

Towards a really social psychology: Liberation

Psychology beyond Latin America

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This chapter explores some of the implications of Latin American Liberation Psychology (LALP) for an engaged critical psychological practice in core capitalist countries (CCC's) such as Britain.

Some key concepts from Liberation Psychology (LP) will be explored in the CCC context including 'conscientization', 'realismo-critico', 'de-ideologisation', the social-societal orientation, 'the preferential option for the oppressed majorities' and methodological eclecticism. These will be contrasted with both mainstream and critical psychologies in the CCC's, which have been broadly characterised by individualism and idealism respectively. Some examples of practice that are more in tune with the LALP approach will be identified:

In conclusion the prospects and limits of a 'really social psychology' will be explored.

Introduction

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

Latin American cradle of LP (Burton, 2004a) and is peculiar to our own experience and outlook.

Nature of the CCCs

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

Why Liberation Psychology is of relevance for the CCCs

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

1. As a response to criticisms of traditional psychology

Much of the work that underpins LALP developed in response to the 'crisis of social psychology' of the 1970s that was experienced in Britain, and North America (Armistead, 1974; Parker, 1989), but also acutely in Latin America (Jiménez 1990; Montero, 2000). It may be summarised in terms of five problems with empirical

social psychology (de la Corte Ibañez, 2000; Parker, 1989; Strickland, Aboud, & Gergen, 1976):

1.1. Its social irrelevance - social psychology did not seem to be producing much practical knowledge that addressed social problems either in the societies in which it was being developed or elsewhere.

1.2. A parochial context of discovery combined with pretensions of universal validity - social psychology was over-dependent on studies of particular populations in artificial settings (especially undergraduate students in formal experiments), but it nevertheless suggested general social psychological principles that would apply to all people in all contexts.

1.3. The imitation of scientific neutrality meant a denial of the moral dimension - a supposedly value free position.

1.4. A restricted repertoire of investigation with a reliance on the parlour game like methods of experimental social psychology.

1.5. A focus on the micro level and a related dominance of individualistic ideology so that 'social psychology' was in a real sense not social at all.

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

2. As a model for working with oppressed groups

LALP developed specifically in relation to the problem of the 'popular majorities', the oppressed, socially marginalised, impoverished, excluded masses in

Latin America. But in the 'developed' economies too there are significant populations of people who are marginalised and oppressed on the basis of disability, age, ill health, nationality, appearance, gender, sexuality and poverty. Psychology as a whole has neglected this fact of exclusion, it hardly making an entry into its formal literature (Kagan & Burton, 2004). The special conditions in Latin America, particularly the experience of state and paramilitary terror in many countries, also make LP a valuable resource for our context, whether working with refugees fleeing persecution and torture, or trying to help rebuild fractured communities.

3. In the global context

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

Differences in context

It is important to recognise that LP developed (as LALP) in a very different context to that of the core countries. The societies of Latin America are far from identical, but are all characterised to a greater or lesser extent by endemic poverty and exclusion often affecting the majority of the population. This is a result of both the dependent and neo-colonial nature of their economies (Galeano, 1998) and severe internal inequalities (Sánchez & Wiesenfeld, 1991). Intellectuals are often less integrated into the state's systems than in the CCCs and this has often allowed a

certain freedom to develop autonomous approaches that don't serve the state or oligarchy (Jiménez 1990). Latin American intellectual traditions in psychology and social science, while influenced by those from the English speaking world (especially North America) also differ, with a greater influence of European continental traditions (especially phenomenology, psychoanalysis, critical theory and Marxism, and structuralism). However, as de la Torre (1995) demonstrates, dependency has been a powerful theme in the psychology of the region.

LALP should be understood as part of a broader intellectual and political movement that began in Latin America in the 1960s and continues with renewed vigour forty years later. All of its currents have been concerned with rethinking and reconstructing particular disciplines (education, theology, psychology, sociology, philosophy) from the perspective of the poor, the excluded, marginalised, or oppressed³, in large part doing this in a process of engagement and solidarity with these groups. The emphasis has been on the popular majorities of Latin America and the 'two-thirds world' (see the chapter by Flores for a detailed discussion of this wider project).

The institutional and societal context for the development and application of contemporary psychology has obviously been different in the CCCs. After the second world war, there was a 'post-war settlement' between capital and labour, which allowed the development of what has been called 'welfare capitalism', where the State intervened in the economy both to support capitalist development, and to ameliorate its effects, through universal education and health care, welfare benefits, and so on.

³ These terms share a meaning but also have rather different resonances which will not be explored here, except to note that more recent writers have tended to prefer victims/victimisation and the excluded/exclusion rather than use the broader categories of the poor or the oppressed.

This began to break down at the end of the 1960s as the falling rate of profit led to a reshaping of capitalist strategy in the form now called neoliberalism. The election of the Thatcher conservative government in Britain in 1979, in the context of a reaction by the forces of capital to advances by labour nationally and internationally, marked the advent of a selective neoliberal restructuring to reduce the ameliorative socially protective role of the State, to bring market mechanisms into the health, education and welfare systems, and to reduce the power of organised labour. Similar policies were enacted in all the advanced capitalist economies to varying extents, by conservative, Christian democrat, social democrat, and socialist parties (sometimes even with the collaboration of communist or former communist coalition partners).

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

Some other characteristics of these societies are also important. The system of liberal representative democracy has been in place from at least the end of the Second World War in most places, and from the mid-1970s in Spain and Portugal. It provides a cloak of legitimacy for the destructive social policies, in part sustained by the mixed nature of the State's policy complex, which generally includes some elements of positive reform. The manufacture and reproduction of consent is carried out through the educational system, the abundance of the capitalist system itself, the media and the all permeating dominant discourses of affluence, progress, democracy,

responsibility, yet always with the possibility of coercion in the background. With exceptions on the peripheries (e.g. Australia's treatment of indigenous Australians, British and Spanish treatment of insurgent nationalists, the victimisation of Roma, asylum seekers and refugees in most states) the populations of the CCCs have experienced nothing like the savagery of the State in so many Latin American countries (Agger & Buus Jensen, 1996; Hollander, 1997), although the altogether sharper regime of accumulation in the USA contrasts with that of Western Europe and Canada. Setting aside for a moment the distortion of humanity that capitalism imposes on everyone, the oppressed within the CCCs are typically minorities rather than majorities.

The experience of these regions then has been of the selective adoption of neo-liberal models, but with continuing 'no-go areas', the best example being the British National Health Service, repeatedly altered, reformed, modernised, but despite the incursion of private finance and the contracting out of some services, it is only now in the New Labour third electoral term being fully submitted to the ravages of capital (Mandelstam, 2006; Pollock, 2004). As a result the social welfare system is still large and contradictory - having both a benign, ameliorative, helpful side, as well as one that is all to do with reproducing the system and controlling the population (Gough, 1979). It is in that system that most psychologists work. Intellectuals and professionals in CCC societies therefore exist in a complex situation. They are integrated in complex ways with the system on which they depend upon for their livelihoods. To the extent that they align themselves with critical traditions these will be feminist, left liberal and socialist, and Marxist (the latter more in continental Europe than in Britain). This would seem to contrast with the USA where the integration with the State and society is also strong, but there is so little of a socialist

and Marxist tradition, and with Latin America, where there are strong socialist and radical traditions, but much weaker integration with the State and its agenda (Jiménez 1990).

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

Key elements of PL for the CCC context

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

They are

1. 'conscientization',
2. 'realismo-critico' and 'de-ideologisation'
3. the social-societal orientation,

4. 'the preferential option for the oppressed majorities'
5. methodological eclecticism.

Conscientization

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

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

Realismo Crítico and de-ideologisation

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

Theory therefore has a supportive but not a fundamental role, as a kind of scaffolding to guide action. This orientation he called '*realismo-crítico*' in contrast to the more usual approach which he called '*idealismo-metodológico*' (methodological idealism). The obvious translation to '*critical realism*' would risk confusion with the work of Roy Bhaskar in the philosophy of science and social science (Bhaskar, 1997, 1998). *Critical realism* in this sense, although not inconsistent with Martín-Baró's concept, has a distinct meaning and therefore the Spanish phrase is retained here. However, *realismo-crítico* is not a naïve realism: the nature of the social reality can be difficult to apprehend, not just for the people, but for the theory and practice of psychology itself. It is therefore necessary to de-ideologise reality, to peel off the layers of ideology (for Martín-Baró the disguised exercise of power) that individualise and naturalise phenomena such as the fatalism of Latin American societies (Martín-Baró, 1987/1996a) or the individualism in the CCCs (Cromby et al., 2006; Moloney & Kelly, 2004).

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

A social-societal orientation

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

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

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

In the CCCs, the notion of the oppressed majority requires some development and reinterpretation. On first sight it might be said that there are oppressed minorities in the CCCs, but not majorities, but a more global orientation would contest this boundary around the CCCs. We can restate the issue as follows. There is a need to test psychology against the experiences of those whose lives are distorted by the accumulation process and its correlates – the excluded, the marginalised and the oppressed included (Dussel, 1997, 1998). But it is also important to recognise that those groups are diverse and fragmented. Disabled people in an urban suburb, migrant workers in a country town, 'surplus' people in a poor neighbourhood, victims

of domestic violence, Indonesian textile workers producing cheap clothing for a high street chain in the CCCs (and middle income countries), Iraqis and Palestinians bombed by weapons from the CCCs, or traditional farmers (for example in Mexico and India) impoverished and displaced by cheap grain imports from the US: all these are part of the oppressed majority that are the proper focus of engagement for a globally literate LP practised *from* the CCCs (Sloan, 2005).

Methodological eclecticism

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

LP in the CCCs, some emerging examples and some gaps

In this section we will explore briefly three areas of work that are most consistent with LP, and which in effect could be relabelled as a Liberation Psychology

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

Community social psychology

Community social psychology appears elsewhere in this book, in its Latin American context. Here we are concerned with what can be identified as a family of approaches to community psychology, sometimes known as 'Critical Community Psychology', that may be contrasted with the dominant tendencies of North American Community Psychology (Burton, 2004b). These approaches are to be found in continental Europe, Britain, Australasia, South Africa as well as in Latin America (Reich, et al., 2007). In these countries, as in Latin America (Montero, 1996), community psychologists are keen to distinguish their orientation from that which has developed in North America. The emphasis varies, with Australasian and South African community psychologists emphasising the indigenous perspective and the complicity of mainstream psychology in racial injustice (Bishop, Sonn, Fisher, & Drew, 2001; Seedat, Duncan, & Lazarus, 2001; Sonn & Green, 2006) although other roots are shared. European community psychology is diverse, and the differences of language make co-operation relatively difficult. However, the attempt to set out and practice a distinctively European community psychology is a common feature with emphasis on structural social system analysis, on collective social forms and struggle,

on cultural diversity, and on methodologies that emphasise phenomenological understandings of social psychological experience (e.g. Francescato & Tomai, 2001; Fryer & Fagan, 2003; Kagan, 2002; Kagan, Evans et al., 2004). Not everyone within the networks would adhere to such a critical orientation, however. To these may be added approaches in North America, especially those that have focussed on work with populations who owe their presence to past and present imperialisms (African US-Americans, Latinos) and native North Americans (e.g. Perilla, 1999; Van Uchelen, Davidson, Quressette, Brasfield, & Demerais, 1997; Watts, Williams, & Jagers, 2003) or who are otherwise disadvantaged within the territory of the dominant economic world power. Two recent text books of Community Psychology (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2004; Seedat et al., 2001) both utilise explicitly critical and emancipatory frameworks. Both have roots outside the USA, the former in Canada and Australia with contributors from a variety of countries and the latter in South Africa (not a CCC in itself, although there are contributions from Australia and the USA).

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

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

Taken together this work crosses a number of levels (micro, meso and macro), foci (policy, research, practice) and domains (crime and disorder, neighbourhood regeneration, health and mental health, community organising). In so doing it cumulatively builds up a systematic approach to the understanding of multiple deprivation in relation to: a) its structural and cultural dimensions, b) the lived experience of the affected (whose identity is centre stage) (Edge, Stewart, & Kagan, 2004), c) the 'official' policies and interventions on offer (in their positive and negative aspects), and d) the dynamic relations among these sectors. To do this required a diverse repertoire of personal, professional and political skills backed by a methodological pluralism engaged with workers from other disciplines and from none. It meets our definition of LP in that it involves conscientization with our

project partners, its construction of theory is led by engagement with practical social problems ('realismo-critico') and the work involves 'de-ideologisation' of the 'official story' about multiple deprivation and the policy and practice solutions on offer. The orientation is social-societal while not losing site of the lived experience of the affected, the oppressed victims of the political economy of this CCC for whom we maintain a preferential option, and as noted above we adopt a methodological eclecticism that goes well beyond the qualitative-quantitative debates in psychology (Burton & Kagan, 1998), adding a utopian and systemic dimension to action research while adopting methods and concepts from other disciplines (Burton & Kagan, 2000; Kagan, 2007, Kagan & Burton, 2000; Kagan, Burton, & Siddiquee, 2008; Kagan, Caton, Amin, & Choudry, 2004).

'Social model' approaches in disability and mental health

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

obvious connection between LP and the cause of disabled people's emancipation (Burton et al., 2001).

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

Table 1 here

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

of survivors and users as well as professionals and activists based in universities or outside the formal service system. *Asylum* makes an explicit connection with the political sphere, which is seen as intimately connected with the mental health system. The magazine is closely linked with the network, *Psychology, Politics Resistance*. It is chiefly concerned with opposition to the orthodox psychiatric system, with particular emphases on electroconvulsive treatment, the domination of practice by the drug companies and the powers of the State over people with mental health problems. An important emphasis of those within these movements is on recovery from mental disorder/illness. That this is scarcely mentioned in orthodox mental health praxis is noteworthy. However a crucial further distinction is made between medical and social definitions of recovery. This latter case mirrors the praxis of the disabled people's movement and the social model of disability: the emphasis is on social change to accept, include and adapt to people with unusual mental health, rather than expecting conformity from them. In this context the Hearing Voices Network is worthy of note for its work to demonstrate that the experience of auditory hallucinations is a common one rather than inevitably pathological, while offering practical support and alternative strategies for those troubled by their voices. These social approaches to disability and mental health again share elements in common with LP, including conscientisation and de-ideologisation along with the preferential option for the oppressed and a social-societal orientation.

Critical policy studies

A further area of work that could be identified with LP is an emerging field of critical policy studies carried out by psychologists. While mainstream psychology has from time to time identified public policy as a legitimate field for psychologists to contribute to (e.g. Keisler, 1980) and psychologists have shaped public policy almost

since the birth of the discipline (Danziger, 1990; Rose, 1985), in these critical studies psychologists work to de-ideologise (Martín-Baró, 1985, 1996b; Sloan, 1993) official statements and formulations of policy, as well as implicit and covert policies and aspects of policy. This work has ranged from social policy to State security.

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

In the latter case, the policy analytic work by those with a nominally psychological identity or affiliation can be similar to those from those other disciplines that at least in the UK dominate the field. However, we would argue that it is legitimate to conduct an analysis that connects three things: 1) the 'bigger picture' of ruling class accumulation strategies (political economy in neoliberal times), 2) the management of those social sectors whose neediness challenges the market economy, whose presence is inconvenient, or whose behaviour challenges the social order, (the terrain of social policy) and 3) the experience, aspirations, characteristics and needs of

the affected (the more traditionally psychological area of focus). This is what we have been attempting in our own critical work on social policy for intellectually disabled people, urban regeneration and crime and disorder.

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

Over a period of some 35 years, psychologists have conducted analyses and exposés of the use of psychological methods by State security. This work of course has a close affinity with that of the LALP movement for which the themes of torture and political violence have been of great importance (Agger & Buus Jensen, 1996; Hollander, 1997; Lira & Castillo, 1991; Lira & Weinstein, 2000; Martín-Baró, 1988, 2000). One area of concern has been the use of psychology in coercive interrogation and torture. In the UK a group of members of the British Society for Social

Responsibility in Science (BSSRS, 1974) exposed the interrogation techniques being used by the British for republicans in Northern Ireland who had been imprisoned without trial. The techniques used built on the sensory deprivation experiments at McGill University in Canada that had received interest and probably funding from the CIA (McCoy, 2006; Watson, 1978). The link was made by Tim Shallice, an academic neuropsychologist in an article in the journal *Cognition* (Shallice, 1974), but the use of the techniques and their consequences was made known through the BSSRS pamphlet and subsequently through other publications (Ackroyd, Margolis, Rosenhead, & Shallice, 1977, by the group that produced the BSSRS pamphlet; McGuffin, 1974, a book that was banned by the British government). The techniques, although later prohibited by the British government were nevertheless to be used elsewhere, most recently at US occupied Guantánamo Bay and Abu Ghraib (Harper, 2004; McCoy, 2006; Physicians for Human Rights, 2005), despite their censure by mainstream medical opinion (Rubinstein, Pross, Davidoff, & Iacopino, 2005) and by the United Nations (United Nations, 1985). The scandal of psychologists participating in interrogation at Guantánamo has led to a debate on both sides of the Atlantic, with the craven position of the APA leadership coming under attack (Anderson, 2006; Psychologists for Social Responsibility, 2006a, 2006b; Soldz, 2006a, 2006b). Moreover, the institutional links between orthodox psychology and the military industrial complex have also been explored (Burton & Kagan, 2007; Gray & Zielinski, 2006, Roberts, 2007). Individual psychologists have also been active in the struggle against the new imperialism, for example John Sloboda with the Iraq Body Count project (www.iraqbodycount.org).

Another body of work should be noted, that has emerged in post colonial or newly CCC context of the Republic of Ireland. This has been orientated to the

understanding of power differentials within a broad appreciation of the societal dynamics of power and the construction of the person, articulating the relationship between systems of oppression and psychological patterns. It has made explicit reference to the work of Martín-Baró among others, emphasising the importance of internalised oppression (Madden & Moane, 2006; Moane, 1999; Ruth, 2006).

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

A really social psychology?

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

Psychology in general has often put social and economic factors beyond its disciplinary boundary, preferring instead to look to intra-psychic explanations. A minority has always worked in other ways but such approaches have always been outside the mainstream individualistic approach. In keeping with that minority view we see the human being as becoming who and what they are through the process of interacting in a socially organised and socially defined world. This is not to deny the bodily reality of humans as a kind of great ape with brains, eyes, ears, hands and so

on, but to suggest that the nature of our species is such that we are pre-prepared to enter into a social milieu, *and* that in doing so we become what is distinctively human, and our psychology, including our most private and personal experiences (Burton & Kagan, 1994), is rooted in, dependent on and structured by this. But these social relations are not just a matter of interactions between people, or even groups (Bhaskar, 1998; Danermark, Ekström, Jakobsen, & Karlsson, 2002). This is where psychologists have had most difficulty understanding the nature of the social, and in trying to articulate a social approach that is distinct from individualism. We have to understand how the social system is structured and how it works, how social phenomena that exist at a level of analysis beyond the interpersonal nevertheless enter into the construction and functioning of human actors, their ideas, desires, prejudices, feelings, preferences, habits, customs and culture (Leonard, 1984; Burton and Kagan, 1994).

The really social approach has another key feature. It has an explicit value base which it takes to be an integral part of itself. Unlike the traditional model of 'positivist' or 'empiricist' social science that maintains a clear line between facts and values, we see facts as value laden, and human situations inconceivable without values and value conflict (along with conflict of needs and interests) as inherent in the kind of social world in which we live. That social world is an unfair one. It is one founded on exploitation, on inequality, on oppression, and on the hiding of this from much day to day consideration. Just as Marx showed how the theft of labour from the worker was inherent (but hidden) in the commodity that was sold by the capitalist, and in the profit made, so it has also been shown that the actions of our governments and the corporations that govern our world are based on maximising the extraction of wealth to continually make profit that fuels the perpetuation of the system, extraction

from countries and populations (nations, classes, genders) at their expense. Organised myths and propaganda disguise this (Carey, 1997) and also allow the system to perpetuate itself through education and other forms of socialisation (in families, shops, churches, and so on). Those processes of economic, cultural and ideological domination are the real stuff of psychology, and a really social approach does its best to understand how they operate through people, both as separate and collective subjects.

A really social psychology then has the following characteristics:

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

but it doesn't throw it away, instead raiding it as a resource (along with others from outside psychology).

Really social psychology, then, draws on and extends LP. It learns from its example but it also has a broader scope, both in terms of its conceptual basis and its terrain of application. We regard it as a generative approach that can guide the development of an adequate psychology, one that is realist, thoroughly (really) social in construction and relevant to real social contexts and problems, offering a unifying framework that while escaping the error of relativism (through its realist ontology and explicit moral project) does not dictate nor homogenise the ways of doing psychology in different contexts.

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

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Table 1: **Community psychological work with people with learning difficulties**

| Strategy for intervention | Content and method |
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| Furtherance of critical consciousness | Working to develop dialogical relationships, which enable group conscientization, and possibilities for change? Sharing ‘expert’ voices and remaining open to learning. Understanding experience from the person's point of view, listening and enabling people to get together to share common concerns and solution. For example, health awareness groups, citizen and self-advocacy. Education, hobby and leisure opportunities and participation in local campaigns (for example, to keep post offices open) and organisations such as civic societies. |
| Creation of new forms of social relations (new social settings) | Facilitating the bringing together of people with common interests, and their allies, and helping them connect with others for greater power to change. For example self-advocacy groups, linking these to other local civil rights organisations, transport lobby groups, and neighbourhood groups. Developing new projects which seek to include people with learning difficulties and other people, such as residents' associations, park users' groups, walking or fitness groups, arts projects. |

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| Development of alliances and counter systems | Working to develop alliances that will challenge the status quo, build a counter system and form part of wider emancipatory social movements. For example, facilitating links between user groups and local women's groups; combining pressure for better continence services with environmental campaigns around personal hygiene products; enabling people with learning difficulties to make links with other groups of marginalised people through the internet; linking with local campaigns and information projects around unemployment and contributing to national and international movements on labour conditions. |
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Kagan and Burton (2005) p. 34.