right. This was made by way of signatures for the demand, providing all identification data of the signers. Such data were taken by the *chavist*[1] deputy L. Tascón. The so-called "Tascón List" has been used since 2004 as an instrument of exclusion, since it is used as criterion to define the political tendency of the citizens, and decide about their acceptation or rejection for public office. It is also used to allocate funds and aids, as well as any other procedures in which the national government has any saying (Goncalves & Gutierrez, 2005). To date there has not been anything that could stop the discriminatory process generated by the "Tascón List" and the "Maisanta List," of the same type, produced in 2005.

The political polarization process in Venezuela has been accompanied by the division of the population into two poles: Chavistas or "officialists" and opposition or *escualidos* (scraggy, emaciated, in Spanish). Systematic confrontations have occurred between both groups as a product of the rejection that both feel for one another. Based on this context I decided to do this research.

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[1] Designation given to the followers and the militants of the official party supporting HC.

Polarization

The verb to polarize alludes to the action of concentrating attention or intention on something – an idea, a person, or an object. Polarization leads to the fixation of attention on one direction, loosing sight of the diversity that can exist in the context (Montero, 2002). By pulling toward the extremes, polarization simplifies reality in order to achieve predetermined ends in social circles. Thus, polarization reduces and impoverishes the social complexity by decreasing options, since it excludes any other possibility that is different from the identifying pole. Polarization includes the phenomena of exclusion, segregation, stigmatization, and sectarianism.

Martín-Baró (1990a) pointed out that the intolerance to accept and understand other ideological positions different from one's own opinions takes place in polarization. Difference is experienced as a menace that has to be eliminated, denied, or avoided in a private and collective context. In this sense, pressure is generated, not only on the citizens, but also on the diverse social institutions so they would align themselves with one pole or the other. This alienated vision of reality takes over social spaces, forcing people to construct a version of reality based on a unique view that defines their values, believes, attitudes, affections, among other psychological processes.

Social polarization acts upon the collective world of the social actors exerting an important influence on their actions and on decision making at an individual and collective level. It is, furthermore, a splitting strategy that can be used effectively when certain political leaders exercise their power. When this occurs we refer to political polarization, alluding to politicians' tendency to induce phenomena and political situations, excluding any option different to the one they are promoting (Montero, 2002).

Political polarization has been broadly employed by authoritarian regimes, with the determination to annul any opinion that would differ from the leaders'. This process of attributing all those negative and dangerous aspects to the "other" progressively legitimates the employment of explicit and implicit violence destined to eradicate the "other," maintaining a social order only convenient for the dominating pole (Lozada, 2004).

The person that leads the political process makes use of a speech to promote society's political polarization and constructs an ideology that unites his/her followers. This system of "unique" ideas seeks to have people who sympathize with the regime act, think, and feel in consonance with the leader's ideology. This guarantees the uniformity of thought as well as the irreproachable character of the "leader's commands." Therefore, a person who wishes to be part of this social group has to submit in an unreflective way to the ideas that reign in the leader. Hence, any person who defers from the dominating group's beliefs will be labeled an "enemy."

In the process of polarization, the relation with the "other" is marked with the necessity of permanently demonstrating the power and the supremacy one exerts. This is a form of defense from the danger and the threat that the other represents. Therefore, pugnacity is a characteristic that is usually present in polarization.

Confrontation and conflict are always latent and they tend to be necessary, since they enhance solidarity and cohesion of each and every group.

Consequences on Mental Health

The concept of mental health should be understood as a global state where the person is influenced permanently by the social relationships. It is considered pertinent to highlight this point, since political polarization can substantially affect the person's global health state, because it goes against the capacity of the person to establish positive relationships and encounters with the others, thereby translating its influence into physical and psychological disorders.

Sawaia (1998) defines health as the capacity that the body and mind have to be in movement, affecting each other through good encounters. She enumerates a series of conditions which are essential for health. Among them is the capacity to reflect upon oneself; and the ability to feel, identify, and understand one's own emotions as well as the others'. That is considered an essential condition to establish positive relationships with others. Sawaia also introduces a political element to her definition, by claiming that in order for a person to be healthy he/she needs to efficiently communicate with others, as well as have "personal democracy." This refers to the capacity of making decisions and taking responsibility for them, as well as respecting the others for what they are, and letting them have their own space for self-expression. For Sawaia, health is the possibility to have hope and convert that hope into action.

Through the concept of health, specifically defined in this way, it is possible to introduce elements such as individual responsibility for one's health and also the state's role regarding public health. As Sawaia (1998) says: "Health is the indicator of the (non)commitment with human suffering on behalf of the government, the masses and the individual." (p. 56)

Given that in polarization repression and abuse of power take place, it is important to introduce the political actors' (government, political parties, and such) responsibility regarding the population's health quality. The feeling of exclusion that is enacted during polarization generates emotional reactions in people, which affect their lives. Therefore, it is necessary to introduce the term "ethical–political suffering," which is defined as the way the individual is treated and treats other people in social relations (Sawaia, 1998). Martín-Baró (1990a) emphasized the importance of not labeling as pathological the effects caused by the chronic social circumstances. Historic, cultural, and political realities are displaced as well as the experience of political violence. In this sense, Martín-Baró alluded to a "psychosocial trauma" when referring to those experiences that affect individuals, and above all, the population as a collective. He also claimed that when a person undergoes a pathological diagnosis without executing a psychosocial analysis of the phenomenon, the collectivity and the individual tend to be victimized, and a "theoretical" violence is exerted upon them.

Consequences for Children

Ethical and Political Dilemmas

The consequences of polarization and political violence affect children as well as adults. However, growing up in an environment where a unique thought is promoted as the right way to think, and where total identification with one group is demanded, can generate deep changes that affect the cognitive, moral, and socioemotional development. Researchers in Chile (Lira, 1991) and El Salvador (Martín-Baró, 1990a; Punamäki, 1990) studied the consequences that children have to face when living in situations of war or political repression. It has been discovered that in such circumstances people are encouraged, by those in power, to adopt positions of clear and absolute identification with one of the groups in conflict. Thus, they try to project themselves from some of the repressive actions that the government or the oppressive group could exert against them.

Martín-Baró (1990b) stated that children growing up in the context of war in El Salvador had to face existential dilemmas that would not be considered "normal" or expected for their age if they had lived in a different situation. Political conceptions affected their lives by influencing their daily decisions, such as their election of friends, topics of conversation, interests, among other aspects. This submitted them to an environment of continuous tension that affected their way of living. Furthermore, he affirmed that children who live in a war situation have to face three basic existential dilemmas: Action-flight, identity-alienation, and polarization-rupture. Moreover, he explained that there are two forms in which children can get involved in a war: by taking part of it or by being its victims. In El Salvador, it was common that children ended up joining the armed forces as child soldiers. There they were instructed to define the people from the opposite side as "the enemy" that had to be attacked. They were reared within a polarized vision of the "other" and learned that violence was the medium to confront it. Risking their lives in the attempt to eradicate the "other" was considered one of the greatest ideals of heroism.

The *action-flight* dilemma: In situations of political polarization, victimized children are invaded by fear and horror, experiencing impotence and deprivation in an environment where violence does not represent power, but rather destruction. For them, everything related to the military represented a constant threat, since it was a symbol of death and a social rejection of their presence in the world. In this situation the victimized child has no other recourse but fleeing from violence. Martín-Baró (1990b) describes an escape of a psychical nature, when referring to the children who had a more privileged economic position, and who could grow up surrounded by walls that could isolate them from the reality of war that devastated El Salvador. Although this author did not consider this fact in itself negative, he thought that the way these children received information was unconstructive, since usually their significant adults mediated the information by transmitting the facts through a filter. This filter was regularly slanted by polarization, repressed anxiety, outspoken hatred, and discriminatory kindness that hindered a personal vision that could actually be understood by children.

Another dilemma that children encounter is the one that is produced between *identity-alienation*, which appears when they have to confront their primary socialization processes in a context essentially determined by violence, political stigmatization, dehumanized social relationships and institutionalized lies, among other aspects. These children's identities begin to form themselves in a context of generalized violence, where they find themselves forced to choose between a socially stigmatized identity and an imposed one, the latter leading them to quit their personal democracy by unreflectively accepting what it is supposed to be correct.

Lira (1991) considers that fear does not only occur because of the dread to become the victim of an attack, but also occur due to the anxiety of being labeled as an enemy by the opposite social sector, since this would produce a situation of constant suspicion. The "other," far from being seen as someone who could help growth and development, is perceived as a potential danger. This idea becomes clear to those people who have to live in a political environment where the prevailing power considers them as enemies or as probable supporters of the enemy. In an environment where politics invade daily lives, people reject any sort of political opinion or expression as a way to protect themselves of any impact that the stigmatization of their ideas might have. People desire to have a political identity, however, the consequences that this could have on their daily relationships are so harmful that they prefer to abandon it. This generates a feeling of lack of authenticity toward themselves and of guilt toward their abandoned friends.

Subjectively, the renounce or abandonment of a political identity considered wanted, but socially stigmatized, creates a feeling of lack of authenticity toward oneself and guilt toward the abandoned friends; but, in case of assuming this wanted identity it is necessary to take the objective risk of repression and subjective fear, such as a feeling of guilt toward one's own family, endangered because of this personal political opinion (Martín-Baró, 1990b, p. 244).

Such a situation presents the child with life options that surpass his/her personal resources as well as the regular challenges for his/her development. The natural dynamic in contexts of repression and war cause a negative impact on children's mental health. Their situation is complex, since assuming a position that contradicts the imposed social system generates objective and subjective costs that can lead them to give up their political identity.

The *polarization-rupture* dilemma is related to the previous one. The confronting groups make clear efforts to win the "unconditional" sympathy of the uncompromised population. Pressure is generated to support a group in an unconditional way, "absolutely" rejecting the other. This stimulates children to structure their mind in dichotomized terms, allowing limited tolerance for ambiguity, as well as a type of convergent and unique thought, which prevents the creative capacity and the possibility to see reality from diverse points of view (Martín-Baró, 1990b).

This restriction of thought inhibits the possibility to use words as a medium to understand and symbolize reality. Words allow generating possibilities for action and forms of conflict resolution that can be mediated through verbal resources, which promote the use of nonviolent strategies to solve problems. Regarding the process of emotional overinvolvement and restriction of the cognitive horizon, the

use of words as a channel of expression is restricted and invaded by the prevailing speech, which oversimplifies the vision of the world. This can lead to the use of violent actions as a response to the "possible" threat that the "other" represents, or occasionally, can also lead to the somatization or development of psychological disorders as a result of the incapacity to deal with tension (Martín-Baró, 1990b).

Emotional Reactions of Children

Children found under situations of repression or war which are marked by political polarization, tend to present responses of fear, anxiety, and aggression. Usually, aggression occurs as a response to experimented fear or frustration. Although, when the object of aggression is considered too powerful, fear dominates the emotions and the behavior.

Regarding aggression, it is important to understand how the naturalization of violence in contexts of political polarization not only supports it but also promotes it. A pacific development is usually stimulated when the child grows up in a context allowing him/her to control his/her impulses. During war and conflictive situations the child grows familiarized with destruction, violence, and hostility, which are accepted by adults. As long as cruelty, violence, and threats appear in the environment, it will be difficult for the child to develop the ability to self-control his/her own feelings of anger. Violence is naturalized in such a way that the necessary guilt is not developed in order for the child to feel the need to repair the aggression, once it is exerted. Due to the pressure generated by conflict, the child can go back to previous stages of his/her development, where aggression is manifested in a disproportionate way in comparison to what it is expected for children in their age (Freud & Burlingham, 1943, quoted by Punamäki, 1990)

In a context of political conflict, of polarization, and especially in war, it is difficult to find the positive effects that extreme situations like these can generate. Nevertheless, the concept of resilience as tolerance of pain and pressure, and the ability that some people have to come out stronger from traumatic situations that would surpass their personal resources (Barudy & Dantagnan, 2005; Cyrulnik, 2002) can explain how a traumatic situation can be coped with. Punamäki (1990) points out that certain victims of war situations tend to develop a major inner control, politically committing to a cause, as well as having bigger expressions of altruistic behavior and expressing solidarity to others, which are not stimulated values of the dominating system in times of peace.

Impact of Political Polarization on Professional Practice

The situation described at the beginning of this chapter illustrates the influence that the sociopolitical situation has had on my work as a psychologist. Since my graduation from "Andrés Bello" Catholic University in 2001, one of the frequent issues

I have attended, as a professional, has been political polarization. In most psychotherapeutic or psychoeducational interventions I have carried out, the children have made allusions to the political situation, even if sometimes it was unrelated to the activity they were doing at that moment. The frequency or intensity of such interventions depended on the historical moment in which we were living. For this reason, subjects related to the "chavistas" or to the "escualidos" (designated name given to the opposition sector) have been very present in my daily work.

Nevertheless, I have also been able to observe that the more the time passes the more the subject has become a taboo, not only for children, but also for me. In recent opportunities, when someone mentions Venezuelan politics, the children tend to inhibit their opinions. The difference in political perspectives has caused a large fracture in society. When a person believes in a political idea different from that of another group in a polarized society, he/she tends to be an object of exclusion and repeated aggressions caused by the "enemy." The topic of polarization has limited the possibility for dialog and coexistence between Venezuelans, and in a way it authorizes the use of disqualifiers when referring to the people from the opposite side. For this reason, the children tend to evade the subject in order to avoid any conflict, and achieve the activities' objectives.

Political polarization appears in my work through multiple forms. It becomes more difficult to elude everyday. As a subject of differentiation it is manifested through questions such as: "Are you "chavista"? "escuálida"? (10-year old boy, Psychotherapeutic section), or comments such as: "In my family my dad doesn't talk to my uncle because he is "chavista" (8-year-old boy from a cooperative learning group),[2] or "If you don't do what I tell you I'm going to tell Chavez" (9-year-old boy from the cooperative learning group) or "What happens is that escualidos want to destroy the chavistas" (9-year-old boy from a cooperative learning group). Paradoxically, even if it is an avoided subject, national politics invade my professional life constantly, which has led me to have deep conversations with my work colleagues about the possible ways of studying and understanding this phenomenon. We have reached several conclusions, such as interpreting these expressions as a possible resistance against our work, or as mistrust or aggression against the bond with the therapist. Most importantly, we have acknowledged the relevance of the role that these children are playing regarding the construction of the national reality. This phenomenon seems to be embraced by people, and is used as a strategy to obtain benefits, as has happened in El Salvador and Chile (Lira, 1991; Martín-Baró, 1990a).

Polarization creates a situation of chronic tension in the population. Feelings of discomfort are generated, which are a product of the anger felt against the rival and also the fear and mistrust produced by the anticipation of possible negative consequences by expressing any political position that opposes collective expectations. The phenomenon of political polarization directly affects interpersonal relationships, which represent an essential component of the individual and collective psychological wellbeing.

[2] This group of cooperative learning is a type of psychoeducational intervention used by the Service of School Psychology in the Psychology Unit of the Social Park "Father Manuel Aguirre, S.J."

Characteristics of the Research

The research I conducted was set out to describe emotional and cognitive reactions in a situation of political polarization. It involved a group of 25 children, with ages between 11 and 12 years old, students of the fifth grade (grammar school); belonging to social economic levels C and D (clerks, labourers, and poor, but with work) of the Venezuelan population.

The research design combines elements from explicative methods (Matalon, 1988), such as creating a quasiexperimental situation that could reflect the conditions of polarization present at the moment in the Venezuelan society, with participatory action research. The researcher created the conditions to reproduce a polarized situation within an environment (a school room) externally controlled by aspects such as time, place, and working conditions regulated by the school norms.

At the same time, the participatory action research was introduced through the procedure of reflection–action–reflection and the participants being able to introduce their points of view by reflecting upon their life experiences while changing the initial situation. This research design is what Montero (2006) has called *participatory experimental intervention*, which does not attempt to control what the participants do, but instead tries to generate a process of problematization that produces changes in consciousness, by introducing a condition where the children could face a situation that is a metaphor of something happening in their daily lives.

These activities were guided by ethical norms protecting the psychological integrity of the children. First, their parents were approached in order to obtain their written authorization allowing their children to participate in the experience. Before this took place, those parents were invited to a meeting where they were informed about what was going to be carried out and about their right to be informed about what was happening during the action-research sessions. Suggestions given by some parents were included. Also there were no judgments or criticism of political opinions given by the children participants. There were weekly revisions of session transcriptions, in order to spot any comment or deed that could be significant or that suggested any type of political inclination in the researcher's behavior.

Moreover, I took care to ensure the anonymity of the children participants, of the teachers', and of the school. Last, after finishing the intervention, I held a meeting with the subprincipal, the school counselor, and the teachers of the fifth grade and sixth grade (this one was going to be the next teacher for those children). They were informed about the results obtained and recommendations derived from them.

I planned a playful situation, in which the group's polarization was induced through the dramatization of a children story called *Children Don't Want War*[3] (Battut, 2002). This dramatization was carried out both by the children and the researchers (an assistant and I). The selection of this book was based on several reasons;

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[3] The plot is about how two kings, who used to be friends, start a war because each one makes fun of the other, when a passing bird drops excrement on his nose. Despite their friendship they start a war, which causes mutual damage to their countries and their people, dragging them into an absurd fight.

Table 1 Activities during the quasiexperimental situation

	Objectives	Activity
First session	Encouraging the knowledge of personal characteristics of the members of the group	Doing "Presentation card activity" discussion with the children
	Constructing a series of rules that could favor the coexistence in the group	Creating norms with the participants
Second session	Introduce the story *Children Don't Want War* (Battut, 2001)	Reading the first part of the story *Children Don't Want War* (Battut, 2001)
	Encouraging a sensitive approach towards war and polarization situations	Discussion of the story
		Selection of the colors of the kingdoms to which the children wish to be part of
Third session	Leading the children to think about the characteristics of the kingdom they belong to	Draw the elements related to the kingdom to which they belong (food, weapons, cars, houses, families, etc.). To do so they could only use the color they chose for their kingdom
		Each group has to gather all drawings on a bond paper, in order to give a sense of unity to the characteristics of their kingdom
Fourth session	Making the participants think about the perceptions that each group has of the other.	Each group has to expose its opinion about the characteristics of the opposite group
	Contrasting the impressions the children have of the opposite group with the characteristics it has in reality.	Each group has to show to the opposite group the drawings they made in the third session, representing the characteristics of their kingdom
Fifth session	Encouraging the children to think about the disadvantages of war	Written activity about *Children Don't Want War*
	Letting the participants identify the feelings that a situation of war yields in them	Reading the last part of the story
	Allowing the participants to generate solutions that help solve the conflict	
Sixth session	Letting the participants establish connection between the situation of war created on class and their daily life	Reflections about possible connections that the children establish between the war situation generated in class and their daily life

(continued)

Table 1 (continued)

	Objectives	Activity
	Motivating children to relate the polarization generated by war (in the story) to polarization in Venezuela	Motivate the children to establish possible connections between a series of photographs projected on a wall and the war situation lived in class. The photographs have images related to polarization situations in Venezuela
Seventh session	Encouraging the children to do an evaluation of the activity	The children have to fill out a questionnaire to evaluate the activity
	Motivating the children to construct a symbol of what peace means to them	Construction of the Peace Tree: The children have to write on a piece of paper a word that explains what they should do in order to avoid war. These little pieces of paper will be put on the branches of a tree that is drawn on the wall. The pieces of paper represent the leaves of the tree Snacks

the main one being its plot, since it portrays a situation of political polarization that leads to a war. This text illustrates in a clear way the causes and the consequences of polarization, by stressing how the leaders and the people's decisions influenced the origin of the conflict. It also shows how following a leader can be sometimes irrational and illogical, leading to actions that contradict people's personal thoughts and feelings. Moreover, the story uses the absurd element as an instrument that problematizes and promotes awareness about the use of violence. Furthermore, it emphasizes the role that children play in a context of polarization and war, highlighting their feelings, thoughts, and actions in this circumstance, which causes the participants' identification with the characters of the story. Finally, the story has images that clearly represent the process of polarization as well as its consequences, which is useful and pertinent when trying to understand the story. The use of images helps to understand the message and at the same time reduces the possibility that the children's reading capacity would be a variable that could interfere in the comprehension of the text. The group of children was divided into two "kingdoms": a blue one and a red one (as in the story). The children could freely choose their group. All the girls and two boys went to the blue kingdom. The red kingdom had only boys.

But there was a participant who did otherwise. A boy who created his own kingdom: the yellow kingdom. His capacity to reaffirm himself allowed him to break from the beginning the polarization and assume a sensible and independent position in this process. However, his election had an individual cost, since he became an object of frequent attacks against the difference he represented. By establishing that difference he became a target for disqualifications related to his weakness, given that he was alone in his kingdom. His kingdom was considered "poor."

Based on this situation a series of activities where made that helped understand and think about the cognitive and emotional reactions caused by political polarization (see Table 1). The children spontaneously established connections between the activities and Venezuela's present sociopolitical situation.

Reactions Caused by Polarization

Polarization can be easy to accomplish as well as highly contagious. Once the children identified with a kingdom, they, as well as the facilitators of the activity, were susceptible to adopt polar positions. It is important to consider that when a process of polarized division is promoted in a group, a series of emotional and cognitive reactions are triggered. These reactions urge each person to identify as part of a specific group and it is difficult to escape from polarization and its consequences.

Therefore, the assistant and I, as directors of the activity to be carried out by each group, had to adopt a role that facilitated the processes' analysis and the control of aggressive expressions caused by the participants' anger. We also had to be the cognitive mediators regulating the children's affective processes. If these functions are not achieved, chaotic and confusing situations could happen that will disturb the group's performance.

It was a real challenge to be able to talk about Venezuelan political polarization without inviting the children to take part of a specific side of the Venezuelan political situation. But in spite of the influence that political polarization has on reasoning and affectivity, it is possible to do interventions of this kind without indoctrinating the children.

Anger Reactions: The Expression of Induced Polarization

In the situation of war and polarization created in class, children experienced feelings of anger, sadness, fear, and exclusion. Anger was the prevailing emotion during most parts of the process. Boys manifested anger in a different way than girls. I could observe that boys tend to express their anger more directly, using mockery, insults, and disqualifiers, and on some occasions through the use of physical violence. The first expression of anger occurred in Session 3 when one of the boys from the "red kingdom" scratched the drawing of one of the boys in the "blue kingdom," as a physical form of attack against the enemy. Then, in Session 4 (L. 484[4]) there was a fight between a couple of members of the "blue kingdom," when one of the boys pushed another. Otherwise, girls used expressions such as: "stingy flowers" to express their aggression (this metaphor was used by the girls when describing the red kingdom's "favorite weapons"). Their style of aggression was softer, more passive, but that did not make it harmless or less violent. When the girls whispered to each other they provoked a violent behavior from the boys, expressed through verbal disqualification associated with the physical weakness of the female gender. They also accused the girls of not being very hygienic or they just criticized their physical appearance. It was common for them to use exclusion as a method to attack the enemy.

Rejection of Violence: The Beginning of Consciousness

One of the most relevant results was the progressive rejection that the children experienced toward the violence generated by political polarization. After the third session, the children started to express the discomfort that the representation of war (the metaphor of polarization) produced in them. They also manifested the importance it has for them to keep the bonding with their friends. The possibility of breaking the socioaffective relationships was experienced on a personal level in this research. Taking into account the children's ages, it was possible to experience and talk about the discomfort that polarization conflicts generated in them. This intervention may have produced a change in them, which maximizes the effects of the investigation. Possibly, one of the most effective methods to discover more about

[4] Line 484 from the transcription of Session 4.

the consequences of political polarization in children is to put more emphasis on the harm that this phenomenon produced on interpersonal bonds.

In this way, it was observed that the rejection against a situation of political polarization occurred at first when the children tried to sabotage the activity. It was only on the fourth session when an explicit rejection was manifested. This means that the phenomena of depolarization occurred gradually, and the children offered signals that allowed identifying their growing rejection of the situation. These indicators, when identified on time, can be used to promote the group's coexistence and transformation. It was observed that there was an attempt by the participants to regulate the intragroup violence, fomenting respect for diversity, as well as for actions that promote justice and inclusion. The impact of the catalytic interventions of this process facilitated reflections and increased the group's integrants' flexibility of thought.

Relation with the Leaders

Regarding the relationship with the leaders represented by the "kings" (in this case a queen and a king), it was interesting to observe the projective construction made by the children. Depending on the group to which the kings belonged, they were perceived either as despotic and destructive figures or as a kind figure. It is possible that the leaders' gender would have affected this construction, as well as the gender predominating in each group. The boys from the blue kingdom considered their king, a young man doing graduate studies, a tyrant who disrespected and mistreated his subjects. On the contrary, the girls denied their queen's aggressive condition. They saw her as a kind figure that covered their basic needs. A possible interpretation is that girls express their anger passively, and maybe because of this they were not able to recognize nor able to identify expressions of aggression as a form of violence, neither in them, nor in the people who are aggressive toward them.

Relation with the Venezuelan Situation

Children made precise connections between the polarized situation experienced and the sociopolitical situation in Venezuela. At first, they made a direct relation between the game of war and the experiences of insecurity that they face daily. The participants felt that the mistrust against the "other", lived daily in the country, derives from a situation of real threat, since they can be attacked by delinquents, or by the "poor", who were perceived as a source of danger. The children perceived that the people who were less favored economically "envied" them and wanted to take from them what they own. This belief seems to correspond to the prejudices and stereotypes that exist in their environment, despite the fact that they are very close to the limits of poverty.

They identified violence as a consequence of political polarization in the game as well as in the country. This connection led them to anticipate the pain that they would experience if they had to lose a beloved person as a result of violence and how this was related to the possible death of their parents or their grandparents. These results are interesting because it seems that when the “other” is humanized and can possibly die by violent causes, that other becomes meaningful. This is how the distance with the game is broken and the reflection upon the issue becomes deeper.

The children participants in this investigation feel the deaths that have happened in the country as a consequence of political polarization. They also think that the people in Venezuela want this situation to be over. The children handle a lot of information that frequently overpasses their ability to process and elaborate cognitively and emotionally. When they refer to the information they handle, they seem to be overwhelmed and do not have many resources for talking about the subject. They usually cannot reveal this information in order to obey the norms that their significant adults impose regarding the “do not talk about politics” rule. Children need to talk about what they feel and think about politics, but they fear to do it because of the consequences that they could have for them and their families.

The children’s speech showed that they perceive their country as “broken, damaged, and battered, in risk of dying.” Maybe they have the feeling that violence can take over the streets as water that “erupts from the holes in the streets” (Ss 6. L. 275[5]), causing chaos that would affect the children and their families, as one boy said in Session 6. The children want a country where they can have reconciliation, peace, and harmony, where they can be safe without feeling the imminent fear of death, as a participant expressed in the following excerpt:

> Because we should hold hands also, so there are no more losses, because the “chavistas” and the opposition, currently, are fed up of having lost so many friends, family, brothers, even their fathers and mothers (Ss. 6).

Reflections About the Findings

One of the main accomplishments was to actually have been able to do this research and action despite the expressed fear of the significant adults that surrounded the children participants and their doubts about the viability of the study. We can conclude that when one acts in a responsible, committed, and reflexive manner it is possible to overcome fear and turn it into an opportunity to achieve transformation and change. The adults’ fear helped me to give the sessions a new meaning, and find more careful ways to achieve the research objectives. Participatory action research was a basic instrument of work. The systematic problematization of naturalized elements of reality contributed to the work’s flow, helping to adjust it to the characteristics of the institution, of the participants, and of the meaningful adults.

[5] Line 275 from the transcription of Session 6.

I believe that referring to the topic of political polarization from a secondary prevention viewpoint is the most effective way of dealing with this issue. In Venezuela, there have been some interventions related to this subject, but from a perspective of attention in crisis or tertiary attention. I consider peace to be constructed in spaces of daily coexistence. Such spaces offer the opportunity to think and observe the daily benefits produced by maintaining positive relationships with others, and they also offer resources to face possible future crises or the "hardening" of political dynamics.

I also observed important indicators related to the children's awareness. The participants succeeded in detaching themselves from the emotional side that the conflict awakened and they managed to offer solutions based on respect and consideration toward the "other." Furthermore, they reacted against authoritarianism by rejecting absolute uniformity. They were also capable of proposing alternatives that would promote tolerance of individual differences in the classroom.

The children did reiterate attempts to integrate as a group and break the polarization. In spite of the apparent conventionality of the solutions they proposed to avoid war, expected for their age, in many interventions they were able to transcend the schemes and criticize the authority's orders.

A series of reflective and analytic resources were mobilized, which allowed them to deepen in the contents and create conclusions that affected positively their psychological wellbeing. Despite having interpersonal problems (as informed by some teachers), these children where able to follow norms and instructions, and also had the flexibility to respect some new authority figures (myself and my assistant). Some of them voiced personal reflections in a play situation in the classroom. One of the children wrote: "I should be cooler instead of getting angry at everything people tell me."

This child was able to rethink about his own personal characteristics and how they influence the promotion of peace in the classroom. Moreover, another child transferred the acquired knowledge to another daily situation, when during an activity he reminded one of his classmates about the importance of dialog and listening, which he learned during the playing research activity.

The strategy used helped the participants to experiment in an affective way the situation of war and polarization. This seems to have influenced the expressed rejection against violence, which was a product of the discomfort that they felt. The problematized and catalytic interventions favored awareness.

The Liberating Effect of the Intervention

As has been already mentioned, polarization exerts a negative influence in people's interactions. It denies the possibility for reconciliation and reflection upon different ideas through the induction of hatred, fear, and resentment between the inhabitants of a country. These feelings interfere with the possibility of accomplishing a dialog and rescuing the value that different ways of thinking have on the construction of a plural society.

Interventions of this kind open the possibility of questioning certain forms of public discourse fostered by political power groups and contribute to the deideologization of daily life experiences. Such interventions allow the promotion of a critical participative process in the citizens, encouraging them to question their daily reality, and thus construct a critical opinion of the situations they are in, as Martín-Baró (1984) once pointed out.

The use of the strategies of dramatization and games, as well as focusing on participatory action with the children, allowed for reflection to occur in a progressive way. Therefore, the children created connections with the national reality through their own personal experiences. This way of studying the subject was the most convenient one to use with the children, since the fear and the censorship of talking about topics related to the national political reality would have obstructed any form of activity studying the subject directly. The children expressed this fear during some sessions, and it was also present in the interviews with their meaningful adults (teachers, board of directors, and parents).

The intervention allowed the children to face fear progressively, which in terms of liberation psychology can be understood as a manifestation of the oppression that the government's speeches exert on the citizens' consciousness. The activities also allowed for the creation of a space where the children could listen to each other while talking about their perspectives on politics and the national political situation. Moreover, the intervention helped the children to approach realities that differ from theirs, marking a change in the way they perceived the people with less economical resources and the people who live in "barrios" (shantytowns or *favelas*). It was evident how these children, who come from a middle-low socioeconomic background, considered the people that live in "barrios" as envious, violent, and dangerous. But a boy whose family lived in a poor community a long time ago questioned this perspective:

> Well, not everything happens because they envy us, it is because there are people who don't think in the same way. There are people that have many needs that we…that we don't have, you know. At least sometimes, there are people who even have kids that have to go to work because their mom or their dad don't live with them, stuff like that.

The dialog allowed the children to transform their reality and approach their social circumstances in a more sensitive way. Through the play situation they could feel the oppressive effect that hatred and violence have on human relationships. They overcame this situation and saw in it a possibility to peacefully reconstruct their educational reality by proposing actions, promoting coexistence, and reconciling with the "other." Just as a boy expressed when proposing an action that could restore peace in the kingdom: "The people from all the towns would have to speak with their kings to achieve a fair agreement for all" (Comment made in an activity in Ss. 5). (See Table 2 for other solutions proposed by the children.) As Martín-Baró (1984) explained, the "new knowledge" that a person has about his/her social reality allows not only to discover the roots of what it is, but also to acquire a perspective of that which could be, and of what a person wishes for him/herself and for the others.

Table 2 Actions to promote peace

What can you do for the war to be over?
Make peace with others
Become friends again
Help each other
Not invade other countries
Stop insulting and hitting
To listen
Unite with others, reds with blues, blues with yellows, and reds with yellows
Share
Apologize
Create alliances
End the differences or problems
Negotiate resources
I would tell the blue ones that we should stop the war, but it isn't because we, the red ones, fear you. I would tell my team to stop fighting
Convince the kings
Stop fighting
Forget about war; to do that you have to stop and cannot have bad relationships with each other
Not yell to each other
Not offend each other
Try to come up with an agreement together
The people from all the towns would have to speak with their kings to achieve a just agreement for all
Not saying bad words to the people from the other kingdom
Give each other a good hug
Content the kings with flowers and sweets
I should be calmer instead of getting angry for everything people tell me
Surrender
Reconciliate
Apologize to the other king

Polarization limits people to the present time and space, preventing them from proposing different scenarios. Therefore, when the children project themselves beyond their present reality they are capable of resisting and rebelling against the authority's (the king's) imposed speech. They are able to take over the construction of their own world and also have the consciousness of acknowledging that there can be something better than what the law imposes. Through this intervention the children could adopt a political position regarding their social reality. They understood that harmony and reconciliation could only be accomplished when we strongly defend them by doing actions that favor peace.

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“Liberating” the *Hijab*

Noraini M. Noor

Liberation Psychology

Liberation psychology originated from Latin America as a result of its economic and social problems to champion the cause of the “popular majorities”: the oppressed, marginalized, and excluded masses in Latin America (Montero, 2007). While Catholic ideals form one of the foundations for liberation psychology (Martín-Baró, 1994), the idea originated from the field of education (with Freire as the proponent) and Critical Sociology (with Fals Borda being its most significant figure). Usually, those working within this orientation tend to see themselves as part of a broader movement for social and economic justice, working together with the “popular majorities” through engagement and solidarity with them.

According to Montero (2007), social change is the main objective in liberation psychology and this is done by endorsing the occupation of the public space by the citizenry, promoting the development of civil society, strengthening democracy, and exercising the rights and duties of the citizenry. Liberation is a movement made up of a series of processes between the “popular majorities” and those working with them. Underlying this alliance between the popular majorities and those working with them is the concept of conscientization (proposed by Freire, 1972), where the conscientized victims (or the popular majorities) work together with the help of others in the system (those with a conscience), identifying or denouncing what is wrong and constructing an alternative social reality (Dussel, 1998). In other words, liberation psychology empowers people to understand and change their lives and the conditions in which they live.

Liberation psychology is beginning to receive interest outside of Latin America (see Burton & Kagan’s chapter in this book; Lykes, 2000; Watts & Serrano-García, 2003) and more recently, workers from South Africa and Australasia have identified with this body of theory and practice (see Burton & kagon, 2005). Can this orientation be used to consider the issue of *hijab* (a headscarf or a piece of fabric

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covering a Muslim woman's head) which has lately been the subject of much controversy and debate? Though this debate has been going on for quite some time, both in Muslim and non-Muslim countries, it was only after the French government banned *hijab* and other religious symbols in public schools in 2004 that this issue became the focus of much media hype. We feel the liberation orientation can be used in the discussion of the *hijab* by placing the decision of the *hijab* onto the women themselves. However, this issue is complex because as eloquently espoused by Ezekial (2006), *hijab* is inseparable from and overlaps with a number of other concerns such as racism, ethnocentrism, human rights, religion, feminism, colonialism, politics, economic and social injustice, and others. Thus, it may be difficult to confine the issue of *hijab* without encroaching upon these related areas. Bearing in mind these difficulties, we will examine the issue of *hijab* by going beyond the simple piece of cloth to the meanings attributed by people and to the more complex dynamics underlying it.

Meaning of *Hijab*

For Muslim women, wearing the *hijab* is a religious requirement ("And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; and they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what [must ordinarily] appear thereof; that they should draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their beauty except…", *Qur'an*, 24:31; and "O Prophet! Tell thy wives and daughters, and the believing women, that they should cast their outer garments over their person [when abroad]: that is most convenient, that they should be known [as such] and not molested. And God is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful", *Qur'an*, 33:59). But, to wear it or not is a personal choice for "there shall be no coercion in matters of faith" (*Qur'an*, 2:256). Therefore, to force women to wear the *hijab* or ban women from wearing the *hijab* is against the teachings of Islam. The decision must come from the women themselves. Once the person has accepted Islam and professed allegiance to its beliefs and teachings based on conviction and free choice, it then becomes incumbent upon the person to abide by that allegiance and live up to its requirements.

However, this may be difficult for each person, having been born and socialized into the norms, beliefs, values, and way of life of the family and group, is enculturated to become a functioning member of the group. While wearing the *hijab* is obligatory for Muslim women, the many socialization agents within the group determined whether they should do so or not. In Iran for example, the state determines that women must don the *hijab* but in Turkey the opposite is seen. By rewarding and punishing those who act with or against the predominant acceptable view of the group, the group motivates itself and others to act in accordance with its view. That is why it is difficult to go against what is regarded as acceptable by the group. Islam, on the other hand, asks both men and women to decide for themselves, not to be coerced by others because allegiance is only to God.

While the dominant Western perception of Muslim women with *hijab* is that of a symbol of oppression, others see it as a political statement. Feminists may see

these women as betraying the struggle for women's rights by submitting to their own oppression in donning the *hijab*. These women may also be perceived as being at odds with the prevailing social and religious norms. And, as a direct result of the events of 9/11, these women may even be seen as dangerous for they may support and/or participate in the so-called Islamic terrorist organizations that threaten social stability. While the *hijab* has come to symbolize so many different things, the meaning of the *hijab* to the individual woman has to be considered. Bullock (2002) studied the experiences of Muslim women living in Canada and found that those who choose to wear the *hijab* centered on religious reasons; to please Allah, accepting that the *hijab* is the proper dress code for women. They viewed the *hijab* as symbolizing determination, strength, courage, and dedication to Islam. Other than religious reasons, these women reported that the *hijab* make the male–female interaction easier, reduce sexual tension between men and women, encourage equality between social classes (by making the display of wealth, i.e., jewelry difficult), as well as providing a sense of inner peace and protection.

Some women strictly follow this Islamic dress code, whereas others take it lightly, for reasons ranging from not being convinced enough about its importance, to hiding away from the negative labels that come with rendering oneself as a Muslim (Ogunbumi, 1999). Among Muslims too, there are those who oppose, as well as support, the *hijab*. Those who oppose include people who have detached themselves almost entirely from any Islamic links and they are Muslims only by name (Hoodfar, 1993) and those who sincerely believe that *hijab* is not obligatory. This latter group considers *hijab* as a cultural practice or that the issue of the *hijab* was misunderstood or misinterpreted by elite Muslim males in their fight for religious, political, and economic power (Abusaraf, 2006). In contrast, there are Muslims who not only support the *hijab* but also are of the opinion that it should be imposed on all women, and if possible, in its most rigid form with those not adhering to it being punished by the religious authorities (Hertz-Lazarowitz & Shapira, 2005). However, there are also Muslims who support the *hijab* and consider it to be mandatory but are against it being imposed on women. They consider it to be only a part of a Muslim woman's identity where the underlying spiritual implications of the *hijab* is more important than the piece of cloth itself and that women should come to the point of wanting to wear it out of own conviction rather than be coerced. For these people, there are other things that are more important than the *hijab*. There are also those who neither oppose nor support the *hijab*. These are among some examples of attitudes toward *hijab* that can be delineated.

Women, Religion, and State

The controversy in France over whether Muslim girls have the right to wear the *hijab* has opened a floodgate of other issues regarding the clash between state and religion. While in France and in other countries where Muslims are a minority, the *hijab* issue dominates, in countries where Muslims are the majority, women are

even more oppressed. In predominantly Muslim Turkey, for example, in 1989 and again in 1993, the Constitutional Court upholds the ban on *hijab* in public schools and universities and those using them are not given employment in the government sector. On the other hand, in Iran, the situation is reversed, where the state dictates women to use the *hijab*. The present dilemma between state and religion seems to focus on the regulation of women. Why?

Women and the family often serve a crucial symbolic role in constructing group solidarity in society (Shachar, 2005). Because they are the ones who hold the family together, they are instrumental in transmitting a group's "culture" and upholding the group's integrity. As a result, idealized and gendered images of women as mothers, caregivers, educators, and moral custodians of the home come to represent the ultimate and sacred repository of group identity. In instances of cultural struggles over a group's recognition in the public sphere, they have come to represent the group's collective identity. Challenges presented by modernization and secularization serve as ready-made rationale for conservative group leaders to impose a rigid and strict reading of the religion in the name of a collective effort to preserve the group's distinct identity in the face of real or imagined external threats. Because of the centrality of women and the family in such cases, they have become a focal point for the current tug of war between state and religion regarding a group's collective identity. This dynamic is important in understanding the pressures that are imposed on women. Within this context, the *hijab* acts as a "symbol" of an underlying struggle.

What is the nature of this struggle? Are they similar in countries where Muslims are a minority and in countries where they are dominant? Using the case of a 12-year-old girl who was expelled for wearing the *hijab* in a school in Montreal as an example of Muslims as minority, Todd (1998) analyzed the media reports of this case and her readings led her to conclude that the fixation on the *hijab* is due to the connections made between the *hijab* and the cross. The media interpreted the *hijab* as though it functioned in the same way as the cross, and in doing so raised the question of where the *hijab* fits in public schools echoing the deep hostility toward confessional education (as marked by the cross) that supporters of secularism continually display. In other words, the newly forming sense of social identity as secular, egalitarian, and tolerant is still struggling with the old sense of social identity as religious, hierarchical, and homogeneous, the very qualities imputed to the *hijab* as a symbol in contemporary society.

Todd also pointed to the continual references made by the media of *hijab* as a political symbol of Islamic fundamentalism, where the *hijab* is seen as a political threat to equality and tolerance. In this case, the media linked oppression and religion, casting its discourse in terms of individual rights, especially the freedom of religious expression. Thus, there are two core themes in the fixation with the *hijab* that can be discerned. While the first relates to the question of what equality and tolerance mean in the context of contemporary society, the other is concerned with deviations from an ideal of equality and tolerance. Using this explanation, the stereotypical representations of the *hijab* is seen as a symbol of a society's struggle in finding and establishing its sense of self and identity.

As in Canada, the *hijab* ban in France has to be understood within the historical context of the country. French secularism was meant to limit the influence of Catholicism, not to target or intimidate minority groups. The controversy over the *hijab* reflects public anxiety on the part of the majority concerning the rise of Islam. In a community that has long been plagued by political underrepresentation, poverty, unemployment, etc., the *hijab* to the French Muslims is more than a religious or cultural expression; it is a political manifestation of identity. Thus, the controversy over the *hijab* represents an underlying struggle between the rise of Islam as a political force that threatens to undermine the French Republic and the portrayal of women as victims of oppression that must be protected by the state.

In predominantly Muslim countries, the *hijab* issue is just as controversial. For many years, Turkey bans women from wearing the *hijab* in universities and workplaces (Shehzad, 1998). Those who defy the ban may be arrested, denied jobs and education, fined, or even thrown in prison. Similarly, Tunisia and Uzbekistan also make use of the state's authority to limit women from donning the *hijab*. In Egypt, the state also forbids schoolgirls from wearing the *hijab* unless there is a note from their parents (Islamic Movement Crescent International, 2000). On the other hand, in Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, and Iran, Muslim women are legally compelled to wear it or under strong pressure to do so.

Taking Iran as an example of a predominantly Muslim country, the Islamic Revolution of 1978–1979 was devoted to free Iran from Western and foreign influences prevailing during the oppressive rule of the Shah, and to implement a government based on Islam. Ebadi and Aasen (2003) reported that within 3 weeks into the Revolution, women, who under the Shah were forced to unveil in the name of modernization, were ordered to cover themselves up. This compulsory covering of women was the start of a program of indoctrination and resocialization that nullify the previous decades' improvements made in women's social and legal status (Ebadi & Aasen).

While the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran upholds the rights of women in line with Islamic values and principles, what is appropriate according to Islamic criteria is defined by the conservative and powerful forces of the clergy (Ebadi & Aasen, 2003). While it acknowledges the central role of women, it is ambivalent about this role; on the one hand it recognizes that a woman deprived of the opportunity to participate in social activities "is denied a balanced growth," on the other it states that the foundation of the family is undermined in the modern world where the absence of women in the family may lead to the total collapse of the family. To counter such threats, these conservative leaders impose a literal interpretation of the religion in line with their traditional patriarchal values, where the *hijab* or chadors have become the symbol of an underlying struggle between the patriarchal, male-dominated religious tradition vs. a modern secular approach. While Islam is used to justify the actions taken, it is not the religion per se that is the cause for the many violations against women but the interpretations of the religion made by the authorities to serve and benefit them.

In contrast, the reverse is seen in Turkey, where there is a state ban on *hijab* wearers. During the Ottoman rule (from about 1300 until World War I), social rankings

were maintained with elaborate dress codes, and upper-class women generally wear *hijab* or a complete veil to signify their status. When Kemal Ataturk, the father of modern Turkey, wanted to build a modern, secular state, he began by promoting European and American dress code, doing away with the *hijab*. The *hijab*, however, survived the revolutionary onslaught and began making a comeback more than two decades ago, accompanied by a resurgence of Islam. In 1989 and again in 1993, Turkey's Constitutional Court upheld the ban on *hijab* in public schools and universities, ruling that they are religious symbols. The Islamically based ruling party once tried to introduce a draft law to extend the areas where women could wear the *hijab* but it was not welcomed by Ataturk's Republican People's Party. The secular, military-dominated establishment views *hijab* as a tool of the fundamentalists bent on undermining the constitutionally secular state and that such a law could only be imposed through bloody Islamic revolution (Sellars, 2004). While the women wearing them have called for greater adherence to Islamic tradition, to liberate them from the secular state, state officials argued that the ideology over *hijab* has little to do with liberation. Here, the underlying struggle over the *hijab* is between the secular vs. individual rights, especially the freedom of religious expression. In other words, modern Turkey has to make room for Islam, but Islam understood from a contextual rather than a literal perspective[1] to liberate women from the secular state where religion has no role.

In all these cases, the *hijab* has become a symbol of an underlying struggle between the forces of modernization/secularism vs. religion (literal vs. contextual interpretations). Framed in this manner, the controversy surrounding the *hijab* is really a struggle of a group/country's identity. However, this struggle is couched using the gendered and idealized images of women as the symbol of group/country's identity. As such, the historical and the political contexts of the group/country are central in understanding the *hijab* debate.

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[1] The *Qur'an* can be interpreted in two ways, literal and contextual. While the literal interpretation is based on the words in the text alone, the conceptual interpretation understands the words in light of historical, political, and cultural contexts, in search of the basic idea. This is necessary because the *Qur'an* was revealed in stages in history and within certain cultural, social, and political contexts. As the message of the *Qur'an* is deemed to be eternally valid, not limited to a specific time or a particular context, to understand the meaning of the *Qur'an*, one must seek the idea/intention rather than the literal words (Ebadi & Aasen, 2003). Usually, literal interpretations of the *Qur'an* are linked with conservative scholars, while progressive/reformist scholars based their understanding of the *Qur'an* on conceptual interpretations. As an example, the *Qur'an* allows a man to have four wives. This provision should be interpreted in light of the social and the cultural context in which it operated. Muhammad encouraged Muslim men to marry up to four wives to provide for women who were widowed at the Battle of Uhud. Thus, the custom of marrying up to four wives had its origin as a humanitarian gesture to take care of the less fortunate women and their children in a community where men were expected to constantly engage in battles and expeditions (Kim & Ebadi, 2003). Today, society has developed other ways of taking care of widows and others who are in need of financial support.

The *Qur'an* also says "You will never be able to do perfect justice between wives even if it is your ardent desire……" (*Qur'an*, 4:129) and in another verse, "……but if you fear that you shall not be able to deal justly (with them), then only one" (*Qur'an*, 4:3), implying that while polygamy is allowed, because it is extremely difficult to be fair and just to all wives, a man is encourage to have only one wife.

"Liberating" the *Hijab*

While the examples cited portrayed a struggle between state and religion, as a point of clarification, Islam as a way of life, does not separate the two. Besides spiritual and metaphysical issues, Islam also outlines how society should be governed. While there is no contradiction between the notion of human rights and the basic Islamic principles of justice and human equality, many current versions of Islamic laws that form the basis of a country's legal system have created serious legal and religious contradictions, incurring problems for many, especially women and children (Ebadi & Aasen, 2003). This is due to the interpretations of Islam represented by the conservative and powerful male-dominated legal tradition that often reflect the values of a patriarchal society. That is why there are differences between say Iran and Afghanistan (under the previous Taliban regime); both claim to be following Islamic policies on human rights, but their practices are different, showing how Islam can be interpreted in various ways depending on social and ideological conditions.

Regardless of the underlying struggle between state and religion, the two extreme impositions of rule (banning or forcing the *hijab*) are both forms of oppression. They reflect violations of women's rights of expression, as enshrined in the Declaration of Human Rights:

> "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion; this right includes freedom…either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance" (Article 18).

In both cases, the freedom to wear or not to wear the *hijab* is not in the hands of the individual woman. The state has become a tool for those in power to impose rules that serve their needs. For this reason, the discourse on *hijab* can also be seen as a human rights issue, where the decision to wear the *hijab* should be respected just as the decision not to wear the *hijab*. In the examples presented, women are fighting against state-imposed oppression for the right to self-determination, as enshrined in the Declaration of Human Rights and in most state Constitutions (but whether it is respected is another thing).

As mentioned, it is possible to use the liberation orientation in the discussion of the *hijab* issue by placing the decision of the *hijab* onto the women. How can this be done? Using examples taken from various countries, I will try to show how women have made used of such an orientation, though this may not necessary be known as the liberation approach.

Islam was revealed around 14 centuries ago in Arabia at a time when society denied the humanity of the woman; women were treated as possessions, to be bought and sold with female infanticide being the norm. Islam changed that by giving women their dignity, humanity, and rights (Al-Qardhawi, 2000), but these are usually not reflected in many Muslim countries. So much so the image projected by *hijab* wearers to the West is that of male subjugation of women. In their struggle, the young educated women in Turkey are redefining what it is to be a Muslim woman; they have organized protests and hunger strikes to get the authorities to rescind the ban. These young women consider their action as an act of self-assertion

and female empowerment. Instead of a symbol of subservience to men, many (Islamic feminist[2]) view the *hijab* as a guard against the intruding eyes of men and as a sign that their first allegiance is to God (not men or state). In other words, these women are making their own decision rather than be coerced by the state. While they incur the wrath of the state by their actions, they are bringing the issue into the public realm, making the general public more aware about their rights. In doing so, these women are bringing Islam into the public arena where religion has been relegated to the background for so long. Not only are they asking the state to make room in Turkey for Islam, but also they are requesting that Islamic interpretations take into account the female voice.

In many Muslim societies, the absence of the female voice in the Islamic legal discourse has been a hindrance for the further improvement of the position of women. As argued by Sachedina (2001) "in the absence of re-evaluation of the relevant authoritative texts within their historical and cultural contexts, Islamic jurisprudence has been impaired by irrelevant hair-splitting exercises, reflecting an acute formalistic rather than a substantive approach to religious knowledge" (p. 167), the legal rulings are determined by powerful male jurists who tend to ignore the female evaluation of her own social situation and the problems they face in contemporary society. Thus, what is needed is a redefinition of the status of women. However, such a redefinition should be based on a new and expanded methodology (see footnote 1), dependent upon the women's participation in the legal–ethical deliberations on matters concerning their rights.

In several Muslim countries (for example, Iran, Egypt, Turkey), women have started to challenge conservative clerics who assume that they enjoy the privilege of interpreting the *Qur'an* and the traditions of Prophet Mohammad where the goal is to remove Islamic jurisprudence from male monopoly (Afshari, 2001). More and more scholars and reformers are pointing to the *Qur'an* as well as the traditions of Prophet Muhammad, providing materials that are clearly supportive of the rights of women. They point that the existing male-dominated jurisprudence need to be replaced with a new and more objective and less male-centered jurisprudence, based on readings and interpretations of the *Qur'an* that are meaningful to Muslim women living in the modern era (Ebadi & Aasen, 2003). Using Iran as an example, Ebadi

[2] I find this term inappropriate to use in the context of Islam. Islam is rooted in the notions of justice, human dignity, and equality, where all humans have been created equal and are equal in the eyes of God. The *Qur'an* states the rights and the duties of men and women; in general the rights and the duties of both sexes are the same except within the family, where men are seen as providers and women as caregivers. In many patriarchal societies, this latter point is often used to justify the confinement of women at home. While the main duty of women is to the family, their rights to education, employment, property, etc. are to be respected, and it is the duty of men to ensure that women are given their rights. Therefore, in an "'Islamic"' country (at present, no Muslim country is really Islamic, though there are claims) women do not have to fight for their rights, to claim what is rightfully theirs. In many Muslim countries, the prevailing patriarchal structures of society have influenced the interpretations of the *Qur'an* and the traditions of Prophet Muhammad, which has led to legal rulings being determined solely by male jurists who have failed to address the concrete problems faced by women in current society.

and Aasen showed that women and children were subjugated and discriminated due to legal changes made after the Revolution. A case in point is the Family Protection Act of 1967 (a reform enforced by the Shah that include among others, divorce actions to be brought before a court to be decided, a married man to obtain permission of the court before taking a second wife, assigning child custody based on the best interest of the child) which was suspended and replaced by the Special Civil Courts Act, with negative repercussions for the women and children. As a lawyer, jurist, and activist, Ebadi opposed this act and for her efforts in defending the rights of women and children in Iran, Ebadi was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2003.

In Egypt, a coalition of women advocates, moderate Muslim clerics, divorce lawyers, and civil court judges have succeeded in getting the approval of the country's religious establishment to enact reforms of the family law. In 2000, a new Egyptian law relating to personal status was passed introducing the creation of a family law court authorized to facilitate divorce cases, family insurance plans, and other liberalizing revisions (Esposito & DeLongBas, 2001). The most significant aspect of the law establishes a woman's right to divorce her husband with or without his consent. The new law further provides that the divorced wife will be able to call upon the Egyptian government if the ex-husband fails or refuses to provide maintenance. In addition, if the husband cannot pay a court-ordered living allowance, the woman will have the right to draw money from a special state bank in order to provide for her family. Although this is not a perfect solution, the Egyptian family law reform is generally recognized as improving the lot of women by precluding gender-based "abuses that had crept into Muslim practice" (Esposito & DeLongBas, p. 61).

Shachar (2005) reported a similar change that has been achieved by a coalition of Muslim-Israeli and Jewish-Israeli feminist organizations. Despite opposition from the more conservative representatives of the Islamic movement, a legislative amendment was passed that considerably limits the exclusive authority of *Sharia* (religious) courts over Muslim women in Israel, following a similar amendment that restricted the powers exercised by rabbinical courts over Jewish women.

These examples show that women, either alone or with the help of others with an ethical conscience are beginning to decide and take some actions, in line with the liberating approach. Though there are still many battles ahead, these initiatives can provide support for other women in similar predicament. Following up on the politics of representation, as people of conscience, how can we assure that the voices of women (usually the less powerful) are heard? Is there a duty to listen to these women whose perspective may differ from the more powerful members? Are there certain structures within the law or institution that can empower women, and to whom they can turn to for recourse? We need to acknowledge inequalities within group/society, rather than simply trusting the representation and dialogue conducted through official group "spokesmen" (many of whom are older men). As shown by the examples, this politics of representation in issues related to women is increasingly being questioned. While banning or forcing the *hijab* provides greater public recognition to the religious/secular identity, they fail to consider the effect on women. As a result of modernization, the "traditional" role emphasized for

women makes them even more vulnerable, which is magnified by the stress placed on the family as a symbol of group and religious identity.

In the examples described, the patriarchal system is so entrenched that in matters relating to women, usually there is no dialogue with the women. It is the voices of the powerful older males speaking through state apparatus that represent the women. That is why in these cases, the actions of the few educated and conscientized women are so important. While they are seen as going against tradition, they are also the ones who will fill the void urgently needed for change in the group. By bringing the *hijab* issue to the fore, they are bringing awareness to the underlying struggle of the general plight of women in relation to the state and the religion, showing to some extent, an insight into the fear and the insecurities of those in power. With the help from others with an ethical conscience within the system (such as lawyers, judges, activists) the few examples described also have provided positive results for the women by enhancing the choices available to them in instances where they need to negotiate their rights concerning child custody, inheritance entitlement, spousal maintenance, or property division, yet without asking them to compromise or abandon their group loyalty or religious identity. These are the kinds of social changes advocated by the liberation orientation.

While the controversy centers on the *hijab*, as we have shown, the *hijab* is only a symbol of an underlying struggle. In addition, the current discourse on *hijab* is couched as an either–or kind of solution. For example, by not using the *hijab,* women are entitled to valued goods such as public education, employment, and recognition, but in donning the *hijab*, they are perceived to be political and punished (or the reverse). This is not a choice because by opting for the former, they are betraying the group's ideals, while in deciding on the latter, they are excluded from participating fully in society (because the attainment of education, the only long-term strategy that is consistently linked with better opportunities in life and empowerment for women, is now more difficult than ever). We would like to suggest that rather than forcing this kind of trade-off, it would be good to offer women space to express their multiple affiliation (example, as French and Muslim or Turkish and Muslim).

These cases also show that there is a need to create within the system some legal/institutional structures that encourage coordination and cooperation between state and religious authorities in issues relating to women. In cases where none exists, women (with the help of others with a conscience) will need to initiate some action, by getting together to lobby for such a mechanism. Without any such structure progress cannot be made toward alleviating, or at least reducing, gender-based inequalities within the group. As shown by the examples, unless women take some action, the state will maintain and reinforce a rigid and harsh interpretation of a group's tradition.

In conclusion, in understanding the *hijab* issue, we need to move beyond the simple piece of cloth to the underlying meaning of the *hijab*. While this meaning is couched in terms of the struggle between state vs. religion, it allows us to question how and why the meanings are different in different social contexts. In doing so, we see how groups/countries are projecting their insecurities and fear into the discourse on *hijab*. Through such enquiry also, we can explore the power relations

between women and the state and to ask how such representations served the interests of the state and women. There is also a need to understand the history of the country to fully comprehend the highly charged discourse on *hijab*, because the *hijab* operates only as a symbol in the act of establishing a sense of identity, of who we "are" with respect to the "other."

The liberation approach fits in well because this is precisely what it aims to do; to liberate women who have long been silenced and marginalized to seek a platform for their voices and concerns to be heard. With better awareness and education, as well as support from within the group (from people with a conscience), these women are finding within the tradition itself resources for more egalitarian reinterpretation of their roles. While this is an uphill battle, this is what liberation is, a constant battle, with critique, democracy, and participation as means in the struggle.

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Development of Historical Memory as a Psychosocial Recovery Process

Rosa Lia Chauca-Sabroso and Sandra Fuentes-Polar

For Peru, the 1980s represented a time of extreme barbarism. Such type of barbarism had never been seen and suffered by the population during the Republican period of the nation. In May 1980, an internal armed conflict was initiated by the Peruvian Communist Party – *Shining Path* (SP), a group with a Maoist orientation. What they called "the people's war" tried to destabilize the State and seize power as their way to react against the acute economic crisis and absence of the Peruvian State in the poverty zones of the country. They were later joined by the *Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement* (MRTA in its Spanish acronym), which was nearer to the Latin American Left organizations. Frequently, the civil population had to assume a position regarding the Peruvian Armed Forces and the rebel groups, thereby becoming the victims of attacks, kidnappings, and selective murders. Both adults and children; men and women, suffered from the disappearances and deaths of their relatives, from sexual violence and torture. These violations of human rights were discounted by the Peruvian army by referring to the victim as "excesses" and "cost of the armed conflict."

The aftermath of such horror were observed during the following decade in the children, the orphans, and the new families who survived without solving their emotional losses. These people carried an enormous need for justice and reparation. Violence, criminal gangs, alcoholism, social disorganization, and individualism are some of the characteristics of the towns in the inner country, but also of Lima, the capital city. Because of this it became necessary for the population to express the truth about what they had gone through, without any coactions and in the most liberating sense. In this way, they contributed to their own reconciliation because old conflicts and rancor destabilized community orders and rules and generated mistrust among the people. This mistrust has persisted to the present day.

In this context, RED PARA LA INFANCIA Y LA FAMILIA-PERU (Infancy and Family Network – REDINFA – PERU) became engaged with the population affected by the conflict. This engagement, which is ongoing, tries to carry out not only the main task described below, but also the incidental activities, searching to

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influence the regional and national policies in order to obtain reparative justice for everything that happened during this sad chapter in Peruvian history.

REDINFA is a nongovernmental organization (NGO) whose mission is to contribute to the recovery of mental health of children, women, men, and older people who have been affected by political violence. REDINFA also supports healthy townspeople in constructing a society characterized by a culture of peace that is just, fraternal, free, and democratic. Our work started in 1985 in five cities (Abancay, Ayacucho, Sicuani, Pucallpa, and Tarapoto), which are all destination cities for people displaced by the ongoing political violence in Peru. Our task was to train Child Mental Health promoters who could create spaces to care for children affected by political violence. Many of the children behaved aggressively and experienced fear, nightmares, and episodes of crying. These were consequences of what they had experienced as well as reactions to their new living context. In the new context, the children and their families were treated with disdain and discrimination. Our support work began at the community level because there was little commitment by state institutions. In order to build capacity, these promoters gradually formed local teams that extended the experience to various zones of the cities.

In 2001, during the governmental transition of President Paniagua, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was established, partly in response to the demands of civil society (e.g., human rights organizations) which pushed for an accounting of what had occurred during the dictatorial government of those years. It opened up the possibility of informing the entire country of what had been ignored for two decades, and initiated a justice and reparation process. Thus, in order to contribute to the mission of the TRC, REDINFA – Peru expanded its programs and initiated the emotional recovery process, based on the construction of the Community Historical Memory in four communities affected by violence in the Department of Apurimac, a mountainous region in the south-central highlands of the Andes in Peru.

This program adopted a methodology that was sensitive to the population's needs and expectations. The central feature of the program was the development of community historical memory, an exercise that we thought would acknowledge the value of individual and collective experiences. This led us to carefully collect their testimonies, mitigate their pain, and support their emotional recovery, while at the same time opening the path toward dignity, a symbolic form of compensation.

In this way, the development of historical memory went beyond the mere historical reconstruction of what was experienced and became a space for expression, acknowledgement of individual and collective capacities, resources and learning, for the joint and consensual construction of a different future for the participants.

Methodology

In order to carry out this task, we had to consider some basic guidelines in approaching the population, taking into account the emotional needs that had accumulated during many years of political violence. In that sense, it was necessary to:

- Build rapport and trust
- Strengthen listening capacities
- Implement a psychosocial, gender equity and intercultural approach
- Be fluent in the native language (Quechua), familiar with various cultures, such as the Andean culture, and respectful toward all cultures
- Maintain confidentiality regarding what was shared

In order to collect testimonies, we designed emotional accompaniment sessions, which fostered the creation of a climate of trust, safety, and respect. In these sessions emotions were expressed, people talked about the context in which the events took place, and considered the causes and the consequences of their lived experiences. Their testimonies, reflections and observations were the bases for the construction of each community history. This was an interactive process receiving the people's comments and new reflections in a continuous process of feedback. In carrying out this task we had the support and commitment of local institutions such as ADIFA-PASMI[1] and CDH[2]. These institutions had previously participated in the Truth and Reconciliation process and therefore had already established relationships with the participants. Our presence in the healing process is a transitory step; it is to accompany and support but ultimately to let people lead their own lives. Thus, a psychosocial accompaniment process must not only help people face reality, but also contemplate the strengthening of individual and organizational capacities and the restitution of rights so that people can overcome the impact of what they have experienced and work toward social justice.

During the process we carried out meetings with participants in their local spaces. This allowed us to gradually become part of the community dynamics. We alternated the work between open and closed spaces. In open spaces, community dynamics favored the establishment of trust, contact, natural rapport, and integration. These achievements were reinforced in closed spaces, where confidentiality was honored and participants were encouraged to share information and feelings privately. The moments of sharing occurred naturally, without infringing on their customs. Elements from nature were incorporated in moments of play and relaxation. For example, we used the sound of the wind, the murmur of rivers, the air, and the flowers, among others, which facilitated a connection with relaxation techniques in a natural manner; even though this activity was not currently part of their daily lives. The exercises were adapted to their cultural reality, for instance, by using familiar names of animals, trees, *Apus* (sacred mountains), saints, among others. Games they played as children were incorporated, such as *watuchis* (riddles), allowing rapport to be built between facilitators and participants.

As said, testimonies, reflections, and future perspectives were recorded and periodically returned to participants for feedback. The final document was presented in its totality to the population, taking into account their suggestions about information they wished to have omitted and included in the document. For the community, history

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[1]*Asociación para el Desarrollo de la Infancia y la Familia Apurimeña.*

[2]*Centro para el Desarrollo Humano.*

becomes a tool, a presentation letter, and a document on demands. It becomes whatever the community needs to use it for. In some cases, it remains as an internal document for the community. In other cases, the community will initiate a dissemination process and share it with neighboring communities and some will use it as a presentation letter that bears witness to their capacities and skills.

Some Findings

In this section, the testimonies gathered will be identified with a code consisting of a letter (which refers to the community) and a number (which refers to a personal testimony). No further identifying information is supplied due to confidentiality and privacy of the stories, and for the personal safety of participants. It must be remembered that there continues to be risks of backlash, because the justice, reconciliation, and reparation processes are still underway.

> …We have to tell the truth; we can't hide it; we trust each other and we have to say things as they were. I see that we have to tell, that we have to tell the truth, (…) the physical mistreatment by the military were threats, whereas the terrorists were not like that. For any little thing they killed, and that is unacceptable. Those four people practically quartered themselves here and made the whole community tremble, a woman and three men... (T1)

As demonstrated in T1, it was possible for the population to express their experiences and feelings in a climate of trust and respect due in no small part to the relationships that had been built over time. This was not an easy task because these communities were deeply affected by political violence, which had damaged their trust in interpersonal and social relationships. In that sense, it was important for us to offer respect and confidentiality in order to promote fairness, to respond to the demands of the context, and, to behave in accordance with our social commitment and institutional mission.

A number of concurrent programs and events contributed to this process of opening and talking. Some people participated in regional and national Meetings of Women Affected by Political Violence (2002) in the province. At the same time, there was a registry of disappeared people, carried out by civil society, called "Never Forget You" (*Olvidarte nunca)* (2001) and the Census for Peace, under the responsibility of PAR.[3] Programs and events that were part of the TRC including documenting massacres, terrorist attacks, forced disappearances, violence against women, and other violations of human rights that were committed by the military and rebel groups in Peru also aided in the process. Together, these programs and events allowed leaders and authorities representing the communities where we intervened to broaden their outlook on what happened during the internal armed

[3] Re-population Support Program (PAR in the Spanish acronym). This program belongs to the woman''s Ministry of Social Development (MIMDES in the Spanish acronym). The initial objective was to help the displaced families that experienced violence and return them to their original communities.

conflict; not only in their regions, but also at the national and even the international levels. Thus, they assumed a dissemination role as spokespersons not only of their communities, but also for their regions.

Accompanying participants in these psychosocial processes strengthened trust within the relationships. However, doubts and suspicion toward their representatives in these spaces also began to emerge as people imagined that some of them might be taking advantage of the situation and gaining personal economic benefits. Doubts were healthy though, because they prompted community members to take an active role in making their representatives accountable. They demanded that representatives participate and become involved in these spaces, leading to overall relationship strengthening. In this way, the population committed itself to demanding and being informed on what is taking place in the Post Truth Commission process.

Psychosocial, Gender, and Intercultural Approaches

War and armed conflict impacted differently upon men and women, the latter often being victims of sexual violence. For this reason, it was necessary to offer different spaces for privacy and emotional support for women and for men so that they can freely express their experiences and feelings. Sexual violence exposed women to the possible stigmatization of being called "women of the military" or "belonging to the *walkers*" (*Sendero Luminoso* guerrilla),[4] and the resulting social persecution for them and their families. For both women and men it is often painful and shameful to talk about acts that humiliated them as human beings.

In addition, the internal armed conflict challenged us to work together toward an understanding of the magnitude and impact women's civil and political rights violations, and underscored the importance of recovering these same rights for the achievement of justice with equity and equal opportunities. Movements toward achieving these rights were the basis for the balance and harmony of their mental and physical health.

Initially, women's testimonies told what had occurred to their children, brothers, sisters, parents, and husbands. They described other people's sufferings as the loss of their traditional values and customs. In other words, they focused on all that affected their communal structure. They hardly talked about their own experiences, until they participated in the workshops and began to speak about themselves and to express their testimonies. In this sense, it was necessary that the teams in charge of the accompaniment process were gender mixed. This instilled a greater confidence in the men as well as in the women. But, in some instances it was necessary to make a positive discrimination regarding gender, because men and women needed different attention. Creating then separate spaces for each gender became a priority.

We also felt that it was important to help community members to see themselves as part of an affected community. Some participants were detained, incarcerated,

[4] The Shining Path guerrilla movement.

or disappeared; other members of the community suffered torture, punishment, forced displacement, and the destruction of their physical space and social structures. That they could recognize themselves as members of an affected community became important, because the perpetrators attacked the integrity of the population as a whole. In this sense, we promoted their participation in various social spaces within the context of the TRC, such as public audiences and group mobilizations. These were important experiences for the strengthening and development of the community and allowed them to develop important actions which impacted upon the public institutions in charge of the processes of truth, justice, and reparation in the region.

Expectations of the Population

The project was initiated within a context of postpolitical violence and transition to democracy after the end of the Fujimori authoritarian government (1990–2001). At this time, the TRC raised many expectations within the affected population. One of them was the need for forensic anthropological and judiciary investigations in order to achieve justice. According to the TRC Report (Hatun Willakuy, 2004, pp. 433–465), approximately 29,980 persons died or disappeared. Also, although 4,464 burial grounds were registered, preliminary verifications have been carried out on only 2,200 of them, leaving a big responsibility for civil society and the governments to follow through on this process.

It is very difficult for community people to understand why a judiciary process is so long and complicated. Yet, the process of justice takes time. It takes time to find disappeared relatives; to be compensated for the injuries they have suffered as not legally recognized (illegitimate) children, and for their loss of assets and mental health impairment. Then, the people's definition of justice is different. Thus, for many people in the affected community, conflicts are expected to be solved in a quick and effective way, identifying the aggressor, determining the extent of the harm inflicted, and establishing material and economic responsibility for the injured. In addition, under some conditions, there is a provision that allows the possibility of offering a new opportunity for rectification.

In the community members imaginary, it is necessary to see concrete and immediate results. For this reason, the challenge in the psychosocial field is how we work with them to unite the work in human rights with the conditions of integral welfare demanded by the population. And doing so, while strengthening their participation in the process, motivating and accompanying them so that they assume the experience, continuing and replicating it, always within the logic of, so these events shall not happen again (*Para que no se repitan estos hechos*). In their testimonies people express that it is important that children do not forget what happened, so they will not be deceived and learn from what their parents went through. This idea is very common among the upper Andean population that was affected by violence.

Process of Psychosocial Recovery

> Woman: “My children are coming back to our community. With so much suffering, we have also rebuilt our house again. I am too old, it is very difficult that they care for me, I have no more strength. Right now I don’t know what I’m going to do. I am suffering too much and I see my children are ill. Because of so many beatings my body is useless, I ran out of force. As a ball they have treated us, chaccñandonos (Quechua word that means “crucify”).

Once the bonds of trust and respect are created, the participants of the one-day workshops, and discussions, progressively expressed their feelings about the impact of political violence in their lives. They do it with rage, anger, impotence, and also resignation, besides a hopeless vision of the future.

> My son has also been beaten, for that reason he is ill, my children have gone all on their own, our fellow countrymen have also been taken away and they have not come back. (I.1).

The impact in the familiar and communal disorganization is evident. In the Andean communities the widows and old people are not able to cultivate the lands by themselves. For this reason many women have had to remarry in search of a solution guaranteeing a way to produce daily life. Violent relations in these new families, as well as abuse of alcohol consumption used to forget the pain and the suffering of all those years, are common. The people not only lost their kin, but also part of their culture and its customs, repressed during the two decade conflict. Actually, many of those traditions have been extinguished.

> In December also Mamacha (the Virgin) Dolores; in April also there were celebrations; in July there was the main celebration of the town, with bullfight and other activities; since that time we have totally abandoned ourselves, it is not like it was, we have even changed our religion, now all of us are Adventists… (I.3).

Communal ways of life were forbidden because there was the belief that an assembly of people could get organized and undertake subversive actions. They shared with us how the fear of being detained, kidnapped, and/or disappeared led to forced displacement of the population, leaving the communities abandoned or only with some resistant families, most of them composed of elders. This affected their identity and their self-esteem, as they were forced to hide and mask their customs. Compulsory religious practices were one of the ways to deal with this situation and served as a shelter for their suffering.

Recognizing Themselves as Victims

Another important aspect that we had in mind was to help community members to recognize themselves as an affected community because we found that for many, the affected were those who were detained, incarcerated, or disappeared. The rest of the population which suffered torture, punishment, forced displacement, and the destruction

of their physical space and social structures did not see themselves as affected. That they could recognize themselves as members of an affected community became important because the perpetrators attacked the integrity of the population as a whole. In this sense, we promoted their participation in various social spaces within the context of the TRC, such as public audiences and demonstrations. These were important experiences for the strengthening and development of the community and allowed them to develop actions which impacted on public institutions that were linked to the processes of truth, justice, and reparation in the region.

It was very important that facilitators spoke Quechua language because for the population it is easier to express their feelings in their native tongue, even though they also speak Spanish – the language of the conquerors, and of the people causing their woes. In the development of the sessions, the use of activities according to their customs and culture was sought, creating an exchange of knowledge among community members and facilitators, which allowed us to improve our work and strengthen their self-esteem due to the recognition and value of their culture.

They shared with us how the fear of being detained, kidnapped, or of disappearing provoked the forced displacement of the population, leaving the communities abandoned or only with some resistant families, most of them composed by elders. This affected their identity and their self-esteem, as they were forced to hide and mask their customs. Compulsory religious practices were one of the ways to deal with this situation as a shelter for their suffering.

To express, to remember, and to partake opportunity lead them to take the reins of their social life, finding thus the reparation of the impact they had suffered. The population knows that it will be impossible to return to the past, recovering the culture, and ways they had; however, there still are remains of the moral values cultivated in their communities. This re-evaluation and their own longing are at the base of their recovery and reconstruction.

Martín-Baró (1986) said that the truth of the Latin American populations is not in the oppression present today, but in the liberty of tomorrow. The truth of the population majorities is not to be found, but to be made. That stresses the importance of doing a critical revision of historic facts, not separated of feelings and sorrows, of thinking and doing, of retaking and projecting. For communities it is an initial process that will generate substantial changes and empowerment stemming from their efforts, their achievements, and their advances.

The Transit from the Collective to the Individual

Initially, testimonies were focused on the vivid experiences of each individual. Progressively, they began to incorporate a more collective vision of what happened to them. Besides that, there was an analysis of the context where these experiences happened and of how violence continued not only in their communities or regions, but also in the country as a whole. In this way, the participants began to recognize themselves as persons, whose human rights were violated, identifying themselves as victims.

The transit from the individual to the collective can be seen in the following testimonies:

> There were a lot of people who died, disappeared. They died because of these fighting. The community was labeled as a red zone and we didn't know why they made those things to us, even now we don't know why those things happened… (I.6)
>
> …within the community we are all like brothers and sisters…sometimes we cry. In this town we have suffered the most when violence came, when came one and beat us, when came other and killed us, we were abused by three parties… (O.7)
>
> …At that time, our life was sad, now we already are glad and now my community is better, there is even a road (O.10)

It is important to mention that community people who suffered those indiscriminate forms of violence, collectively perceived themselves as victims. Nevertheless, the population could develop strategies to cope with each one of the dangerous groups (military men and subversive groups). They produced a uniform type of message according to what each group wanted to hear. This worked out since they did not know, at each specific moment, with which one of the groups they were talking. In addition, in the communities where the subversive groups' incursion implied the participation of the leaders and key people in the community, the way to survive was to press charges among themselves. These communities at present have problems to get organized, because the suspiciousness and mistrust among its members maintains the rancor caused by the damage that such measures made among themselves. Alcoholism, violence, and mistreatment have become part of their family and social relations.

The projects developed by NGOs and governmental institutions, concerning these problems, have not yet attained the results hoped for. The impact of violence has disorganized the communal sense of work and the search for common wellbeing. The population perceive themselves as victims of themselves, and as victims of the moral damage that they indirectly generated due to the conflict, when each one was trying to save him or her from death, torture, and despair.

From Victims to Actors: Building the Way to Hope

The acknowledgment through the process of discussion and reflection in the workshops, of themselves as citizens whose rights were violated, but as also having resources and abilities, progressively allowed them to stop feeling only as victims and to participate actively in processes of surveillance; building proposals, projects, and budgets in a participatory way. Thus, this led them to envision a different future and to assume a more active role as citizens.

For the population we have been working with, the possibility to dialog with local authorities represents the beginning of the construction of their citizenship, reflected in the constant participation and negotiation of their common needs and interests. This experience opens a possibility of integration to a sociopolitical system of equality and participation, discovering and valuing the importance of jointly achieving their priorities. In order to do that it was necessary for them to acknowledge

the fact that, in their whole history, the State had never fulfilled its role as a promoter of development and wellbeing.

Now the participants are aware that they need to be exigent regarding others and also themselves in order to achieve community and regional development. It is in that sense that alternative educational proposals for children and women are always well received and accepted by them. For this people it is necessary to know and to learn. "To be learned" represents for them the social power making them able to know the other's discourse, progressively incorporating their culture in an official system. Learning and knowing are a strategy not spoken about but manifested in their acts.

> The government has very much neglected our community, there was not support, only the organized people lived somehow; there was not any project. Now women and young people must study because through education young people become professionals and look for a job… (I.7)

Identification of themselves as a productive and reproductive people gives them the status of a "live community" which will last across time, not only as social fighters, but also as developing and advancing producers.

> Nowadays, people are even reproducing themselves in this community; this did not happen before. There were no jobs before, now at least there is work. For that reason we ask the government to make an agreement in order to be peaceful. The government should support us; if a military base returns, they too will commit abuses against human rights. We are peaceful and we would like to stay like that, we do not want the fears we felt to be repeated. Here, we, old men and women, where we shall go if we do not have any more energy? (I.5)

The construction of their community history through the elaboration of collective and individual memory represented for the population participating in this process, the focus of their learning and of social projection. The pragmatism of Andean thought and their world vision has allowed them to put aside hatred and resentments, and to propose a fraternal way of living, though this does not mean they are forgetting what they have lived.

> …some of them have accepted because of their hopes. Suddenly they do not want to go back to that suffering, to those tears. How many people have lost their life saving their families because they did not have any access to travel to other cities (O.2)

The possibility to reinitiate their life cycle, and of intertwining hope and sorrow in order to overcome the events that halted them has been a positive answer for the beginning of a new phase; although they needed much courage and integrity to confront sorrow, and also to identify and admit their errors. Those were not easy tasks. The wisdom evidenced by those capacities is worth of being preserved.

> Many of us as youngsters were with them. First, in the popular schools, we learned their ideology there. We saw that it was for our own good. Then we were 14–18 years and we were with them, we believed in them[5] because nobody, neither politicians nor government officers, or any high officer not even came once to my town. They come when elections are close and then never ever!!! (T11).

[5]They are referring to the subversive movement "Shining Path."

Learning From the Past Together: Motivations, Doubts, and Conflicts from the Process

Many times one thinks that the doubts and motivations arising while carrying out a project should be seen as contradictions, but we think it is the contrary. For us, those doubts and motivations have become a stimulus leading us to persevere and continue in the line of social change, reassuring us about respect and solidarity not as myths, but as living values and essential components of reality. Because of this, in what follows we want to share with the readers some of our doubts and motivations. One of the main things we learned is that, in spite of the impact of political violence in the lives of individuals, families, and communities; organization, solidarity, and hope have stood as strategies for the defense of life, the re-establishment of peace, truth, reconciliation, and for community development.

We believe that people's fears and memories will unfortunately persist if corruption and impunity are not consciously and structurally counteracted in our society. Thus, it is important that when we participate in psychosocial recovery processes we should also promote processes for the recovery of people's fundamental rights, in order to strengthen their identity and role as active members of society. This is a liberating aspect in our work.

In communities, the interest and motivation, especially of adults and the elderly, can be frustrating when they try to encourage and take back lost practices in the face of the demands of young people who have lived in the city and have returned with other culture, food, and musical tastes. We believe that the challenge is to let both experiences contribute in bringing people together, instead of becoming a gap. Likewise, we need to take into consideration the presence of some religious denominations that, with radical attitudes, are not contributing to division.

However, recognizing the work of defense and accompaniment that branches of the Evangelical religious denomination offered during these years is important. Although, in their main motivation of obtaining followers and to establish a strict command over them, they separate their congregations from the cultural and the social space they inhabit. Communal celebrations in the Apurimac zone are related to religious festivities of saints, thanking for the harvests and, to better climate petitions. But, currently they are presented and resignified for the Evangelical, as pagan cultures, as heathen. These cults have put in peril of extinction those traditions, since fewer and fewer people participate in the organization and celebration of these festivities, which may disappear in the near future.

For the people and their authorities, it is important to be familiar with the methods of State institutions, as well as to participate in the planning, development, and processes of change, as well as in citizen's security actions. In other words, they need to be organized and to recover their citizen condition (male and female), for their participation in various social and community spaces. It is in this way that learning from history, their history, makes sense for people; for it allows to make continuous comparison between the past and the present, and on that basis, generate proposals to overcome current difficulties.

We think that accompaniment in social processes, as well as the construction of partnerships for this task, are important factors. Hence, the role of promoter or professional in this process must be differentiated from friendship bonds, although it is not easy to do so. Community leaders can offer us their affection through *compadrazgo*[6] bonds, but we should discriminate and keep in mind our role, in order not to put at risk the process and sustainability of the relationships that could be established between the institution and the community.

To carry out our work with the community, we created teams including men and women as a way of helping to make gender equality visible, especially because, it is difficult for community authorities (mostly male) to have a woman as a spokesperson. Thus, it is necessary to approach them in couples, promoting women's value among authorities and changing their perceptions about them based on their past performance during the internal armed conflict. It also is necessary to develop capacities for the construction of governance and a democratic process.

We verified that for people it is important that their history be printed in Spanish for mass distribution, so that local authorities may know about it. However, at the beginning, in our effort to acknowledge the Quechua language, we proposed that the publication also be made in their native language. Later we realized that as Quechua is basically an oral language, not all of them write or read it. Thus, it was important to consider some audiovisual material that could be understood by the majority of the population; as it is important to take into account these aspects in the interventions, because our motivation can be valid and respond to reality, but at certain times, may not be meaningful for the population.

At certain moments it was frustrating to discuss whether it was timely to carry out this process, if the population was ready for it or if the local and regional authorities were conscious of the necessity of a process of reparation and of the urgency for the reformulation of inclusive and participatory policies. The delay in the procedures and the authorities' lack of interest was not easy to understand. Population problems are solved in a quicker way from a practical perspective based on reciprocity; so for them to be given satisfaction regarding their rights translated into the satisfaction of their basic survival needs such as nourishment and housing. It is the State's responsibility to promote the development of the population as part of their fundamental rights, but it is urgent to attend to basic needs. Nevertheless, beyond the academic meaning of reparation within contexts of violence, what is important is how the population elaborates and makes demands concerning their urgent needs, in a context where legal and political aspects are intertwined.

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[6] Type of relationship established between two individuals, as a result of one of them becoming the godfather of one of the children of the other. The two individuals thus become co-parents (*compadres*). In the community intervention process, a connection of such magnitude between facilitators and community members can be detrimental to the process. We must understand that if someone from outside the community were to establish a connection with one of the community's families, it would generate jealousy and suspicion among the rest of the population regarding possible special benefits for the family thus related.

The Process of Reconstruction of Historical Memory as a Liberating Process

The people's main motivation is to be heard by their local authorities. The process carried out by REDINFA and the people generated great participation in the discussions with them, in the development of proposals, and in decision making by the community. In the last stages of this process, they expressed their commitment to community development, overcoming their differences, limitations, and confrontations. They showed their progress not only by organizing themselves to express to their authorities their demands and proposals, but also by demonstrating the follow-up capacity of their organizational projects, their citizen surveillance, and their participation. This shows us that the process of developing a historical memory contributes to rediscovering, valuing, and strengthening people's capacities, taking into account the attitudes, willingness, and plans of community authorities. When people are empowered, not only through their authorities and representatives, but also as a whole, they show the importance of the liberating quality transmitted during this experience. Based on their own learning, people begin to value their capacities, experiences, and ways of facing violence.

The possibility for the participants of resignifying their experiences, recuperating the capacity to build and transform a reality from their integrated perspective and fighting to preserve their culture has been a liberating experience. Demonstrating before the authorities their necessity to be respected and to make known to the political and social system the conditions in which they have to solve their problems, as well as proposing healthy alternatives for the repairing of the damage caused, supposed clarity of goals and empowerment. Twenty years have passed since violence was unleashed in the country's inner regions, but time has not deterred the possibility of demanding the construction of their own development, and of assuming its direction too. Being able to hear themselves narrating what they had to live and suffer has provided for this population a process of self-reconciliation; because the main damage was to be divided, accusing and informing against one another. Liberation from their fear, from their souvenirs and sorrow has allowed them to close their wounds and to begin their own development.

In 1986, Martín-Baró said that "recovering historical memory supposes the reconstruction of identification models which, instead of chaining and alienating people, open for them the horizon of their liberation and self-realization" (p. 3). To attain that liberation has meant participants freed themselves of their fears, of the imposed "truths," of the mistrust as effect of violence, and of the insecurity in their living space. This has taken them some time. A process of inquiry to produce historical memory has to relate quotidian life and what is happening in the social and political spheres, with the past. It has been particularly interesting to note that people, who did not actively participate in the political life of the community, were the ones who discovered the importance of presence and voice in everyday work in order to re-evaluate action modes. Our accompaniment has left a seed in the women, who in previous times had not been protagonists in public affaires, and who, little by little,

have been showing their capacity and abilities, while motivating other women to participate and make their voices heard. This is in line with what Martín-Baró (1986) wrote: "For the theology of liberation actions are more important than declarations, and doing is a better expression of faith than saying" (p. 227).

A psychology of liberation is that leading the people toward a symbolic awakening in order to break the chains. In this process, full of doubts and questioning, of fears and incertitude, the participants have been accompanied toward a process of constant discovery and re-evaluation of their capacities. This is how people contribute to development in their local spaces, having impact and participating in government efforts. This has produced a change in the authorities' perception, so far not used to listen to the people: there is less authoritarianism in the ways and style of leadership. The active participation of women, men, elderly people, and even children and youth, contributes to strengthen the exercise of citizenship, their self-esteem, and the exercise of their collective rights.

REDINFA's Role and Contribution to the Construction of Social Psychology as an Instrument for Liberation

The aim of this project has also been to contribute to a full recognition of the dignity of people as human beings, to facilitate their personal, family, and community development, strengthening their capacity to establish better human relationships in organizational and community development. In every task that we carry out, it is important to give back to the population everything that has been obtained, so they can visualize their progress, learning, and results. This action reinforces in them, both individual and social identities, as well as their growth as a group and their appropriation of what is theirs. We believe that in this way we contribute to making people no longer see themselves as isolated individual victims, but as a collective whose organizational system was damaged. They see themselves as members of an affected community, which nevertheless knew how to stand up to face hardships and violence.

After all these years of political violence, the community social structure is slowly re-weaving itself and authorities gladly assume their duties. However, along the way, their motivation decreases due to the scarce accompaniment and participation of other members of the community, and because of the impact of political and social value crises crisscrossing social spaces and sectors. Thus, it has been important to support these communities in order to promote and facilitate their participation and prevent authorities' tasks from becoming isolated or being reduced to personal initiative. We promote collective work and commitment of authorities and community members: men, women, the elderly, children, and youth.

Communities have shown a great strength and progress in overcoming difficulties. They are slowly recovering their trust in the institutions, in the State, and in the collective work for community development. This process allows us to involve the public sector, so it can become acquainted with the people's capacities and strengths.

And a space for dialog, negotiation, and joint work with communities still having a passive position due to the consequences of the internal armed conflict is then open.

Our work in mental health not only deals with the individual and his/her malaise, but also demands carrying out a more coordinated task that responds to a larger process and contributes to the reconstruction of the social structure, of participation, of psychosocial recovery, and of the demand for justice. As psychologists, we cannot limit our intervention to clinical–individual work and be indifferent to the deterioration of our society, running the risk of becoming new victims, not being able to use our knowledge to share and learn from others. We must contribute to the generation of changes in our surroundings, especially where destabilizing factors break the balance and the welfare of mental and physical health.

Looking at how to contribute to enable people to analyze their feelings regarding to the context in which they live, we will gradually be generating the commitment of the people, as well as a change in attitude that leads them to become social actors, leaving aside indifference, passivity, and victimization. We consider that our presence is a transitory step. Currently we accompany, transfer, share, and then let people assume their commitment and lead their own lives. Thus, a psychosocial accompaniment process must be not only of helping people to face reality, but also to contemplate the strengthening of capacities, of organization, and restitution of rights, so that people can overcome the impact of what they have experienced.

Finally, these reflections generated from daily practice, are open to exchanges with other professionals working in the promotion of mental health, contributing to build a psychology based on, and aimed at, the Peruvian reality. Thus, we must thank the families and people who have shared with us their experiences. And in what regards the experience and learning we have achieved, we owe it to the trust those people have deposited in us. In retribution, we are committed to keep on working in the construction of a different world. About our work, its usefulness is illustrated by what one of the participants said, about the importance of retrieving the tangled memories that make collective history:

> …to have a book about our community's past so that our grandchildren do not forget what their parents and grandparents went through, and do not allow that to happen again. (O.13)

Violence exerted by the State and by the terrorist groups is a topic addressed by Liberation and by Peace Psychology. This chapter presents an example of the effects of violence and the need to provide peace with justice and freedom, for the population, along with consciousness about their rights as citizens.

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Psychological Accompaniment: Construction of Cultures of Peace Among a Community Affected by War

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Colombia, with its 3.3 million displaced people, has the second largest number of displaced people in the world. These people have been forced to leave their communities of origin. Several studies (Bello, 2004; Medical Doctors without Frontiers [MSF], 2006) show that the causes of forced displacement are related to the dynamics of the internal armed conflict and to the powerful economic interests. In the case of the former, communities abandon their lands because of massacres, threats, assignations, kidnappings and disappearances, imprisonments, persecutions, armed conflicts, or mined fields. In the case of the latter, displacement is promoted by those who plunder land in economically strategic areas using illegal violent coercion.

In the last 3 years new causes of forced displacement have been discovered. Among those is the massive detention of people by the State in areas controlled by the guerilla. In many cases, detention is based on arbitrary information provided by reward programs and networks of civilian informants. A further cause of forced displacement has been fumigation in areas of illegal cultivation of coca, when the fumigation is carried out along with military operations, clashing with armed irregular groups (CODHES[1], 2005).

Our research group, along with the Social Psychology Department and other Departments at Javeriana University, have decided to make a concerted effort to understand and serve the people who suffer from displacement in Bogotá; thus assuming the position of standing up for life, defending human dignity, and building peace and social justice; as well as understanding the Colombian armed conflict both in its ethic and political character.

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[1]Alta Consejería para los Derechos Humanos y el Desplazamiento (High Council for Human Rights and Displacing).

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Psychosocial Accompaniment

We define psychosocial accompaniment as an encounter between the community and the social psychologists with the goal of constructing liberating knowledge. In this respect, our principal sources have been Zabala (1974), Paulo Freire (1969), Orlando Fals Borda (1979), and Ignacio Martín-Baró (1990) for their works present their engagement with social and critical emancipation from dominant structures and state their commitment with the oppressed.

The process must be orientated toward helping the community to give new meaning to the feelings associated with the painful experiences it has lived (Sacipa, Tovar, & Galindo, 2005). In this process, it is necessary to encourage conversations and to promote collective and individual reflections. In this context, it is important to have an ethical commitment to be the bridge between the individual subject and their culture in such a manner as to allow both to construct a new order in which interactions and practical dialogs can coexist (Castro Largo & Sacipa, 1998).

Although in Colombia, at the moment, a considerable number of displaced people receive both humanitarian and some psychosocial attention, very few people are offered any kind of formal accompaniment. Psychosocial accompaniment is a process offering the displaced person a space to recognize their emotional experience along with the possibility to express their feelings afterward, reflecting on the facts implied by violent acts. We speak of a psychosocial process that facilitates recuperation and the repair of social and cultural damage. We believe that accompaniment should be directed toward the affirmation of displaced persons as subjects in their own stories and the reconstruction of the social fabric of the community.

From the psychosocial perspective it is necessary to see the subjects as a reflective and active part of the community because they can transform themselves and the world around them. In this perspective, an ethical stance between the social psychologist and the community is fundamental. The social psychologist must understand accompaniment to use the logic of "construction with." In other words, we believe that the social psychologist should accompany the community in the construction of feelings and not intervene to make specific changes (Sacipa & Tovar, 2004).

The Conceptual Perspective

Before presenting our experiences with accompaniment, it is necessary to review the conceptual references that have guided our actions. For Vygotsky (1973) the meaning of the word is the unit of verbal thought. It is the act of thinking made concrete in speech. Therefore, the word has an outstanding role in the development of thought and historical development of consciousness. Both Vygotsky and Bruner (2000) believe that the meaning of words is the unit of analysis that allows integral understanding of human beings. Analyzing the meaning of words permits the researcher to understand how human beings see the world and how they make it

their own. At the same time, it provides the possibility of understanding the attitudes that human beings have when meeting their surrounding environment and when they construct their lives (Vygotsky). Therefore, the meaning of words incorporates the reflective capacity of thought with respect to the world and the creative potential of language. As the meaning adapts a communal form by virtue of its continual usage in the culture (Bruner), its analysis makes it possible to agree on the ways words are used by the members of a community in constructing their explanations and interpretations about their social experiences and history (Sacipa, 2006). As stated by Bruner (1998):

> All cultures have as one of their most powerful constitutive instruments a folk psychology, a series of more or less connected, more or less normative descriptions about how human beings "tick", what our own and other minds are like, what one can expect situated action to be like, what are possible modes of life, how one commits oneself to them, and so on. (…) I mean by "folk psychology" as a system by which people organize their experience in, knowledge about, and transactions with the social world." (p. 35)
> …Narrative is (…) a natural vehicle for folk psychology. It deals with the stuff of human action and human intentionality. It mediates between the canonical world of culture and the more idiosyncratic world of beliefs, desires, and hopes. (Bruner, 1998, p. 52)

For Lieblich, Tuva, and Zilber (1998) narratives provide coherence and continuity to our experiences because they have a central role in our communication with others. Narratives have cultural significance. In our work, narratives established themselves as the media to locate the subjects as interpreter of their experience and builders of stories (Sacipa, 2000). As Payne (2000, p. 58) says, "narrative refers as much to the stories that people tell about their lives as to first-hand experiential knowledge of people and communities (…) This local knowledge emerges and then is expressed and consolidated in interactions with others."

The work presented in this chapter is directed toward the construction of peace instead of toward intervention in sociopolitical frameworks. Our goal was to rebuild the social fabric through the application of common everyday values and principles like tolerance, mutual respect, and solidarity. Cortés (2003) states about the effort to build peace "in the case of Colombia, [those who believe in] the strategy of intervention should look at the roots of a community and articulate the problem of violence from the view point of the individual, the family, and finally the community" (p. 21).

The Context

> …when I left I felt both sad and brave. I told myself that I was going to Bogota. When I arrived I felt very sad because I didn't even know what to do…in the country, if you don't have money, you don't feel so humiliated…there are days in which I don't make enough to eat. It's very hard (Displaced man 4, Altos de Cazucá, Material from fieldwork for the history of CEDEPAZ and its displaced members).

Altos De Cazucá is a marginal sector neighboring Bogotá (the capital of Colombia). Among other things it lacks paved streets, public utilities, and storm drains. It is a

place where a great many displaced families arrive and use pieces of wood, tin cans, plastic, and cardboard to put a roof over their heads. Life in Altos De Cazucá is fused with the life of the capital city representing a completely unknown context for displaced people. It is a place where everything is strange, where the displaced people get lost, where nobody knows them, and solidarity is hard to find. The displaced are looked at with everything from suspicion to prejudice, which constantly reminds them that they are victims. It is there where they try once again to negotiate their civil rights (Sacipa, 2006).

This is the substitute for their farms, taken by armed actors – a space that does not give them their rights as citizens in spite of being inhabitants affected by historical poverty. The displaced are looked at with distrust because during the first few months they receive humanitarian aid, to which the town folk do not have any access. Furthermore, the displaced represent greater competition for the few jobs. To make things worse, Altos De Cazucá is a limbo of misery where the armed confrontation that the displaced tried to leave behind is still present (Sacipa, 2006).

Our research group performed psychosocial accompaniment for the members of the Corporation for the Education and Development of Peace (CEDEPAZ). This organization is based on UNESCO's call for cultures of peace (UNESCO, 1999) and proclaims the value of life founded on solidarity, active nonviolence, pluralism, and an active posture against exclusion and structural violence. Our focus was centered on the social fabric and what was useful for constructing meaning (Sacipa, 2003). This of course means understanding that political violence is at the bottom a rupture of social links (Martín Beristain, 1999) demanding actions directed toward its reinforcement and toward the reconstruction of identity (Osorio, 2004).

This leads us to think about collective processes of accompaniment based on the certainty that experience is part of the social and the political context of a community (Sacipa, 2006). The process is based on the rebuilding of trust and recognizing the regional and the cultural diversity of the community. This is accomplished by repeated and successive respectful contacts, oriented toward generating a psychosocial relationship.

Our goal as social psychologists was to connect not only with the displaced person's logical mind, but also with their affection and spirituality (Sacipa & Tovar, 2004). Informal everyday chats, actively listening, working, and teaching were the vehicles allowing us to develop open relationships.

Investigation in Action

Our investigation was initially conducted within a project called "Reconstruction and Integration of the Stories of CEDEPAZ and Displaced Persons," which was carried out with the idea of both constructing new psychosocial knowledge and providing accompaniment to the displaced. We worked using a qualitative oral

history methodology. Field studies, carried out through interviews, allowed us to recover collective memories by way of personal memories. We were "looking for the subjective manner in which displaced people live, think, and transform the world." (Uribe, 1992, p. 34).

Meanings Found in the Stories of the Displaced

In a first phase, we wanted to investigate the meanings associated with the experiences of displacement as lived by people in the community of Altos de Cazuca. In this phase, we discovered that historical facts like the *Genocide of the Patriotic Union* (a leftist political movement); the agricultural rise of coca; drug trafficking; the degradation of the guerrilla; and the rise of paramilitarism[2] were repeated events in the narrations, as sources of the violence that displaced the people in the organization. Genocide, massacres, kidnappings, and disappearances are actions used by the guerrilla, the paramilitaries, the police, and the military that the people interviewed saw as mechanisms to terrorize the population in such a way that they had to run away. This forced displacement generates a series of economic, political, psychosocial, and cultural consequences for people, families, and communities.

The stories told by displaced groups speak about the earth shaking from fear; the interruptions of life produced by armed confrontations; the death of loved ones without time to elaborate the pain; having their lands usurped; hunger; feeling psychologically vulnerable because of constant threats; the insanity generated by the presence of armed actors; and the impossibility of understanding or making sense out of the situation. The loss of loved ones because of assassination or having family members disappear, before or during displacement, is described as the most painful event. In the majority of cases, a long time passes before the displaced can find enough security to allow them to elaborate their pain.

Ruptured Families

Reading the narrations of displaced people, it is clear that forced displacement brings with it ruptured families. Some families are forced to separate. As one mother says: *…I had to leave my children by the wayside and this is very hard to do* (Displaced woman 5, Altos de Cazucá, Material from fieldwork for the history of CEDEPAZ and its displaced members). Other people stated that the degradation forced upon them by the conflict affects the family structure. This is especially true when their sons are forcibly recruited into the conflict.

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[2] The paramilitaries are illegal and armed groups, characterized by being anti -insurgents. Their actions are related to landowners, multinationals, and the State's interests. Likewise the guerrillas groups, they take part on the drug trafficking business.

Rupture of Social Organizations

The rupture of social organizations also emerges in their stories as a psychosocial effect of war. It is through this violent mechanism that armed groups appropriate power from community movements and other local organizations and take control of a region. One of the persons interviewed stated: "actually there is nothing because they have killed most of the people in the organization. It's over". (Displaced man 8 Altos de Cazucá, material from fieldwork for the history of CEDEPAZ and its displaced members).

Meanings Revealing Ability to Construct Feelings

In their narratives, women and men explained the way in which they find the strength needed to face their new life. In the midst of narrations that are filled with the pain of violence, laced with physical and symbolic deaths, the peasants interviewed expressed a love for life that was stronger than any threat or vulnerability, and even stronger than displacement. The interviewees convinced us that the family is one of the anchors that they use to make sense of the situation. In the sense that the family is the entity from which, and for which, they find the strength to go on. Spirituality was shown to be another anchor in their lives. Confidence and faith in a supreme being was recognized as a source of hope.

The interviewees told us that even though they had to abandon their lands, their belongings, and their jobs, they never abandoned their dignity nor would they do that in the future. This posture of dignity is linked to the capacity to work. Work is seen as something more than a mechanism to cover the basic necessities. It is taken to be an opportunity for internal re-enforcement. As Sánchez and Jaramillo (1999) say, work becomes associated with personal identity. It has a close relationship with the social fabric that improves a person's image in the community. It shows not only that the individual can assume a series of responsibilities, but also that one is in control of oneself.

The History of CEDEPAZ

The members of CEDEPAZ were peasants from all over Colombia. The majority were from Tolima and the eastern plains. All had been displaced by violence; total membership was only approximately 40 families. The goal of CEDEPAZ was to improve the quality of life of its members by claiming their civil rights through peaceful means.

The second phase of the research was oriented toward questioning how members of CEDEPAZ construct their organization and what it means to them? With the goal of strengthening the organization, our investigation was orientated toward the

reconstruction of the collective history of CEDEPAZ as a community organization. This allowed the members of CEDEPAZ to redefine goals in the light of present resources. After bringing together all the stories of the members of CEDEPAZ, the professors and students discussed and analyzed the narrations. We looked for common threads of personal and organizational meaning. The results were organized in a beautiful primer in which the history of the organization is narrated, and presented to the community as a kind of feedback. "In an emotional moment, sharing happiness, we gave the notebook to its legitimate owners…the creators of CEDEPAZ." (Sacipa, 2006, p. 107). During this meeting the metaphor of planting and harvesting was introduced to represent a historical landmark and show a common path, giving us the feeling of human dignity, and rejecting victimization. Giving CEDEPAZ the notebook made the organization stronger and made it easier to get closer to its members. It also made it possible for us to find the attributes that went into the construction of the organization.

It became obvious to us that the capacity to define the role of leadership, understanding that it is necessary to be organized in order to dialog with institutions, receiving help from government institutions, and being capable of giving help to other people who have suffered displacement, were essential characteristics that allowed the formation of CEDEPAZ. With these attributes the members aspired to re-establish themselves economically, by valuing work and dignity and discarding the options of public begging or charity. At the same time, through productive projects they were able to fill their lives with hope and solidarity.

It was a long journey filled with misunderstandings and rejections from state institutions. In fact, various members left CEDEPAZ out of frustration. Overcoming misunderstandings and rumors requires greater confidence. This is a limitation that is characteristic of Colombia's social context, and it is directly related to the mistrust generated by the armed conflict. The members of CEDEPAZ recognized their capacity to give help to others despite living in dire economic straights: "every person arriving was welcomed. We gave them emotional strength and support" (Displaced man 3 Altos de Cazucá, Material from fieldwork for the history of CEDEPAZ and its displaced members).

The welcoming attitude of the members generated links in the organization that established it as a receptive community that is open to collaboration and accompaniment and worried about re-enforcing the feelings of solidarity and community that the displaced had in the countryside. The members of CEDEPAZ also found it to be a place which allowed them to be recognized by society. One man stated:

> …the organization was founded so that they would believe in us. It was founded so that they would see that we aren't disorganized. We are organized and recognized by the State institutions. Today CEDEPAZ is an achievement because to construct a community isn't easy (Participant C. Displaced man, Altos de Cazucá, Material from fieldwork of the Professional practice Cultures of Peace).

Reconstructing the history of the organization became an opportunity for its members to see that they had gained something more than economic resources.

Keeping in mind psychosocial and cultural aspects, which are the supports that make it possible to repair damage, rebuild identities, and reweave the social fabric

(Castaño, 2000), the study attempted to encourage the recuperation of memory by bringing back the experiences of displaced people inside contextualized and significant circumstances. This contributed to the construction of a narrative charged with meaning and allowed the participants to understand the past and project into the future.

The Process of Accompaniment

Psychosocial accompaniment was carried out in various forms simultaneously. In part, it was focused on re-enforcing community organization. It was a psychosocial process to empower the participants as citizens with the right to participate in the construction of the community as well as to be autonomous both inside and outside of the organization. Using psychosocial accompaniment in this way allowed us to prioritize the initiatives and autonomy of the community during the recovery process. The researchers did not want to take a leading role in CEDEPAZ. During the three and a half years of our contact with CEDEPAZ, it was the members who controlled their own dynamics.

Accompaniment was also directed toward re-enforcing personal identity so that the person gives new meaning to the violent facts they had lived during displacement. We were thinking about a mechanism that would allow the elaboration of pain, the expression of hate, and the management of fear.

The forcibly displaced are all peasants. Our thinking was that personal attention, taking into account their culture, which we came to understand by way of their narratives, would allow us to understand them when they spoke to us of their love for their land and nature, which provided them with some place to live, with food, and with a reference point for their lives. Along with other investigators (Pérez, 2004), we have found that this is an important difference between the peasant and those who live in the cities. The peasant sees the piece of land that supports them not as a commodity which is to be bought and sold or exploited. Instead, for them it is the source of their life and the sustenance of their family.

Informal personal conversations were carried out at work places and centered on the urban political violence that the families of Altos de Cazucá live. Many psychosocial dynamics related to feelings of hostility and impotence, the meanings associated with past events and protagonists (affiliations, ideologies, political opinions, and moral judgments) and the difficulties in establishing reciprocal social links that are based on confidence and respect cannot be expressed in group, so it is better for them to come out naturally in private face to face conversations. The theories guiding the conversational strategies are such as sociocultural psychology (Vigotsky), the cultural historical psychology (Bruner), and the Narrative. Perspective (White & Epston, 1990), kept a contextual perspective, gave priority to the narrators and were orientated toward re-enforcing the advances made in accompaniment, without using psychopathological categories.

Accompanying Women

The psychosocial accompaniment process was divided by genders and generations. Women were accompanied in the process of recovering from the emotional wounds caused by the displacement. We tried to strengthen the links of trust between them and other women of the community. This was done by helping them become aware of their potential as individuals and thereby recognize that they can have a dignified future and are prepared to emotionally support each other.

With the women we used two different conversational spaces. The first was home visits (Nensthiel & Saenz, 2003) where the conversation was more profound, warmer and richer in details. This made it possible for them to give new meaning to their pain and their feelings of low self-esteem. The other conversational space took place in support groups. This was a secure and empowering space where conversation was the tool to defeat silencing and paralyzing fear. After defeating their fear, participants recovered the ability to speak and interact with their environment. This allowed them to change their narrative in relation to the people and institutions around them (Pardo, 2003). Changing their narratives allowed the participants to experience new feelings about themselves and the world (Pearce, 1994). In this process, subjectivity turns into an intersubjective phenomenon because by narrating their stories the women became coauthors of their identities. As a woman put it into words:

> This space has been very productive. When we entered CEDEPAZ we were timid. We almost didn't speak or greet each other. Now we're friends with others. Before I was always in a bad mood and closed in. I kept myself apart and lived depressed. Now I've opened up like a door. I've changed. I'm different (Participant A, Displaced woman, Altos de Cazucá, Material from fieldwork of the Professional practice Cultures of Peace).

Accompanying Youth

Psychosocial accompaniment with youths requires understanding of the following aspects: First, for the displaced young people the city is not a safe place. Urban bands of illegal armed groups threaten to engulf them. Second, displaced youth must also confront gangs and social cleansing groups that operate in the sector. Social cleansing groups assassinate those people they feel are socially undesirable, such as homosexuals, drug addicts, prostitutes, and youth who do not submit to the norms of "social control" that they exercise. Third, the city implies a new verbal and corporal language, which takes away the right to a native accent from home and the right to wear certain types of clothes (clothes are key elements in juvenile identity). In other words, displaced youths must loose their identity in a city that at first they do not like. Later, that city seduces them with new dynamics and styles of life that are very often void of wellbeing (Rojas, 2004). In educational environments, to be labeled as a displaced person, means to stand out from the rest in a negative way. One of the youths said: "I never talked about my life with anybody else. In school, I never spoke. Nobody new that I lived in the mountains…

I never spoke about my life" (Participant B. Displaced youth, Altos de Cazucá, Material from field of the Professional practice Cultures of Peace)

With the youths in psychosocial accompaniment, we emphasized group identity and recognition that every individual has a multitude of identities (Morin, 1998). Identity is related to environment, role playing, participation, and the expression of feelings through body language. It is important to work with the body in accompaniment, because according to Restrepo (2001), this generates a renewing understanding of the body as one of the essential elements of human expression and can be a determinant factor in the improvement of the quality of life of a population.

To understand the context in which displaced youths must live, it is important to take into account the interchange between three elements: how the young boys and girls have constructed themselves (this is found in the different roles they adopt), the construction of those with whom they have friendly or authoritative relationships, and the contextual conditions that bring constant change (options and decisions). This interchange gives rise to the dynamics of their tension with others (family, leaders, accomplices, rivals), some of which are being constantly constructed and deconstructed (Forero & Concha, 2003).

The students participating in the project did their own research. They discovered that the displaced youths thought of psychosocial accompaniment as an affectionate space where they could learn. It was a positive alternative when compared to the other things in their lives that allowed them freedom of expression. In turn, freedom of expression allowed social links to be established between participants that even though they lived in the same neighborhood had not made contact.

During our investigation, social cleansing groups and other illegal groups became more active. As a result of the death of several young people various families of CEDEPAZ were forced to displace again. This was their third or fourth displacement as a result of the expanding territorial conflict. In spite of this, those involved with the investigation and the community that we accompanied decided to continue with nonviolence. We wanted to re-establish the relationship between force and life, exercise the power of pacifism, and establish pacts, accords, and mediations that were based on respect for others as well as ourselves. Even today, despite difficult conditions, the members of CEDEPAZ still maintain the hope of re-enforcing solidarity and continue working in the organization.

It is important to recognize that without a job, other disciplines, and social actors, an organization like CEDEPAZ is not possible or sustainable. An organization like CEDEPAZ requires many nonpsychological supports that permit the displaced to do more than those survive. They must be able to live in conditions assuring social and political participation in the city and country.

What Accompaniment Meant to People: A Kind of Conclusion

This experience was submitted to a systematic reflection (Project the Meanings of Psychosocial Accompaniment: "Giving New Meaning to Experience." Financed by Vicerrectoría Académica of Javeriana University, 2005–2006) (Scapia, Tovar, & Galingo, 2006).

Our purpose was to study accompaniment's capacity to understand by looking at the meanings expressed by displaced persons. What accompaniment achieved was congruent with its intentions. Moreover, the exercise of self-criticism was a practice that allowed us to identify what changes and transformations were needed at the moment (Bayer and Shotter, 1998).

During accompaniment, the participant's voice is given priority. This constant obligation gave the participants the possibility to have encounters with others that had suffered similar experiences and thereby learn new strategies for dealing with circumstances: "As a person, you begin to change and share more with others. I am a better person now. You hear the experiences of other people and you learn from them. It has been very cool" (Displaced woman 4, Altos de Cazucá, Material for the history fieldwork of CEDEPAZ and its displaced members).

Accompaniment was also recognized to be a possible way of re-enforcing positive emotional links between family members; between participants; between the participants and the rest of the community; and between the participants and the psychologists. It is also an agreeable alternative to the precarious daily routine and provided some special moments of celebration. As a woman said:

> That's how the support group meetings were at CEDEPAZ, and that's why I say that the Sunday there was no meeting was very sad for us. We had to stay at home and we were accustomed to sharing things with the members of the support group…for us it was very hard… (when) they told us that 'the psychologists could not come today'…for us things were very different without them…" (Displaced woman 3, Altos de Cazucá, Material for the history fieldwork of CEDEPAZ and its displaced members)

During accompaniment, the methodology was positively valued by the participants for several reasons. One reason was the respectful and subtle way the psychologists entered the participant's lives. Our criteria for engaging the participants depended on their invitation and the disposition of the community. Other reasons were the conversational spaces and the opportunities for meeting others, which were seen as a way of recognizing and legitimizing their stories (Martín Beristain, 1999). These both made possible the liberation of feelings and gave the participants the sense of being dignified people.

The family visits were seen by the narrators as a more intimate way of assisting the process of emotional recovery and an expression of recognition of their value as humans. This contributed to the building up of confidence. Of course we understand that too much confidence in an environment of armed conflict can be a risk factor (Martín Beristain, 1999).

We found that the emergency of feelings lived by those who have been forcibly displaced consists of fear, anxiety, and sadness, which have become ingrained in everyday life. These emotions begin when the displaced person is still on their native lands and become long-term problems, for some, after their arrival in a city. The participants could give their feelings new meaning. They learned to regulate the effects of their feelings and to recognize the circumstances that produced them.

> These are the advantages of having been in the support group. The first days were chaotic, filled with mistrust, and the feeling of being unprotected. My life has been filled with mistrust for so long. After you have lived like that, you don't trust anybody. You see the enemy around you all the time and you can't find anybody good in your life. Now, with

what we have done in the support group, the dialogues and everything, you begin to see that there are still good people that can give you good things. They can help you solve a problem, listen to you or give you advice (Displaced woman 3, Altos de Cazucá, Material for the history fieldwork of CEDEPAZ and its displaced members).

The way in which those interviewed were able to put aside their suffering to resurrect themselves from tragedy was surprising. Psychosocial accompaniment played the role of helping them to recover hope.

The psychologists shared with us all of our problems. That helped us offset a little of the pain (…) the treatment and the things that they said here inside the group were excellent;…, they comforted us a lot (…) they alleviated a little of our sadness (Displaced woman 4, Altos de Cazucá, Material for the history fieldwork of CEDEPAZ and its displaced members)

To walk beside people during their search for understanding, to accompany them directly during their pain and help them to find catharsis and a new point of view; to guide them in their recognition and construction of social support networks, helps them to live with their suffering in less destructive ways.

The people interviewed recognized as achievements the acquisition of knowledge, the improved skills, and the improved emotional wellbeing. Furthermore, they thought of achievements as improvements in their family life, in their relationships with others, in the way they see their own lives and their identity.

The empowerment of the participants was demonstrated by renewed self-awareness of their qualities and elevated self-esteem. We believe that this is an important achievement in the light of the fact that various authors (e.g., Corporación Vínculos, 2004; Lira, 1990; Martín-Baró, 1990) have reported shutting down of the self as one of the psychosocial effects suffered by victims of armed conflict.

A sense of mutual collaboration characterized by the recognition of the power of joint action appeared in the narratives. At the same time "*to do for others*" was marked by the participants as a gesture of solidarity and social responsibility. As members of a community organization, collective action and political participation were important characteristic for the participants and many of their reflections proved this to be a reality.

Putting the advances aside, the paralyzing meaning of some experiences and their associated feelings remained without any positive transformation. Among those were the experiences and feelings related to fear. Here, we understand that the problem of "traumatized memory" (Lira, 1990) requires deeper and more prolonged work because the effects of fear can be very severe. Furthermore, we recognize that as long as the armed conflict continues in the countryside as well as in the city, it will be an obstacle to recovering from fear for obvious reasons. In the middle of an armed conflict fear is an effective defense strategy (Beristain, 1999). However, if the participants could overcome the greatest part of their mistrust, we have to ask ourselves how they can recover their capacity for action and taking risks without losing the ability to recognize danger signals.

It is important to note that renewing trust between citizens requires the promotion of sincere political recognition of diversity and actions that include all citizens in specific social dynamics. Unfortunately, in modern day Colombia differences of opinion are not accepted, the truth is denied and social and political exclusion is very strongly enforced.

In general, structural violence and armed conflict appeared to be limits to a more complete recovery from suffering during accompaniment. As was observed in the victims of the Second World War, giving new meaning to pain requires peace and a dignified life. These conditions do not exist in Colombia. On the contrary, the armed conflict is getting worse and "what gives many people difficulty is the search to make sense of their experience" (Martín Beristain, 1999, p. 38).

We want to state one more time that for the psychosocial reconstruction of a community to work it must be part of a total package that includes changes in the social, economic, and political life of the country. Therefore, it is vital to investigate possible ways to give new meaning to the naturalization of violence and find ways to promote peace as a cultural characteristic.

Finally, we renew our call for a social psychology that is understanding, therapeutic, and committed to the victims of war. We call for a liberated political psychology and construction of peace that fundamentally supports life and opens the way for humanization. A psychology that promotes peace as defined by Galtung: "peace, as pointed out using the love metaphor, is a positive relation between parties, of union, togetherness. The condition is mutual respect, dignity, equality, reciprocity. In all three areas, spirit, mind and body; culture, polity, economy" (Galtung, 1998, p. 2). Finally, we call for a psychology like the one proposed by Ignacio Martín-Baró (1990) that has a place for love as something shared and makes it possible for humans to live together.

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Liberation Psychology on the Street: Working with Youngsters Who have Lived on the Streets of Caracas

Manuel Llorens

The Context

During the 1980s, Venezuela suffered a long string of economic and social crises that have continued up into the beginning of the twenty-first century. One of the first noticeable consequences of these crises was the impact they had on the most vulnerable populations, the children growing up in extreme poverty. In 1992, the sociologists Pedrazzinni and Sánchez studied and described what they labeled the "culture of urgency," the expression of extreme economic stress on different lifestyles. *Los niños de la calle* or "street children" was one of the categories mentioned as fitting these "urgent lifestyles." In other South American countries, such as Colombia, Perú, and Brazil, the phenomenon of children living on the streets had been described since the 1950s (Alcalde, Atocha, Carvajal, Liberti, & Piaggio, 1997). But in Venezuela it was not until the 1980s that the number of children living on the streets of main cities like Caracas began to multiply. The first nongovernment agency (NGO) to specifically target the problem was founded in 1987 and their directors Albano and Misle (Llorens et al., 2005) stated that their first objective was to put this problem on the national agenda.

This was soon accomplished as the problem of the so-called "street children" began to increasingly occupy space in different social, cultural, and political expressions. As had happened in other Latin American countries, the attention given to these children passed from invisibility to fascination, to the point that Glauser (1999) wrote ironically, referring to the situation in Paraguay, that the phenomenon of street children had become a "fad." A number of independent citizen initiatives began to attend to the problem; newspapers began to report the phenomenon; universities began to do research; and various cultural expressions began to reflect upon it: so a number

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of museums presented expositions on the subject; a popular movie "Huelepega"[1] was filmed and pop songs began to appear, as we have documented in our work (Llorens et al., 2005). Later in the 1990s government initiatives began to systematically promise solutions to the problem and use the theme of street children as a main issue in their propaganda.[2] In research carried out with my students (Hernández, 1998), we registered the strong and ambivalent reactions that society had to these kids. On one side many expressions sought to "save" them, and on the other, many initiatives aimed to make them disappear and "clean up" the streets. Expressions about the children that we see working, begging, sleeping on the streets are many times filled with conflicting and disturbing feelings, as expressed by one person we interviewed while developing one of our research projects on the streets of Caracas. This young man spontaneously came up to us after watching our interaction with a group of young girls who were selling pencils on the street and told us:

> People give these children money to get them off their back, but what we should do is kill them, because they are the thieves of the future… And I understand them, if you don't have any education, if they live on the street, the least they can be is delinquents. This country doesn't worry about these things. What we need is education. It's not possible that a ten year old lad can't read. It's not that complicated to recuperate them. It's not like recuperating a bank, now that's complicated. All we need to do here is to find a place where we can give them workshops. And they would be educated there. Because if not all you're doing is feeding delinquents. What these children need is love. That's why I became curious when I saw how the kids sat down with you. I don't do it because I don't feel it comes out naturally from me. But love is just like a pat on the back, in the end it's of no help… It's not worth the effort to give them anything, because they won't appreciate it. (interview, 1999)

This young man expresses a shocking array of conflicting and contrasting feelings and attitudes toward the children he sees daily on the streets. Their image evidently confronts him with the harsh social realities of our country – to the point where he feels indignation for their situation, but also fear, rage, and despair. These conflicting attitudes, "now we pity and have compassion for you, now we fear and despise you," are typical of society's reaction to the experience of life on the street (le Roux & Smith, 1998).

It is in this social climate that I was studying psychology in Venezuela. A group of young psychologists and I shared an interest in using our newly discovered capacities to offer solutions for some of the difficult situations our country was faced with. When we graduated a few offers to work with children living on the streets were presented to us. Our first approaches to working on the streets quickly evidenced that our good intentions were faced with the huge challenge of transforming our skills in contexts which had little to do with the academic settings where we

[1] Huelepega: Glue-sniffer, which is one of the demeaning names used to label these children.

[2] We have also documented many of the local and national governmental promises towards these children, as well as the projects that have been undergone, which to this point have been notably expensive, ineffective, and aimed more at propaganda than at effective public programs. We report these in Llorens, et al. (2005).

were trained. We ran back to the professional literature for help, but did not find much of it. It seemed that we were on our own. One of the first books on the subject that helped me to reflect on my experience came from a journalist, not a social scientist. Gilbert Dimenstein had written in 1994 a lucid account of the life of children living in the streets of Brazil. The preface of his book was specifically moving and allowed me to identify with some of the feelings he was reporting:

> During the trip…I found it impossible to be indifferent to the testimonies of torture, mistreatment, and assassination of the children. The drama of these lives was able to contaminate those of us that received the information. Our reaction was not only felt in our stomachs. When at night I got back to my hotel I felt the urgent need to take a long hot shower, without hurry, relaxed. It was n't only the effects of the heat and grime. It was as if I wanted to wash off everything I had heard, in a useless attempt to expel the terrible words, like taking dust off of clothes…
>
> In the first phase of this book I frequently found myself in front of malnourished children that spoke calmly about how they had been brutalized or had seen their friends brutalized or shot. This reality had nothing to do with the pedagogic theories of Piaget about the education of children. This was simply of a different world. (p. 11)

This hair-raising document, while describing the systematic assassination of children in Brazil by the hands of state organized groups, an extreme that has not happened in Venezuela,[3] still offered many insights to our first reactions of what we were encountering. Specifically a strong emotional impact, the experience of disbelief when confronted with the life experiences of extreme poverty, and the sense that many of this was hard to organize with the tools traditional psychological theory was providing us.

We decided to do the only thing we thought reasonable at the time: develop research projects that allowed us to begin to comprehend the situation while at the same time offering tools to reflect on the phenomenon. Qualitative inquiry came in handy offering sensible research tools to approach a very different type of setting and also offering opportunities for reflective conversation that could immediately be useful to groups we were approaching.

It was at this time that the writings of Martín-Baró started to become especially relevant to us. Specifically a paper titled "War and Mental Health" (1990) that spoke of some adaptations that clinical thought had to consider to become useful in an extreme social situation such as the civil war in El Salvador where Martín-Baró tried to apply his capacities.

Martín-Baró described how much of the Salvadorian population he interviewed could be adequately classified as having "paranoid attitudes" and "posttraumatic stress disorders," but that defining these problems this way obscured much of the experience of war and its social and political effects on experience. He wrote:

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[3] I mean to imply that there has not been a systematic policy of extermination. But there have been reports of youngsters living on the street being murdered at the hands of state police. For example, on September of 2006, five children living on the streets were set on fire by police officers while they were asleep. The flames were seen by neighbors who were able to rescue the youngsters who were severely injured by the attack (El Nacional, p. B-16, September 10, 2006).

> It is important to underline that we do not pretend to simplify a problem as complex as mental health by rejecting its personal roots and, while trying to avoid an individual reductionism, fall into a social reductionism. In the end we always have to answer the question of why this happened to this person and not the other. But we want to emphasize how illuminating it can be to change perspectives and to look at health or mental disorder not from inside out, but from outside in; not as the emanation of an internal individual functioning, but as the materialization in a person or group of the humanizing or alienating nature of their historic relationships. (Martín-Baró, 1990, p. 28)

This paper seemed to offer light, because as a clinical psychologist in training I was not looking to discard all the theoretical and practical tools that my training had offered, but I was challenged to rethink its application in the context of working with extreme social situations that seemed to need a wider viewpoint. At that point I was not very knowledgeable about Martín-Baro's legacy. As I just mentioned I was continuing my postgraduate training as a clinical psychologist and working in a general hospital where his work was pretty much unknown. But on the other hand the team of researchers we had formed had decided to include a heterogeneous group of psychological trainings and perspectives, which included two young social psychologists. Their training led us to Martín-Baró and to what I now consider very pertinent and extremely valuable contributions to clinical thinking. As the economic, social, and political crisis of our country continued, the reflections that sprang up from our work with these children, became a significant influence in rethinking my clinical perspective as a whole.

The reflections of Martín-Baró seemed to challenge us to see "behavioral problems" in a new light which at first seemed very hard to grasp. I was being trained to see the individual, diagnose disorders, and apply treatments. The problems of poverty, social injustice, racism, political oppression, and human rights abuse were simply not part of the study program, as though these were not problems that appeared in the consulting room. But the truth was that I was doing my training in one of the main public general hospitals of the city, that belongs to the Universidad Central de Venezuela and that people in dire economic and social situations were the ones that we were treating.

Social psychologists in Venezuela had been criticizing imported versions of psychology and lobbying for and working toward the development of an approach that could be more relevant and applicable to our circumstances from a while back (Montero, 1993, 1994; Moreno, 1999) as had happened in social psychology in many other underdeveloped nations (Moghaddam, 1987; Serrano-García & Vargas, 1992; Sinha, 1984). But this call had barely appeared in clinical settings, besides a few notable exceptions (Carvallo, 2002; Vethencourt, 2002), as was also the case in other Latin-American countries. One of the anecdotes that made this evident sprang from the projects of Rodríguez Rabanal, a Peruvian psychiatrist and psychoanalyst who worked at bringing psychoanalysis to very poor slums in Perú. His two enlightening books "Scars of poverty" (1989) and "The violence of the hours: A psychoanalytic study of violence in Peru" (1995) are very interesting reports on these efforts. I was able to hear Rodríguez Rabanal on one of his visits to Caracas and he spoke of some of the curious knots some of the projects ran into while trying to apply traditional clinical approaches in the context of extreme poverty.

> We built two settings but the majority of our adult patients were against visiting us at these places and asked us to have the analytic sessions at their homes, because of the fear of their neighbors seeing them come to our center and later stigmatizing them as 'mental patients'. These sessions were very complicated because when a therapist has his consulting room and the patient doesn't assist, well the therapist picks up a book or whatever. But when the poor neighbors of this slum, and now I'm referring to them as poor neighbors not because of their economic situation but because they had to put up with us; when they were tempted to avoid a session they had to literally flee from their own house! We called this "el Candadazo" because when we got to their homes we'd find a huge lock [*candado* in Spanish] on the closed door at the time of the session and this occurred once and again. (Rodríguez, 1996, p. 1)

This report expresses with affection and honesty the gaps that traditional approaches were confronted with when trying to reach difficult social scenarios. The simple and mechanical transportation of clinical models to the streets of the barrios was not the answer.

Initial Challenges

Our first attempts at research and intervention in this area were challenged on one hand by our own tentativeness in learning new approaches and on the other by resistance from our academic setting that frowned upon qualitative frameworks as well as the engagement to difficult social circumstances. This work was sometimes judged as not scientific or not psychological. What helped us to carry on developing our understanding and skills in this area was that it was a team effort, the work of a number of psychologists and students of psychology who contributed to the process, and that our initial reflections strengthened our ties with the organizations and the children that were struggling. Even if our research initially had very tentative approximations to the problems we were dealing with, the qualitative approaches opened up many fruitful conversations that helped us and our research partners to reflect on the problems that interested us. One of my closest collaborators Natalia Hernández established bonds with one of the shelters where she researched for her Master's thesis and became an important counselor to the project's directors. We all established bonds with a network of professionals and organizations that offered direct feedback on our work and seemed to be able to appreciate and make use of our interest in trying to offer them reflective tools to continually rethink their work. Many of the people of this spontaneous and unofficial network are still close collaborators which we have had the privilege of watching develop, sophisticate, and consolidate their work in the area. This continuous and stimulating exchange helped us to believe that insisting on using psychology to research, reflect upon, develop strategies, and evaluate our work with children in extreme poverty made sense even in the midst of academic disbelief.

But this was further complicated by the fact that toward the end of the century social problems in Venezuela started to speed up. Growing economic problems were followed by social unrest and political instability. In 1989 the recently elected government of Carlos Andrés Pérez applied strict economic measures which lead

to protests and riots which came to be known as the Caracazo. This was followed in the beginning of the 1990s with two government coup attempts and finally the election in 1998 of Hugo Chávez, one of the coup leaders, as President. Chávez has brought along what he has termed a "revolution" and, independently of the opinion one could have about the effectiveness and propriety of his government, social, and political tension has been put on the table.

This has had an incredible impact on all expressions of life including universities in general and psychology in particular. What had been looked upon as themes suspiciously not academic enough, became increasingly urgent problems, and many sectors of society looked toward academics and universities for explanations and solutions. Our work has been about developing and transforming psychological understandings and tools to respond to the urgent demands that our context is making to us. The reflections of Martín-Baró helped us pave the way. He had been asking psychologists:

> What contributions has psychology made to the integral development of our Latin-American countries? I think that, except very honorable exceptions, psychology and psychologists in Latin America have remained on the sideline of the mayor issues and movements of our people. And the worst thing about it is that this sideline of our practice cannot be attributed to conformism of our profession or to insensibility towards the sufferings of the majority but to an intrinsic impotence of our own psychological thinking. (Martín-Baró, 2002, p. 73)

In other words the task of developing psychological theory and practice pertinent to our settings was not a task only of turning our attention to our surroundings but also of rethinking some of our premises. Moghaddam (1987) had stated, in his revision of the different expressions of psychology in the "third world" that the most important factor shaping it would probably come from the demands made on it to contribute to the development efforts of their societies.

His observations fit well with the revisions I have mentioned, except for the fact that Martín-Baró was pointing not only toward a methodological and theoretical shift, but also toward a paradigmatic one. Again in Martín-Baro's words: "This reconstruction of our role as psychologists in Latin-America entails therefore answers at least at three levels: an epistemological, theoretical, and practical one" (2002, p. 72).

In the rest of this chapter, I will try to outline how our approach to working with children who have had life experiences on the streets of Venezuela has attempted to consider and work through the epistemological, theoretical, and practical challenges that developing a relevant psychology in contexts of urgent social needs make of us.

Paradigmatic Considerations/Research Approach

Our first challenge was to develop a research approach flexible enough to help us adapt it to the new and defying conditions of life on the street. We wanted to be able to develop a wide view of the different dimensions that were useful to understand these children's lives. We tried to start from a methodological approach that brought along few preconceptions and that could be open to different routes. We were also oriented to developing tools to think and to act upon the realities we were approaching.

In particular we follow Montero (2004) in her proposal that a paradigmatic stance should include the political and ethical dimensions and not just consider its ontological, epistemological, and methodological ones.

Qualitative research and ethnographic methodologies seemed again to be a useful starting point. Approaching the realities of street life as an ethnographer offered us the opportunity to slowly develop relationships with many of the children and the people who work with them. Shotter's suggestions (2000) to develop methodologies that allow researchers to extend their reach and answer the calls received from their surroundings, allowing them to be more "at home" in the landscape of human phenomena, seemed to fit well with our aims.

Our first research project (Llorens, 1999) was a qualitative study in which, during 6 months, ten researchers did participatory observation and in-depth interviews in a central boulevard of Caracas (Chacaíto – Sabana Grande). That allowed us to progressively establish relationships with the main actors of this area of the city and begin to get on a first name basis with the children who worked and lived in this area, along with the many adults who interacted with them daily. This research allowed us to draw a first sketch of some of the life situations of these children and of some of their psychological functioning. For example, we identified four different groups of children who were frequently at the boulevard. These groups differed in age range, types of activity they developed on the street, and the quantity of contact with family or adults who were responsible for their welfare. In the first group we found small children, from 5–10 years of age who went to the boulevard to beg or sell small objects, many were accompanied from afar by adults who supervised them and went home at night. As age and contact with the street increased, contact with responsible adults decreased, so at the other end we found a group of late teenagers, who slept on the street, had little contact with family, were identified by the shop owners, and neighbors as engaging in acts of theft and vandalism. In this group we were able to confirm the high use of drugs, specifically glue and this group also was more recognized and organized as a gang: others identified them by a group name; there were certain group norms and roles that these youngsters enacted in our interactions with them. These different levels of interaction with the street and the group organization were similar to the observations made by Lucchini (1996) in Brazil.

One of the immediate aspects of our field work that became evident was the emotional impact that relating with the children had on us and also the emotional impact that the personnel from many of the foundations who worked with children with life experience on the street reported. We found that many interventions were sidetracked by the emotional entanglements of the organizers and the caretakers (Hernández, Llorens, & Medina, 1999). The emotional pitfalls of this work were common and complicated. We were able to follow the opening months of a shelter that was jointly organized by a catholic foundation and a government agency. This foundation disregarded a number of suggestions and concerns about certain recommended limits that they should consider with the opening of the center. For example, a group of sociologists with experience in the area were against including girls and boys in the same shelter, they also recommended targeting certain

age group and advised not to include all of the ages in the same shelter. But these comments were not heard on the grounds that the foundation knew these children well (they had been in contact with them for about 2 years). It was also argued that it was unethical to leave out a child that they had already established contact with. As it is evident, these decisions are very complicated and entail many considerations such as ethical, practical, economic, and psychological. It was evident to us that the emotional bond that many of the personnel had established with the children guided many of these reflections and that they all had their hopes up that the shelter was a concrete expression of their work for a better future. Other suggestions such as not relying entirely on volunteer personnel and incorporating paid professionals were also discarded.

The shelter closed within 6 months. In the first 2 months of work very difficult problems became evident. There was a very high level of violence between the children at the shelter; some of them turned the house into a drug hideaway where trafficking was evident. This impacted the personnel who were in many cases in disbelief that this could be happening. They also expressed fear of things getting out of hand. Some felt betrayed by the children. The experience of living 24 h a day with them gave them a completely different perspective of them.

Even though we, at that time, did not have too many tools to help support and rethink this intervention, the opportunity of following and registering these exchanges gave us quite a different view of some of the interpersonal entanglements that influenced the course of these projects. After the first 2 months the personnel began to report the emotional impact as shock, constant anxiety, depression, and nightmares in reference to their work. Soon the volunteers began to drop out, some reported sick, some just started to miss their turns at the shelter. They had become emotionally impacted by their work. After 4 months we had a few visits where only the director of the shelter and a sociologist appointed by the state offices were present at the shelter. The lack of supervision complicated things even more. Two of the teenage girls at the center became pregnant and two distinct groups were formed, those that were late teenagers vs. the younger group and violent fights started to erupt.

It was interesting how the children began to demand supervision, because there was none to be found, and sought to develop strategies for managing this dangerous conflict. The three girls of the center stepped up as the mediators of the two groups and finally decided that the smaller children had to leave the shelter because the situation was becoming too dangerous. So the small children decided to leave. After years of planning and months of hope and goodwill, frustration and anguish, the law of the strongest had won out. Left to themselves the older children began to rob the shelter and sell its items. The situation had gone far off track and the shelter was closed. The economic, organizational, and emotional scars of this failure were dramatic. This experience highly influenced our thoughts and quickly evidenced the importance of developing hands on, practical and reflective suggestions for work in the area.

We also began to experience firsthand the appearance of these children in our thoughts and dreams, even when we were not working on the project. The trip to the street was often an emotionally charged experience, that sometimes carried

anxiety, or sadness, or fear, or rage, and at many times amazement, hope, and joy. We soon began to question some of the initial stereotypes we brought along, and our psychological preconceptions began to be confronted. It became evident that our involvement was a relevant concern and we looked to include it. This was not a subject matter toward which we could be "distant" and "objective". Work in this area made us feel indignation and the need to turn our efforts into action. We could not be scientific "tourists" watching from our "neutral" standpoint the systematic abuses these children were regularly subjected to. But we believed, and still do, in the benefits of research and did not want to switch our work only to political and community activism. We wanted to use psychological research as a tool in the intervention process. I believe that is part of the call that Martín-Baró had been making to psychologists. Our challenge was to use this impact as a resource so we could reflect upon it without loosing sight of our objectives and the systematic work we were trying to develop.

So we devised weekly discussion sessions of our trips to the street. We invited a clinical psychologist that was not part of the team, but that was doing field work, to these sessions so he could register, as a participant observer to our process, our reactions to the work we were doing. This inclusion turned out to be one of our richest sources of information and reflection. Since then one of the main concerns where we have continued to offer comprehension and intervention has been that of burnout and emotional impact of the people who work in this area. The recording of our experience turned out to be a powerful document that later has proved to be most useful in preparing and supporting teams that work with youth in very difficult circumstances.

Our research approach then can be characterized as: the search for scientific tools that can continually reflect upon the perspectives of everyone involved, the researchers and their interactions with the people they are working with. It is a collaborative endeavor which tries to allow comprehension to emerge from the process. It is also a contextual approach that seeks to underline the comprehension of the psychological dimensions in specific circumstances. We, as researchers, consider that we are not pretending to adopt a "neutral" standpoint, and question if this is even a possibility. We consider that our research continually meets with political and ethical dilemmas, that we inevitably will position ourselves with respect to these dilemmas and that our responsibility as researchers is to keep an eye out, to reflect upon, how our positioning influences the process and develop strategies to allow our viewpoints to be identified, acknowledged, discussed, and questioned by the people we enter into contact with. Finally, it is an endeavor guided by our doing and the continuous reflection process. It does not aspire to "purity," it aspires to being reflective, rigorous, negotiated, and debatable.

To operate in this manner has never ceased to be uncomfortable. At many times I would like to be able to express a "pure" perspective, perfectly coherent. For example, there is a constant tension between the advantages of incorporating clinical thinking and its risk of underlining individual and pathological comprehensions of a situation clearly embedded in a socially unjust situation. What we have developed is a perspective that we try to keep open to debate and revision. We consider that

we have political and ethical stances and responsibilities that have to be continually reflected upon and addressed. Our search for answers, the methodologies we use to seek them, must be attuned to these considerations.

Theoretical Considerations

In the process of building a contextualized comprehension of these children's lives we have tried to gather what journalist reports, university thesis, and researchers have said about: the amount of children in our country's streets; time reported to be living on the street; characteristics of their family of origin, frequency, and type of contact with family members; subjective representation of their families; type of work and activities developed on the street; attitudes and meanings attributed to the street, and finally, gangs and relationships with other youngsters. In addition to this, our first project mentioned earlier allowed us to develop 14 categories that we used to describe their individual functioning. These categories were constructed from our participant observation and our interviews. The children's words are used to illustrate and express many of them.

For example, we describe how a number of children established intense but labile emotional bonds with the adults who work with them as street educators or as personnel at the different shelters. These attachments many times included calling the workers "mom," "dad," or "uncle," as if they were members of their family or family substitutes. Many times the emotional exchanges were subtle or hard to grasp but essential to the process. The children demanded, were frustrated, challenged, or shied away from these bonds at great speed, which many times left the adults perplexed or frustrated. For example, after having met and talked with a youngster only three times before on the street for a few minutes, an interesting series of exchanges unfolded (Llorens et al., 2005). This is the description of a conversation with the 9-year-old at one of the soda fountains on the street:

> He speaks without much emotional involvement. He doesn't make any eye to eye contact and turns around again and again in the chair we have invited him to sit in. But then he starts to talk about his father and seems moved. When I inquire about how he feels about his father's departure he sits in silence, seemingly unable to say a thing… He starts to draw. It took him quite a while to decide what to draw and finally decides to copy the picture on the menu. Afterwards I ask him to draw a person and after telling us he didn't know how to do that, draws a man. Then he asks my name, my age and my profession. Writes my name down on the paper along with: "Manuel went to the park with his children"… He asks me a number of times what my job is, what my schedule is and where I live. He went on to tell me that he was going to make a lot of money to be able to buy a house for his family. (p. 93)

We met up with this same child a few weeks later at a small recreational event that one of the NGOs was organizing. He ran up to greet us and handed us a balloon he was carrying. He asked us to hold it for him. During our observation that afternoon he came back several times to check on it. This was enough for us to believe that his balloon was a very prized possession, so we made an effort to take special care of it. After the event was over he came back to say goodbye and when I went to give him his balloon he asked us to keep it. He gave it to us as a gift.

I believe that exchanges like these are very meaningful and tell us very important things. This youngster established a bond with us and, in his own way, started to express his desires and unmet needs, along with the fears and defenses he used to protect himself. He approached us with enthusiasm but at the same time with avoidance. He began to check to see how worthy of trust we were, probing if we were able to hold and protect his things. He found a way of asking for things and being grateful. All these exchanges are not too different from what a child psychologist would be experiencing with the children he works with in his or her consulting room. I find that my training as a clinical psychologist is useful in bringing light to many of these exchanges. At the same time these exchanges with children who have lived on the streets and survived dangerous and negligent relationships with caretakers will probably not appear in a traditional consulting room setting. The psychologist in an office is too awkward and threatening a setting for it to happen. Meeting on the street, in the child's territory makes the psychologist much more accessible. The theories and tools of clinical psychology are useful but only if we transform them to include the wider sociopolitical dimensions that are part of the "setting." Note that in this example, the experience of poverty, the theme of material loss and deprivation, appears in the first exchange along with the sufferings of the loss of his father and are all worthy of being taken into consideration. Finally the unavoidable emotional intensity of our own presence in this exploration is also evident.

Psychological theory is of help to comprehend some of the processes that unfold in working with these children. In particular, we have made use of attachment theory (Bowlby, 1982, 1988) and the developments in the comprehension of psychological trauma to organize, reflect upon, and work with the children and the data we have gathered. The dynamics of bonding and loss seem very pertinent to understand the development of these children whose lives commonly have been flooded by loss. The comprehension of the consequences and the challenges of prolonged and extreme situations of trauma and of other circumstances such as being victim of violence on the street has also helped to enlighten many of these children's reactions.

To focus on and explore the dynamics of attachment and trauma in the lives of these kids we carried out five different research projects. These research proposals were challenging because they were developed with students at my university and they had to negotiate a project that was acceptable to the more quantitative tradition at our school as well as continue to be methodologically relevant and adapted to the circumstances of the street. To achieve this we started out with two projects that used projective psychological tests that have been used in different cultural settings (Dana, 2000; Ephraim, 2000, 2005). We used the Kinetic Family Drawing Test (Arévalo & Hernández, 1998) and the Thematic Aperception Test (Alvarado & Morales, 2000) to explore the youngsters' perceptions toward their families of origin and the types of attachments established. These first approximations confirmed some shared impressions by many professionals that these children effectively had established precarious bonds with their first caretakers, their families of origin were perceived as dangerous and anxiety provoking. More subtle observations typical of the clinical approach also proved to be enlightening. One example came when reading the answers to the first card of the TAT where we found that once and again the violin was described by the group of children who had lived on the street

as being broken or shattered. Ephraim (personal communication), who has researched extensively using TAT and Rorschach in diverse cultural settings, pointed out to us that it was an uncommon answer and the repetition stood out. He recalled having found such answers only when working with political refugees who had endured and survived torture (Ephraim, 2001). This finding highlights how traditional clinical tools such as projective techniques and clinical observation can make valuable contributions. The association between these responses and those of survivors of trauma brought even more strength to our belief that these children had endured severe and prolonged abuse.

These first two studies opened up the opportunity at our university to continue with three qualitative projects, two of which consisted in the writing of life stories that chronicled the personal history of six youngsters who had lived on the streets (Romero, 2001; Souto & Jaramillo, 2002) and one which identified the presence and meanings attributed to trauma in the lives of these children (Hernández & Llorens, 2002). Parallel to this, my colleague Natalia Hernández carried out her Master's thesis on the subject of everyday life of the children that live at a shelter (Hernández, 2000). The life stories allowed us to acquire a more complex view of the lives of these children, the variations of their families of origin, the different and multiple meanings they gave to their life on the street (many times with conflicting feelings), their assumptions about their possibilities, the negotiation of the development of their own identity (that had to deal with the very different valued identities and meanings attributed to them from the different adults and institutions they had come in contact with), issues dealing with violence, self-worth, courage, trust, friendship, suffering, loss, money, and the future. We were able to explore the presence and consequences of trauma in the lives of these children.

This work showed that even though we expected to find stories of mistreatment in their family lives, we were astounded by the severity of the violence the majority of these children had had to endure (even though there was one child where violence was not present in his family). I believe that clinical experience was useful to accompany the children and the researchers in these conversations. The children spoke to us of events such as having to endure hunger for long periods, seeing a father beat and injure their mother, seeing a father burn their house down, being victim of beatings, rape, and being shot at by caretakers. The consequences of these events for the children were as important as the identification of these terrible episodes in their lives. We were able to identify constant fears that many times were not spoken about because they were interpreted as lack of courage; serious difficulties regulating strong emotions (for example one child spoke of needing to go sit in the scorching sun and rocking himself in a fetal position for hours until he finally calmed down after being humiliated in a basketball game); many episodes of dissociation (various youngsters recalled episodes where they stared into a point on the wall or repeated the same phrase over and over to endure emotional pain and then not remembering what had happened); flashbacks; difficulties in sleeping; a sense of being damaged or contaminated by these experiences; a sense of being completely different from other kids because of their violent upbringing; difficulties in trusting; the need to be always on the look out; feelings of rage; guilt; chronic sadness; desires

of revenge; and constriction of feelings and numbing so as to avoid having to experience these emotions.

Many behaviors and reactions that the personnel typically find incomprehensible and contradictory become much more comprehensible as we began to add up the experiences of loss of attachment figures and trauma. The challenges of working day in and day out in a shelter stem from the consequences of these experiences. Consider for example the words of this child:

> J: I remember one time I had a problem, I can't remember what it was, but I had a problem. I had a problem with people I can't dominate for example, I get stuck. I get like a… like a door stuck in my throat and I can't talk, I can't move and I start to stare at the same place. You talk to me and it's like you were talking to a wall. I can hear you of course, but I can't answer or anything. And my uncle once, because of that problem, I got stuck like from seven in the morning all the way to the afternoon and my uncle would say 'Hey José do this' and finally he started to beat me with a stick boom! boom! boom! And I didn't even react, as if he weren't hitting me at all. (p. 138, 2005)

It is easy to imagine how this behavior is perplexing not only to the child but also to the adult. The child seems to have severe dissociations when confronted with certain difficulties. This exasperates caretakers and seems incomprehensible to the child who is experiencing the reaction. This is an expected reaction of a person who has been subjected to severe and prolonged trauma (Herman, 1997). The identification of these psychological reactions and training on how to deal with them becomes a very useful skill for the children and the adults that are trying to help them. As expressed by Martín-Baró, a Liberation Psychology does not pretend to simplify human problems and fall into a social reductionism. Theories and applications of psychological functioning can benefit from including the comprehensions derived from clinical thinking if they are used in a contextual perspective. Just as clinical psychology has overlooked once and again the social and political dimensions, community work sometimes loses sight of the emotional dynamics that underlie it (Hoggett & Miller, 2000).

Trauma in particular has become one of the areas where professionals of different perspectives have acknowledged the inevitable intertwining of the biological, psychological, cultural, economical, and political dimensions (Barudy, 2000; Corsi, 2003; Herman, 1997; Pakman, 2004). It has made visible the importance of developing complex and contextualized approximations where psychologists recognize the importance of offering a politically informed and positioned approach (Pakman).

Martín-Baró challenged us to assume these complex approaches that ranged from the personal–emotional to the larger political issues at hand. He challenged approaches attempting to be politically neutral and aseptic. The reality where he developed his work, the context of the civil war in El Salvador dramatically confronted him with this possibility. The consequences of the traumas of war and politically oppressive circumstances did not allow for a distanced, neutral standpoint. In his compilation "The Social Psychology of War: Trauma and therapy," these issues are expressed clearly (1990). For example, clinicians working with political refugees from Chile (Becker, Castillo, Gómez, Kovalskys, & Lira, 1990) argue in favor of a "nonneutral" committed stance that acknowledges the political causes of suffering.

They consider that the therapeutic process "constitutes a first moment of re-socialization" (p. 299) and that complete resolution needs to link the private psychotherapeutic experience with the political context.

To move toward this goal of integrating the individual and social dimensions of trauma, Martín-Baró proposed the concept of psychosocial trauma (1990) as a way of underlining that some traumatic experience is not only of the individual realm. He wrote:

> The implicit presumption of the individuality of traumatic experience is a most deceptive one. It assumes that trauma is an individual phenomenon, not only in the sense that it is suffered by individuals but that its nature is individual, meaning that it can be understood as we understand organic trauma: examining the affected individual, his o her individual wound. It's the 'medical model' that I fear is still a great part of the perspective assumed by the American Psychiatric Association with the proposed 'Post-traumatic stress disorder' in the DSM-III.
>
> An initial call of attention about the limitations of this vision is offered by speaking instead of social traumas when we speak about those experiences suffered by society as a whole. (p. 235)

As a clinical psychologist, I have always marveled at Martín-Baró's capacity to see and think in terms of individual suffering while integrating it into its social frame. Trauma in particular has moved many professionals to seek integrated perspectives and many clinicians working with gender-based violence and child abuse have began to point toward the same direction Martín-Baró suggested 20 years ago. His work was not directed simply toward developing therapeutic work for the survivors of war trauma, his writings and voice sought to give voice to the silenced circumstances of the common citizen and the horrors they were subjected to. To identify abuse in the life of these children is also to raise awareness in the community on these issues, to begin to take a stand in relation to them, and to bring it into the public sphere, which as a result demands other actions such as advocacy, developing policy, and strengthening institutional response. Contemporary clinicians have begun to consider the importance of working in all these areas (Herman, 1997).

Reflective Tools

These thoughts lead us naturally to the tools that we have tried to use to put some of these ideas into practice. As is probably true of all of psychology's applications, the tools are not concrete physical objects that can be used or understood apart from its theoretical frame of reference. The psychoanalytic couch is just a couch and it will not be of much use torn away from the ideas that give it meaning. Even though, as has been sustained throughout this paper, the emphasis is on offering concrete solutions to our difficulties, this effort points toward the development of new ways to think about our problems and not just the development of a list of new techniques. In some cases, many of the previous tools of psychological work can be of help if they are used considering some of the epistemological, ethical, and theoretical shifts we have been discussing.

In our work with children who live on the streets, these tools therefore must be coherent to the perspective we have outlined. That means that these tools must include a complex systemic or contextualized comprehension of the problems and sufferings of the children. A complex approach refers to a comprehension that considers the different dimensions of the psychological issue at hand in contrast to a fragmented view of the problem. They should also be specific, they should adapt to the particular circumstances of each social context. They should, above all, be reflexive and negotiated, they should allow the construction of processes of communication where the person developing the intervention can continually receive feedback and reflect upon his o her presumptions, influence, and power. This also points toward flexibility and creativity.

A first step then to developing and implementing an intervention in working with children who have lived on the street is to stop and reconsider the preconceptions and languages with which we approach the issue. What are our motivations? What the values guiding our thought and practice? What is our own personal history, has it had to deal with issues of social, educational, or material deprivation? Or on the contrary, has it had to do with certain advantages? How have these situations made us feel and think? Have we had to deal with issues of exclusion, racism, neglect, abandonment, injustice, family, or community violence? What does the street make us feel? How do we think these children should be growing up and where did we obtain these ideas from? What are our political positions and where do they overlap with our work with the children? What are the ethical dilemmas we face when working with these children? What do we do to deal with them? How do these beliefs, feelings, and dilemmas influence how we relate to the children?

As can be seen from these questions, there is a wide array of complex issues related to our work in areas such as this one. These questions do not mean to imply that researchers or psychologists or volunteers working in this area needs to or can answer all of them. Many of these are questions cannot be answered unequivocally once and for all. But making these questions from the start help the professionals to see the complex ethical, political, and personal issues related to the decisions made in the day-to-day interactions with the children. If these questions are made in an inviting and secure atmosphere, the adults can engage in reflective conversations that help identify their personal positions and dilemmas in the work. It helps to prepare the adults to consider their work not only as a technical affair.

With this approach in mind, the words of Gigengack (1994) seemed inviting to us. He wrote:

> A first obstacle in delineating a community-based strategy to work with poor urban children is concepts like 'street' children. Such a terminology refers to a complicated aggregate of assumptions about how and where children should grow up, and people working with, or writing about, the children of the poor would do the right thing to make a critical review of these underlying notions… (p. 380)

So a first step of our work led us to ask the children about their impressions of the label "street children." We also asked the general public about what they believed a "street child" to be (Hernández, 1998). We found that most of the kids rejected the name, considering it demeaning. In our country the figure of the mother

is idealized and not only mother is a central figure in our personal and emotional development, but also the bond with an identifiable mother is a central part of the construction of a valued identity (Moreno et al., 1998; Moreno & Luna, 2002). "Street" child seemed to imply to them that they "belonged" to the street, that their family was the street, and they found this particularly offensive. In contrast we began using the label "children with life experience on the street." This had two advantages: the first one was that the children reported this option to be more acceptable for it acknowledged the fact that they were living or had lived on the street, but did not imply that they belonged to it. It was an experience, a circumstance in their lives. In second place, it left open the possibility of redeeming that experience. "Life experience" on the street seems to imply that they could have extracted valuable lessons from these extreme circumstances.

A second practical learning that we extracted from these reflections was a series of training workshops for professionals working with the children. The most requested workshop is organized around the theme of emotional burnout, how to identify it, and how to prevent it. It offers an opportunity to exchange with many professionals, to offer support and also to help them reflect on the impact and their place in the interaction with the children. It is a chance to talk not only about the emotional, but also about the ethical and political dimensions of their work. One of the simple strategies that have been useful is to start these workshops asking the participants to share an anecdote of a day where they have felt that their work has been especially meaningful, when things have gone especially well. This introduction serves a number of purposes. First, it creates a positive climate where we do not send out the message that we are only going to focus on the rough challenges and difficulties of the work. Second, through this invitation we have been able to get to know the heartfelt commitments and dedication many of the people who work in this area feel. It has been helpful to illustrate the values, the goals, the deep human motivators that fuel much of the work in socially deprived circumstances. It has also been marvelously helpful to get to know the practical wisdom many of the people who work day in day out with the children develop. When we as psychologists acknowledge, are genuinely moved and comforted by the commitment and wisdom of the people who dedicate their energy to the children, the people we work with feel respected. They feel that we are not there to judge their work and offer our knowledge from a place of superiority, but that we are genuinely interested in hearing their perspectives and building collaboration. It becomes easy to pinpoint the dignity that committing oneself to this work entails. When the people we work with perceive this it becomes a lot easier to share doubts, contradictions, and dilemmas. When they honestly share their questions along with their personal answers I have been able to genuinely feel that the different volunteers and professionals, I have had the privilege to meet along these years, have been very important in shaping my view of the work.

In the work with the children we have a similar approach. In the first place, more than thinking in terms of a particular activity we seek to consider the program as a whole – its objectives, core values, the human organization, material resources, strategies, and outcome indicators. Of course, all of the organizations we work with

do not ask for support on all these dimensions, but we still need to know a bit about them and take them into consideration when developing our specific activities. As has been stated, we believe that our psychological contributions are complemented and built upon a complex, global view. We believe that an intervention with children who have had to live on the street and have been deprived of many of their basic human rights necessarily has to start with the restoration of those rights. To not consider this basic restoration could lead us to propose intervention strategies that become entangled with contradictions. For example, the art workshops mentioned earlier developed by the "Jacobo Borges" Museum was carried out in one of the State shelters. The artist who was conducting the creative writing workshop asked the children to bring to one of the sessions a list of the songs that they liked to sing and found out that it was prohibited to sing rap music in the shelter. The shelter coordinators considered that rap music was dangerous because its lyrics were filled with "the street culture." This seems to us a clear example of the contradicting notions of rehabilitation some programs have. Rehabilitation many times turns into indoctrination or just plain and simple control. Not allowing someone to sing seems to us to be a pretty simplistic and abusive approach. It pretends to "cure" street culture, but what it does is distance the kids from the personnel. It avoids the opportunity to talk and reflect on that street life and at the same time subjects the children to a new "professionalized" version of oppression.

Even though we were not conducting these interventions we offered help trying to open up the space to reflect upon the program's objectives, values, and strategies. In the end the artist was allowed to work with the spontaneous rap songs the children had made up and edited a digital recording. The words and images in these songs are incredibly meaningful and useful to get to know the life of these kids. The opportunity to express their inner world through music and to think of these expressions as an art form and not as something to be prohibited reframed the work with music and made a significant impression on the children ("Jacobo Borges" Museum, 1999).

We suggest that the psychologists working in intervention programs reflect on their frame and adapt it to the contextual characteristics. We have found that in the programs psychologists sometimes adopt a role that tends to fragment and divide the different dimensions of the children and pick out those that he or she considers "psychological." This is generally done following a more medical model where he or she starts with a psychological diagnosis of the children using a standard set of tests and deriving suggestions in each case which lead to recommendations for specific interventions and in some cases to psychotherapy. An effort to develop a traditional "psychotherapy" is then carried out; fixed sessions in the therapist's office are tried out. Normally this leads to tension between the child that has to attend the sessions, the psychotherapist and the personnel that has to ensure that the child remembers to assist. We suggest that instead of forcing this approach, the psychologist adopt a more flexible, "qualitative" approach, giving him or herself time to get to know some of the specific characteristics of the children and the program. This means stepping out of the office and using much of the time accompanying daily activities: sitting with the children at the cafeteria, playing with them at the basketball court, watching and listening how the rest of the personnel interacts with them, and establishing bonds through daily contact. The use

of a personal log where the professional can write down his or her initial expectations and how these evolve through this interaction becomes a useful reflective tool. The specific needs and problematic issues that are present in the shelter or street intervention should appear through this participant observation. From this basis, the psychologist can shape his or her approach to fit the specific characteristics of the program.

More than psychotherapy, we think psychological theory and reflection is a useful incorporation into the activities of daily life. In day-to-day interactions, issues pertaining to self-worth, loss, difficulties dealing with frustrations or trust, dissociative reactions, the renegotiation of their identities and their existential place in life, personal strengths, and resources should become evident. For example, if the psychologist can stay attuned to the program's routine and has begun to understand the dynamics of each child, issues dealing with attachment become evident in daily experiences. The loss of a pet, the anxiety that monthly reunions with family members brings, the frustration or defensive reactions following a missed appointment of one of his family members to those meetings, the reactions that appear when one of the shelter's caretakers leaves the program or goes on vacations, the "transferential" wishes and demands that the children make of their caretakers, their frustration when one of these is not met, the mixed feelings brought on by the knowledge that their time in the program is coming to an end, the reactions dealing with a friend who leaves the program because he has successfully completed it, their relation with symbolic figures that are relevant to the program (for example in some of the catholic programs in Venezuela it is interesting to observe what they think of the religious icons that may be present at the house, how they relate to these symbolic figures, do they look for protection?, do they fear them?, do they discard them?), etc. are all examples of meaningful events that are filled with information for a sensible psychologist and for the rest of the personnel. Using these moments to open spaces where the children can express their feelings and thoughts and reflect on their reactions is, I believe, a powerful therapeutic opportunity. Sometimes it is through the elements that are present in the program that the most effective interventions can be carried out: conducting monthly reunions with the personnel to help them handle emotional challenges they face, suggesting a change in the schedule, or how to incorporate a psychological theme in some of the activities they already participate in.

Winnicott worked with many shelters in England following WWII and reflected upon many of the challenges these institutions faced. He speaks of how his view of what a psychotherapist had to offer shifted when he came into close interaction with these shelters. He says, speaking of one in particular, that he soon learned that this shelter was already doing therapy. He goes on to show how "therapy" was conducted by "walls and ceilings," the "windows that were used as targets," that it was practiced by the cook and the meals that came always on time, it was practiced by the warm blankets and the unending efforts of the shelter's director to keep everything in order even though there was always a lack of personnel and many daily experiences of frustration (Winnicott, 1970/1991). His description of the work at the shelter is moving and his conclusions telling. He acknowledges the therapeutic value of the restitution of rights, of protection, of the daily routines, of the continuous management of difficult emotions in the process.

Finally, I would like to mention specific clinical-community tools we have incorporated into our daily work (Llorens, 2003, 2006). We have imported from community psychology and feminism the focus on making visible the oppressive social structures related to the life of these children, as well as the use of denaturalization and problematization (Montero, 2004). While we help to identify the emotional, personal, and interpersonal issues at hand, again we try to keep an eye on the political dimensions of these issues. The concepts we have mentioned have helped make this possible.

Montero (2004) defines problematization as: "The process of critical analysis of the circumstances of life and the role that the person performs in it that challenge the ordinary explanations and considerations of these circumstances." (p. 293) And denaturalization as:

> The critical examination of the notions, beliefs and procedures that support the ways of comprehending and of living in every day life, so that that which was considered natural is deprived of its "natural" essence and shown to be constructed. It consists of the problematization of the essential and natural qualities attributed to certain facts and relations, revealing its contradictions, and its ties to social or political interests. (p. 287)

It is easy to identify, help express, and work through experiences of loss without mentioning or stopping to reflect on the issues of poverty or injustice that underlie many of these situations. To render visible, denaturalization, and problematization help to acknowledge these issues and open the space up for reflection. For example, the children we have worked with many times ask us about where we live, where we study, if we have a car or not, about the clothes we wear, and how did we get that education, that car, those clothes. They are on the lookout for social cues about our socioeconomic status. They do not engage us head on with a rhetorical debate on poverty and social injustice, but in these questions those issues are evident. We encourage workers to not shy away from these themes, to explore the children's fantasies, their questions, the feelings that come with these perceptions. We encourage the workers and ourselves to try to examine honestly what these issues make us feel, why are some of them uncomfortable? What answers do we have? Issues of other matters like racism and sexism are also ever present in daily interactions. Many demeaning expression of who is blacker and who is whiter, their own values on physical appearance, nicknames with which they make fun of each other that express racial or gender prejudices, their preconceptions of masculinity and femininity, how they tease each other or fight to gain acceptance, all appear time, and time again in their interactions. These are all excellent opportunities to render visible many of their cultural preconceptions and to examine critically with them what consequences these values have, how some of them collude against them. It is useful to explore where they obtained these values, who have they heard expressing similar thoughts (family, friends, mass media), how these values makes them feel, and how sometimes they may have internalized some of the prejudices that keep them in disadvantage. It helps to begin to show how the transformation of the situations of injustice is helped by their active reflection and the questioning of some social and cultural givens. It also asks for the emotional presence to help the children deal with the frustration of recognizing these stigmatizing and unjust preconceptions and to tolerate the anxiety and uncertainty that examining our long-held values may bring.

Martín-Baró was able to show the intimate interweaving of individual and social wellbeing. How the work of one of these dimensions necessarily implies the work of the other. Psychotherapy, from our perspective has to be able to tackle both dimensions. In this sense, clinicians have a responsibility to each individual he or she works with, but also to society as a whole. The work with an individual includes at the same time a concrete effort to strive for justice and peace. In Christie's (2006) terminology, psychotherapy with children living in these conditions necessarily implies work at peace building, specially aimed at the structural dimensions of violence. In Martín-Baró's words:

> If the foundations of mental health for a society are rooted in the existence of humanizing relationships, of collective bonds where the humanity of each person is sustained and nobody's reality is denied, then the construction of a new society, or at least, one that is better and more just, is not only an economic and political problem; it is also a problem of mental health. Social order cannot be separated from mental health and that is because of the nature of our professional purpose. In this sense, I think we have an urgent task of education for mental health, which consists not in teaching relaxation techniques, or new ways of communicating, no matter how important these goals may seem… This may perhaps be the best psychotherapy for the effects of war and also the best intervention for the shaping of our future (Martín-Baró, 1990, p. 38)

In our traditional psychotherapeutic language, we work to offer support, identify, and express emotions, give meaning to experience, work through unresolved experiences. In the language of a liberation psychology, these processes include a political dimension that seeks to contribute to the restoration of dignity and basic rights, give voice to those who have been silenced by oppression, give testimony of these abuses, offer refuge, denaturalize, and problematize oppressive cultural givens and empower the group.

The combined use of psychology to attend to emotional interpersonal and wider cultural and political issues offers a wide base to cease opportunities to make a difference in the lives of some of these children and help empower them to reexamine their identity claims and their possible life projects.

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New Challenges for the Psychology of Liberation: Building Frameworks for Social Coexistence

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Social Coexistence: An Unfinished Task for the Salvadoran Society

Social coexistence is based on the ties established between the members of a community or country within a framework that allows them to develop creatively, to maintain a balanced connection with both their physical and their psychosocial environment, and to constructively mix with other social actors – including their peers, figures of power, institutions, and the State. The organization of such coexistence depends on the efficiency of social institutions and becomes a reality as long as the people take on the responsibility of establishing effective bonds with their environment, both at the private and the collective level, and of meeting their own needs in a proactive manner, while making proposals to overcome contextual or structural weaknesses. Social coexistence helps people play a prominent role as citizens and participate in the construction of their own reality. It provides a perspective that allows them to experience the dimensions of being part of (i.e., a shared identity with their group, historically and currently), having part of (i.e., shared rights, duties, and a future with that group), and taking part in (i.e., committing, demanding, contributing, and challenging themselves, and connecting the present with the future) (Hernández, 2002).

Unfortunately, social coexistence remains an unfulfilled dream for the Salvadoran society. It is still an unfinished task that showed its worst features in the 1970s and 1980s. At that moment, civil war was considered the way out of a situation in which inadequate management of the social problems hindered the emergence of constructive solutions to the social, political, and cultural oppression suffered by most of the

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population (Chomsky, 1985; ONUSAL, 1994). During those years, the psychology of liberation emerged as a perspective from which it was possible to expose the ideological mechanisms used by the power elite to justify repression as a means to combat social problems (Martín-Baró, 1986; De la Corte Ibáñez, 2006; Montero, 2004) and generate explanations that facilitated the reconstruction of damaged or destroyed social networks.

The idea and the praxis of social coexistence have to be invested with a liberating sense in order to provide an ethical base for social coexistence within the psychosocial ambit of social network reconstruction and to construct a society that affords a dignified life. It is not enough to create better social conditions (e.g., housing, jobs, education, food), although they are absolutely necessary. Better social conditions are important, but at the same time they must be related to the construction of citizenship. Individuals become members of society through the generation of a sense of belonging derived from participation; decision making; individual and collective responsibility; as well as being part of the process of social transformation.

To achieve that, one needs to construct oneself in a positive way, erasing the negativity of being the enemy, the poor, and being labeled lazy and apathetic. As Martín-Baró (1987) said, the traditional stereotype of "Latin American fatalism" has to be eradicated, because it is part of an ideology of helplessness, sadness, self-destruction, and apathy, which was exacerbated by the Salvadoran civil war.

The Peace Agreements between the Government of El Salvador and the Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN[2]) were signed on 16 January 1992, thereby drawing a line under one of the darkest periods of the country's history – 12 years of armed conflict that resulted in more than 75,000 deaths. This has paved the way for new contact mechanisms that allow the social actors to manage the tension by means other than clash and repression (Zamora, 2001; Zinecker, 2007). Nevertheless, factors such as marginality and poverty, which undermined social coexistence in the past and that contributed to conflicts, are still present (Whitehead, Guedán, Villalobos, & Cruz, 2005).

Marginality and Poverty: A Challenge for Social Coexistence in El Salvador

El Salvador has been one more example of the fact that peace and equity do not always go together (Chevalier & Buckles, 2000). Even though it has been acknowledged that the Peace Agreements were followed by progress in terms of national reconciliation, most of the population still lives in poverty, and a considerable percentage in extreme

[2] Salvadoran political party opposing the current government; formerly a revolutionary guerrilla organization.

poverty, and it seems there is very little possibility of their basic needs being met in the social spaces they inhabit. According to the data provided by the 2003 National Human Development Report of El Salvador published by the UNDP.[3]

(2003), 19% of the urban population and 29% of the rural population were living in absolute poverty in 2002, and the level of economic inequality had increased in such a manner that the richest 20% of the population obtained 58% of the income while the poorest 20% only got 2.4%.

This situation was also described by the UNDP (2005) National Human Development Report. The report states that once the novelty of the peace agreements wore off, the lack of employment and opportunities and the increasing inequality and crime, boosted migration from the countryside to the big cities or to other countries, especially to the United States. By 2004, more than 20% of the Salvadoran population was living in a different country. The reason for this is that "they have been deprived of the opportunity to fulfill their ambitions in their place of birth" (UNDP, p. 12).

Most of those who have stayed in the country's urban areas, especially in the capital San Salvador, continue to face extreme poverty, living in shanty towns or illegal suburbs that have been expanding without any order or planning, mainly along rivers and streams. The houses usually do not have legal permits, as the inhabitants do not have the land title deeds, and the houses are built on protected or high-risk areas (Rico de Calvío, 2003). By 2005, 50% of the families in San Salvador's metropolitan area only had access to this kind of housing solutions (SUM Consult[4], 2006).

The conditions necessary for social coexistence are extremely precarious for the inhabitants of these kinds of settlements, as they live in the middle of problems caused by exclusion (Rico de Calvío, 2003). These problems include qualitative deficiencies of the housing (insalubrious, insufficient space); nonexistent or inadequate public services – especially those related to water and sanitation; illegal use of the land where their poorly built houses have been constructed; environmental insecurity; no access to loans or financial aid to improve their houses; or restricted access to social services, education, health, and work. Apart from these conditions, that is, social conditions required for a healthy and decent life, they live in an environment of distrust that hinders the establishment of community bonds (SUM Consult, 2006).

Creating Conditions that Favor Social Coexistence

The situation confronted by this large sector of the population living in extreme poverty is probably one of the most serious challenges facing the Salvadoran society. It calls for a type of psychology with a practical, critical, and committed approach

[3] United Nations Development Programme.

[4] German consulting firm that evaluated FUNDASAL's work in Las Palmas and Los Manantiales communities (see p. 6).

to support the people in their transformation, in their search for the historic and collective realization that will allow them to transcend poverty (Montero, 2004), as well as in the establishment of social relations that promote their development.

Different initiatives have been undertaken in El Salvador to achieve this goal, although not exactly from the perspective of the psychology of liberation. Popular education, participatory research, and the various modalities taken up by the Popular movement since the late 1960s, which gained in importance during the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, promoted civil society. Together with psychologists, teachers, and sociologists, spaces were created to jointly pursue dialog, participation, and transformative praxis (Montero, 2004).

Two initiatives promoted by the Salvadoran Foundation for Development and Basic Housing (FUNDASAL) in San Salvador's metropolitan area, specifically in the poor communities of Los Manantiales (beginning in 1997) and Las Palmas (beginning in 2003) are examples. Both settlements are characterized by extreme poverty and are built on public lands belonging to the local government. They show high risk of instability and vulnerability. These initiatives were aimed at improving the conditions for social coexistence in these communities and at developing the abilities of their inhabitants to actually assume their role as citizens with rights and duties (Simioni & Szalachman, 2006; SUM Consult, 2006). To do this, three key processes were undertaken (a) integration into the city, (b) strengthening of social solidarity, and (c) promotion of community participation.

Integration into the City

The integration into the city was pursued in five areas (a) physical, via the improvement of the houses, construction of access ways and recreation areas; (b) social, through the incorporation of the households into the basic services networks and the health system; (c) educational, through incorporation of the children and the youth into schools or spaces where the integration into the country's educational system is promoted; (d) economical, via the provision of access to the labor market; and (e) legal, by integrating the system of urban land regulation (e.g., land registry, title deeds of the lands where the houses are built).

Strengthening of Social Solidarity

One of the key instruments used by FUNDASAL to support this process of integration into the city was the *Programa de Mejoramiento de Barrios* (Program for the Improvement of *Poor Quarters*), based on the community members' committed participation by means of mutual help and external support (Simioni & Szalachman, 2006; SUM Consult, 2006). Mutual help became the core feature of the intervention and social transformation processes developed in Las Palmas and Los Manantiales.

In this modality of social action, the people carry out the work improving their communities.

Mutual help means that the families get involved in the whole process of improving their communities and houses. Task forces are formed to carry out various activities including the cleaning and maintenance of the environment, and taking care of materials and resources. The work is done within the framework of rules for coexistence, or participation agreements that grant respect among people and to the environment, the pursuit of common interests, general consent when making decisions, and a dialogic relationship between the experts and the community members (Rico de Calvío, 2003).

Promoting Community Participation

The participation of the community and the permanent contact with external promoters is important. Action within the framework of the program is divided into five stages, along which it will guarantee a central role for community members when they take part in the different intervention moments (SUM Consult, 2006). These stages are:

1. *Pre-investment stage*. Once the communities have been selected, FUNDASAL's team of experts conducts a study on their legal, physical, and socioeconomic situation. This committee draws up the project with the participation and involvement of community members. At the same time, FUNDASAL tries to get financial aid from external cooperative agencies and makes contact with national institutions vital to the development of the works (institutions in charge of basic services such as water, health, sanitation, education, land registry, as well as local government bodies).
2. *Initial stage*. Once the project is ready and the funds to carry it out are guaranteed, it is discussed with the community. The leaders who will promote the process are appointed and the rules that will guide the relationship between FUNDASAL and the community members are defined. Contributions from the community are established and the members of the Project Committee are also appointed – they are members of FUNDASAL, representatives of the community, and, if possible, representatives of the national institutions and the local government. They all should commit themselves to work together on the base of mutual help.
3. *Intervention stage*. The works are carried out with the active participation of FUNDASAL's experts and the community members. This includes infrastructure improvement and construction, building of access ways, provision of basic services (water, electricity, sanitation, etc.), legalization of land ownership, and construction of decent housing and common recreation areas. All this work is supported by mutual help, participation of the community, and external technical advice (provided by FUNDASAL's staff). At the same time, organization and training processes are promoted, in order to strengthen community ties.

4. *Follow-up and consolidation stage*. The community members must assume their space (inhabit their houses and use the services). This happens when the community's resource capacity to coexist in a constructive and sustainable manner is assessed. The institution continues supporting the development by means of advice and training aimed at strengthening coexistence, learning how to maintain the work done, and supporting conflict resolution.
5. *Postintervention stage*. This is the moment when the community takes on the responsibility of using, maintaining, and following up the works in a totally autonomous way, while FUNDASAL withdraws.

The Span of Social Coexistence

Social coexistence goes beyond the improvement of the physical environment. It is based on social consciousness and is practically expressed in the capacity people have to use their own resources in order to positively manage everyday situations. Social coexistence is not the immediate consequence of the improvement of the social and the living conditions of physical spaces; it is constructed through a dialog in which the members of a community should know each other and acknowledge themselves as actors and architects of their own history (Montero, 2006) and as agents of change. This mode of self-understanding allows them to restructure the way they see their habitat, and to look for new solutions and ways to handle everyday situations (Watzlawick, Weakland & Fisch, 1976), thereby overcoming the limitations posed by society, as well as by themselves.

This is no easy task. As Bush and Opp (2000) say, communities are not homogeneous. In the process of their construction, specific dynamics are established, which determine the quality of the coexistence. Even the intervention itself can be the source of conflicts, and working with some groups can cause conflicts with others. The basic differences among the members of any community have to do with a range of factors including power, values, authority structure, gender roles, social standing, and the way of conceptualizing reality and of acting upon it. These factors are crucial when it comes to the proposal for any kind of change.

This was precisely the conclusion from the experiences in Las Palmas and Los Manantiales when the projects were evaluated in 2006. They both have been successful interventions (SUM Consult, 2006), as 90–100% of the expectations were fulfilled in areas such as:

- Infrastructure improvement and construction (ways of access, sanitary system)
- Provision of basic services (water, electricity, sanitation)
- Construction of decent housing and common recreation areas
- Legalization of land ownership
- Participation of the community members
- Improvement of health and sanitation indexes

These aspects were indicators that had been defined in the project and assessed by the community in the initial stage when the project was being discussed.

Despite this success, the process was accompanied by tension that emerged in the different stages and in all kinds of relationships. For example, there was tension between different groupings including; between the experts and the social promoters, among the community leaders, among the community members, and between the community members and the leaders. The worst part is that these tensions continued to exist or even intensified after the houses and jobs had been handed over. The causes for this are described below.

Tensions and Achievements

When the members of Las Palmas and Los Manantiales communities were asked for their opinion, it was found that 70% of the families believed that mutual help enabled them to get to know each other better. Also, the availability of common areas in good repair (streets, paths, recreation areas) made people go out of their houses more often, as well as have a better communication among themselves and better know each other. Having the title deeds of the lands where their houses were built also made them feel more secure. However, 47% of the families expressed their concern about the tension experienced during the development of the projects and when the work had been handed over (SUM Consult, 2006). That tension still hinders coexistence. The concern of these families is also shared by FUNDASAL's experts and promoters. Among the cases of tension and conflict described by the community members and by FUNDASAL's experts and promoters, the following stand out:

- Families refusing to participate in the mutual help processes, because they consider that their real needs are not taken into account and disagree with the measures taken within the framework of the project.
- Confusion in the processes due to the lack of coordination between the different institutions taking part, or even between the different task forces that had been formed to address the different needs.
- Decision-making leaders or bodies not respecting the agreements established by the group, which then reacts to this situation with rejection, unease among its members, or active or passive resistance.
- Institutions that had committed themselves to support the development of the works not doing what was expected, so the work is not done properly, generating frustration in the community.
- Crisis being experienced within the families when the time came to hand over the houses, due to differences between the female heads of families and their partners. When the ownership of the houses had to be allocated; priority was given to the former. This measure was taken based on three factors: first, most households are in the hands of a woman; second, when she has a partner, it is

usually a very unstable relationship, so if the man leaves the home, the children will not lose their home, as they continue living with their mother; and third, the idea was to value the participation of women, who are victims of exclusion.

- Neighbors having arguments because of different ways of living (full volume radios, garbage in the wrong place, etc.).
- So-called *maras* or gangs threatening the neighbors' tranquility. For example, in Las Palmas, once the common areas (e.g., parks, paths, and recreation areas) had been finished, they were occupied by the *mareros* (members of gangs). So, the community inhabitants could not use those spaces and much less let their children approach them (SUM Consult, 2006).

Factors that Undermine Social Coexistence

FUNDASAL's experience reflects the strained relationship between persistence and change (Watzlawick et al., 1976), which emerges when expected results (changes) are produced and, at the same time, some situations remain the same, thereby risking the sustainability of those changes achieved. Persistence (lack of change) points at processes related to behavior, attitudes, beliefs, and skills that have an influence on people's interaction. It influences how they make decisions, how they handle their differences, and how they defend what they consider to belong to them. Thus, it affects the various individual and collective mechanisms that facilitate or hinder coexistence.

Persistence can also be related to structural factors, policies, and the community's and the country's culture. In this respect, Cruz (2006, pp. 226–227) explains some of the features of the Salvadoran society, as caused by the frustration provoked by unfulfilled expectations deriving from the Peace Agreements. These features include little trust in politicians and the State, disillusionment with the government institutions, and perception of the social environment as chaotic and threatening. Cruz believes that these factors can result in the "creation and articulation of psychosocial responses based on antidemocratic or authoritarian attitudes," as in "a negative perception in terms of their compatriots' reliability" (p. 227). It could be added, that this is probably reflected in the everyday troubled relationships people establish where they live.

The factors presented in Table 1 were identified as undermining social coexistence in both Las Palmas and Los Manantiales communities (Hernández, 2006). Explanation of those factors:

1. *Practical problems* related to the progress of the community work needing to be done. This includes the availability of adequate equipment and technical criteria for the development of the work; the ability of the external sponsors of the intervention to understand the community and to implement a reliability framework to relate with its members; and track how people adapted to the changes happening during the intervention.

Table 1 Factors undermining social coexistence found in Las Palmas and Los Manantiales

1. Practical problems, related to the progress of the community work that wanted to be done 2. Negative structural conditions existing prior to the interventions generating unwanted circumstances 3. Problems associated with the behaviors and attitudes of social actors	(a) The country's housing policy, which excludes these sectors (b) The risky situation of vulnerable groups, especially children and young people (c) Political polarization of the two main political parties (d) Gangs or *maras* integrated by young delinquents (a) Relationship patterns hindering collective work and the principles of mutual help (b) Little clarity or confusion in the management of roles and positions related to power or the control of resources and responsibilities (c) Weak democratic and integrating attitudes in leaders and external experts (d) Participants' stress resulting from excessive work and responsibilities (e) Expectations from community members larger than the intervention capacities

2. *Negative structural conditions* existing prior to the interventions also generated unwanted circumstances. Some of the important factors are listed below:

   - The country's *housing policy* excludes these sectors, because they lack habitability certificates and the houses are built upon vulnerable lands, so no institutions can guarantee sustainability after the works are finished. This situation is similar in other areas (education, sanitation, health, basic services in general).
   - *The risky situation of vulnerable groups*, especially children and young people. For example, by 2003,2006 10% of preteens and teens between 11 and 15 years of age in Los Manantiales were not attending school (SUM Consult, 2006) and, in 2005, 4% of the school children between 6 and 10 years of age was not integrated into the education system (FUNDASAL, 2005, as cited in SUM Consult, 2006).
   - *Political polarization*. Salvadorans are radically polarized between two political parties (ruling party ARENA[5] and opposition party FMLN), between which there is a permanent tension that hinders the country's governance and affects the communities by generating quarrels or clashes among their members.
   - *Gangs or maras* (Santacruz, 2006; SUM Consult, 2006; Whitehead et al., 2005) have become one of the main problems of the Salvadoran society, affecting everyday life in poor communities. These gangs are groups of mostly young people who feel highly identified, use violence to relate with others and to settle conflicts, and use communication and symbolic codes that differentiate them from the rest of society (Santacruz). The strongest groups

[5]ARENA: Alianza Republicana Nacionalista.

are *Mara Salvatrucha* and *Mara 18* (also called *Pandilla 18*). These groups share the territories and the type of felonies and crimes, between them (e.g., drug selling, robberies, extortion of money from businesspeople, threats to the neighbors). In many cases their actions are part of organized crime (Santacruz; SUM Consult) and they fight against each other to defend their zones of influence. Los Manantiales and Las Palmas are considered by the police to be high-risk zones due to the presence of these kinds of groups, although the situation is more serious in Las Palmas than in Los Manantiales (SUM Consult).

3. Problems associated with the *behaviors or attitudes of the social actors*, both at individual and collective levels, as well as within the framework of institutions. Among these problems are:

   - Relationship patterns hindering collective work and the principles of mutual help, such as domestic violence (men who hit their partners, adults who batter their children); gender inequality (overburdened women, who very often have to cope with a formal job, plus the work in the community and the household chores); and differences regarding habits and customs (disrespect for common areas and others' tranquility).
   - Little clarity or confusion in the management of roles and positions related to power or the control of resources and responsibilities, as it is not clear sometimes who decides on the use of materials. Members also sometimes feel their autonomy is being violated and have doubts about their degree of participation in the community. Finally, the scope of action of external executors of the intervention is not clear.
   - Weak democratic and integrating attitudes in leaders and external experts, especially concerning the management and socialization of important information or the incorporation of community members in decisions about key issues.
   - Stress resulting from excessive work and responsibilities, not only suffered by the community members, but also by external actors – for the former, the work they have to do within the framework of the project is an obligation that becomes an extra load, combined with the daily tasks they already have. For the latter, the working days are very long, they assume too many responsibilities, and community work ends up leaving them with no time for other activities.
   - Expectations from the community members going beyond the project capabilities or being different from those of external actors.

Inadequate Problem and Conflict Management Hinders Social Self-Responsibility

Social coexistence starts to emerge when people become conscious of their capacity to generate change, and of the effective management of problems and conflicts. It only consolidates when they assume the individual responsibility of actively

confronting problems and conflicts. However, the process of taking on this self-responsibility is hindered by attitudinal and behavioral patterns that make people transform a simple problem into a serious problem and generate situations that bring about conflicts.

When analyzing the causes of the conflicts and tensions that emerged in Las Palmas and Los Manantiales, I found that they were being influenced by one or more of the identified problems. In many cases, these problems were ignored at the moment of the intervention, or some action strategies were developed, but were not successful. As time passed, these problems became more serious. Watzlawick et al. (1976) and Hernández (1998b, 2005) state that, when problems are not properly addressed, they become the breeding ground for tensions or conflicts. In other words, every conflict hides an inappropriately solved or an unsolved problem (Hirsch, Phanvilay, & Tubtim, 2000).

Watzlawick et al. (1976) have identified four ways of inappropriately addressing problems and thus threatening social coexistence (1) doing more of the same; (2) simplification; (3) paradoxes; and (4) utopia syndrome. These ways of handling problems are bound to common sense and determine the mechanisms and strategies that people choose in their everyday contact with others.

The first way, "doing more of the same" (Watzlawick et al., 1976, p. 51) refers to when action has to be taken to address some situation, but people let things remain the same, because only half measures are taken or people continue to apply the same wrong solutions to tackle problems that eventually become chronic. This was precisely the situation observed in both Los Manantiales and Las Palmas. A paradigmatic case is that of the *maras* or gangs. Many young people enter these groups because they feel they belong there, they feel identified with them. This questions many of the strategies taken to tackle the situation of the threatened youth. An example of these strategies is the *Plan Mano Dura* (Firm Hand Plan), a policy the Salvadoran Government has put into practice since 2003. That Plan has included strategies that ended up reinforcing the power of those groups within the communities, as they started to protect themselves against the authorities and put more pressure on the youth to become part of them (SUM Consult, 2006).

The second form of making everyday situations more complex has been called "simplification" by Watzlawick et al. (1976, p. 61). This form is evident when problems are disregarded. By simplifying problems, they seem to be less serious, and people eventually believe they do not exist or are not as important as they really are. Simplification also may induce people to attack anyone who points out the problem or tries to tackle it. This is frequently the attitude adopted by institutions and civil servants when they have to address the problems of these communities. Low health indexes are denied; the conditions in which children study in the communities' are ignored; and the community members' need of decent housing is not considered.

The third has to do with contradictory behavior and attitudes. So-called "paradoxes" (Watzlawick et al., 1976, p. 87) occur when certain actions are taken to tackle a problem, but these have an opposite orientation to that of the results to be achieved, or to the reasons for carrying out those actions. For example, people can

discredit the work done by the people of the community and expecting them to participate; or promoting coexistence while implementing raids as a mechanism to reduce crime. Sometimes, even measures that seek to create gender justice, such as giving priority to the rights of families lead by women over those lead by men, can cause conflict between couples when it comes to deciding who lives in the houses that have been built or improved through a process of mutual help.

The fourth way has to do with the "utopian vision" of reality; especially feeling that one owns that vision (Watzlawick et al., 1976). This is the attitude of people who think they are right in anything related to a certain situation, or who think they have the power to do whatever they want, ignoring the opinions of others and branding as enemies all those who do not share their reasons. Those people usually blame others (e.g., system, the law, society, the institution, community members) for everything that goes wrong. This attitude was observed in some of the leaders and in some members of the analyzed communities, especially when the time came to make important decisions establish and assume responsibilities, or decide to make changes to the previously set agreements.

Assuming self-responsibility implies identifying what has been done inappropriately or what has not been done appropriately anymore (Egan, 1981), and accepting that something has to be done immediately to change the situation in the interest of everyone. Once self-responsibility has been assumed, sensible actions are needed to guarantee an effective management of the problem or conflict, but, above all, to guarantee that the changes made can be maintained and improved in the future (Hernández, 1998a, 1998b).

A Challenge for the Psychology of Liberation: Supporting the Creation of Effective Social Coexistence

In my opinion, we have arrived at the point where there is the urgent need for a psychology of liberation that gives a strategic orientation to the interventions carried out in the communities. A psychology of liberation should help to generate a transforming force that allows people to transcend the everyday logic of common sense. That logic often allows, justifies, and reproduces inequalities that are detrimental to the community and to the individual (Montero, 2004); hindering their self-responsibility; and paving the way to solutions based on repetitive behavioral patterns, simplifications, paradoxical actions, or utopian excuses. Within this framework, the psychology of liberation could play the role of promoting the creation of new individual and collective meanings regarding the contextualization of the processes that are being experienced and of potentially generating new ideals for a transforming practice (Ratner, 2002) that would give both the individual and the institutions the capacity to generate change. This requires that the problems suffered be contextualized and that problems and conflicts be responded to with a liberating attitude.

Contextualizing the Problems Suffered

Against this background, the liberating orientation would help social subjects to understand the historical meaning of the processes they are experiencing (Martín-Baró, 1986; Montero, 2004, 2006). When one works with communities living in extreme poverty, contextualization helps their members to assume problems and conflicts and place them within their relations (Hirsch et al., 2000), identifying both the factors that relate to them in their own dynamics, as well as those which are related to other factors (Kant & Cooke, 2000).

The factors that undermine social coexistence are part of a reality composed of different spheres and multiple contexts that include, and transcend, the immediate milieu of the individual or the community, providing a historical sense and a complexity that is often ignored in many interventions. In the case of the communities analyzed (Las Palmas and Los Manantiales), the following factors can be mentioned:

1. The community is part of a human reality, as it includes the people that form it with their own interests, circumstances, and abilities.
2. The community is part of a social reality, because it is itself a reality, in which its members are interconnected through the relations they establish (leaders, families, vulnerable groups, other key groups of the community), and the different roles they play.
3. The community is part of a cultural reality, as any country, any city, and any community is a space where cultural realities are constructed, so when an intervention is going to be carried out in order to promote social coexistence in a specific community, it is important to take into consideration both the way this community sees relations among its members and how the latter are perceived in the country. This is why it is important to know the language of the community, the groups' specific historical background, and to establish a special relationship with its members, so that the processes taking place within it can be understood as a unique reality and, at the same time, connect them with the logic of the country where it belongs.
4. The community is part of a political reality, because the policies applied in a country and the priorities set in terms of the needs of the members of the different social groups are reflected in the communities, so the solutions given will be determined by the capacity of the political system to respond to the problems of the marginalized sectors living in these communities. A critical approach of psychology would benefit the interventions in terms of helping understand the contradictions and the effects of the relationship between these communities and the State or the power devices.
5. The community is part of an institutional reality, because it functions in the middle with a logic that covers the institutions relate to the key problems that have to be solved, and must consider the limitations and opportunities offered by the relations that have been established with them, as well as the mechanisms that have been developed to respond to their demands. Therefore, it is necessary that the community understands this logic and is able to develop strategies to transform it for its own advantage.

When the problems and the conflicts are contextualized, it is possible to understand one's own experience and recover information that was previously used to confront similar situations in other spheres, or that is part of the people's traditional knowledge. Recovering information from previous experiences also helps to understand the similarities and differences between the situations that generate conflicts, so the way to address them will change and their importance will be analyzed based on the challenges of the framework in which they emerge.

Contextualization provides a more comprehensive framework from where to think about social change. Social change stops being a problem of the community and becomes a problem of society. Through their actions people play a more important role within the community, as work is done in the interest of everyone and favors processes that transcend their everyday logic. With this new attitude, community members – and especially those who are organized and interested – approach reality from an ecological perspective and understand that in order to change negative situations affecting them they must become forces for personal, social, and institutional change. In other words, they come to face life with a liberating attitude. In the case of the experiences of Los Manantiales and Las Palmas, it could be said that if their members interpret their work from this perspective, they will assume that they are not only improving their environment, but also transforming their community. By doing this, they will be establishing guidelines demonstrating that it is possible to generate more comprehensive social changes and to transform themselves.

Responding to Problems and Conflicts with a Liberating Attitude

Having a liberating attitude to problems and conflicts implies thinking of oneself as a person who must solve problems, and not as someone who has problems; as well as seeing everyday life as the source of continuous doubts that need to be clarified, as truths that need to be confirmed, as voids that need to be filled and as new solutions that need to be found. As people solve their everyday problems, they take control of the way they manage their reality and are able to have an influence on the outcomes. This liberating action requires from the people to a number of things that are discussed below.

Be Able to Dream Again

Acting in a liberating manner is in one sense related to the capacity of once again having dreams (Wyssenbach, 1996). This dreaming capacity connects people with the future and depends on the frameworks people have for making comparisons, or, as Kelly (1955) puts it, on the individual constructs. According to Kelly, human beings are active hypothesis creators, with which they try to anticipate and control

their life events. In other words, when people have the opportunity to experience changes in their concrete living conditions, they discover that it is possible to live realities other than the one they have been used to. The reference frameworks are developed when people establish relationships with other people and contexts, as they have the chance to be educated, to read, to write, to dialog, and to act.

Most of the times it is difficult to act in accordance with a desired scenario, because when people are living amidst problems and, even more, when they are within a conflict, they see things in such a way that they unintentionally intensify them. And when they are strongly connected to them in an emotional way, it is almost impossible for them to change the attitudes and behaviors that are making problems worse and consequently creating more conflicts (Calcaterra, 2002). The challenge for the psychology of liberation would be to support the intervention processes, helping people to develop a common view of the community that critically integrates the expectations of all the members and establish their missions within the framework of attitudes, behaviors, and values that favor the creation of conditions for the development of social coexistence.

Develop Skills to Handle Problems and Conflicts

Developing skills to manage factors that determine the achievement of an effective social coexistence – for example, in the case of problems and conflicts – make people feel that they can better control their environment (Hernández, G. 1998), allowing them to consciously feel they are active subjects. It lets them know that both the environment and their internal processes act upon them, but that they can also have an influence on and transform their own processes and their environment. This also implies that the external promoters of social transformation (psychologists, social workers, etc.) should help the community members to develop personal skills that would enable them to work in groups, take effective decisions, successfully manage their context, and make room for dignity to be stronger against power groups (the institutions, the State). Above all, the communities must be helped to develop the ability to foresee conflicts and to handle problems by identifying their resources, and their capacity to have an influence on their respective contexts.

Assume Negotiation as the Basis of Relationships

Negotiation is the conscious alternative for the solution of problems and conflicts with the objective of developing social coexistence. It implies the encounter of actors, who through dialog, exchange of information, resource management, decision making, and the acceptance of previous norms or treaties, manage to reach agreements that allow them to solve problems, and settle conflicts or draw up a plan

or project (Calcaterra, 2002; Hernández, 1998b). Dialog in negotiation is based on the principle that the other person deserves to be respected and has rights.

Negotiation usually emerges from the interdependence of contexts and interests in conflict. It is a relation that develops between actors in an asymmetric situation, each of whom has the need to reach an agreement that would guarantee them the fulfillment of minimal aspirations, but also the possibility of meeting some maximal aspirations. So this relation based on exchange should transform asymmetry into symmetry. What is needed then is a psychology that helps community members to identify with whom they can establish strategic alliances and what can be their compromises in their relationships with the institutional actors.

Conclusions

I began this chapter stating that social coexistence remains an unfinished task for the Salvadoran society. After the reflections based on the experiences developed by FUNDASAL with the communities of Los Manantiales and Las Palmas, I conclude that this business should be finished by both the institutions of the Salvadoran State, and the different social organizations and actors (community members, external executors of the interventions, and professional), by assuming their practice with a liberating and committed attitude.

The State is mainly responsible and should be the first to start finishing this business by putting into practice the commitments pledged in the Peace Agreements; by generating structural proposals to help the underprivileged overcome the conditions of marginality and social disadvantage they live in; and by creating an environment of true political, social, and economic democracy that would ensure a better future to the country inhabitants in their place of origin.

Against this background, I ask myself: When will the State start doing this? To what extent are those holding the political power willing to create the conditions to help the poor improve their situation within a framework of social coexistence that guarantees their human development? I do not have the answers to these questions.

Perhaps actors such as FUNDASAL are already promoting changes through concrete proposals that integrate the marginalized communities into the social fabric, giving them the possibility of having experiences of solidarity and inclusion that help them develop skills to construct new realities. At the same time, by assuming their self-responsibility to transform the circumstances forcing them to live in social exclusion, the members of these communities can become the driving force of a more comprehensive change in society and its institutions.

To this end, community members should develop skills that would help them effectively manage the problems that affect their everyday relationships, that generate conflicts, tensions, ruptures, and hinder their capacity to assume their individual responsibility in the face of their living conditions. Psychologists and other professionals that address this reality from the perspective of the psychology of liberation have, as Martín-Baró (1986) said, the challenge of becoming the mediators for

processes that could allow community members to get rid of the mechanisms that alienate them, in order to increase their power for change, both at personal and collective level, in the social processes they are experiencing. Thus, they will validate their historical memory, deideologizing their everyday experience, and strengthen their human capacities, their creativity, and their solidarity.

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Gendering Peace and Liberation: A Participatory-Action Approach to Critical Consciousness Acquisition Among Women in a Marginalized Neighborhood

Violeta Luque-Ribelles, Manuel García-Ramírez, and Nelson Portillo

Many women from marginalized neighborhoods suffer injustices and structural violence due to patriarchal and macho-dominated culture as well as injustices stemming from precarious economic and social conditions (Christie, 2006). Their disadvantageous living conditions coupled with multiple levels of exclusion have a negative impact upon their well-being at the personal, relational, and community levels. In the field of community psychology, these areas of negative impact can be studied and addressed from different methodological and epistemological approaches. From the point of view of peace psychology and liberation psychology, conditions of inequality are understood primarily in terms of social injustice (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005; Rappaport & Seidman, 2000; Watts, Griffith, & Abdul-Adil, 1999). Yet community initiatives planned and executed with women from marginalized neighborhoods, informed by such perspectives, are scarce, especially in Europe. This chapter seeks to further the study of situations of social injustice experienced by oppressed groups and introduce a community approach model of conscientization or consciousness raising (Martín-Baró, 1989, 1994; Montero, 1994) that differs from mainstream analyses of the living conditions of such populations.

One of the objectives of this process was that all participating women, and the academic practitioners working with them, changed oppression-rooted perceptions held about themselves and identified actions to contest injustices based on their strengths and knowledge. This initiative employed a Participatory-Action Research (PAR) methodology as a strategy to develop a community–university partnership and to promote the well-being of women living under conditions of oppression by using community narratives (Balcázar, 2003; Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005; Rappaport, 1995).

Historically, the Global South has shown a tendency to equate peace-building efforts with the active pursuit of social justice due in part to the predominant conditions of oppression and asymmetrical distribution of resources in those regions (Christie, 2006). Not surprisingly, community practice based on liberation psychology

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(Martín-Baró, 1994, 1998) emerged originally in Latin America where it has been actively developed (Montero, 2004a, 2004b); in contrast, research and intervention from this perspective has yet to prosper in Europe (Burton & Kagan, 2005; García-Ramírez, 2006). Hence, this initiative adopts the experience and knowledge generated in Latin America and introduces it to community and peace psychologists, who work on social injustice issues, especially in Europe.

First, this chapter examines the constructs of oppression, power and its uses, as well as the consequences associated with oppression and power inequity among women from marginalized neighborhoods. Second, it explains the role of conscientization and community narratives in the process of psychopolitical development and proposes a model that integrates the acquisition of critical consciousness in an iterative process. Third, it discusses the use of collaborative and participative research methods in the development of practices directed to promote processes and actions of liberation and community peacebuilding. Lastly, it presents a research-action community-based practice carried out with women from a marginalized neighborhood located in Seville, Spain, to illustrate the model in practice.

Oppression and Power Among Women from Marginalized Neighborhoods

Oppression has two dimensions, a political and a psychological, which coexists and determines each other dialectically. The first dimension is rooted in using violence, obstacles, and barriers (e.g., legal, economic, material) that prevent others from accessing privileges by means of force, restrictions, ethnocentrism, and by negating their right to question the authority while being blamed for their condition of oppression. The psychological result of sustained dominance and subjugation is that the person who is oppressed eventually internalizes a demeaning view of her or himself, as someone who is not worthy of resources and rights. Hence, the person becomes transformed into her or his own oppressor (Martín-Baró, 1989, 1994; Moane, 1999; Montero, 2003; Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005).

Power is central to understanding oppression. Power permeates all human relationships. It is exerted at personal, relational, and community levels, and it is regulated by social and historical circumstances as well as by structural and personal factors. As a contextual process, power entails the opportunity and capacity to obtain and share collective welfare through the availability of material and psychological resources, and a system of social regulation (D'Adamo, García & Montero, 1995; Martín-Baró, 1989, 1994; Montero, 2003; Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005; Prilleltensky, 2004).

Marginalized neighborhoods are visible examples of structural violence that produces several processes of oppression. They reflect a socioeconomic order incapable of absorbing the majority of the people; a political order that obstructs, or at least discourages, the participation of certain social groups; and a domination of an economic and cultural front that excludes others. In such zones, inequalities involve most aspects of reality (e.g., urban design, division of labor), manifested primarily

in asymmetric social relationships where privileged groups dominate others, control their access to resources, and restrict their capacity to respond. All together, these conditions produce several processes of oppression that impact people at various levels. At the personal-psychological level, people are likely to develop a fatalistic attitude toward life and experience feelings of anxiety, depression, and anger. At the relational level, people may become less responsive to the needs of others and favor conflict resolution through violence. Finally, at the community level, it is common to find litter, vandalized property, abandoned buildings, overcrowding, noise, organized crime, and the presence of gangs (Cruz & Portillo, 1998; Martín-Baró, 1987, 1989, 1994; Moane, 2003; Wandersman & Nation, 1998).

The conditions of oppression that characterize marginalized neighborhoods have specific consequences for the women who inhabit them. They are more vulnerable to different types of violence, more likely to internalize the oppression that makes them feel inferior to men, and more commonly overwhelmed by numerous house responsibilities (Christie, 1997; Galtung, 1969; Pilisuk, 1998). In addition, gender-based economic oppression confines them to precarious jobs (e.g., low wages, long shifts) (Campbell & Wasco, 2000; Grant, Lyons, Finkelstein, Conway & Reynolds, 2003). This in turn furthers their exclusion in spaces of community participation and limits their pursuit of happiness and personal fulfillment (Moane, 2003; Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005).

Given the conditions of oppression faced by many women living in marginalized neighborhoods, community research and initiatives designed to overcome them are needed. On the basis of liberation and peace psychology (Christie, 2006; Martín-Baró, 1994) as well as psychopolitical development theory (Watts & Abdul-Adil, 1998), we propose a model to promote critical consciousness among women from a marginalized neighborhood; that is, consciousness about their situation of oppression, including the political, social, and cultural factors that make it possible as well as the necessity to take action and participate actively in them. This process of critical consciousness acquisition can also contribute to form a system of peacebuilding, "that is, the interplay between the nonviolent management of conflict and the movement toward socially just structures, an approach that yields an increase in cooperative and equitable relationships across levels, from interpersonal to intergroup levels" (Christie, 2006, p. 13).

Psychopolitical Development: Conscientization, Liberation, and Peacebuilding

Peace psychology proposes that conscientization of oppressed groups and their liberation must contemplate their capacity for nonviolent management of conflict (Christie, 2006; Montiel, 2006). Liberation psychology seeks to develop methods of social change and a praxis that promotes the psychopolitical capacity to resist and contest the oppressive conditions (Martín-Baró, 1994). One of its challenges is to articulate strategies that allow the conscientization of oppressed groups such as women from marginalized neighborhoods (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005; Watts et al., 1999; Watts, Williams & Jagers, 2003).

In this context, liberation means to develop the capacity to resist, procure, and enjoy political and psychological well-being (Prilleltensky, 2003; Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002). The political dimension involves the processes and results from the emancipation of class exploitation, gender subjugation, and ethnic discrimination. The psychological dimension means to overcome any undignified view about oneself, the acquisition of the capacity of self-determination, and a new voice to propose actions as well as the necessary skills to make them happen.

The liberation of oppressed women is possible through psychopolitical development. One of its central tenets is known as conscientization; that is "the process of consciousness mobilization of liberatory character about situations, facts or relationships, causes and effects ignored or unnoticed until then, but that exert an influence in a way that the subjects of this process consider negative" (Montero, 2006, p. 262). According to Cerullo and Wiesenfeld (2001), the ultimate purpose of conscientization is to generate a new praxis, one that is politically significant. Conscientization needs to be understood as a dialectic process through which people change while their relationship with their context and others changes also (Martín-Baró, 1994).

At the psychological level, conscientization refers to the active process in which one makes new sense about the world. At the social level, it refers to the community as the subject of transformations, which makes consciousness development possible. When conscientization takes place, the forces, factors, mechanisms and structures that determine the organization of one's life are revealed and, as a result of such knowledge, a political commitment to social change is made (Martín-Baró, 1994; Montero, 1994). In particular, conscientization and liberation must be nonviolent processes focused on: (1) understanding social injustices (i.e., structural violence), (2) comprehending the impact of structural violence on life experiences (i.e., direct violence), and (3) recognizing oppression and resistance.

Watts and Abdul-Adil (1998) systematized the process of psychopolitical development to raise critical consciousness by using a model of five stages: (1) acritical stage, (2) adaptative stage, (3) precritical stage, (4) critical stage, and (5) liberation stage. Applying this model to the case of women living under oppressive conditions, it can be argued that at the first two stages, the women are not able to notice social injustices because they lack consciousness about their disadvantageous situation and/or because they have become habituated and consider it a logical consequence of their assumed inferior status. At the third stage, they understand and acquire consciousness about the processes that maintain oppression and social inequity; and, at the fourth stage, they develop the capacity of critical analysis and rebelliousness as well as the need to act for change and to speak out about the negative impact that particular sociopolitical forces have on their lives. Lastly, they take action against the oppressive factors and propose the means to promote positive change.

There are different models that explain the steps between lacking critical consciousness and carrying out actions of liberation (e.g., Kieffer, 1984; Stokols & Altman, 1987; Watts & Abdul-Adil, 1998; Watts et al., 1999, 2003), but usually these models do not elaborate on the acquisition of specific dimensions of critical consciousness; that is, the acknowledgment of social injustices, and the acquisition of skills to participate and respond to oppression. In the case of women who live in

marginalized neighborhoods, the acquisition of these three dimensions would allow them to access more knowledge about what it is that oppresses them and how the social order perpetuates unjust structures of inequity. They would also learn analytical skills to know what to change and creativity to propose actions that could bring about social justice. Finally, they would develop emotional skills and the ability to identify and use their strengths and transform their weaknesses to participate in social change processes (Bartky, 1990; Martín-Baró, 1989; Moane, 1999; Montenegro, 2002; Prilleltensky, 1990, 2001, 2003; Watts & Serrano-García, 2003; Watts et al., 1999, 2003). These proposed dimensions take place in an iterative process where the three dimensions interplay in the development of critical consciousness in which conditions of oppression are identified, challenged, and targeted with specific actions.

Psychopolitical Development and Narratives as Strategies of Change

A challenge in the validation of a psychopolitical development model is the need to take into account cultural and gender-related variables such as community narratives when designing and testing strategies to raise critical consciousness (de la Rey & McKay, 2006; Jason et al., 2004; Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005; Wessells & Montiero, 2006). To overcome possible shortcomings in community work, practitioners need to understand that minority groups share multiple realities; be aware of the influences of their own biases on their perceptions and relations with the community and its members; and stress the importance of focusing on community strengths and returning the voice and power to silenced groups that are essential to develop local-based practices (Suárez-Balcázar & Kinney, 2006). In turn, these practices allow women to learn about their specific contexts and to restore their silenced voices while accumulating evidence for future best practices (Chinman, Imm & Wandersman, 2004).

A methodological approach that allows practitioners to employ community narratives is participatory-action research (PAR) (Fals-Borda, 1959, 1987). This is a strategy that joins research, education, and social action with the objective of defining and confronting problems that the community, which becomes actively engaged in the research process, defined as socially relevant (Christie, 2006; Montero, 2006). Besides being appropriate to raise critical consciousness among community members and practitioners, it allows this second group to substitute their role of experts for that of a community ally, facilitator of skills, and catalyst of success through consensus and active participation of all members interested in weaving a common narrative (García-Ramírez, Balcázar & Suárez-Balcázar, 2003; Jason et al., 2004). The techniques used to work with community narratives are multiple and varied (Campbell & Ahrens, 1998; Lykes, Blanche & Hamber, 2003; Williams et al., 2003). The work carried out with marginalized women in this study employed in particular discussion groups, semistructured interviews, participant observation, and community meetings.

Community narratives are shared stories that communities tell about themselves that say who they are, have been, and could become (Rappaport, 1995). Dialogue, as a form of narrative, is a tool for personal as well as social creation and transformation. It builds shared knowledge about social problems and their possible solutions, and facilitates the role change of community psychology practitioners (Ibáñez & Íñiguez, 1997). With this objective, they start transforming their own narratives (i.e., give oppressed communities a chance to be heard) and reexamining their expert status by substituting the concept of objectivity with that of disciplined subjectivity and by socializing within the community (e.g., participation in community activities) to earn and enjoy the residents' trust and respect (Montero, 2006). Academic practitioners and community members initiate processes that lead them to discover their own stories of oppression, modify the existing ones, create new ones, and shape contexts for power sharing. This joint reflection and comprehension propels communities to take action as they strive to build a more just society based on communal values (Jason et al., 2004; Prilleltensky, 2003; Rappaport, 1995, 2000; Williams et al., 2003).

Proposals for a Research-Action Community-Based Practice

This study introduces a model of conscientization to enable the women who live in a marginalized neighborhood to develop critical awareness and become the protagonists of their own process of liberation. To achieve this, narratives are used as a strategy of social and personal change through a PAR process in a community-based practice. This procedure is considered by Fals-Borda (1959, 1987) as one of the basic principles of PAR and community work. He called it the *principle of priorities*. A PAR practice was favored because, in addition to being characterized by getting to know in depth the specific contexts where knowledge is acquired as well as yielding positive results, it restores the voice to traditionally silenced groups (Chinman et al., 2004). The practice is based on a three-step model that seeks to: (1) mobilize the community and identify the conditions of social injustice, (2) respond to oppression by prioritizing problems and defining actions, and (3) develop action capacity by identifying barriers to participation and determining how to address them. Prior to examining each phase, the context of the experience, the instruments used, and the procedure for information analysis are described.

Community Context

The study was carried out in a marginalized neighborhood in the outskirts of Seville, Spain[1]. The neighborhood is located in a limited expansion urban area, isolated from other residential areas and asymmetrically related to them. Divided in

[1] To locate the neighborhood, go to http://www.pueblos-sevilla/espana.org/andalucia/torreblanca + de + los + canos

three areas by a sewer canal and a highway, it has industrial areas and a low construction density. About 2.2% of the surface is covered with green areas and parks. There are 19,935 habitants of whom 40% live in the most socially at-risk area (i.e., higher birthrate among adolescents, higher levels of drug consumption) and where the number of young people facing problems of social integration is higher. The index of dependency is three points above the rest of the city, and it has 2.3% more households with children not attending school. In addition, more than half of all households show disadvantages in education, work (i.e., unemployment is 35% higher than the average rate), housing (i.e., crowding is 27% higher than the average rate), and health care (see *Plan general de ordenación urbana* and the *Boletín Demográfico* of the City of Seville[2]).

Although this area is subject to governmental interventions to improve the social conditions of its inhabitants (Consejería de Igualdad y Bienestar Social, 2005), most of these programs are of ameliorative nature or promote dependency. These programs intend to satisfy needs by promoting health care and welfare-to-work initiatives, reducing school absenteeism, and encouraging the creation of community associations. These interventions, however, foster clientelism, are unstable, overpopulate the roles of their members, and are carried out using models that are applied indiscriminately to all socially disadvantaged neighborhoods without the active participation of the community and without taking into account the particularities of the context. These interventions cover very specific needs to help people and do not transform the structures that maintain the status quo nor do they provide the people with the capacities and knowledge necessary for self-determination (Dalton, Elias & Wandersman, 2006; Montero, 2004a). In addition, the neighborhood has community organizations that try to cover other necessities that the local government institutions do not address, the most influential being the parents' associations and the neighbors' associations.

Instruments

To obtain information about the oppressive conditions in the neighborhood, a guidebook was developed following the model of Wandersman and Nation (1998). A process of social adaptation (*centering*) was carried out, with professionals having at least two years working experience in the area, to obtain valid and sensible information about the social characteristics of the neighborhood. Among other things, this process considered: (1) dialogic or written narratives of the women and professionals, (2) cultural values and customs, (3) geographic situation, (4) community context, and (5) impact of social class on the women (Jason et al., 2004; Rappaport, 1995; Skaff et al., 2002).

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[2] Further documentation can be found at http://www.sevilla.org/impe/sevilla/portada

Information Analysis

An interview guide was applied through self-administered surveys, semistructured interviews, and discussion groups. These data gathered were introduced in a matrix and organized according to categorized issues based on a series of variables identified by Wandersman and Nation (1998). In the first column, participants, associations, etc., were represented. In the rows, the conditions of the neighborhood were recorded. Finally, the answers were written in the cells. This matrix made it easy to visualize the cluster of answers and to examine them consistently through a content analysis that emphasized the variables related to oppression based on gender and within the community while revealing the most relevant problems and strengths of the community (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Sonn & Fisher, 2003).

Applying the Model to Community Practice

Community Mobilization and Identification of Social Injustices

In the first step, a community partnership between women and academic practitioners was established to identify situations of social injustice. To do so, it was necessary for the women to acquire a minimum of critical consciousness; that is, to evolve from the stage of internalized feelings of inferiority and powerlessness to begin to doubt and question their adaptation to oppressive conditions (Watts, 1994). For the academic practitioners, it was necessary to become familiar with the neighborhood and to engage in its social dynamics (Kieffer, 1984). This last aspect is known as *familiarity*; that is "the process that introduces the external agents to the community's knowledge, making habitual and understandable the aspects of each community" (Montero, 2006, p. 78).

To contact and involve women and professionals, a networking strategy was employed. Women already taking part in ongoing social programs or workshops were contacted to gain access to other women living under conditions of oppression and to create a web in which the first contacted members served as mentors. Throughout the process, women and practitioners worked on dialogic and written narratives in: (1) three discussion groups with the participation of 77 women (informed consent to tape their contributions and to take photos was solicited); (2) 15 semistructured interviews; and (3) 22 self-administered questionnaires. Once all information was gathered, it was disseminated among the sources so that they could indicate any changes if necessary.

The evaluation of the process gave a chance to make further modifications, according to the proposals of the community and the academic practitioners, while a series of group meetings held in the neighborhood allowed all parties to examine it in more depth. In addition, all academic practitioners gathered periodically and interacted with the neighborhood women to overcome barriers due to age, education level, etc. In an attempt to earn the trust of the community and to know more

about the events of the neighborhood, they participated in various community activities (e.g., local parties and social initiatives).

During a period of six months, different alliances were created to build a sustainable partnership. Members of the local government participated as well as seven academic practitioners, several professionals from 10 institutions, 14 community organizations, and 100 women between the ages of 30 and 75. A group of eight leaders was created between those who participated consistently and those who were trained in community work strategies.

In this process, shared knowledge about the social reality of the neighborhood was created whereas the narratives of the different social groups modified each other dialectically. Academic practitioners voiced their own narratives; some of oppression for working in a marginalized neighborhood that made them feel fearful about their safety, emotionally exhausted, and apprehensive; and others of oppressive character for relegating the neighborhood to an inferior status, blaming it for its own situation. The narratives of the academic practitioners evolved from using information based on a third party and stereotypes to form opinions based on direct experience. One researcher, for example, went from talking about the neighborhood as a unity ("*the population of the neighborhood shows a lower economic and socio-cultural level*") to differentiating it in areas according to their conditions of oppression ("*the population of areas A and C enjoy a better socio-economic level than the one residing in area B*").

Simultaneously, the women departed from an uncritical stage (Watts & Abdul-Adil, 1998). They spoke about being tired of having multiple jobs, but did not acknowledge situations of gender violence and neighborhood deficits. An example of these deficits was voiced by a member of one of the parents' association who said: "*Tussam (the bus service) works every day. We don't have any problems with public transportation; we've got a bus*." However, she failed to acknowledge that the transportation service was limited to the day hours and connected them to only one area in the city, making it very difficult to travel in and out of the city and to return to the community after work.

Later, they started building narratives in which they identified unjust situations, considered stable otherwise, thus reaching a higher level of adaptation (Watts & Abdul-Adil, 1998). They acknowledged that domestic chores were a responsibility of all family members and identified cases of domestic violence (Table 1). In the process of identifying injustices, a different member of the parents' association said: "*The public transportation service is bad; many people have to use it… [They] can't get out of the neighbourhood*. She also mentioned that "… *there [were] very few containers for glass and paper [recyclable] waste*."

The issue of pregnancy and motherhood among adolescents exemplified how different groups had their own understanding of the situation. A number of external health professionals mentioned, among other things, the ignorance and irresponsibility of the youth, blaming the victims for their situation. One of them said:

> The problem of the adolescent pregnancies is educational and generational; it starts with the early incorporation of the young people to the workforce and they use it (the pregnancy) to become independent and to live with their partner… [It is also] lack of parental responsibility

Table 1 Outcomes of the work carried out by the women in the different phases of the process of critical consciousness acquisition

Identification of situations of social injustice
(1) Pregnancies among adolescents (teenage mothers, HIV, broken families, contraceptive methods); (2) Isolation and neighborhood stigmatization (neighborhood isolation from other urban centers, lack of public transportation, deteriorated access to the neighborhood, mass media stereotyping); (3) Deterioration of the neighborhood and common spaces (dirt, lack of street lamps, traffic chaos, empty lots, lack of sociocultural equipment); (4) Drug problems (high level of drug trafficking, drug addiction among youngsters, drug consumption in public); (5) Green areas and parks (lack of green areas and parks, park bonfires); (6) Women's role overload and domestic violence (work outside and inside the house, caregivers of dependent persons, grandchildren, domestic violence victims)
Necessary areas to work and prioritized actions
Needs: (1) Trainings and workshops for parents; (2) Contraception and prevention campaigns; (3) Sexual orientation as a school course
Prioritized: (1) Conduct trainings for parents in schools and academic centers to facilitate spaces to talk about sex, conversations with parents and children about families' roles; (2) Conduct contraception and prevention methods campaigns at the local health care center; (3) Make sex orientation another school class; (4) Conduct talks in local places for youths where pregnant young women can share their experiences; (5) Campaign to distribute condoms in the community
Participation difficulties and proposals to overcome them
Difficulties identified by the women: (1) Do not know how to conduct campaigns (prevention, sensitization, and dissemination); (2) Do not know how to increase the motivation and union of the population to improve the neighborhood; (3) Do not know how and whom to contact to solve problems; 4) Uncertainty about the community's reaction to new initiatives; (5) Do not know how to improve the training of the population; (6) Do not know how to change the neighborhood's negative image; (7) Do not know what the neighborhood's resources are; (8) Do not know how to decrease women's roles overload; (9) Do not know what to do with drug addicts; (10) Do not know how to design effective programs; (11) Do not know how to decrease drug addition; (12) Have little information about domestic violence
Proposals made by the women: (1) Find out how to obtain institutional, organizational, and professional support; (2) Learn how to receive information, how to raise awareness, train and inform the neighborhood; (3) Learn to navigate the bureaucracy and make protocols of performance; (4) Learn how to make a list of resources; (5) Learn how to reach out to mass media; 6) Obtain information about how to conduct prevention and sensitization campaigns; (7) Learn how to organize games and sport activities; (8) Learn how to denounce issues; (9) Organize babysitting groups and psychological support; (10) Share domestic chores; (11) Learn how to use the Internet
Difficulties identified by the professionals: (1) Targeting the youngest women; (2) Targeting all women, not just the same group; (3) Covering just the basic necessities; (4) Lack of training; (5) Lack of specialized and qualified professionals in the area of participation due to the complexity of the issue; (6) Private space is assigned to women, therefore their participation in the neighborhood is limited; (7) Women who do not participate think that their contribution is not important.
Proposal made by the professionals: (1) Study all levels of participation; (2) Foster and facilitate that all women who participate become agents of change and mediators in their neighborhood; (3) Support the initiatives that emerge from the associations; (4) Offer institutional support; (5) Promote social and communication skills

Source: Key informants and stakeholders.

> when educating their children; they do not want to take any responsibility because they don't want to confront [the situation]… so the problem repeats itself and becomes a habit.

The women themselves revealed their narratives in the discussion group when they shared their thoughts about adolescent pregnancies, a phenomenon that they denied initially. One of the parents' association members, in fact, mentioned that pregnancies among adolescents had become less common.

After modifying their narratives and acquiring critical awareness of the social injustice, the women acknowledged that they themselves were adolescent mothers or were the mothers of pregnant adolescents. Among the reasons behind adolescent pregnancies, a participant mentioned that "*pregnancies are used to leave [the parents'] home and find a husband*" while another highlighted that "*scheduling a date with the family planning service usually takes a long time*."

In addition, they reflected on economic and emotional responsibilities of adolescent mothers, future opportunities, and familiar repercussions (e.g., caretaking grandmothers, crowding). These new narratives made them more conscious of the damage caused by being deprived of their rights, which led to questioning the value of adaptation (Watts & Abdul-Adil, 1998).

In summary, this first step showed that establishing relationships of trust and collaboration, getting to know the neighborhood, and promoting the conscientization of women to identify situations of social injustice are interdependent processes that enrich each other. Through these processes, the neighborhood established new relationships while academic practitioners also became part of the community. Furthermore, women moved from being unable to name social injustices or considering them as habitual, to fully identifying them and redefining them as surmountable. In this way, they learned new roles and abilities, which facilitated their individual and relational empowerment and started to break the dynamic of oppression.

Responding to Oppression: Prioritizing Problems and Defining Actions

The objective of the second stage was for women to realize that to overcome oppression it is necessary to take action against social injustice. To achieve this, the women prioritized situations of social injustice and defined actions intended to overcome them.

The community leaders acquired new abilities to participate and had to confront a series challenges when planning and taking part in a meeting organized around the injustices identified in the previous stage. In this meeting, the original group of women leaders was joined by 34 other women, who formed six work groups. They were instructed on how to work with eight common mentors and community leaders from other neighborhoods (Osuna & Luque-Ribelles, 2003), and learned the problems and goals identified. Each group proposed a list of actions to resolve the problems of the neighborhood (Table 1). At the end, they presented their conclusions and established timelines for future actions. Critical debate, reflection, and

participation were actively promoted, in addition to offering services to make attending the meeting a much easier task (e.g., transportation). The academic practitioners and professionals acted as facilitators, making sure that every woman had the opportunity to present her own ideas and conclusions.

At the same time, the academic practitioners started to deconstruct their narratives and expectations because they risked becoming oppressive themselves and, therefore, limiting the opportunities to take action. By molding these in terms of the proposals of the women, they became more in tune with the context and the necessities of the community in which academic practitioners were willing to get involved. This is what Fals-Borda (1959) called the *principle of social catalysis*.

The women modified their narratives too, redefining the social injustices in positive terms to be able to tackle the problems that they wanted to solve. Women raised issues related specifically to drug use and trafficking in high schools, information about resources and activities available in the city, and utilities in households. They proposed actions to confront their problems, promote social change, and acquire awareness of the social asymmetries and the power required to overcome them. They took charge of their future and found a new vision of themselves (Table 1) (Watts & Abdul-Adil, 1998). Some of the actions proposed were to "*increase the unity in the neighborhood, surveillance around the schools, and more efficient police*" and "*have the radio say good things about the neighborhood*."

For their part, external professionals identified problems in the community work carried out with the women and proposed ways to address them. One of them mentioned that "*the women who participate are usually the same*" while another proposed to "*address the issue of participation among women as an integral part of the planning*."

The group assigned particularly to the issue of "adolescent pregnancies" exemplifies how women, upon proposing actions, confronted social injustices with the goal of overcoming them and becoming ready to assume the cost of affirming their rights. On the one hand, they made the commitment to practice safer sex and involve their partners in talks about contraceptive methods, to hold sessions on how to resolve communication problems, and to promote information about safer sex. On the other hand, they created new narratives in which they evaluated the role of each member of their relation and proposed ideas for the neighborhood's young women, so they could meet their needs in their relationships and feel fulfilled as individuals (Table 1).

Ability to Take Action: Participation Barriers and Strategies to Overcome Them

The objective of the third phase was to make women aware that in order to achieve their well-being they must lead the actions proposed. With this aim, the women identified the barriers that prevent them from becoming involved in the actions and the strategies necessary to overcome such barriers.

Women completed a list of obstacles to participating in the actions and another list of the strategies to overcome them (Table 1). They met in a community gathering where they created working groups once again and presented their results. To improve the quality and continuity of their achievements, their work was evaluated following the procedures described by Chinman et al. (2004). Two questionnaires were distributed and respondents were asked for their satisfaction with the work accomplished in the community meetings (28 completed questionnaires) and their opinion about the working process (completed by the community leaders).

They were aware that they could lead liberation actions in their neighborhood after identifying the barriers that kept them passive. Among the barriers identified by the women were: lack of union, knowledge about the dissemination of neighborhood initiatives, how to reach out to local institutions, and how to access resources that could increase their chances of success.

In addition, they saw themselves contributing to the improvement of their community together with other women, after identifying what knowledge and abilities they needed to overcome their community participation difficulties. In this way, they took a step toward achieving the liberation stage and toward social change (Watts & Abdul-Adil, 1998). Some of the proposals included obtaining orientation to know the steps to carry out their own initiatives, learning to use the Internet to diversify their resources, and acquiring skills to determine what could be done with them.

The academic practitioners went through a series of difficulties to coordinate the working groups and had a hard time identifying which were the barriers to participation. The academic practitioners shared their understandings and established that they had similar problems with increasing women participation and exposed common objectives, all of which helped increase the chances of taking action (Table 1).

Regarding the work accomplished at the community meetings, all of the women indicated they wanted to see more women participate in similar initiatives, obtain information about how to implement the proposed actions, and keep their motivation high. The community leaders emphasized the strengths of the participative process, the interest of the academic practitioners, as well as their own interest to acquire new abilities and to improve their neighborhood. Among the weaknesses, they identified were the necessity of more information as well as adapting mechanisms to assure the sustainability of the project and the dissemination of its results.

Discussion

On the basis of liberation and peace psychology principles, this chapter introduced a consciousness raising model through which oppressed women from a marginalized neighborhood in Spain began their psychopolitical development process to acquire critical awareness and to work toward their well-being and liberation. The literature indicates that practices designed to achieve psychopolitical development do not spell out what they understand by critical awareness acquisition or even the process

of acquisition itself (Moane, 1999; Watts & Abdul-Adil, 1998). This work contributes to fill this gap by proposing that critical awareness has three dimensions that can be acquired in an iterative process: the acknowledgment of social injustices, the necessity to take action to overcome them, and the necessity to participate in those actions.

Applying a PAR methodology to the proposed model and working in a collaborative partnership, marginalized women identified the social injustices that affect them, responded to oppression by prioritizing problems and defining actions, and developed action capacity by identifying barriers to participation. During all the work stages, women and academic practitioners deconstructed and transformed their narratives of oppression into narratives of liberation. This allowed women to generate a new shared knowledge about their reality while their behaviors shifted from passiveness and habituation to movement and assertiveness directed to social transformation. At the same time, the work in a community partnership allowed academic practitioners to learn to listen to the multiple voices of the community and develop a new understanding anchored in the lives of the marginalized women (de la Rey & McKay, 2006; Martín-Baró, 1994; Moane, 1999; Montiel, 2006; Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005).

This work revealed also the oppressive character of well intentioned interventions from official institutions and how their effects can last beyond the initial established limits. The original sponsoring institution of the initiative presented here, the local municipality, tried to carry out a peacemaking process to influence women's participation to satisfy external demands and move them away from any attempt that would bring deeper changes. They did so, partially, because members of the municipality and the academic team could not fully agree on a shared agenda that reflected the level of commitment acquired by the women participating in the project. This was very evident when the local municipality stopped supporting it. Nevertheless, the alliances that the PAR process made between women and academic practitioners became stronger and together proposed alternative community initiatives.

On the basis of the extension of the work carried out, some lessons for future collaborative community work can be drawn. The proposed model and the experience that illustrates it represent an effective local-based practice oriented to a specific population and context, which may limit its replicability in other contexts with dissimilar conditions. In the future, it is recommended that community practitioners develop initiatives that incorporate best practice criteria based on evidence so that they can determine whether the research findings are trustworthy and sustainable (Chinman et al., 2004). As asserted by Prilleltensky (2004, p. 29), to achieve psychopolitical validity, "research and intervention projects need to adopt specific criteria that indicate the extent to which they incorporate lessons about psychological and political power."

Originally, this was an experience that focused on working groups' established cooperative relationships with existing institutions. This constrained the possibilities that parallel alliances and action networks would emerge to channel their interests and achieve their goals. Academic practitioners should strive, whenever possible, to promote sustainability among the working groups and act independently to achieve

their goals and interests. Therefore, it is necessary to develop strategies that assure the continuation of the consciousness raising process and the deconstruction of narratives and practices of oppressions among those who provide the resources. Another valuable lesson has to do with situations in which official organizations threaten to withdraw their financial support or disrupt ongoing initiatives. Community practitioners should be prepared to align themselves with the community to defend the rights of its members to access resources and have their views and initiatives respected as well.

This work acknowledges the necessity and the importance of developing action-oriented knowledge, useful and socially relevant to provide responses to the needs of oppressed communities living under structural violence conditions. In this way, academic practitioners can contribute to advance social progress and build a more just world where community values inform the relationships between individuals and groups (Prilleltensky, 2001).

The core theoretical models of this work, based on oppression theory and liberation psychology, emerged originally in Latin America, where they have a long and consolidated tradition (Martín-Baró, 1994, 1998; Montero, 1992, 2003, 2004b, 2006; Montero & Fernández-Chritlieb, 2003; Watts & Serrano-García, 2003). Yet in first-world contexts, especially in Europe, these models, as far as we know, are just being developed and applied, meeting many of the difficulties already addressed in Latin America (Burton & Kagan, 2005). In this way, the evolution of this work is similar to that described by Maritza Montero (2004a; see also Montero, 1994) concerning the circumstances and barriers that prevented the development of community movements within the communities in Venezuela. For these models to be successful in developed countries, it is necessary to work simultaneously in two directions. On the one hand, it is necessary to work closely with the oppressed populations so that they become protagonists of their own psychopolitical development by deconstructing their own narratives of oppression. On the other hand, it is necessary to work with those who have the power and who define agendas to instil the abilities and strategies to ease their reservations about true participation and collaboration and to facilitate peacebuilding and psychopolitical development processes within oppressed communities, especially among women.

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