

Recovering and Advancing Martin-Baro's Ideas About Psychology,  
Culture, and Social Transformation<sup>1</sup>

Carl Ratner

[www.sonic.net/~cr2](http://www.sonic.net/~cr2)

Abstract

This article undertakes a textual analysis of Martin-Baro's writings to show his analysis of psychological functioning in relation to culture and social transformation. We then demonstrate that some of his contemporary followers have misrepresented these ideas by depoliticizing them. Examples are provided. We conclude that advancing Liberation Psychology requires recovering Martin-Baro's original, or classical, ideas on psychology, culture, and social transformation, and developing their socioeconomic, political telos, while adapting them to contemporary socio-political conditions. Our task, in a nutshell, is repoliticizing the depoliticizing of Martin Baro's macro cultural psychology.

Liberation Psychology has had a promising initiation in the work of Martin-Baro. He worked to develop it into a combination of psychological

science and progressive social reform -- what I call "an emancipatory psychological science." His Liberation Psychology describes and critiques oppressed psychology/behavior that incapacitates marginalized people -- e.g., fatalism, machismo, and infantilism. It traces these deleterious psychological functions to oppressive macro cultural factors -- social institutions, cultural artifacts, and cultural concepts/symbols/ideologies/collective representations. This leads to political insights about the need to transform oppressive macro cultural factors in concrete directions in order to enhance psychological functioning and fulfillment. In these ways, Martin-Baro was a macro cultural psychologist (Ratner, 2012).

Martin-Baro's description of fatalism exemplifies his Liberation Psychology:

Fatalism is a way for people to make sense of a world they have found closed and beyond their control; it is an attitude caused and continually reinforced by the oppressive functioning of overall social structures.

Marginalized children in favelas, or champas, or other shantytowns of Latin America internalize

fatalism not so much because they inherit it from their parents as because it is the fruit of their own experience with society. Day by day they learn that their efforts in school get them nowhere; the street does not reward them well for their premature efforts at selling newspapers, taking care of cars, or shining shoes; and therefore it is better not to dream or set goals they will never be able to reach. They learn to be resigned and submissive not so much as the result of the transmission of values through a closed subculture as through the everyday demonstration of how impossible and useless it is to strive to change their situation, when that environment itself forms part of an overall oppressive social system (Martin-Baro, 1994, pp. 210-211).

Though fatalism is a personal syndrome, it correlates psychologically with particular social structures...We do not to assume a

mechanical cause-and-effect relationship or to postulate a "basic personality." We are simply noting the obvious fact that the organization and functioning of each social system favors some attitudes while impeding others and rewards some kinds of behavior while prohibiting and punishing others...Fatalism is a behavioral pattern that the social order prevailing in Latin America encourages and reinforces in certain strata of the population (ibid., p. 213). In order for the Latin American masses to do away with their fatalism, not only must they change their beliefs about the nature of the world and life, they must also have a real experience of changing their world and determining their own future (ibid., p. 218).

Martin-Baro's Classic Liberation Psychology (CLP) employs a particular methodology.

1) He objectively analyzes psychology of the people to

conclude that it includes elements of fatalism. He realized that fatalism is an oppressed, oppressive, debilitating cultural psychology. This psychology of oppression (Ratner, 2011, 2014a, b) interferes with people's capacity to comprehend their social world and to challenge it. His psychological conclusion does not emanate from people's self-reports as fatalistic.

- 2) He objectively employs a sociological explanation of fatalistic psychology; he traces it to objective sociological factors of oppression. He did not derive his sociological conclusions from self-reports of people about what they believed were the social determinants of their fatalism.
- 3) He employed his objective sociological explanation of fatalism to deduce the necessity to transform the oppressive causal social factors into new concrete social structures (see Ratner, 2014c, e; Ratner, 2015b, chap. 3) for development of this idea). He did not derive this deduction about social transformation from the opinions of the people, or from metaphysical ideals.
- 4) His objective sociological analysis was didactic. It was

intended to teach oppressed people the true nature of their psychology, as well as its causes and ways to transform it into a fulfilling psychology (via social transformation of a particular kind).

- 5) Martin-Baro's analysis of psychology, culture, and social transformation were informed by classic Marxist concepts such as social class, politics, false consciousness, socioeconomics, and socialism. For example, he said, in his unpublished book The Social-psychological Causes of The War in El Salvador, "The social-psychological consequence of class domination consists in false consciousness ("la falsa consciencia") in which the dominant class interests override the people's own (true) interests" (pp. 35, 17). [La consecuencia de este dominio a nivel psicosocial consiste en la falsa consciencia que sobre sus propios intereses tiene el sector dominado."] This entire book develops a powerful, classical, Marxist class analysis of Salvadoran society, and a discussion of the class struggle necessary for the subordinate classes to overcome the oppression caused by the dominant class. Martin Baro outlines criteria necessary

for viable, effective working class formation and action. These include class identity, and the oppressed people taking control of social resources. He also observes the importance of cultivating appropriate psychological emotions to animating the class struggle. One of the most important is hatred of the ruling class and all forms of oppression it generates (ibid., p. 186).<sup>2</sup> Martin-Baro's analyses of these various issues were based upon sophisticated theories from Marx which were derived from Marx's massive empirical research into political economy and history. There was nothing spontaneous or populist about these analyses.

I will engage in a textual analysis of Martin-Baro's work to explicate these points of "Classic Liberation Psychology" (CLP).

Contemporary iterations of Classic Liberation Psychology have radically altered its scientific and political substance while retaining the name. The nominal continuity has obscured the radical change in content. People believe (and claim) they are practicing Martin-Baro's style of Liberation Psychology when they are not. I call this revisionism "New

Liberation Psychology" (NLP) I shall demonstrate that New Liberation Psychology is shot through with post-modernist, neoliberal, neo-anarchist notions that prioritize/validate the subjective understanding and desires of people regarding change. The immediate validation of people supersedes objective, structural, theoretically-informed, social analysis and reform as the focus of Liberation. This makes New Liberation Psychology a New Age Liberation Psychology. I shall explain why this New Age Liberation Psychology is incapable of realizing emancipatory social transformation and psychology. Like other kinds of reformism, it subverts liberation while posing as its champion (see Ratner, 2015b, chap. two).

#### I. The Theoretical and Methodological Perspective of Martin-Baro's Classic Liberation Psychology

Martin-Baro sought to objectively describe the culturally concrete features of (1) social oppression, (2) psychological oppression (3) liberation. These objective, concrete analyses utilize psychological phenomena to reveal social oppression and the need for social emancipation. Subjective impressions of psychology, society, oppression,



and liberation would not necessarily connect psychological functioning to real oppressive social factors, or to real social necessities and possibilities for social transformation. This especially true given the massive ideological mystification of most peoples' consciousness.

This is why Karel Kosik (1976) said that humans cannot directly know reality as they sense it; instead they must detour around this superficial, incomplete, mystified, familiar, practical, sensible appearance (what Hegel called "sense certainty") to comprehend the essential features of reality.

### 1) Objectively Defining The Oppressed And Oppression

Martin-Baro probed into the demographic composition of the populace (popular majorities) to identify the extent of their oppression and mystification, and the remediation necessary to overcome these.

In his 1974 essay, "Quien Es El Pueblo: Reflexiones Para Una Definicion del Concepto de Pueblo" [Who Is 'The People'? Reflections for A Definition of the Concept] he decried the nebulous use of abstract terms such as "the people." He said, "It is important to clarify as much as possible the determining characteristics of this entity called 'the people,'

so as to be able to recognize when the term is being used objectively (and sincerely) and when it is not. Or, what is the same thing, to know who are the people are who are not, and to be able to judge when an endeavor that wants and claims populism is really populist and when it is not” (Martin-Baro, 1994, p. 175).

Martin-Baro calls for an external, objective, critical questioning of what constitutes 'the people,' and what is really in their populist interest. He does not leave it up to the people themselves to define these issues: "Plainly, the mere fact of suffering exploitation does not automatically make an individual or a group a part of the people" (1994, p. 181).

Martin-Baro proposes an objective, tripartite definition of 'the people' that is clearly Marxist. "It is fitting to assert that 'the people' has a historical meaning, a political meaning, and a socioeconomic meaning, and that each of these meanings is simply an aspect [moment] of the concept, trying to define the reality of the people from its particular perspective...The entity 'the people' is therefore real only to the extent that it integrates (at least implicitly) all three aspects of its meaning" (ibid., p. 176, my emphasis). Martin-Baro seeks to define the reality of the people in objective terms -- socioeconomic, historical, and political. He does not discover the aspects and structure of peoples' reality in their

subjective definitions and opinions. In fact, he says that if "the people" does not integrate these three objective aspects of their oppressive/oppressed reality, then "the people" is not real, not construed around their real oppression or their real (objective) interests for liberation.

Oppression is not an opinion or feeling, but an objective fact, rooted in objective political-economic social systems; and it is essential for oppressed people to have a correct, objective understanding of the determinants and nature of their oppression. Their subjective sense of identity as the people and community must come to match objective determinants and nature of oppression. This is pivotal for their ability to overcome oppression. If their subjective idea of oppression does not match objective oppression, they will be ignorant of what they must oppose; they will oppose the wrong social factors and utilize the wrong methods. They will not possess the social consciousness necessary to organize themselves as an oppressed people and a revolutionary force.

Martin-Baro developed a typology of the Salvadorian peasant that identified the revolutionary potential of various strata. His typology included psychological obstacles (psychology of oppression) that impeded the potential of various strata (Martin-Baro, "Psychologia del Campesino

Salvadoreño" Estudios Centroamericanos, 1973, 28, #297-298, 476-485).<sup>3</sup>

## 2) Objectively Identify The Existing, Concrete Consciousness of The Popular Majorities

Martin-Baro emphasized the fact that economic, political, material, social and ideological oppression entails psychological oppression. He said, "Colonization reaches into the very psychosomatic structure of the colonized" (Martin-Baro, 1994, p. 214). His earlier statement about fatalism is a case in point.

Oppressed people are complicit in their oppression through oppressed/oppressive psychology. "Through their fatalistic attitude and their submissive behavior, the oppressed contribute to maintaining the conditions of oppression" (Martin-Baro, 1994, p. 216). They actually worsen their oppression by relying upon oppressive cultural concepts and practices to guide their mundane understandings, values, morals, self-concept, desires, fears, and interpersonal relations.

All this means that the popular majorities are limited in their ability to comprehend, circumvent, and challenge social oppression. Of course, this is quite functional for maintaining the status quo. Social leaders of

oppressive societies, cultivate psychology of oppression as a means of preserving their control. Psychology of oppression is not an accidental by-product of poor conditions. It is systematically cultivated by social leaders for their benefit.

Martin-Baro (1994, p. 188) described this acutely:

In El Salvador the established power structure has concealed reality and systematically distorted events, producing a Collective Lie. Further aggravated by the civil war, the schizophrenia of everyday life becomes more acute, with the population living a daily experience that differs greatly from the "official" definition of what their lives are about.

The social lie is part of the ordinary structural order of the country. It consists in constructing a reality that is ideologically compatible with the interests of the dominant class. It sets limits on how far the collective consciousness can move in any given situation, thus putting a ceiling on the

growth of social consciousness. In the concrete case of El Salvador, this includes at least three aspects: a) the systematic obfuscation of the most serious social problems; b) the distortion of the interests and social forces at play, and c) the assimilation (internalization) of the alienated discourse as part of their personal and social identity.

The problem is that this impedes a reflective knowledge of oneself and one's circumstances. It blocks the construction of a realistic personal and collective identity that would empower growth and progress. Problems can hardly be overcome when their causes are relegated to the Will of God and the demands of human nature (fatalism). Or when the behaviors of the leadership are attributed to their personal peculiarities, or when the reality of what is happening is denied plain and simple.

This is a classic Marxist analysis of ideology that distorts reality and self-consciousness in line with the interests of the ruling class. This

prevents understanding oppression or effectively challenging it.

Psychology of oppression is a political phenomenon that has a political basis and a political function.

The depth of psychological oppression must be elucidated and worked through as much as social and material oppression must be. This is why Martin-Baro did not shrink from criticizing the people's fatalism. He also researched the machismo of Salvadorians. He acknowledged that "the working class consistently demonstrates more machismo on every measure than the professional class" (Martin-Baro, 1987, p. 121).

Martin-Baro additionally criticized "infantile intellectualism" and "infantile personalization." These denote the wish that politics can be changed by appealing to a country's President. They include "quasi-magical" thinking, impulsive thinking, and illogical thinking (Martin-Baro, 1973, "Cartas Al Presidente: Reflexiones Psicosociales Sobre Un Caso de Personalismo Politico en El Salvador," 345-357; <http://www.catedralibremartinbaro.org/html/imb.php>).

Mao Zedung similarly worried about the culturally-based backward thinking among the Chinese peasantry with whom he worked for decades. He said: "given the various kinds of deep-rooted feudal relationships in the countryside, it will not be an easy task to raise the class-

consciousness of the peasants to the extent that they all realize that, in the end, it will be essential to eliminate the feudal remnants” (cited in Knight, 2007, p. 98).

In 1929 Fromm, working as the social psychology director of the Frankfurt School, researched the pathology of normalcy (psychology of oppression) in the psychology/character of Weimar workers. He concluded that it included elements of authoritarianism that were congruent with the emerging fascist state (Fromm, 1984).<sup>4</sup> Interestingly, workers' psychological responses concerning gender relations, corporal punishment, the role of children were typically more conservative than their political opinions which endorsed socialism. Their psychological character thus undermined their revolutionary interests.<sup>5</sup>

### 3) Defining Liberation

Martin-Baro initiated a programmatic discussion of what constitutes emancipation. He stated, "The objective of any healthy polity is the attainment of a communal structure...which makes possible an integral development for all its members through a harmonious and creative interaction...It follows that the person who favors dissociation is not of the people....[e.g.,] the competitor for whom getting ahead



necessarily involves leaving others behind..." (1994, pp. 179-180).

Martin-Baro enunciated necessary -- mandatory -- directions for challenging and transforming the status quo into a viable, fulfilling socio-cultural system: "One cannot speak of 'the people' while ignoring the fact that acquisitive and individualist economic power (capitalism) necessarily entails its denial" (ibid., p. 181, my emphasis). Since capitalism necessarily denies community, solidarity, the people, and fulfillment, liberation movements must necessarily oppose the capitalist political-economic system.

Again we see that Martin-Baro formulated an objective, scholarly, programmatic definition of the people/the populace/the popular majority, and what qualifies as emancipation. He did not include everyone who was oppressed because many of these individuals

- are not conscious of their oppression
- are even less conscious of the concrete causes of oppression
- often unwittingly internalize and identify with oppression --

thereby opposing and impeding solidarity and liberation, "healthy polity"

Martin-Baro did not accept peasants' self-definition as comprising "the people" or "the popular majority." Nor did he accept their understanding of oppression or liberation. It is only when people

comprehend the objective determinants of their oppression that they develop the subjectivity, consciousness, and agency of an oppressed group (class) that is a revolutionary force for negating the status quo.

### Conscientization

A key concept in overcoming the psychology of oppression, and ultimately social, material, military, and political oppression is "conscientization." Conscientization was coined by Franz Fanon. It was prominently used by Friere, and later by Martin-Baro. "In the first place, conscientization responds to the situation of injustice by promoting a critical consciousness of the objective and subjective roots of social alienation" (Martin-Baro, 1994, p. 42).

In a 1974 article entitled "Elements of Socio-Political Conscientization in the Curricula of Universities," (<http://www.catedralibremartinbaro.org/html/imb.php>) Martin-Baro states that conscientization "demands a serious examination of consciousness" (1974, p. 783). Martin-Baro acknowledges that conscientization is fundamental to Marxism (p. 770). He emphasizes that "conscientization is political or it is not conscientization" (p. 770). "Ignorance of politics is the negation [antithesis] of the process of

conscientization" (p. 771, my translations throughout). Conscientization that abstracts from concrete politics insidiously perpetuates dependency and oppression (p. 771). A new political, social consciousness is necessary to envision a new historical future that is liberation.

Conscientization is not a construction of personal meanings that emanate from within consciousness. It is a deeper awareness of the political nature of culture and subjectivity. Martin-Baro explained that conscientization is a praxis that is necessary for appropriating social conditions intellectually (cognitively) and politically (practically): "People must take hold of their fate, take the reins of their lives, a move that demands overcoming false consciousness and achieving a critical understanding of themselves as well as of their world and where they stand in it" (1994, p. 40).

Conscientization implies that understanding the present, past, and future requires new forms of consciousness. This is true for understanding external social, political, and economic events as well as internal psychological, subjective phenomena. None of these understandings is naturally, spontaneously, or normally given. They depend upon particular social values, principles, and concepts; and they depend upon new social relations wherein people control, plan, and

administer their social institutions, artifacts, and concepts.

### Conscientization of historical memory

Historical memory is an important cultural-psychological phenomenon that must be conscientized for social transformation. For the way a people remember their past bears on the way they interpret their present and envision their future. If they understand how they were historically oppressed, this will illuminate current oppression and what must be done to eradicate it in the future. If a people can tap into heroic events that their ancestors accomplished in their struggles for emancipation -- e.g., revolutions against colonial powers -- they may draw inspiration from these acts to energize contemporary, heroic, revolutionary actions.

Historical memory is difficult to achieve. Being disenfranchised, dispossessed, and alienated blunted peoples' ability to know the intricacies of their society -- just as it does now. Moreover, ruling powers strive to falsify memories about the nature of oppression, the reasons for oppression, and successful resistances to oppression. For example, ruling powers have constricted Americans' memory of Martin Luther King's civil rights struggle. They have reduced it to dreaming about racial equality,

and polite protesting to achieve it. They have eliminated from public discourse in the media (that they own) and the schools, the fact that King had begun to denounce capitalism and militarism, and called for democratic socialism. Similarly, social leaders have obfuscated from public view Nelson Mandela's youthful militant activities to eradicate apartheid (as well as the U.S. role in opposing those activities). Similarly, origins of the Great Recession of 2007 are obfuscated. It is attributed to financiers' greed, with no reference to the stagnation of the capitalist political economy that had reduced "productive" sources of profit and speculative, specious, financial devices the most lucrative source of profit.

Consequently, people's memory of past eras was and is limited and distorted. This impedes liberation. A telling example is way that the Guatemalan people elected Otto Perez Molina as their President in 2012. Earlier in his career, Perez was a right wing special forces soldier who graduated from the notorious U.S. School of the Americas. He was instrumental in several coup d'etats against sitting Presidents; he joined the military governments where he was involved in torturing the popular majorities. Yet, in 2012, the Guatemalan popular majorities did not possess an adequate historical memory of this man's political and military

history. The popular majorities -- who held majority electoral power -- allowed him to be elected President -- when he was running against a populist candidate! Their historical memory failed to inform them of what Perez really stood for.

People's mundane memory of their history is not necessarily historical memory of what historically occurred. Just as all consciousness must be re-constructed on the basis of political awareness, so memory of history needs to be conscienticized. It must become historicized -- made historical -- through serious, critical historiography.

This is illustrated by the case of memories of childhood abuse. Clinical psychologists recognize that children do not clearly understand the process of abuse. They often blame themselves for what adults do to them, and they often believe that sexual abuse was a sign of affection. When psychologists treat victims of abuse when they are adults, the objective is not to recover the memory from childhood experience, because that memory was distorted. The objective is to correct the distorted memory, to explain how the patient's memory was invalid, how the abuse was neither a sign of affection, nor was it initiated by the child. The point is to remake the memory into a valid perception of the abuse. Only this reorganized, corrected memory can help the victim understand

his or her social roots and extant behavior, and only this new memory can help a person change oppressive behavior into fulfilling behavior. True memory of what actually transpired during the abuse was not repressed; it was unknown. The victim's memory had been distorted by the abuser's lies. This is why it had to be remade and reorganized, not retrieved from repression where it lay waiting in its truth.

This is Martin-Baro's sense of recovering, or recuperating, memory. It is remaking or reorganizing of memory, not recovering something that was already known.

There is an ambiguity about the prefix "re" that explains the confusion about the term "recover" or. "Re" denotes doing something again -- as in repeat, return, retrieve, reclaim, restore -- and it also denotes doing something anew -- as in revise, recreate, restructure, reshape, reform, and reorganize. Martin-Baro -- and dialectical, progressive, revolutionary thinking -- emphasizes the second meaning with regard to recover and recuperar: "The truth of the popular majority is not to be found but made" (Martin-Baro, 1994, p. 27). "People's new (conscientized) knowledge of their surrounding reality carries them to a new understanding of themselves, and, most important of their social identity...All this allows them to discover not only the roots of what they

are but also the horizon, what they can become. Thus, the recovery of their historical memory offers a base for a more autonomous determination of their future" (1994, pp. 42, 40). In this passage, Martin-Baro clearly defines recovery of historical memory in terms of a new conscientized social-political knowledge of their historical roots that had escaped them.

He says, "The prevailing discourse puts forth an apparently natural and ahistorical [social] reality; structuring it in such a way as to cause it to be accepted without question. This makes it impossible to find the roots of one's own identity." "To de-ideologize means to retrieve the original experience of groups and persons and return it to them as objective data. People can then use the data to formally articulate a consciousness of their own reality" (Martin-Baro, 1994, pp. 30-31).

Recovering or returning historical memory is not reminding oppressed people of forgotten memories and subjectivity that they had already acquired and known. For subjective memories were mystified and were not the self-creations of the people that recognized their social reality. It is rather objective data about experience that must be provided to people to help them articulate a new, true consciousness of social life.

True, valid historical memory must be created as a historical



project. Memory must become historicized and de-ideologized in order to become historical consciousness of original social life. Historical memory of past social reality must be created now, in the present, belatedly.

When Martin-Baro uses the term "recover"/"recuperar" he means to take it away from its ruling class form and re-form it. This is what conscientization denotes. (The same is true of the material basis of memory: the means and mode of production. Production must be expropriated from the capitalists and taken over by the people to re-form it in light of contemporary requirements and conditions. Production is not to be "returned" to people as they formerly practiced it.)

## II. Coopting Classic Liberation Psychology into New Liberation Psychology

Advocates of New Liberation Psychology employ four strategies to (surreptitiously) revise Martin-Baro's classic Liberation Psychology.

Under the banner of Liberation Psychology, they

- 1) articulate concepts that contradict (deny) Martin-Baro's words
- 2) omit (ignore) important concepts that Martin-Baro emphasized
- 3) misrepresent Martin-Baro's ideas, by misquoting these, and

presenting them incompletely and out of context

4) convert concrete social-psychological issues into indefinite, nondescript, abstractions

These strategies are illustrated in statements expressed in Montero & Sonn's (2009) book, Psychology of Liberation: Theory and Applications.

Indefinite, nondescript, abstractions

Montero & Sonn (p. 2) define Liberation Psychology as

"Transformation of societies marked by inequality and exclusion...Strengthening democracy and empowering civil society. Citizens becoming conscious of their rights and duties" "The necessity to produce a science constructed by praxis. That is, practice that produces knowledge, and knowledge that turns into action -- theory and practice informing each other." These statements are nebulous and uninformative.

There is no specific analysis of the causes of inequality. Yet these causes are what must be transformed. Leaving them indefinite deprives social movements of the targets they need challenge; it leaves social transformation indefinite. The authors do not even define rights and duties that people should be conscious of. What are the rights that

people should become conscious of? The right to own one's home? The right to discharge garbage on one's own property? The right to make as much money as one wishes? The right to keep children from learning about evolution? What does it mean to "empower civil society?" After 150 years of rigorous sociological and political-economic research, Montero and Sonn only offer up platitudes.

Strengthen democracy? The authors do not even specify whether this includes economic democracy or only political democracy. Nor can they specify what strengthening it means. Does it mean more elections like the U.S.A. holds, with distracting political advertisements and corporate lobbying? Are there different kinds of democracy?

The notion of practice is equally vague and uninformative. Every practice produces knowledge and further action. Surely, a science of liberation psychology -- that aims at transforming social, material, symbolic, and psychological structures -- requires more guidance than what Montero & Sonn offer us. The authors do not tell us whether emancipatory praxis consists in studying and mobilizing and challenging the political economy of our society, or whether it consists in survivalist acts where individuals hoard food in their homes and protect it with weapons, or whether it consists in getting in touch with our inner selves,

or forming partnerships with capitalists, or renouncing technology.<sup>6</sup>

Montero & Sonn state that liberation psychology encourages oppressed people to “develop modes of control of their lives.” But what does it mean to control their lives? How is this achieved? By choosing which consumer products to buy? By removing all the trees on our land to enrich ourselves? Or by democratizing the political economy? Community members in the U.S. have elected school boards committed to not teaching sex education or evolution -- because these violated their conservative religious beliefs (Frank, 2005). British controlled their lives by voting for Thatcher Americans voted for George Bush twice. Indefiniteness in terms such as controlling life can lead to supporting regressive, repressive actions by community members.

Montero & Sonn never define who the exploited people are or the nature of their exploitation. They employ terms such as "exploited majorities," and "popular majorities," but they never explain which groups comprise these categories. Nor do they explain who the exploiters and powerful elites are and how they rule. Nor do they explain what oppression is. One of the insidious aspects of capitalism is that it masks its oppression as voluntary, individual choice and free market exchange of equivalent values. New Liberation Psychologists have no methodology or

analytical framework for exposing insidious oppression that must be combatted. They naively rely upon content-less communication processes to mysteriously apprehend complex and mystified content of oppression. This is oxymoronic.

This leaves us directionless about who we should follow and support, and who we should denounce. Are liberation psychologists such as Montero members of the popular majorities, given that they are privileged university professors? Is the wage-earning supervisor of the meat department at a supermarket a member of the popular majority? If a peasant owns 10 hectares of land is he a member? If a farmer rents a room out to travelers is he a member of the popular majority or is he a landlord or capitalist elite? And who decides?

Instead of developing concrete analyses of society and psychology, Montero and Sonn's book is replete with abstractions such as:

- Choosing man, choosing our people integrally conceived
- Choosing love for the poor
- Choosing integral liberation
- Denouncing everything that goes against justice
- Defend the right to live in dignity

- Generate strategies to develop collective consciousness (p. 25)

Since none of these is defined with any content, they are useless as explanatory, analytical, or activist constructs.

What is justice? Is it preserving property rights? Is it fair commodity exchange? Is it paying people some money for the environmental damage that corporations have caused? Is it raising the minimum wage for work? Or does it involve replacing the capitalist ownership of resources by workers' associations and collective social relations?

Are we supposed to love everything about the poor? Even their fatalism, apathy, domestic violence, superstitions, crime, and misinformed politics? Should we glorify the political wisdom of American Blacks and Hispanics when, in June 2013, 60% of them approved of the government's collection of telephone and Internet data as part of anti-terrorism efforts? (Only 44 percent of whites wanted the NSA's metadata collections to continue.) Should we praise the practice of certain Amazon Indians who bury their children alive, as depicted in the following video?: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pzjrO3x9ef0>

Privileging subjective beliefs over objective, scientific analyses of social and psychological reality

New Liberation Psychologists insist that the masses of people can find the way to liberation by looking at their own indigenous experience and memories. Montero's (2009) chapter focuses on social dialogue in which people understand and respect each other. This communication process is deemed sufficient for generating all the analyses and conclusions that are necessary for transforming society. She never mentions any content to communication that is relevant for people to know. It is all about good listening, respecting and tolerating the other speaker, and reflection (p 81): "Everyone should have the opportunity to speak, everyone should be heard" (p. 83). "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" (p. 84). Montero never explains how these group dynamics will lead to explicating the falling rate of profit of capital, and the relation of financialization and stagnation, that are necessary to reveal the actual social causes of poverty, exploitation, and ideological mystification.

Montero's statements about what should be considered in group dialogues are abstract. For example, "deideologization is 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" (p. 75). What does this totality consist of? Other individuals? Institutions? Flowers? Puppies? Ruling class? Everything? Don't we need to focus our understanding on mode of production, ruling class, sources of exploitation, mystification of free market exchange? Without this, merely understanding "totality" will never uncover the basis, character, and alternative to oppression.

Montero's contentless definition of deideologization obfuscates ideology. It implies that ideology is simply not understanding the totality of one's circumstances -- whatever that may be. No reason is suggested for this deficiency, nothing about the class structure, obfuscation, or exploitation.

Montero similarly eviscerates the concrete construct, alienation. For her alternative is dealienation which she defines 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" (p. 75). In other words, the objective is to construct a social situation that is understandable. But this is an empty statement, devoid of any direction



or orientation. Additionally, it is not an alternative to alienation.

Dealienation is the practical, political controlling of one's social world, not simply becoming aware of it. A slave who becomes aware of his subordinate role is not de-alienated!

Montero & Sonn tell us that liberation psychologists “foster the recuperation of historical memory of the oppressed majorities, in order to overcome alienation and ideology.” Jimenez (2009) similarly states, “As proposed by Ignacio Martín-Baró, ‘de-ideologization’ assumes a critical commitment which gives back to the people the knowledge they have gained of their reality” (p. 37). Jimenez insists “Psychologists must adopt the perspective of the popular majorities and follow them on their historical path towards liberation” (p. 38).

These statements assume that within their oppression, the people have acquired knowledge of their reality and that they somehow “lost” it. Liberation must rekindle it and follow it.

Our lengthy discussion of recuperation has documented the fact that Martin-Baro did not advocate this populist sense of subjectivity and recuperation of it.

The authors do not clearly explain what this lost memory included, how it became lost to the people, or what precisely recovering it involves.

Was this memory an accurate recollection of objective conditions and events hundreds of years ago? Is this what should be rekindled? Or is any memory worth “recovering?”

Nor do the authors specify what aspects of history are important to recall in order to overcome alienation and ideology. Will alienation be overcome if people remember that 500 years ago their Aztec ancestors sacrificed children by burning them to death? Or by recalling that a witch doctor said that people should pray for rain?

Should "the perspective of the popular majorities" be accepted (by us and by them) if they believe in evangelical Christianity or Wahhabe Islam? If they segregate women by imposing burqas on them and restricting their education? If they are macho? If they value private property and individualism? If they desire harsh penalties for non-violent, working-class crimes?

Jimenez occasionally acknowledges that “Martín-Baró pointed out that Latin American Psychology must ... 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)” (p. 38).

However, this contradicts Jimenez's opinion that we should adopt

the perspective of the people and follow them.

Similarly, Jimenez's statement that "liberation psychology must recognize the importance of combining both the knowledge of academia and of the people in popular praxis and struggles" (p. 38) contradicts his idea that psychologists must adopt the perspective of the popular majorities and follow them.

Moreover, the critical perspective introduces questions that Jimenez does not consider (and cannot answer). What would be the perspective that forms the critical eye to evaluate peoples' proposals? How does one decide which peoples' proposals are acceptable virtues and which need to be criticized?

In fact, New Liberation Psychologists do not seriously criticize popular notions. New Liberation Psychologists repudiate objective, external science that evaluates and counters popular thinking and practice. Jimenez tells us: "Martin Baro had 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." There is no critique of popular opinion here.

### Omissions and silences

New Liberation psychologists compound abstractions and vagaries with omissions and silences about concrete problems and alternatives. They never mention capitalism, commodity production, the World Bank, World Trade Organization, NAFTA, the CIA, colonialism, imperialism, extracting surplus value from wage labor, or interlocking boards of directors. They do not explore the content of Social Lies or their political economic basis, as Martin-Baro does. These are the cornerstones of oppression. Ignoring them ignores the basis of oppression and the basis of emancipation.

New Liberation psychologists never mention Marx or socialism or class struggle or false consciousness – that are all emphasized by Martin-Baro. They do not debate, reconstruct, or even reject these doctrines; they ignore them. This deprives New Liberation Psychology of valuable, concrete analyses and transformative programs (Hudis, 2012). It also deprives New Liberation Psychology of critique, reflexivity, scientific argumentation, and the ability to correct its errors.

### New Liberation Psychology Contradicts Martin-Baro's Classic

#### Liberation Psychology

In addition to being vague, trite, and useless, the notions of New Liberation Psychology contradict Martin-Baro's Classic, Marxist, Liberation Psychology. Martin-Baro employed an objective, concrete analysis of oppression and liberation. He probed the concrete social positions, social characteristics, and social possibilities of oppressed people. He emphasized class oppression and the need for class struggle – even armed class struggle. In his unpublished book, he said, “La medida ultimata del creciente poder popular, de su capacidad de controlar recursos sociales, lo constituye la formacion de un ejercito del pueblo que haga frente a las tropas regulares del poder establecido y que quiebre aquellos mecanismos sociales que protegen la estructura de oppression” (p. 45). (“The ultimate measure of the growth of popular power, of its capacity to control social resources is to constitute a people’s army that confronts the normal squads of established power and breaks those social mechanisms that protect the structure of oppression.”) This activity is based upon an objective analysis of the structure of power, it is not a summary of people’s popular opinions.

Martin-Baro did not search the truth from the people's current perspective. He said the exact opposite: "to acquire a new psychological knowledge it is not enough to place ourselves in the perspective of the

people" (Martin-Baro, 1994, p. 28). "The task of the psychologist must be to achieve the de-alienation of groups and persons by helping them attain a critical understanding of themselves and their reality" "that demands overcoming their false consciousness" (ibid., p. 41, 40).

Occasionally, Martin-Baro did speak about the need to comprehend the standpoint of the oppressed, however, his meaning was contextualized; it was not the pure subjectivity of the oppressed, it was the objective standpoint about how things stood in the conditions inhabited by the populace. It was "looking at educational psychology from where the illiterate stands, or industrial psychology from the place of the unemployed" (ibid., p. 28, my emphasis).

Martin-Baro also said we must understand their needs -- i.e., what they objectively need to be emancipated – and their life: "we must rethink our theoretical and practical baggage from the standpoint of the lives [vida] of our own people, from their suffering..." (Martin-Baro, 1994, p. 25, my emphasis). The point is to comprehend the life conditions of the people that make them suffer, and comprehend what the social world must become in order to eliminate this suffering.

Martin-Baro went so far as to state that "self-knowledge and self-acceptance presuppose a radical change in social relations, to a condition

where there would be neither oppressors nor oppressed” (ibid., p. 42, my emphasis). This means that the oppressed cannot currently understand themselves and their history; they can only come to this comprehension as a radical change in made in social relations that eliminates social classes! Social structural change is prerequisite to psychological understanding. Consequently, the oppressed cannot presently lead us to liberation based upon their contemporary class-based consciousness.

Martin-Baro held an objective conception of the people's perspective, not a subjective perspective. He adopted this from Marx. Marx wrote from the working class's perspective in the sense of understanding what the world has done to this class and how society must be transformed in order to support fulfillment of workers as the universal, productive class. Marx & Engels (1976, vol. 4, p. 303) said, “Communism, insofar as it is a theory, is the theoretical expression of the position of the proletariat in this struggle, and the theoretical summation of the conditions for the liberation of the proletariat.” Communist theory is about working class conditions and position in the political economy, for these are what must be transformed.

Marx insisted that the working class's current subjective perspective must come to correspond to the objective working class

perspective. The working class perspective is not the perspective of the working class as it is currently constituted. Both Marx and Martin-Baro unflinchingly criticized current perspectives that fell short of objectively understanding the real causes of, and solutions to, suffering.

New Liberation Psychologists do not engage in this critical, (re)constructive process. Jimenez reprimands “elites who promulgate the belief that people are passive, submissive and fatalistic in regard to the prospect of changing society towards a more socially just arrangement.” Yet Martin-Baro emphasized that the dispossessed are fatalistic -- which we cited in the outset. Jimenez misunderstands and misrepresents Martin-Baro. He is beguiled by an idealist (post-modernist, New Age, neo-anarchist, liberal-humanist) ideology about oppressed people that Martin-Baro rejected.

Nor did Martin Baro "go beyond a scientist obsession with objectivity" as Jimenez claims. He said "Latin American Psychology must stop focusing on itself, stop worrying about its scientific and social status, and focus on attending to the needs of the popular majorities" (Martin-Baro, 1994, p. 26, my emphasis). Martin-Baro did not renounce scientific objectivity. He merely renounced superficial, formal, quantified positivistic science and objectivity. Martin-Baro condemned positivistic,



colonialized Latin American science and its preoccupation with its own status as a legitimate science. This pretentiousness and need for validation have resulted in sterile, superficial quantification of simplified, overt behavior that ignores broad, complex macro cultural factors and their psychological correlates.

Martin-Baro renounced pseudo science because it falls short of true science and objectivity that are crucial for identifying oppression (both social and psychological) and finding viable alternatives to it (see Ratner, 1997 for this argument). He eloquently said, "to realize a psychology of liberation it is first necessary to achieve a liberation of Psychology" (Martin-Baro, 1994, p. 25). By this he meant making it truly scientific. This was the explicit objective of his unpublished and unknown book The Social-psychological Roots of the War in El Salvador (p. 20): "Con este libro se pretende mostrar como puede un psicologia social dar un aporte cientifico a las luchas sociales..." ["This book seeks to demonstrate how a social psychology can give scientific support to social struggles."] He sought to make this science politically relevant to improving the lives of the "Wretched of The Earth" by understanding the causes of oppression and ways to eradicate it. He sought an emancipatory science, not the elimination of science.

Nor did Martin-Baro adopt the viewpoint of New Liberation Psychology regarding the humble role of experts who merely follow the people. He regarded their advanced knowledge as a vital tool for educating the populace and remediating their psychology of oppression. He said,

Psychotherapy must aim directly at the social identity worked out through the prototypes of oppressor and oppressed, and at shaping a new identity for people as members of a human community in charge of a history. Overcoming the traumas of war has to include seizing consciousness of all those realities, both collective and individual, which are at the root of the war. Thus, a conscientizing psychotherapy must construct a process that will enable the individual to assert his or her personal and social identity as part of a movement of collective and national affirmation (1994, p. 43, my emphasis).

In his unpublished book The Social-psychological Roots of the War

in El Salvador (p. 21), he further added that “Social psychology must contribute to creating a new collective consciousness in our people, a lucid consciousness about the ultimate roots of their being and their social knowledge, necessary for projecting toward a distinctive being that opens the horizon of a new history.” [La psicología social debe contribuir a crear una nueva consciencia colectiva en nuestros pueblos, una consciencia lucida sobre las raices ultimas de su ser y de su saber social, necesaria para proyetarse hacia un ser distinto qua abra el horizonte de una historia nueva.”] It is because people do not yet have this consciousness of their existing history (of the roots of their being) and the new historical horizon, that social psychologists must help create them.

The people's perspective cannot be uncritically followed because it is corrupted and vulnerable to cooptation. Even progressive social leaders who had been brutalized by the social system, such as Nelson Mandela and Dilma Rousseff, and even progressives who worked to reform the brutal system, such as Obama and John Kerry, ultimately succumbed to this cooptation.

In his biography of Mandela, Anthony Sampson acknowledged, 'Mandela accepted the imperatives of the global

marketplace.' Thus, he appointed Derek Keys, de Klerk's pro-market finance minister as his own (<http://truth-out.org/progressivepicks/item/20974-mandela-was-unable-to-dismantle-the-white-oligarchy-keeping-south-africa-in-economic-chains>). Shortly after he assumed the presidency, Mandela said, "for this country, privatization is the fundamental policy." Mandela's neoliberal policies led to black unemployment rising from 16 percent to over 30 percent; average household income of the black population fell 19 percent.

These sell-outs by popular, revolutionary figures can only be prevented by rigorously analyzing and criticizing their actions.

#### The political subtext of New Liberation Psychology

New liberation Psychologists are indefinite about the nature of oppression, the oppressed, and liberation. They minimize concrete, material, social, structural, systemic, political, and ideological aspects of society. They dismiss external, expert, objective constructs, theories, analyses, methodologies, and programs. They reject disciplined, organized political parties in favor of spontaneous interpersonal relations (Jimenez, 2009, p. 39). The errors, distortions, and omissions of New Liberation Psychologists possess a logic that is rooted in political values and

objectives. The logic that unifies all these gambits is the desire to leave all ideas about liberation up to the popular majorities of oppressed people, themselves. The objective is to maximize the unfettered, creative subjectivity/agency of oppressed people. All constraints on this must be minimized. That explains all the varied elements of New Liberation Psychology.

New Liberation Psychology is a minimalist approach that minimizes (eviscerates) reality, political organization, leadership, programs, science, external critique, and necessity so that subjective activity can reign supreme. This is essentially a post-modernist -- and neoliberal and neo-anarchist -- point of view (see Ratner 2009b, 2014f, 2015a, 2015b, chap. 2; Taylor, 2013). It dichotomizes subjectivity and objectivity, freedom and necessity, instead of recognizing their dialectical interrelation.

### The Epistemology and Politics of Respect

New (Age) Liberation Psychology is an epistemology of how to understand a society, its people, its problems, and emancipation. Its understanding is fashioned to respect the populace and validate it. It is a respectful epistemology, an epistemology of respect. Respecting

oppressed people is designed to dispel the disrespect leveled by colonial elites. Thus, Montero and Sonn (p. 2) state: "another person must be respected who constructs knowledge...as an active person, not a passive entity, a mere reacting being."

This sense of respect is political in that it has a political content and agenda regarding the fulfillment and freedom of a person. New Liberation Psychology is thus a political epistemology of respect.<sup>7</sup> Fulfillment and freedom are to be achieved on the interpersonal level as activists work with and from oppressed, marginalized individuals. Fulfillment and freedom are achieved by respecting and validating individual ideas and desires and agency in the process of social liberation. The emphasis is on the local, micro-level of interpersonal relations. This is why theories, programs, systems, and structures – all of which are outside individual members of the populace -- are minimized or rejected, as Jimenez does. Instead, the individuals occupy center stage. We must learn from them, how they do things, how they see things. This is all built into the political epistemology of respect that underlies New Liberation Psychology.

While this epistemology and politics of respect is well-intentioned, it is scientifically and politically misguided and misleading. The

epistemology and politics of respect misunderstand oppression, liberation, and social transformation. They fail to work through the material, social, and symbolic structures of oppression that generate sedimented oppression of consciousness/subjectivity/psychology/agency (which Martin-Baro emphasized in his previous statement that "Psychotherapy must aim directly at the social identity worked out through the prototypes of oppressor and oppressed"). They imagine that oppressed people can conjure up solutions to social problems from within their subjectivities, agency, activity, dialogues, and memory without concrete analysis, program, or organization. This is utopianism that Martin-Baro rejected. Sartre -- in a brilliant explanation of social conditions, oppression, and emancipation -- explained how the field of possibles "always exists, and we must not think of it as a zone of indetermination, but rather as a strongly structured region which depends upon all of History and which includes its own contradictions." "The subject appears, then, as a necessary moment in the objective process." "So long as one has not studied the structures of the future in a defined society, one necessarily runs the risk of not understanding anything whatsoever about the social (Sartre, 1963, pp. 93, 97).

New Liberation Psychology obscures and falsifies the science and politics of Martin-Baro's Classical Liberation Psychology. It misleads social and political activities in fruitless directions -- toward a politics of subjectivity and respect that ignores a) macro cultural social systems, conditions, structures, politics, analytical frameworks, b) culturally oppressed psychology/subjectivity, c) concrete social alternatives such as socialism (not to be confused with Stalinism and Maoism).

Our critique of New Liberation Psychology highlights the illusory progressivism of humanism, multiculturalism, post-modernism, individualism, subjectivism, and abstract conceptions of society, history, humanity, civilization, and psychology. We must replace this illusion with objective, concrete, political, programmatic, organized, rigorous, disciplined social science and social activism that directly and concretely challenge the political economic basis of social-psychological problems.

### III. Toward A Genuine New Liberation Psychology

Developing a genuine New Liberation Psychology requires

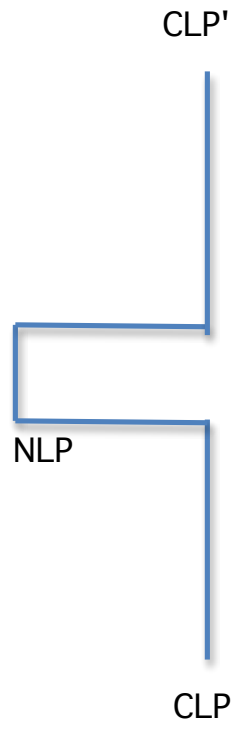
- a) repudiating New Liberation Psychology (NLP)
- b) recovering (recuperating) Martin-Baro's Classical Liberation



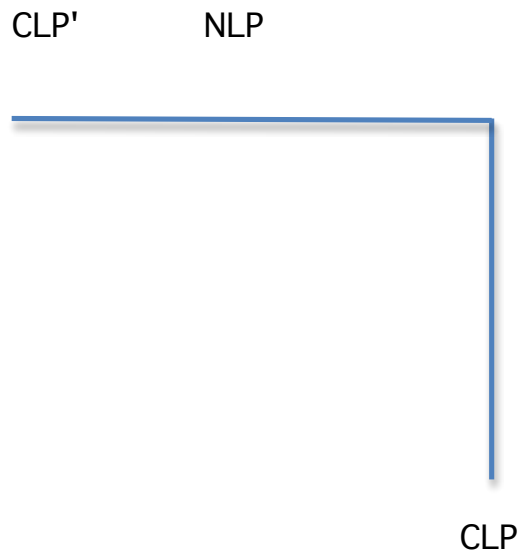
Psychology (CLP)

c) refining and advancing CLP into a genuine modern Liberation Psychology (CLP').

The path to a viable future liberation psychology is not a continuous, linear one from past to present to future. Rather, we must reject the present iteration, go back to the classical iteration to recover it and re-ground ourselves in its concepts, then detour around the present, false, misleading New Liberation Psychology to develop a genuine, modern Classical Liberation Psychology (CLP'). We must go back to (get to) the future.<sup>8</sup>



We cannot get to CLP' by continuing the path of NLP (i.e., CLP-NLP-CLP').



Moving from abstract NLP to CLP' exemplifies what Kosik (1976) called the dialectics of the concrete. One promising path for achieving this is Macro Cultural Psychology (Ratner, 2012a, b; Ratner, 2014c, d; available at [www.sonic.net/~cr2](http://www.sonic.net/~cr2)). Arguably, Martin-Baro's CLP was macro cultural psychology. He argues that subjectivity is shaped by macro

cultural factors: “micro processes must always be understood as connected in their essence to more fundamental macro processes” (1994, p. 69). Additionally, macro cultural factors are the cornerstones of social transformation, and the cornerstones of social and psychological liberation. Conversely, psychology/consciousness sustains particular macro cultural factors. In the status quo, psychology sustains oppression. Existing psychology is a conservative social force that reproduces existing society. Martin-Baro (1994, p. 77) said that “political revolutions have found upon taking power that one of their staunchest enemies is the cognitive-evaluative structure – the personal reference scheme internalized by large sectors of the population during their socialization under the ‘old regime.’”

Martin-Baro articulated this in observations about memory. He explained that oppressive social structures and political ideology have been the operating mechanisms of memory. They have generated mystified, incomplete, erroneous, alienated memory of history. Accurate memory of history requires new mnemonic mechanisms that are cultural. Critical, politically-informed consciousness (conscientization) is the necessary cultural mechanism to generate historicized, historical memory. This conscientized historical memory is not only aware of the macro

cultural influences on it; it is also aware of a concrete cultural negation of the status quo.

Social transformation is built into the psychological science of macro cultural psychology/CLP'. Good science entails good politics, and good politics entails good science. The reason is that both of them engage in the dialectics of the concrete.

## References

Bettelheim, B. (1979). Freedom from ghetto thinking. In B.

Bettelheim, Surviving and Other Essays (pp. 243-271). New York: Knopf.

Frank (2005). What's the matter with Kansas?: How conservatives won the heart of America. N.Y.: Holt.

Fromm, E. (1984). The working class in Weimar Germany: A psychological and sociological study. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. (Originally published 1929)

Goldin, F., Smith, D., & Smith, M. (2014). Imagine living in a socialist U.S.A. N.Y.: HarperCollins.

- Hudis, P. (2012). Marx's concept of an alternative to capitalism.  
Chicago: Haymarket Books.
- Jimenez-Dominguez, B. (2009). Ignacio Martín-Baró's social psychology of liberation: Situated knowledge and critical commitment against objectivism. In Montero, M., & Sonn, C. (Eds). Psychology of Liberation: Theory and Applications (pp. 37-50). N.Y.: Springer.
- Kosik, K. (1976). Dialects of the concrete. Boston: Reidel.
- Knight, N. (2007). Rethinking Mao: Explorations in Mao Zedung's thought. Mass: Lexington Books.
- Martin-Baro, I. (1994). Writings for a liberation psychology.  
Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Martin-Baro, I., (1987). Is the Salvadoran Macho? Boletin de Psicologia (University of Central America), Vol. VI, 24, 101-122.  
(<http://www.catedralibremartinbaro.org/html/imb.php>).
- Marx, K., & Engels, F. (1976). Collected Works, vol. 4. New York: International Publishers.
- McKenna, B. (2013). Paulo Freire's blunt challenge to anthropology: Create a Pedagogy of The Oppressed for your times. Critique of Anthropology, 33, 447-475.

- Montero, M. (2009). Methods for liberation: Critical consciousness in action. In Montero, M., & Sonn, C. (Eds). (2009). Psychology of liberation: Theory and applications (pp. 73--91). N.Y.: Springer.
- Montero, M., & Sonn, C. (Eds). (2009). Psychology of liberation: Theory and applications. N.Y.: Springer.
- Ratner, C. (1997). Cultural psychology and qualitative methodology: Theoretical and empirical considerations. N.Y.: Plenum.
- Ratner, C. (2006). Epistemological, Social, and Political Conundrums in Social Constructionism. Forum Qualitative Social Research, vol.6, #3. (online at my web site)
- Ratner, C. (2009a). Cooperativism: A social, economic, and political alternative to capitalism. Capitalism, Nature, Socialism, 20, 2, 44-73.
- Ratner, C. (2009b). Harre's social philosophy and political philosophy: A social scientific critique. Journal for The Theory of Social Behaviour, 39, 4, 448-465.
- Ratner, C. (2011). Macro cultural psychology, the psychology of oppression, and cultural-psychological enrichment. In P. Portes & S. Salas (Eds.), Vygotsky in 21st Century Society:

- Advances in cultural historical theory and praxis with non-dominant communities (chap. 5). NY: Peter Lang.
- Ratner, C. (2012a). Macro cultural psychology: A political philosophy of mind. N.Y.: Oxford.
- Ratner, C. (2012b). Macro cultural psychology: Its development, concerns, politics, and future direction. In M. Gelfand, C. Chiu, Y. Hong (Eds.), Advances in Culture and Psychology (vol. 3, chap. 6). N.Y.: Oxford University Press.
- Ratner, C. (2013). Cooperation, community, and co-ops in a global era. N.Y.: Springer.
- Ratner, C. (2014a). The psychology of oppression. In T. Teo (Ed.), The encyclopedia of critical psychology, N.Y.: Springer.
- Ratner, C. (2014b). False consciousness. In T. Teo (Ed.), The encyclopedia of critical psychology, N.Y.: Springer.
- Ratner, C. (2014c). Emancipation. In T. Teo (Ed.), The encyclopedia of critical psychology, N.Y.: Springer.
- Ratner, C. (2014d). Macro cultural psychology. In T. Teo (Ed.), The encyclopedia of critical psychology, N.Y.: Springer.



- Ratner, C. (2014e). Cultural-historical psychology and cultural-psychological change. Theory and Critique of Psychology ([www.teocripsi.com](http://www.teocripsi.com))
- Ratner, C. (2014f). Pathological normalcy: The psychological dimension of alienation and a guiding construct for overcoming alienation. The Humanistic Psychologist, 42, 2.
- Ratner, C. (2015a). Classic and revisionist sociocultural theory, and their analyses of expressive language: An empirical and theoretical assessment. Language and Sociocultural Theory.
- Ratner, C. (2015b). The politics of cooperation and co-ops: Forms of cooperation and co-ops, and the politics that shape them. N.Y.: Nova Publishers.
- Sartre, J. P. (1963). Search for a method. N.Y: Knopf.
- Schram, N. & Hodes, N. (Eds.) (1997). Mao's road to power: Revolutionary writings 1912-1949, vol. IV, Armonk: Sharpe.
- Taylor, B. (2013). From alterglobalization to Occupy Wall Street: Neanarchism and the new spirit of the left. City, 17, 729-747.

---

<sup>1</sup> I am indebted to my Brazilian colleagues and students for inspiration

<sup>2</sup> I am indebted to the Brazilian scholar, Prof. Fernando Lacerda, for giving me this book and clarifying its significance, along with Martin-Baro's other works.

<sup>3</sup> Mao similarly made a precise class analysis of different interests among the peasantry during the Chinese Revolution. He defined rich peasant, poor peasant, landlord, and merchant. This allowed him to identify the different "levels" of class consciousness, social critique, and allegiance to the revolutionary struggle that currently existed. It also helped Mao to understand different kinds of education that needed to be addressed to the different groups in order to help them understand the sources of their problems, and to understand the kinds of solutions that were viable (Schram & Hodes, 1997).

<sup>4</sup> Bettelheim (1979) identified a similar syndrome among Jews in Nazi Germany. He called it ghetto thinking, or the internal ghetto in consciousness. It denotes how Interned Jews identified w. their captors. Some Jewish leaders helped the Nazis deport and exterminate Jews.

---

<sup>5</sup> This is an important social-psychological phenomenon (which surfaces in the study of political psychology) that requires concerted political-psychological intervention. It demonstrates that a) personal activities are not more compassionate and egalitarian and free from social organization than politics are, and b) a people's psychology is not homogeneous, consistent, or continuous. Particular psychological issues are discrepant; they must be addressed individually to comprehend and alter their specific causes and characteristics. Progressive politics do not necessarily transfer to progressive personal activities.

<sup>6</sup> Mao Tse-tung explained this in his 1937 essay entitled "On Practice." He emphasized Marx's concept of praxis, known as historical materialism, in which production is the fundamental activity that must be reorganized. New Liberation Psychologists would profit from reading this concrete discussion of revolutionary praxis.

<sup>7</sup> New Liberation Psychology shares the epistemology and politics of Indigenous Psychology. Indigenous psychologists emphasize indigenous

---

understandings of society and psychology. Indigenous epistemologies strive to respect historically disrespected people who have been excluded from psychological research.

<sup>8</sup> This detour that I shall articulate regarding Martin-Baro has general applicability to many intellectual and political issues. Many issues were properly formulated in a classical mode and were corrupted by modern revisions. They can only be advanced by repudiating the corrupted elements of the latter, regrounding themselves in the recovered classical mode, and advancing it.

This is true for Friere's anti-capitalist pedagogy of the oppressed (McKenna, 2013). It is true for Vygotsky's work in socio-historical psychology. Like Martin-Baro, Vygotsky held a political, socialist view of society and psychology that has been depoliticized by most of his contemporary followers. Whereas Vygotsky said that Psychology needs its own Das Kapital, his followers generally ignore capitalism, neoliberalism, social class, imperialism, and political activism. They also ignore social theorists who do engage these, such as Marx, Marcuse, Fromm, C. W. Mills, Foucault, and Bourdieu (Ratner, 2012, 2015a).

---

Genuine sociocultural psychology cannot be advanced by continuing its degraded, depoliticized form. Its advance requires following the same kind of detour that Liberation Psychology must take.

The detour issue is also necessary with regard to socialism. Marx's classical formulations were corrupted by Stalinist and Maoist distortions. Socialism can only be advanced by renouncing modern distortions, recovering the classical principles, and developing those.