## Towards an Emergent Conceptualization of Decolonial Praxis and Competencies in Community Psychology

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## Abstract

The epistemologies of the Global South teach that co-creating alternatives to modernity requires a commitment to delink from colonial ideologies and practices that have been normalized by many institutions and venues, including the academy itself. Looking from "the South" allows us to move UStatesian approaches to community psychology from the center, a privileged position "above" other approaches, as though to the edge of a circle alongside other approaches from different cultural contexts. This repositioning enables us to see pluriversal, community psychology praxes, i.e., multiple localized approaches to engendering thriving. Epistemologies of the Global South reject universalizing theories. These epistemologies generate an ecology of knowledges that resist the hegemonic conception of an only-one-world contained in global standardizations of consumption and extraction propelled by capitalism. Learning from the Global South, we propose a definition of a decolonial community psychology praxis that reflects pluriversality within a relational ontology that promotes the values of sentipensar/feeling-thinking with the Earth, affective conviviality, conscientization and annunciation, decolonial solidarity, ecopsychosocial accompaniment, and buen vivir (collective well-being). It includes the rights of the Earth, embracing an ecology of knowledges and webs of solidarity with communities' struggles to sustain cosmovisions (Indigenous worldviews) that delink from Western-centric ideologies.

The epistemologies of the Global South teach that co-creating alternatives to modernity requires a commitment to delink from colonial ideologies and practices that have been normalized by many institutions and venues, including the academy itself.  It also demands we engage in critical self-reflexivity that confronts the implications of our positionalities and assumptions (Santos, 2014). The Euro-American discipline of psychology not only developed in the historical context of colonialism, but made its own contributions to sustaining the racist and capitalist logics of colonialism (Fanon, 2008; Keller, 2007).

Quijano (2000) introduced the "coloniality of power" construct to describe the ongoing effects of colonial relationships, including the pervasive strategy to usurp Indigenous lands and peoples, labeling those conquered and subjugated as inferior, and establishing a racist hierarchical system supported by colonial difference and abyssal exclusion (Mignolo, 2009; Santos, 2014). Abyssal exclusion describes the divisions created by this racist, hierarchical system, dividing those who deem themselves superior from those deemed inferior, and, even, less-than-human.

The coloniality of power colonizes space, economics, wealth, self-valuation, time, values, knowledge, compassion, language, religion, identity, medicine, and madness (Bulhan, 2015). At the personal level, the coloniality of power affects being, knowing, feeling, and acting, including our experience of our bodies and our relationships with other humans, other-than-human animals, and built and natural environments. It manifests as "modernity and epistemic universalism." This universalism poses Euro-

American-centric epistemologies as more advanced than Indigenous epistemologies. This prejudiced assessment is used to pseudo-legitimize the export of Western systems of knowledge to all other parts of the world, derogating and displacing knowledge systems that are pronounced deficient and non-rational. Meanwhile, Western-based educational systems that preserve the ongoing ecocide and epistemicide of non-western, geopolitical regions and knowledge, continue to sustain capitalism, neoliberal globalization, and coloniality.

The Western academy, inclusive of psychology, has served to maintain and perpetuate coloniality. Community psychology is no exception (Carolissen et al, 2017; Dutta, 2016; 2018; Grosfoguel, 2008; Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Mignolo, 2000; Roshanravan, 2014; Santos, 2009; Smith, 1999, 2012).  Sonn (2016) outlined the problem:

> In community psychology, the contested view exists that the discipline started at the Swampscott conference in the United States. This discourse is perhaps an example of "abyssal lines" (see Santos, 2007) being drawn, where one history is rendered visible and valuable and claimed to be universal. In this process, other histories are erased, leading to epistemicide (Santos, 2007), or the invalidation of non-hegemonic knowledges, usually those belonging to marginalized cultures, groups, geopolitical regions, and traditions. This colonizing process involves abstract hierarchies of power (especially the socio-economic power that constitutes them) and contributes significantly to the maintenance of cognitive injustice. For example, our geospatial location in the Global South means that unless we, at great cost, travel to community psychology conferences in the Global North and publish in American

community psychology journals, our knowledges are rendered invisible and our reputations as scholars are questioned. These forms of cognitive injustice contribute to the maintenance of hegemonic manipulation and ignore the value of the co-existence of world knowledges or ecologies of knowledge. (p. 497)

US-centric community psychology has been critiqued as a monolithic and universalizing discourse (Dutta, 2016). This can be seen more clearly from perspectives that arise in different locations and contexts. Looking from "the South" allows us to move UStatesian approaches to community psychology from the center, a privileged position "above" other approaches, as though to the edge of a circle alongside other approaches from different cultural contexts. This repositioning allows us to see pluriversal, community psychology praxes, i.e., multiple localized approaches to engendering thriving. Indeed, it helps us to see U.S. community psychology as itself a set of "local" approaches that to different degrees reflect and conserve the U.S. context (Marsella, 2013).

Carolissen et al (2017) further argued that "…it is important to recognize that community psychology is not unitary in its aims and practices and that complex pluralities and fluidities of representation exist across numerous geospatial and political locations (Bond, Serrano-Garcia, Keys, & Shinn, 2016)" (p. 496). The recognition of this pluriversality or diversity—as the authors called it—provides an opportunity to learn from efforts emerging in the Global South to review curricula and practices that can become alternatives to epistemological and praxiological hegemony. Critical reflections on the kinds of practice competencies that can support the construction of a decolonial curriculum are necessary.

In this paper, we draw on possibilities to co-construct a decolonial, pluriversal, community psychology praxis, distinguished from practice that is regulated by universalized theories and not guided by localized experience. Such a praxis would follow Gone's (2016) proposal for "practice-based evidence," in contrast to the pervasive evidence-based practice that validates and imposes generalized theories (p. 320). Our efforts are informed by liberation psychology and Indigenous psychologies, and are enriched by decolonial praxes of solidarity and deep commitment to cultural, economic, political, racial, ecological, and epistemic justice. We believe that we are introducing familiar language used by scholars and practitioners from the Global South. Our intention is to imagine decolonial definitions of US-community psychology's practice including diverse (and perhaps unfamiliar) epistemologies and praxes that may shift the paradigm.

We propose a definition of a decolonial community psychology's praxis that reflects pluriversality within a relational ontology that promotes the values of sentipensar/feeling-thinking with the Earth, affective conviviality, conscientization and annunciation, decolonial solidarity, ecopsychosocial accompaniment, and buen vivir (collective well-being). It includes solidarity with the Earth through acknowledging and advocating for its rights. Such an approach respects and embraces an ecology of knowledges and webs of solidarity with communities' struggles to sustain cosmovisions (Indigenous worldviews) that delink from Western-centric ideologies.

We will review definitions of community psychology practice that have emerged from both the Global North and the Global South. We will also unpack the terms of the proposed definition and describe practice competencies that can guide curricular activities. In an ongoing feedback loop, learnings from the application of these competencies inform our emergent definition of a decolonial community psychology praxis.

## Community Psychology Practice Definitions from the Global North

Julian (2006a) proposed that community practice is defined by a set of processes: "community mobilization, planning and decision-making, implementation and evaluation" (p. 27). He envisioned the role of the community practitioner as primarily assisting and supporting communities in the identification of needs and the translation of scientific, evidence-based practice into transformative action. The practitioner "actively manages community collaborations in the interest of achieving specific meaningful results" (p. 26). Given this definition, community psychology programs need to develop skills and capacities in the application and management of these processes. Julian recommended that community psychology "cultivates relationships with consumers of these practice skills" (p. 26). Practitioners are trained to apply ameliorative—rather than transformative (Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002)—solutions to community problems that are effective as determined by the conceptualizations and research conducted by experts, who provide services to communities conceived as "consumers." Julian proposed that issues such as "poverty and race relations" can be addressed by the community practitioner following the same processes and "understanding state-of-the-art" knowledge on those issues as background information to know how to intervene effectively and "support meaningful community dialogue" (p. 26). In this delineation, community psychology's practice is aligned with expert-driven, ameliorative strategies that do not confront the system but contribute to improve the fit between the individual community and the environment in which it is embedded, an environment in

which structural inequities, exploitation, oppression, racism, poverty, sexism, xenophobia, ecological extraction, and exclusion continue to exist. Evidence-based knowledge arrives in the hands of professionals, to be consumed by community members.

Tom Wolff (2014) incorporated the definition embraced by the Division 27 of the American Psychological Association (APA), Society for Community Research and Action (SCRA) Educational Practice Council (Julian, 2006b), asserting that "Community psychology practice acknowledges that community is the level where change needs to happen and that change occurs by strengthening the capacity of communities to address their problems and realize their dreams" (p. 804). Among the main domains that this practice targets are the ecology, prevention, social and systems change, empowerment, and the integration of multiple disciplines (p. 804). Wolff addressed the social determinants of health as main indicators of ecological prevention and suggested that most programs and public health institutions focus on individual indicators, disregarding person-environment interactions. Wolff further noted that systems-change toward social justice and equal distribution of resources are core principles in prevention work, whereas empowerment—as defined by Rappaport (1981)—entails that community members take charge of their own lives through self-determination.  Agreeing with Rappaport, Wolff contended that community psychologists need to partner with the grassroots and facilitate political, economic, and psychological resources. We need to collaborate with other social scientists and communities to effect comprehensive social change. Moreover, the field needs to recognize the work and contributions of community practitioners (Wolff, 2008). Based on lessons learned from his life-long dedication to community practice, Wolff's critique indicates that the most difficult

challenge has been to promote organizational change from service provision to social justice work. Many public service organizations and institutions appear to be more interested in designing prevention or education programs that target individual or population health rather than addressing the systemic causes of social suffering (Kleinman, 1997), such as poverty, racism, and forced migration. Wolff has been instrumental in the conception of 18 community psychology practice competencies to guide the education of community practitioners based on research and applications as well as lessons learned from collaborations across educational institutions.

Let us pause and question what is "community psychology practice" and the purposes it pursues. As Dzidic, Breen, and Bishop (2013) have argued, community psychology has conceptualized its practice in communities that have been conceived as a conglomeration of separate individuals who are the targets of psychological interventions emerging from Western theorizations and worldviews. Consequently, the discipline proposes individual skills and competencies that can promote the community psychologist's capacity to apply theorized interventions.  These authors stated: "Competencies wrongly imply that once a standard is met, the individual is therefore 'competent' irrespective of context" (p. 3). A set of practice competencies has been determined by the SCRA Educational Practice Council that is expected to be applied across settings, independent of their cultural context. This is an indicator of the ethnocentric tendency to position Western theories and practices as universal truths.

Dzidic, Breen, and Bishop (2013) clearly exposed the coloniality of US-centric community psychology. They cite Fryer and Laing (2008),

Put bluntly, the USA has the resources and personnel to promote its community psychology in exactly the same way that it promotes its soft drinks industry, fast food industry, and film industry. The ideological domination of community psychology by United Statesian versions of community psychology is arguably just another manifestation of United Statesian global military, economic, cultural, and intellectual domination….(Fryer and Laing, 2008, quoted in Dizic et al, 2013, pp. 9-10)

Dzidic, Breen and Bishop (2013) articulated the gaps that need to be mirrored as self-reflexivity in this hegemonic imposition of Western and narcissistic disciplinary scholarship.  They noted that the assessment of practice competencies is usually conducted by means of dichotomous variables or rating scales, creating a mechanistic process that perpetuates the academic status quo. The settings and contexts in which community practice occur are complex. Consequently, scientific reductionism—as an innate characteristic of Western ideologies—cannot conceive of the multi-layered factors at play and the diversity and uncertainty these generate.

In contrast, critical community psychology has emphasized the centrality of values and worldviews to guide reflective practice that informs theoretical conceptualizations and is relativized within particular contexts (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010; Riemer et al, 2020). Dzidic, Breen, and Bishop (2013) proposed virtue (value-based) competencies that integrate continuous self-reflexivity and humility to address positionality, uncertainty and ambiguity, and the deconstruction of complex settings within diverse and often chaotic cultural contexts. Furthermore, community psychology's practice needs to address systems change within discussions on colonialism's consequent manifestations in modernity, extractive capitalism, and

coloniality. Failure to do so perpetuates the imposition of the status quo through US-centric hegemony in disciplinary theorizing. Under this critical analysis, community psychology's research and action can appear as an imperial and global intervention.

Hart and Ackhurst (2017), referring to community psychology in the United Kingdom (UK) and acknowledging Kagan's call for a critical community psychology that integrates liberation psychology and the main value of social justice, critiqued this state by noting that the involvement of students in community-based learning (CBL) runs the risk of perpetuating the values of employability based on neoliberalism.  Higher education has become the place where students become consumers of marketable skills. Consequently, community psychology practice becomes coopted in this neoliberal system and serves the market-driven criteria of training students to be competitive in the job market while too often exploiting communities from which they extract knowledge and practical experience.  The authors asserted,

> For example, rather limited attention has been paid to the propensity of CBL to mirror and replicate existing power structures and inequalities routinely found in the workplace, academic institutions, and wider society (Mitchell, 2008). Students may 'buy into' the dominant mode of amelioration, rather than considering more transformative actions (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005). (p. 7)

A particularly important critique these authors provide focuses on the potential of community practice, as it is applied in university settings, to promote "cultural voyeurism," also known as "poverty porn," "slum tourism," and "ghettourism" (p. 10). Students may neglect power differentials and conceive their roles as helpers and

benefactors to eliminate their own guilt from complicity and to satisfy narcissistic desires to rescue and "help" (see also Watkins, 2019, 2021). Citing Australian Aboriginal social worker Lila Watson, the authors reinforced that the role of the education of community practitioners—even in initial phases as student practitioners—is not that of liberating others but of collaboration and co-liberation.  Universities need to pay particular attention to the construction of a critical curriculum that clearly provides opportunities to learn about and confront the dynamics and consequences of oppression, racism, and the pursuance of social, epistemic, and ecological justice (Watkins, Ciofalo, & James, 2018).

Mohatt (2020) offered a set of lessons from his lifelong dedication to rural community practice. One main recommendation is to build passionate and enduring relationships with the communities we work with. He indicated that curiosity and observations are more important than following a prescribed procedure. Lastly, he recommended that we conduct our practice while being sensitive to the community's emotional responses, and that we give ourselves permission to be confused. Watts and Serrano Garcia (2003) asserted that in the community psychology from Africa, Latin American, and the Caribbean, one is more likely to find power analyses on structural violence, colonialism, resilience, privilege, and emancipatory action than in the US or Europe.

Fisher and Sonn (2007) centralized power analyses in reflections on both research and practice. The authors critiqued the current situation by noting that the training of community practitioners has been based on positivistic philosophies of science favoring the scientist practitioner who maintains a detached and objective gaze in evidence-based applications in the field. This kind of epistemological and ontological paradigm has greatly contributed to the maintenance of the neoliberal status quo.  Furthermore, they stated that "…we have the lessons from Smail (2001) […who] said that we need to de-psychologize psychology to work in different and more effective ways" (p. 257).

In this regard, Langhout et al. (2016) proposed that the SCRA core competency of "ethical-reflective practice" be revised to "an ethical, critically reflexive, anti-racist feminist praxis" (p. 4). Community psychologists need to transparently disclose embraced assumptions, beliefs, and personal experiences and how these influence, enhance, or constrain their practice (Dalton & Wolfe, 2012, p. 11; cited in Langhout et al, 2016, p. 1). This kind of praxis, the authors contend, is based on feminist women of color who have emphasized relationality (Montero, 2007) and critical self-reflexivity on intersectionality such as Gloria Anzaldúa, Cherrie Moraga, Patricia Hill Collins, and Aida Hurtado (cited in Langhout et al., 2016, p. 2). It is an embodied praxis that makes the practitioner's identity visible. Furthermore, addressing issues of power, the authors propose heterarchy, a non-hierarchical system of interactions that can be dynamically governed by different components at different times (Tebes, 2012; cited in Langhout et al., 2016, p.7).  Such a system engenders equally distributive responsibility and accountability with shared tasks within a collaborative of relational individuals who co-construct academic knowledge and praxis.

### Community Psychology Practice Definitions from the Global South

Significant social movements and contestations to the continuations of colonial impositions at all levels of existence—economic, social, cultural, political, epistemic, spiritual, and ecological—have grown in abundance throughout formerly colonized countries in the Americas, Asia, Africa, Australia, the Middle East, and the Pacific.

Community psychology has been constructed and re-constructed within struggles of liberation and self-determination across these regions. It has evolved from practice, mostly re-conceived as praxis in the Global South and as self-reflexive and transformative community work to effect structural change.

Montero and Serrano Garcia (2011) noted that in Latin American Social Community Psychology (SCP) there has been a tendency to neglect theoretical and methodological developments in favor of community practice. Wiesenfeld (2016) proposed a SCP "upside down" that addresses the following requirements: (1) confluence of a diversity of knowledges that integrates interdisciplinarity and popular knowledges emerging from communities; (2) intersectionality, conceived as the fundamental mission of the academy that has a creative capacity to multiply knowledge and relate with heterogeneous communities as well as with government to influence policies for transformative change; and (3) diversity approached from "a vison of multidimensional knowledge" (p. 7; translation by Ciofalo) .

A community psychology that accountably commits to care for global, social, epistemic, and ecological justice needs to learn from Indigenous scholars, psychologists, and activists from former colonized countries and to contest racism and the erasure of Indigenous cosmovisions (Dudgeon et al., 2018, 2017; Duran et al, 2008; Dutta, 2018; Gone, 2016; Sonn, 2016, Wilson, 2008). Reyes, Cruz & Sonn (2015) proposed a decolonial standpoint in the construction of our theories, research, and actions, becoming aware of the impacts of white privilege, unequal power in racialized and ethnicized, discursive practices and relations, and promoting alliances and solidarities to address them. Referring to Freire's problematización, a process to develop critical awareness by which people come to

understand structures of oppression, Irma Serrano-Garcia (2020) stated,

> As community psychologists you must be aware of the impact of coloniality on any research or intervention effort. You must reflect about what "researching and intervening" means to people. Not only will you be considered a representative of the colonizer, particularly if you are from the U.S., but you will additionally carry the "aura of science." Thus, problematización starts with ourselves. What research methods are pertinent and non-exploitative? Which…research areas are more useful to people participating in "sovereign acts"? …You will contribute to decolonizing by engaging others in conversations about the ideologies and diverse mechanisms that support oppression and coloniality. (pp. 9-10)

Furthermore, Indigenous women who promote holistic, community wellbeing through the use of traditional healing practices, spirituality, and activism to revive cultures and knowledge systems have been contributing significantly to our understanding of decolonial community praxes (Ciofalo, 2017; Dudgeon & Bray, 2018; Speed, Castillo, & Stephen, 2006; Rivera-Cusicanqui, 2018). Below we review and define the practices and aims we see as essential to a decolonial approach to community psychology.

*Buen Vivir, Collective Well-Being*

We begin with the interdependent understanding expressed in *Buen Vivir* or collective well-being that needs to guide our practice. Grondona-Opazo (2016) proposed that community psychology be based on the new political formations in Ecuador emerging from Indigenous cosmovisions of *Sumak Kawsay/Buen Vivir* (collective wellbeing). The author distinguished between the rhetoric of *Buen-Vivir* that has served as

mythic discourse of Indigenous worldviews exploited as [global] "political marketing" of the Bolivian and Ecuadorian governments, and Sumak Kawsay (Gudynas, 2014) as a referent of an ancestral position of Indigenous peoples (p. 61). Grondona-Opazo (2016) stated,

> Buen Vivir constitutes itself as a category of permanent construction and reconstruction which articulating axis is the collectivity; that is, it asserts that the personal realization depends on the collective realization, on the relations among humans and those of nature. Buen Vivir "purports to retake society as unity of observation and intervention and equity, inclusion, and social cohesion as values that allow the promotion of the solidary and cooperative spirit of the human being" ( SENPLADES, 2009, p.37). In this way, social inclusion and cohesion constitute the social policy pillars of the Ecuadorian State. (p. 54; translation by Ciofalo)

These social policies require that all praxis contributes to the attainment of *Buen Vivir* values. At an ethical level, there have been continuous tensions in community psychology's praxis between top-down or bottom-up interventions. The former tensions are derived from rational evaluative assumptions instead of guided by ethical and political values. At a strategic level, tensions exist between assistance-based and participatory interventions, and between prevention efforts and community development (Grondona-Opazo, 2016, pp. 54-55; translation by Ciofalo).

Like in other places in Latin America, community psychology in Mexico evolved from praxis as a branch of social psychology. Almeida (2012) noted that Mexican community psychology has roots in pre-Hispanic Indigenous practices. It is a perspective that "has strong roots in the

unconscious of the Mexican people (Almeida & Osorio, 2011, p.137)." During the 60s and 70s, many programs initiated by the government and non-governmental organizations to address severe poverty conditions provided the terrain for newly graduated psychologists to be involved in communities applying popular education and participatory action research. Some universities utilized applied psychoanalysis in their work with communities, while in universities influenced by Marxism and populism, community work meant consciousness raising for liberation. Theories in community psychology evolved from praxis applied in Indigenous movements for social justice, from praxis networks, and from social and community psychologists' experiences with minimal contact with SCRA and APA (Almeida, 2012; Almeida & Osorio, 2011).

Almeida and Sanchez Diaz de Rivera (2014) asserted that the first ingredient to co-construct authentic, reciprocal, and long-lasting relationships with communities is through *presencia* (presence). The authors proposed that community praxis is co-created, weaved within dynamics of conflict and hope for utopic ideas of "*vivir bien*" (wellbeing), tracing uncertain pathways toward the application of strategies to confront corporate capitalism, modernity, and coloniality. Almeida (2016) added,

> It is about the restoration of human communities as genuine as possible... that includes collective participation...and flexible collective ties beyond the conviviality of individuals who are consumers and opportunists...A utopia...of individuals who dialogue with each other and who establish vital synergies with others and with the environment. A history that belongs to all, that has not yet come to an end and that allows us to learn and redeem the

humanizing potential of failures. (p. 19; translation by Ciofalo)

Furthermore, Almeida recommended that the Zapatista movement, *Emiliano Zapata de Liberación Nacional* (EZLN), can teach community psychologists how to confront the many heads of the capitalist hydra. Referring to the important contributions of Zapatista women, he added,

> It is about the construction of community grids that cause allergies to the hydra. Ana Lydia Flores (2016) says in her text, in the 2nd volume published by the EZLN, that the smell of collective work disconcerts the capitalist hydra. She is accustomed to the smell of the slave work and the seat of organized effort and solidary work disconcerts her. Vilma Almendra (2016) cites a thought of the Nasa Indigenous peoples: the word without action is empty, the action without word is blind, the word and the action that is outside of the community spirit is death. (pp. 14-15—translation by Ciofalo)

Almeida invites us to reconstruct the discipline considering these learnings to decolonize knowledge, research, and action. Furthermore, academic institutions need to resist neoliberal models of education and band together in collectivities to promote praxis competencies that learn from popular struggles carried on by Indigenous peoples and communities, resisting the tentacles of the capitalist hydra to co-create decoloniality. As Arturo Escobar (2016) stated, those struggles and movements are more complex than the knowledge imparted in the Western academy.

## Sentipensar

The epistemologies of the Global South, a term first coined by Santos (2014), create the structure on which praxis competencies that

build "the otherwise" emerge. Such competencies allow for the deep cultural and ecological understanding of the needs of the Earth applying *sentipensar* (thinking-feeling with the Earth), a capacity first addressed by Colombian sociologist Orlando Fals-Borda who conceived the holistic relationality of human and planetary coexistence (cited in Escobar, 2016, p. 14).

One of the main propositions of epistemologies of the South is that Eurocentric modernity has created an Only-One-World (OWW) mentality erasing the rich diversity of other mentalities that define pluriversality rather than universality. "The pluriverse is a tool to first, make alternatives to the one world plausible to one-worlders, and, second, provide resonance to those other worlds that interrupt the one-world story (Blaser, de la Cadena, and Escobar, 2014)" (cited in Escobar, 2016, p. 22).

Epistemologies emerging from struggles for territoriality and cultural preservation constitute an ecology of knowledges and practices that present alternatives of relational ontologies where there is no divide between culture and nature. Escobar (2016) stated, "sources of novel theoretical-political projects do exist, but they are more likely to be found at present in the knowledges, practices, and strategies of subaltern actors as they mobilize in defense of their relational worlds" (p. 16). It is from these practices that we must learn to delink from the practices, epistemologies, and ontologies of the OWW, as Mignolo proposed, in order to end the perpetuation of the extractive, capitalist hydra whose survival is legitimized by its derived academic disciplines.

## Conscientization and Annunciation

The Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire, defined praxis as interlinked reflection and action that raises consciousness by means of critical reflection (conscientization) to understand

the effects of oppressive structures of society on everyday life so that we can transform them.  This praxis must be horizontal, founded on dialogical relations, graced by humility, and love. It must resist universalization and be free to evolve differently in varying contexts. Those coming from social positions of privilege must interrupt their socialized tendencies to take over and to talk to others with less social privilege, usurping revolutionary potentials.

Through conscientization, group members can understand together how oppressive realities are structured. Once this is understood, it is possible to imagine together more mutually desired futures and to announce, to annunciate, them. These desires and visions can orient actions in concert with others that seek to transform oppressive structures and practices. The work of liberation is not conceived of as individual, but as social.  It requires solidarity.

*Ecopsychsocial Accompaniment*

Re-visioning psychological practice from his immersion in El Salvador in the 1980's, Ignacio Martín-Baró, Spanish Jesuit and social psychologist, embraced Freire's focus on nurturing critical consciousness as a role for psychologists. He also advocated for psychologists to encourage forms of attachment where the humanity of each is affirmed, where joyful modes of interdependence are promoted, and people's virtues acknowledged and utilized (Martín-Baró, 1994). Borrowing from liberation theology, he challenged psychologists to accompany the majorities in libertory social movements (Watkins, 2015; 2019; 2021), rather than seeking to help individuals accommodate to pernicious social structures and inequalities.

> Perhaps the most radical choice Central American psychologists face today concerns the disjunction between an accommodation to a social system that has benefitted us personally and a critical confrontation with that system…the choice is between accompanying or not accompanying the oppressed majorities….This is not a question of whether to abandon psychology; it is a question of whether psychological knowledge will be placed in the service of constructing a society where the welfare of the few is not built on the wretchedness of the many, where the fulfillment of some does not require that others be deprived, where the interests of the minority do not demand the dehumanization of all. (Martin- Baró, 1994, p. 46)

An essential aspect of such psychosocial accompaniment is understanding and challenging greed and helping people re-evaluate their "needs" so that they do not act to maintain inequality in the distribution of wealth. For Martín-Baró, psychology should not evade a necessary critique of capitalism and the multilevel violence it breeds in people's lives (Watkins, 2019).

Ecopsychosocial accompaniment requires that the accompanist learn as much as possible about the particular history of the group and the issue with which one is working. This includes a history of place and an awareness of the health and well-being of not only humans, but other-than-human animals and natural and built environments.

*Affective Conviviality*

The commitment to decolonial praxes requires that we apply methodologies of affective conviviality, weaving deep relations with all those involved in our work, epistemic and ecological justice, and decolonial solidarity, sharing stories that build interconnections among peoples, authors, scholars, practitioners, artists, and nature (Ciofalo et al, 2019). In alignment with the

Zapatista call for a world in which many worlds coexist, De la Cadena & Blaser (2018) proposed that the epoch in which we live, the Anthropocene, is being vigorously contested by Indigenous movements against a one-world-world (OWW), the world of the powerful, and "what we see as the making of an 'uncommons:' the negotiated coming together of heterogeneous worlds (and their practices) as they strive to make each of them be what they are, which is also not without others" (p. 4).

Kowal (2015) and Land (2015) alerted committed practitioners to be aware of conscious and unconscious motives that perpetuate power and colonial difference and confront the "White savior complex" that drives helping, assisting, or redeeming those conceived as marginalized and oppressed and that is anchored in coloniality. Instead, practitioners are urged to apply solidarity with partnered communities to learn from them and collectively unite for social, economic, racial, gender, epistemic, and ecological justice. In addition, those with racial, ethnic, economic, and other kinds of privilege are urged to turn back to their own privileged neoliberal communities to undo both the social and economic structures that generate social suffering for the majorities and to transform their own consciousness, seeking out destructive assumptions that continue to fuel coloniality and instead nurture a biophilic orientation.

The questions to ask are the following. To what extent has community psychology from the Global North and its US-centric hegemony perpetuated Western practices and competencies based on white supremacy? Has it leaned on narratives of social justice to reduce guilt and shame? Has it concealed complicity with neoliberalism and avoided confrontations over privilege? It is now due time to contribute to grassroots efforts to return occupied land, acknowledge appropriated epistemologies, and to show respect for community praxes from the Global South.

## Toward an Emerging, Decolonial Community Psychology Praxis Informed by Practice Competencies

Dzidic, Breen, & Bishop (2013) advocated for Indigenous and cross-cultural psychologies to provide models from which we can develop community practice competencies. They asserted,

> In Australia, working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is an example where "tick-a-box" competence assessment does not and cannot work (Purdie, Dudgeon, & Walker, 2010; Vicary & Bishop, 2005). Rather, these forms of competence assessment are seen as incompetent as they perpetuate the status quo. (p. 5)

In these cultural contexts, competencies have a different meaning that signifies value-based, practical readiness, and critical consciousness. They refer to Maritza Montero (2012) who asserted that while the community researcher may facilitate and assess participation, participatory researchers have to be critically aware of the entanglements of their position as oppressor. "In that sense, the practical ideological identification is a hard conquest that only a few achieve" (Montero, 2012, p. 83; cited in Dzidic, Breen, and Bishop, 2013, p. 6). Furthermore, Carolissen et al (2017) presented case studies of curricular applications that aim to promote theory, research, and practice informed by decolonial theory and critical participatory action research methods that address transformative social change and social justice. The authors concluded that key competencies to achieve decolonial curricular goals are the continuous application of critical consciousness and self-reflexivity on positionality and intersectionality.

In our [Community, Liberation, Indigenous, and Eco-Psychologies](#) M.A./Ph.D. specialization at Pacifica Graduate Institute we have been laboring to understand our own diverse positionalities and their impacts on our theorizing and practice. We have placed the study and practices of critical community psychology into dialogue with liberation psychology, Indigenous psychologies, and radical ecopsychology, the latter revisioned from an environmental justice perspective. We have conceived the following practice competencies based on our learning from knowledge and praxes systems from the Global South as well as from ongoing assessment of practice competencies in our program over a decade (Ciofalo, James, & Watkins, 2016). To co-construct decolonial community psychology praxes, we defined practice competencies emerging from our conviviality in academic-community partnerships (see Appendix). We are learning from their application, from students' and faculties' engagement in ongoing reflexivity, and from the specific ecopsychosocial challenges that we are addressing.

Definitions of emergent decolonial community psychology praxis will reflect the particular context of its theorizing practitioners. Our context in the U.S. is one of ongoing coloniality-- of racism, gross economic inequality due to unregulated capitalism, environmental extractivism, unbridled imperial violence, and massive ecopsychosocial collective trauma. A community psychology that aspires to nurture decoloniality must seek to address structural change while accompanying communities and individuals in the promotion of buen vivir, social and environmental justice, and ecological sustainability. We offer below our delineation of decolonial community psychology praxis from where we are standing and look forward to learning from yours.

Decolonial community psychology praxis is weaved within a relational ontology that promotes the value of *sentipensar*/feeling-thinking with the Earth, affective conviviality, conscientization and annunciation, decolonial solidarity, ecopsychosocial accompaniment, and *buen vivir* (collective well-being). It includes the rights of the Earth within an ecology of knowledges. It builds webs of solidarity with communities' struggles to sustain a plurality of cosmovisions delinking from Western-centric ideologies.

Testimonies of this definition's application and its related practice competencies can be accessed in our [yearly newsletters](#), *Hearing Voices.* We welcome multiple definitions of decolonial, community psychology praxis, arising from diverse locations, reflecting communities' varied cosmovisions, challenges, and virtues. Each of these will have its own distinct genealogy and will be susceptible to ongoing re-visioning.

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## Appendix: Community, Liberation, Indigenous, and Eco-psychologies (CLIE)
## Practice Competencies

| **Depth Psychology** |
|---|
| Capacity to imagine unconscious dimensions of individual and community experience through attention to narratives, dreams, metaphors, images, symbols, silences, and gaps. |
| Capacity to communicate through arts- and image-based experiences, including community visioning. |
| Capacity to be aware of, to track, and to take responsibility for one's own projections. |

| **Liberation Psychology** |
|---|
| Ability to apply self-reflexivity in identifying coloniality through indicators of racism, sexism, class and gender aggression. |
| Ability to facilitate dialogical, empathic, horizontal, and democratic relationships aimed at transparency and shared decision-making. |
| Capacity to join in solidarity with people engaged in struggle against oppressive conditions. |

| **Indigenous Psychologies** |
|---|
| Capacity to include the historic, socio-cultural, political, spiritual, and ecological context of a particular place under consideration. |
| Ability to understand and consciously participate in Indigenous Knowledge Systems, their relational holistic and metaphysical philosophies, and ecological praxes. |
| Ability to participate in Indigenous research methodologies that contribute to decoloniality in communities where fieldwork and/or dissertation research is implemented, including understanding of relationality with nature and spirit, and participation in cultural practices, ritual and ceremony. |

| **Ecopsychology** |
|---|
| Capacity to integrate multiple influences comprising a place, including bioregional and geopolitical context. |
| Capacity to analyze the environmental crises in a transdisciplinary manner, connecting socio-cultural, economic, political, and climate issues. |
| Understanding and addressing the role of extractive industries and industrialization in environmental degradation. |