Decolonising Psychology through a Liberatory Praxis

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“‘Conscientización’ (critical consciousness) does not consist of a simple change of opinion about reality, a change of individual subjectivity that leaves that objective situation intact; ‘conscientización’ supposes that persons change in the process of changing their relations with the surrounding environment and, above all, with other people.” (Martín Baró, 1996: 40-41).
Martín Baró’s Liberation Psychology

- reject the idea of psychology as universal and impartial
- critically examine itself so that it can be a force for transformation rather than conformity
- develop with a critical commitment to social change and justice for those oppressed
- develop to address the historical context, the social conditions and aspirations of ordinary people
Based on Liberation Theology and in response to the suffering in Latin America
Influenced by Paulo Freire
Latin American societies are not identical, but have in common endemic poverty, exclusion and large discrepancy between the rich and poor
LP not specific knowledge or approach but the only ethical way to practice psychology and, therefore, the task of all psychologists
Three essential elements for the building of a Liberation Psychology: **a new horizon, a new epistemology** (ideas about knowledge) and a **new praxis** (action-reflection)

And three key tasks: the **recovery of historical memory**, **deideologising** (challenging the ideology in) **everyday experience** and **utilising the people’s virtues** (knowledges and skills)
Cardboard Citizens – ACT NOW
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=axE1NhPN12o
Exercise: part 1

- What would a new praxis (action-reflection) look like, feel like?
  - what values would guide it?
  - how do current idioloy/discourses fit and don’t fit with these?

- What are the challenges to this new praxis?
  - given social, cultural, historical contexts?
  - given local, national and global contexts?
Exercise: part 2

- Feedback

- What can we do individually and collectively to develop a new praxis?

- What would this new praxis mean for psychology as a discipline?

- Collective document?
Methodologies

- Participatory Action Research (PAR; Orlando Fals Borda)
- Augusto Boal’s Invisible Theatre, Image Theatre, Theatre of the Oppressed, and Forum Theatre
- Paulo Freire’s Conscientisation:
  - Denaturalization, problematisation, de-ideologisation and de-alienation
  - Experiential learning, capacitation, field notes, evaluation, auditing