Engaging and Contesting Hegemonic Discourses Through Feminist Participatory Action Research in Peru: Towards a Feminist Decolonial Praxis

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This chapter is an adaptation of part of the author's dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of her doctoral degree in Applied Developmental psychology.

Contents

Peru, as many other countries that were once European colonies, is one in which its colonial past is still very present permeating its social fabric and giving place to racialised interactions that marginalise several non-white groups, particularly indigenous Andean people. Moreover, due to the entrenched patriarchal dynamics present in Peruvian society, Andean women are even more vulnerable to this marginalisation, which is evidenced by the ongoing conditions of material poverty many of them continue to face. In this scenario, oftentimes professionals work with Andean women in social and economic projects that seek to promote their development and wellbeing. Although well intentioned, through these projects professionals might be unknowingly reproducing colonial and patriarchal dynamics by not incorporating Andean women's knowledge (s) and by privileging ideas and practices informed by their disciplinary training, which is largely rooted in western knowledge.

This chapter presents some reflections drawn from a Feminist Participatory Action Research (PAR) project in which I worked with a group of Andean women.

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These women had come together to "organise-as-women" establishing a knitting association that allowed them to face forms of ongoing structural violence that affected their lives and those of their families. Women's organising is usually understood as organising in social and political struggles to achieve social change (Ferree and Tripp 2006). Despite these connotations, and acknowledging the connections between social and political issues and economic conditions, the term "organising-as-women" is used in this chapter to refer to processes of organisation with the view to improving one's conditions of life in an economic reality fraught by poverty. This feminist PAR project provided a space for the participants (and me) to reflect about how this process of organising-as-women was influenced by a variety of ideas and discourses which came into this Andean community introduced by agents and institutions external to it, such as state institutions or non-governmental organisations (NGOs). As will be seen, ideas about organising-as-women were also deeply informed by ideas about development and progress, and ideas about violence against women and how to resist it.

This chapter seeks to contribute to developing a feminist decolonial community psychology by analysing the ways in which ideas and practices informed by western discourses are introduced into Andean communities by professionals and academics such as ourselves. Furthermore, it seeks to illustrate that Andean women are not passive recipients of ideas and practices external to their cultural background, rather they critically engage with these ideas as they transform and contest them. This chapter is situated along a line of scholarly work that challenges hegemonic discourses' positioning of indigenous women and other women of colour as 'Third World Women' (Mohanty 1988; Lugones 2008), that is as those who are ignorant, uneducated, and victims of their circumstances. It challenges this reified image of women from "developing" countries, by foregrounding the experiences and reflections of a group of Andean women who positioned themselves as active constructors of knowledge through a feminist PAR project. Before discussing the project and the learnings from it in detail, I situate Andean women's historical marginalisation, and resistance to it, in the Peruvian context.

Andean Women's Marginalisation and Resistance in Peru's Racial, Class, and Gender Hierarchies

The marginalisation of Andean people is deeply threaded into Peru's social fabric. This marginalisation reflects racism that is rooted in colonialism, but which still persists today, although in slightly different forms. Although colonialism as a political system has ended, we can still see its social and economic effects in Peru (Quijano 2000). Most of those who live in rural areas and are dedicated to agricultural activities earn very little for their work, and are Andean people; while those who hold most positions of economic, social and political power, with some exceptions, are mestizo or white (Thorp and Paredes 2011). However, being white or mestizo does not depend exclusively on phenotypic elements; these ethnic differences

include symbolic and cultural elements as well. In the Peruvian social hierarchy, social and cultural markers are mapped on to race (De la Cadena 2001). Among the most important markers is money and the possession of resources, a marker strongly associated with whiteness and western culture. Therefore, in this racialised social hierarchy elements and characteristics associated with whiteness and western culture are seen as superior, and those associated with indigenous Andean culture are seen as inferior. This interconnection between race and class yields a social stratification that is fluid but still very hierarchical.

Racialised social hierarchies and the dynamics of marginalisation associated with them are not only present in the Peruvian society at large, but can also be observed in Andean communities which also tend to be stratified. In these, some individuals and families hold more economic and/or political power relative to others and have more access to resources. Within this hierarchy, because of how race, class, and gender intertwine, Andean women are usually positioned at the lowest level. They tend to have a subordinate role to men, who are considered as the head of the household, and make the important decisions at the family and community levels (Radcliffe et al. 2003). In some Andean communities, men also exercise great economic control by having more rights to land and other material resources (León 2011). Because Andean men have been assigned more power in their own communities, they also have more access to other circles of power beyond the community, extending into urban areas. With this greater access to urban areas also comes greater possibilities of access to education.

Education is usually associated with greater opportunities for social and economic progress, and this is not an exception in Andean communities. Andean families believe that by providing education for future generations they can put a stop to the marginalisation to which they have historically been subject (Ames 2002). Unfortunately, many times the opportunity for Andean women to complete their basic education is limited. Access to equal education in Peru has improved compared to previous decades (World Bank 2007), during which women living in rural areas had very little, if any, formal schooling. However, inequality in education persists despite there being no gender gap in primary school attendance. Rather, the gender gap appears in secondary school and increases as girls grow into adolescents (Montero 2006). Studies have documented how some Andean families stop sending their daughters to school because they fear they will be sexually abused, and because they expect them to take on more domestic chores (García 2003; Montero 2006). Other studies have shown how pregnancy continues to contribute to adolescent girls dropping out of school (World Bank 2007). As may be observed, Andean women face greater challenges to reach higher levels of schooling which leaves them at a disadvantage compared to other groups in Peruvian society. The challenges to complete their education as well as the racial and patriarchal marginalisation present both in their communities, and in Peruvian society at large, continue to inhibit many Andean women's ability to escape poverty. Official statistics from 2017 show that the highest levels of poverty and extreme poverty in the country are found in rural areas of the Andes (INEI 2018). Moreover, due to the interlocking forms of structural violence explained above, poverty can be even more detrimental to the wellbeing of Andean women.

Andean women's racial and gender marginalisation has also been evidenced in the particular ways they have been affected by socio-historical processes, such as the Peruvian internal armed conflict (1980–2000). This conflict hit hardest the central-southern regions of the Andes, disproportionately affecting Andean communities (CVR 2003). Founded in June 2001, The Commission for Truth and Reconciliation (Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación in Spanish) found that three out of every four victims, among the almost 70 thousand victims, were quechua-speaking campesinos [peasants in Spanish] (2003). Moreover, among these victims the majority (80%) were young men between the ages of 20 and 49 (CVR 2003). In this scenario, many surviving Andean women had to find ways to face the new challenges that emerged in the wake of the conflict as they struggled to reconstruct their lives in conditions of dire poverty (Bueno-Hansen 2015). Several women's organisations emerged seeking to face these harsh material conditions. Among the most well-known of these organisations was one in which women organised under their identity as mothers, *Club de Madres* [Mothers' Club in Spanish]. These women advocated for the families who had survived the conflict so that their material needs could be addressed (Bueno-Hansen 2015). Their work has had a significant impact organising women in Mother's Clubs at the district level through many regions. By the time the conflict ended there were approximately 1800 Mother's Clubs in the region of Ayacucho. In the wake of the conflict the women from Mother's Clubs became protagonists of an important social movement who advocated for the guarantee of their families' livelihood (Venturoli 2009).

Women in post-conflict contexts, and in impoverished contexts more broadly, have been organising to improve their conditions of life in several parts of the world, and many times becoming involved in development projects working in collaboration with NGOs and state institutions. Most development projects have focused on improving women's economic development at the micro level through income-generating projects in which women are trained in several skills (see Walsh 2000 in Bosnia; Kalungu-Banda 2004 in Kosovo). Unfortunately, these projects have often overlooked the structural issues, such as the patriarchal and racial dynamics present in the context, the issues that have led to women's marginalisation in the first place. Also, oftentimes these projects are conceived by professionals in institutional contexts far away from the social realities in which they will be implemented. Therefore, they lack a contextualised comprehension of women's experiences vis-a-vis development as well as about the challenges they find as they seek to achieve it.

In order to contribute to a feminist decolonial praxis it is important not only to incorporate indigenous women's understandings about development and in general, about how they want to live, but to place them at the centre. In this way, professionals, such as community psychologists, can contribute to challenging the hegemonic discourses about development and wellbeing that are prevalent in psychology. This feminist PAR project sought to contribute to this line of work by foregrounding Andean women's understandings about development and about how gender dynamics operate in their local context and beyond, either constraining or fostering women's development.

Feminist Participatory Action Research with Andean Women

Participatory Action Research (PAR) is a conceptual and methodological approach to research that entails shared decision-making in identifying the research questions, methods, data collection processes, and analysis and interpretation of the findings. These decisions are shared between "outsider" researchers, that is, those typically from outside the community and university-based, and "insider" researchers, that is, those from the community (Fals Borda 2001). For several decades community psychologists have been embracing PAR as their flagship methodology in their work with communities given its participatory and collective methods. However, many times professionals hold an idea of a homogenous and united community, which leads them to overlook how women's experiences and understandings tend to be excluded due to the patriarchal dynamics present in each context (Maguire 1987). Feminist PAR acknowledges these challenges and incorporates critical feminist theories to the approach proposed by PAR. However, without incorporating a decolonial lens, feminist PAR risks further obscuring the diverse experiences women have, particularly *vis-a-vis* the dynamics of racial and class marginalisation and forms of marginalisation tied to colonial histories. Incorporating a decolonial lens entails recognising how historically research (and other academic processes of knowledge construction) have been inextricably tied to the colonial project (Mohanty 1988; Smith 2012). The colonial project has continuously constructed knowledge about the world from a western perspective while silencing indigenous people's stories and experiences and positioning them as objects to be theorised about and known, but never as subjects who are themselves knowers (Smith 2012). By embracing a decolonial and intersectional perspective the feminist PAR project reported on here sought to challenge and reject this view of indigenous women by centring the understandings and experiences of a group of Andean women and facilitating a process through which they could collectively and dialectically engage in processes of knowledge construction.

Context and Participants in the Feminist PAR project The feminist PAR process referred to in this chapter was developed with a group of Andean women from the town of Huancasancos in the department of Ayacucho, Peru. This town is part of a region that was strongly affected by the Peruvian armed conflict (CVR 2003). In Huancasancos, the campesinos are mostly dedicated to cattle rearing and subsistence agriculture. Knitting is also an activity preferred by many campesina women in this town, which has a long tradition of textile production. It is also important to note that due to political and economic changes several professionals working either in state institutions, NGOs, infrastructure projects, or extractive industries, have established in Huancasancos in the last three decades creating many shifts in local dynamics.

The participants in the project were a group of approximately 15–20 Andean women from the town of Huancasancos who had just formed a knitting association. They formed their association with the support of the district municipality and the person in charge of community relationships from the staff of a Peruvian mining

company. This person played a key role by providing support with the logistics and procedures required to formally register the association.[1]

Data Collection and Analysis: Processes of Collective Knowledge Construction The research focus of the feminist PAR was to explore how a newly founded women's association could be a means to confront structural violence, including racism, hetero-patriarchy and economic violence—all forces rooted in colonial histories that continue to marginalise and contribute to Andean women's impoverishment. To this end, I facilitated several participatory workshops during nine months, and these generated the core data for the research. In these workshops we explored topics that the participants and I saw as related to the research focus through the use of creative techniques. These techniques included both creative arts—such as drawings, sculptures, and collages—and embodied practices, such as role play and frozen images (Boal 2013). Both creative arts and embodied practices have contributed importantly to feminist PAR processes with indigenous women (see Lykes and Crosby 2015 in Guatemala).

For the most part of the workshops, creative techniques were used collectively in groups of four or five participants. An iterative process of data analysis was carried out in which participants used these techniques, such as collective drawings, to express their understandings regarding a particular topic. The product of these techniques was then presented to all participants giving place to subsequent group discussions. The process was iterative given that I recorded both the products of these techniques (e.g. drawings, colleges, dramatizations) and the discussions about them, and then, after organising and synthesising this emergent information, I presented it back to the participants in the next session for their further analysis. When the workshops ended, I analysed the transcribed discussions that took place in the workshops through a constructivist grounded theory approach (Charmaz 2014). I complemented the analysis of the workshop transcriptions with data from individual interviews conducted with some of the workshop participants and with field notes.

Feminist PAR processes might seem to provide an unmediated representation of participants voices. However, as researchers we also play an important role when facilitating these processes given that we partly shape the knowledge that emerges from participants when we interact with them in the workshops and also when we organise and write-up the findings. Thus, rather than presenting these results as purely the participants' understandings or voices it is best to refer to the findings that emerge from feminist PAR processes as dialogic co-constructions (Lykes et al. 2003). Also important is to critically and reflexively interrogate our own positionality vis-a-vis the participants given that it can help us understand how it informed the knowledge constructed through these processes (St. Louis and Barton 2002). I have previously analysed and written about my privileged positionality as a mestiza woman who is part of an upper-middle class in relation to the group of Andean

[1] I previously reflected about the complex power dynamics present in the relationship between the extractive industry company and this group of Andean women (see Távara 2018). However, it is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss in detail these complexities.

women I collaborated with (see Távara 2018). I have also reflected about how the power dynamics taking place in our relationship constrained the processes of knowledge construction, and how we sought to counter these dynamics and promote the protagonism of participants.

It is also important to underscore that this chapter presents locally constructed knowledge that responds to the socio-cultural and historic particularities of this Andean community. Thus, even when it might contribute to understanding social processes related to the incorporation of western ideas in other similar Andean and indigenous contexts, this research by no means seeks to portray a homogenised version of Andean women's experiences and organising processes. Furthermore, even when at times this chapter tends to present Andean communities in clearly delimited contexts and in opposition to what is external to them, it is important to acknowledge that these boundaries are flexible, porous and increasingly unclear. It is partly because of the porosity of these limits, that ideas forged elsewhere are increasingly being incorporated, adapted, and transformed within Andean communities. In the following section I present in more detail Andean women's engagement in some of such processes. I finalise this chapter by reflecting on some of the learnings that can be drawn from this feminist PAR project for building a feminist decolonial community psychology.

Andean Women's Engagement With External (Western) Ideas Through Feminist PAR

The Andean women participants in the feminist PAR were interested in forming a women's knitting association. In this process they found themselves relating to ideas about organising-as-women, and to ideas about development and violence against women. Through these findings I seek to present the particular ways in which Andean women were relating to these ideas, some of which they perceived as external to the community.

Organising-As-Women As Foreign to the Community Although organising as collective groups has always been part of this Andean community— which has long been organising for social, economic, and cultural activities—in these groups both men and women have participated, and women have typically had a subordinate role. Organising in women-only activities was foreign to the town and women in the past were mostly dedicated to their household chores (including caring for children) and to their daily campesina activities, which participants described as very isolating (Távara 2018). About this a participant mentioned "*In those times we didn't know about that [in relation to women's associations]. Each woman [was] on their own, in the fields, caring for their animals*".

Significant changes started taking place in the town in the mid 1980's when it was declared a provincial capital. Multiple offices, housing and state institutions

moved to the town as well as NGOs. Consequently, more outside professionals moved into the town giving place to a host of changes that connected Huancasancos to an increasingly globalised world. Among these changes were new ideas about organising-as-women being introduced by professionals working in NGOs or state officials working in different areas and programs of the local, regional, or national government. Participants reported that these professionals had given talks on topics related to gender and offered trainings on economic and productive activities for women (Távara 2018). As one woman stated: *"I went to two or three talks [given by an NGO]. They were about agriculture and about what to feed our children, to overcome malnutrition and progress. They also talked about how we can develop projects in the future, and about farming"*.

The group of women knitters who participated in the feminist PAR had just formed an association with the support of outside professionals. Thus, they were also being influenced by ideas regarding organising-as-women brought from outside the town. Furthermore, participants' discussions evidenced how they saw organising-as-women as connected to ideas about development and progress. One woman mentioned "*Among women, we can call each other. When seeing that someone is not doing well, we can tell her 'come here, let's work together'. This way we will move forward"*. As can be seen participants saw organising and working together as women as a means to promote their development. Participants also saw organising-as-women as connected to violence against women. For them violence against women was an obstacle to women's capacity to organise and, at the same time, through coming together and organising they had greater opportunities to challenge that violence. Regarding this a participant stated: *"There are several homes with family violences. So because we are working in an organised way, now it is diminishing a little [Interviewer: The violence?] Yes, violence is diminishing because we support each other, and also because when women sell what they knit they have their own income"*.

Even when the idea of organising-as-women was strongly perceived as being introduced from the outside, participants' ideas about development and about violence against women and how to resist it, were not exclusively influenced by external ideas. Rather they were informed by participants' own understandings grounded in their particular experiences as Andean women at the interstices of race, gender and class.

Organising-As-Women for Development In this feminist PAR process, Andean women discussed their ideas regarding development. Underlying their descriptions was the assumption that development was partly brought from outside the community, mostly by the state. They saw development reflected in the construction of infrastructure, to improve water and electricity availability, and also in the newly paved roads that connected the town with neighbouring urban centres. They also associated development with businesses, such as town shops and the local market. Nevertheless, included in the participants' conceptions about development was also the improvement of campesino activities; for example, enhancing the processes for cattle rearing and field cultivation.

Knitting, a practice very tied to Andean women's cultural identities, was also encompassed within participants' idea of development. These Andean women felt that by coming together and knitting to earn an income, they could improve their conditions of life, as illustrated in the following quote: *"I've knitted like three or four jumpers, with the purpose of selling them. I'm very motivated to improve (...) Now that we are associated and knit a lot, we can move forward and progress for our families' wellbeing"*. As can be seen, Andean women draw their ideas about development and progress from their own cultural practices and knowledge(s); these influence how they engage capitalist production, as evidenced by their decisions to incorporate local traditions (e.g., knitting) into a market economy (Radcliffe and Laurie 2006).

The participants' perceptions about the community's development also reflected their desire to combine the "traditional" and modern world. They not only saw development and progress as the construction of infrastructure or the creation of businesses, but also as something that should include their campesino activities. This suggests that Andean women see their culture as offering resources that can contribute to progress and to a more modern way of life. In relation to this point, one participant stated: *"With the irrigation technology, we will be able to... wow! grow crops in that big field. That will bring progress. [Development] is also cattle rearing, cows for example. We produce a lot of cheese, we have the best cheese, we will be able to do business with the roads"*. This research illustrated that participants are reluctant to leave their knowledge and practices behind. Rather, they have a desire to generate income from this knowledge and these practices to enable them to survive in the current economy (Ruiz Bravo 2005).

As can be seen, Andean women have much to contribute to notions about development and about how to live a better life in the contemporary moment. However, many times, due to the way ideas about development are defined and introduced into Andean communities their voices are not incorporated, neither prioritised. Rather, Andean women tend to be positioned in unfavourable ways *vis-a-vis* development. Development is a definitional project—usually defined from a place of power and privilege—that fixes an idea of the modern society that all should pursue. The ideas and perspectives of groups identified as "developing" are not included in this framework nor in its policies (Esteva 1985). Consequently, groups such as Andean women are defined in relation to this idea of development and so are positioned as underdeveloped and not-modern. In our work with communities, as outside professionals, we might be unknowingly promoting this message as well by not incorporating Andean women's knowledge(s) and ideas, and by focusing on what needs to change in them, the "underdeveloped" subjects. Therefore, we need to shift our focus to what needs to change, not in Andean women, but in the social structures that are marginalising them. In this challenge towards social transformation Andean women have much to contribute.

Andean Women's Racialised Experiences of Violence Against Women and Their Resistance to It Violence against women is a social problem that has enormously damaging effects on the lives of women all over the world. However, the

particular shape this violence takes and how it is experienced by women can vary significantly depending on their position at the intersection of race, class, level of education, among others. Seeking to incorporate a feminist decolonial lens, that places the diverse experiences of marginalised women at the forefront, the feminist PAR project referred to sought to analyse and highlight the particularities of Andean women's experiences regarding violence against women as well as their understandings about how to resist it.

For the Andean women who participated in the research, violence against women—particularly intimate partner violence—was an ever-present experience that permeated several areas of their lives. They spoke about many forms of abuse that women in the town experience at the hands of their husbands and expressed that although forms of physical violence had decreased in the recent years, forms of psychological abuse were still present. They indicated that some men treated their wives with disdain, yelling at them and bossing them around. Men were described as domineering, and their economic control was described as particularly harmful for Andean women. About this control, one participant stated: *"Sometimes unemployed women do not have an income (...) So because of this women are underestimated. Their husbands tell them 'I have you, I feed you, I dress you'"*. Participants explained how some men do not allow their wives to work outside the home or to have their own income. Thus, most (if not all) domestic chores, including child-rearing, fall onto women.

Participants described rearing of children as a particularly limiting activity, one that leaves Andean women with no time to do anything other than caring for their offspring. Women mentioned that children "cut off their hands", expressing how their hands no longer belong to them; they were just for their family and children. Furthermore, experiences of motherhood and becoming pregnant were described by the participants as something that interrupts life plans of many young townswomen. They explained how many young girls become pregnant while they are still in high school and most of them drop out. In the words of a participant: "*So, when we are studying, sometimes you end up getting pregnant. So men… well, we women are screwed, right? You have to care for your child.*" Their description suggests that they perceived motherhood as being out of women's control.

Andean women's descriptions of being pushed towards domestic life and not having control over their pregnancy and motherhood reveal how control over women's reproductive life contributes to their being controlled economically (Radcliffe 2015). Moreover, this control is experienced at a corporeal level. Women experience neither their hands or womb belonging to them. Through this symbolism these Andean women conveyed a lack of control over both their own productive labour (their hands) and their reproductive labour (womb); productive (income-generating) labour is limited by reproduction. Therefore, because of patriarchal ideologies enrooted in Andean communities, women's self-fulfilment becomes subordinated to the fate of their children or spouses (Velázquez 2007). In this scenario, the importance women place on using their hands for knitting acquires additional relevance: it is a way of reclaiming the use of their hands for a task they have decided upon so as to improve their own future and that of their families. In

this way women take control over their productive labour in the service of the children they have produced, but on their own terms (Távara 2018).

In order to further understand Andean women's experiences of violence it is important to situate their experiences of gender marginalisation in relation to the racial and class dynamics present in their context. Participants described several cases of discrimination against Andean women who were perceived as poorer and as having less education. These women are treated in patronizing ways, as ignorant by others in the town and from outside and are not taken seriously. Women related that they were sometimes called "polleronas", in relation to the name of the traditional Andean woman's skirt called "pollera". In relation to this humiliation a participant said: *"For example, when professionals see a pollerona they don't even answer you well. Or if your child is studying and you go to the school, they'll answer you 'yeah, yeah, yeah' and they send you back."*

The mock and therefore reinscription of the pollera on Andean women's bodies, can be understood not only as a devaluation of their Andean culture, but also of their Andean womanhood. In a way, this reveals the control of Andean women's subjectivity and representation through discourse (Távara 2018). Decolonial feminists have asserted that women from the global south are placed in an essentialised position of subalternity (Mohanty 1991). This phenomenon can also be observed in the Peruvian national imagery wherein a woman in a *"pollera"* with braided hair appears as the most emblematic symbol of a rich cultural legacy on the one hand, and as the last remains of a backward culture on the other (Babb 2017). Thus, the choice of the word *"pollera"* in this case, evidences an expression of racialised gendered violence against Andean women, a form of violence against women that goes beyond the normative western-informed understandings of this social problem.

As can be seen, the distinctive shape violence against Andean women takes, and how they experience it, is strongly informed by the racial and class dynamics present in their context. Similarly, the way Andean women seek to resist this violence is also influenced by contextual factors as well as by the particularities of their ethnic and gender identities. Thus, Andean women's understandings of resistance to violence against women might significantly differ from the ways western-informed feminist have envisioned these struggles.

In the feminist PAR project participants showed an apparent ambivalence towards ideas and actions related to gender inequalities, particularly in relation to gender roles. They emphasised that women can do the same things as men. In relation to this a woman stated: *"Now women and men are equal, women can produce and men can produce as well"*. They expressed that women needed to get out of their homes to organise and work. However, at the same time they expressed that it is women's responsibility to take care of domestic tasks and that it is in their nature to care for children because, as a participant mentioned, *"women are the cornerstone of the home"*. Similarly, even when most participants valued talks and workshops about gender equality given by outside professionals, some of them strongly opposed state institutions and services that protect and promote women's rights because they felt that they were threatening marriages and families. These ambivalent reactions might

give the impression that Andean women's gender identities are still strongly informed by patriarchal ideas. However, this ambivalence might also be revealing that for some Andean women their roles as caregivers and mothers within families and communities are foundational. Possibly because of this Andean women's associations have tended to organise around what would be considered traditional roles, such as motherhood, or in the case of the participants from this feminist PAR, as knitters (Boesten 2010).

Sometimes ideas about womanhood put forward by professionals influenced by western feminist thinking, are not aligned with Andean women's ideas about their gender and ethnic identities, identities they are constantly constructing and negotiating vis-a-vis their social setting. This is not to say that some of the ideas regarding womanhood that Andean women hold do not lead them to engage in oppressive dynamics, but rather to question the extent to which gender identities and roles that at the first glance might seem restraining for those of us trained in western feminist thought, might be source of pride and strength for Andean women. Furthermore, organising under the role of motherhood or knitters might give the impression that women are taking a conservative approach that remains within the permissible margins of power. However, in these groups, women could gain more empowerment and gender awareness, which might be more responsive to their actual experiences and afterwards contribute to unforeseeable shifts that undermine existing patriarchal relationships (Boesten 2010).

Gender emancipation is a culturally grounded process and as such women will traverse different paths, and the process will look different depending on the socio-cultural setting in which they work and live. In Peru, Andean women's identities develop not only in relation to their own local histories, but also because of continuous confrontation with dominant models of femininity and masculinity brought from Lima, and by other people who enter their communities from further afield. Andean women choose to identify with some of these external ideas and appropriate them in their own ways to their local contexts, but they also choose to reject others (Ruiz Bravo 2005).

Concluding Thought and Recommendations

Through this chapter I have discussed how a feminist PAR project allowed a group of Andean women and me to analyse how they were engaging and responding to ideas (about organising-as-women, development, and violence against women) strongly influenced from outside the community. In this way, I have sought to illustrate how working in feminist PAR process with indigenous women can contribute to a decolonial feminist community psychology, specifically in relation to ideas around 'development' and gender.

Feminist PAR can facilitate spaces through which indigenous women's knowledges and understandings about their own experiences of gendered and racialised

marginalisation can emerge. In this way indigenous women position themselves as active constructors of knowledge about their own lives. They reclaim an active subjectivity and resist their continuous subjectification, that is, the process through which others form (and inform) them as subjects (Lugones 2010). In this feminist PAR Andean women were able to reflect, express, and discuss among each other their own experiences and understandings as they advanced in the process of forming a knitting association. They discussed what this association meant to them within the broader context, and how it could contribute to facing their material poverty, an expression of structural violence rooted in their colonial history.

Through feminist PAR processes indigenous women, and other women of colour, can also reflect about how they make meaning and interrogate their own and others' knowledge(s) and assumptions. In this project the collective discussions and the dialectic dynamics facilitated a space in which Andean women situated external ideas brought from outside professionals in conversation with, or contestation of, the more traditional elements of women's work, family, and community lives. In some cases, they incorporated their own cultural practices and identities combining and adapting them to external ideas; in other cases, they cautiously analysed these external ideas and discourses, challenging them and only incorporating what they felt was aligned with their own way of being in the world. What is important, is that through feminist PAR these processes of meaning making carried out by indigenous women can be apprehended in more depth by them and by the professionals who accompany these processes.

Being exposed to Andean women's knowledges and understandings— through processes such as feminist PAR—can facilitate community psychologists' own critical interrogation of the assumptions on which they have built feminist struggles. As academics, we community psychologists are part of system that has carried out the colonial project through history. Therefore, through our work we can easily reproduce forms of epistemic violence by privileging our own western knowledge and by continuing to marginalise the knowledge and understandings of indigenous women. By incorporating a decolonial lens we are able to take a more critical view of the assumptions on which we have built a western-informed feminism.

Incorporating a decolonial feminist lens requires community psychologists to work with indigenous women in a dialogic manner, while recognising the inequitable power circulations in these processes and their roots in colonial histories. By doing this we can better ground projects for Andean women's development and emancipation in their social settings. We can critically interrogate together patriarchal structures in context and arrive at new understandings on these issues and potential ways to address them. These new conceptualisations might be more attuned with Andean women's understandings of their problems and at the same time they could incorporate, in a more critical way, western feminist thought. Working in this way we might have a greater chance of contributing to the feminist decolonial praxis that as community psychologists we seek to embrace.

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