The Role of Organizations in Liberation Psychology: Applications to the Study of Migrations*

El Papel de las Organizaciones en la Psicología de la Liberación: Aplicaciones al Estudio de las Migraciones

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Abstract. The incorporation of an immigrant population in the receiving society often takes place in the context of asymmetrical power relationships between immigrants and other groups in society. This often reduces the chances of successfully fulfilling any goals or plans that immigrants may have for their lives in the new country. In this paper we analyze how the study of migration can be enriched by Liberation Psychology, a theoretical approach which calls for the transformation of society at all levels (structural, organizational and individual) as a means to create social justice and conditions of well-being for all social groups. In addition, we analyze how the internal dynamics of several organizations working in the field of migration are actually helping to perpetuate the status quo. Finally, we highlight the potential role that organizations can play in the construction of a just multicultural society, using a Liberation Psychology approach.
Keywords: liberation, migration, organizations, social justice, social transformation, well-being.

Resumen. La incorporación de la población inmigrante a la sociedad receptora se realiza frecuentemente bajo relaciones de poder asimétricas respecto a otros colectivos. Esto a menudo dificulta sus posibilidades para desarrollar el proyecto migratorio. En este trabajo analizamos cómo el estudio de las migraciones puede verse enriquecido por la Psicología de la Liberación, perspectiva teórica que aboga por la transformación de las sociedades en sus diferentes niveles (estructural, organizacional, e individual) como medio para alcanzar el bienestar y la justicia social para todos los colectivos. Además, analizamos cómo las dinámicas de funcionamiento de algunas organizaciones en el ámbito migratorio están ayudando a perpetuar el estatus quo. Finalmente, enfatizamos el rol que desde la Psicología de la Liberación pueden desempeñar las organizaciones como promotoras del proceso de construcción de una sociedad multicultural justa.
Palabras clave: bienestar, justicia social, liberación, migración, organizaciones, transformación social.

Migratory flows are increasing all over the world as a result of the current globalized economic system, which generates and justifies extreme inequality among individuals, social groups and countries (Manzano-Arrondo, 2011; Nafstad, Blakar, Carlquist, Phelps & Rand-Hendriksen, 2007). In this way, the incorporation of the immigrant population into the receiving society often takes place in a context of asymmetrical power relationships between immigrants and other groups in society. This, in turn, reduces the chances of successfully fulfilling any goals or plans that immigrants may have for their lives in the new country. At their chosen destination, recent immigrants seek social legitimization, while the local population may feel threatened by a potential loss of social status and resources (García-Ramírez, De la Mata, Paloma,

& Hernández-Plaza, 2011). It is therefore crucial to find both theoretical and applied frameworks which can promote a situation of well-being and social cohesion in today's culturally diverse societies.

Liberation Psychology analyzes migratory phenomena in terms of power and calls for the transformation of societies at all levels (structural, organizational and individual) as a means to create social justice and conditions of well-being for all social groups (García-Ramírez et al., 2011; Hernández-Plaza, García-Ramírez, Camacho, & Paloma, 2010). In this transformation process, the role that organizations can play in the promotion of a just multicultural society is considered to be essential. Early on, community psychology considered organizational settings to be contexts of influence primarily at the individual level rather than necessarily catalysts for social change. This perspective is based on the idea that "individuals cannot be understood unless we understand their natural settings and their interactions with those settings" (Keys & Frank, 1987, p. 244). In accordance with this, in empo-

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werment theory, organizational characteristics were originally thought to promote the individual empowerment of the organization's members (for example, Maton & Salem, 1995). Some time later, the organization began to be conceived as a setting which has the capacity not only to influence its members, but also to influence the society in which it forms a part (Maton, 2008; Peterson & Zimmerman, 2004). Currently, several authors are working to promote the notion that organizations can function as catalysts for social change and the promotion of social well-being, rather than maintaining the status quo and being interested only in the well-being of their own members (Bess, Prilleltensky, Perkins, & Collins, 2009; Evans, Hanlin, & Prilleltensky, 2007). Despite all this, it is still true that community psychology has only just begun to study organizational settings as promoters of social change, and holistic approaches are still required to progress in this area (Boyd & Angelique, 2002).

This article analyzes the role that organizations should play to achieve a just multicultural society from the point of view of Liberation Psychology. Firstly, we describe the main contributions that Liberation Psychology can make to migration studies. Secondly, we analyze different situations that can lead organizations to act in a way which perpetuates oppression. Thirdly, we propose a model where the interconnection among liberation-promoting organizations is used as a catalyst for progress towards social justice. Finally, we analyze the potential of this perspective for practical application in studying and working with migrant communities.

Liberation Psychology and Migration Studies

Liberation Psychology (LP) developed in Latin America in the 1970s as an attempt to go beyond mainstream psychology (De la Corte, 2006). Its main exponent was Ignacio Martín-Baró, who suggested that this new way of 'doing' psychology should (a) have a social dimension (ending socio-economic misery and political oppression), rather than focusing on individual liberation; (b) give priority to practical truth (have practical, or social, utility) over theoretical truth; and (c) have clear preference for the oppressed majorities. These defining principles are expressed, respectively, by the following quotations from this author:

> The point is that it may not be individuals who need treatment, but rather society as a whole. The treatment of society is called revolution (Martín-Baró, 1973, p. 204).

> Let it be the popular praxis itself which decides the validity of our concepts and models, its utility not only to explain existing reality but also to transform it for the benefit of the oppressed and the project of historic liberation (Dobles, 1986, p. 73).

> It is about putting psychological knowledge at the service of the construction of a society where the well-being of a few is not based on the lack of well-being of the majority, where the self-realization of some does not require the negation of others, and where an interest for a minority does not demand the dehumanization of all (Martín-Baró, 1985, p. 111).

Oppression is a state of domination where the dominating group obtains privileges over others by restricting their access to resources and limiting their capacity to respond (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005). LP considers that the clear inequalities in power wielded by different individuals are best understood as a manifestation of the inequalities of power found in social structures. Thus, what occurs on the individual, relational, and collective levels is seen as corresponding to that which occurs on the structural level (Fryer, 2008). This approach, therefore, (a) denounces mainstream psychology as concentrating too much on the individual level and ignoring structural causes and solutions; and (b) promotes individual and structural liberation simultaneously, based on the conviction that both processes feed and depend on each other (Manzano-Arrondo, 2011; Martín-Baró, 1987; Prilleltensky, 2004).

The immigrant population arriving in the receiving country is negatively affected by a variety of oppressive structural conditions present there, which affect the immigrants' various individual spheres (Moane, 2003; Prilleltensky, 2008). These conditions have consequences, therefore, on the collective level (feelings of alienation, passive attitudes), on the relational level (isolation, lack of participation), and on the personal level (low self-esteem, depression). For example, the Moroccan immigrant population present in Andalusia often works in insecure jobs and for low salaries as a result of a system which condones this type of exploitation; they use public services infrequently, as these are not sufficiently adapted to their cultural needs; they have little contact with the local population since they expect only rejection from them; they participate very little in social spheres as a result of their explicit exclusion from political settings; and they show signs of depressed well-being (García-Ramírez et al., 2005; Hernández-Plaza, Pozo, & Alonso-Morillejo, 2004). The dominated population may eventually naturalize and interiorize these beliefs, thus also contributing to this permanent cycle of oppression (Martín-Baró, 1987). However, although these situations clearly weaken the dominated groups, in the approach offered by LP it is also suggested that these groups have strengths and that they construct niches of resistance which can serve to confront and overcome the conditions of oppression (Watts & Serrano-García, 2003). By drawing on these strengths, LP suggests that a liberation process is possible whereby the immigrant population may transform the unjust structural conditions and ultimately transform itself, acquiring critical thinking about the dynamics of injustice, gaining the capacity to respond to inequalities by working with

others in similar situations, and taking necessary action to resist them (García-Ramírez et al., 2011). Through this active, ecological process, the immigrant population contributes to the building of a more just multicultural society, and at the same time achieves a greater level of well-being (Nelson & Prillestensky, 2005; Paloma, Herrera, & García-Ramírez, 2009).

The transformation of these structural conditions of oppression can have corresponding effects on each of the individual spheres. On the community level, the immigrant population might gain equal access to key resources such as housing, employment, community services, and formal social support. On the relational level, the supportive relationships both within the immigrant community and with the local community could be positive, and they would enjoy equal opportunities for social participation. And on the personal level, the immigrant community could gain greater levels of self-determination, personal control and positive identity (Hernández-Plaza et al., 2010).

Thus, *liberation* implies (1) the transformation of oppressive social structures through collective action, unmasking "all kinds of elitist ideology, that is, the assumptions that are treated as common sense and which justify and operationalize an oppressive exploitative system" (Martín-Baró, 1985, p. 6); and (2) the transformation of the psychological patterns of internalized oppression which perpetuate the injustice. It is therefore "a dialectical process in which the changing of social conditions and the changing of personal attitudes each make the other possible" (Martín-Baró, 1987, p. 156). In short, LP has as its objective structural and individual liberation; as its validating instrument, praxis; as its focus, the oppressed majorities; and as its methodology, the combination of collective action and critical thought.

The mainstream perspective with which migratory phenomena have traditionally been studied links the well-being of the immigrant population to its chances of adapting culturally to the receiving context. From this point of view, Berry (2005) articulated the first two-dimensional model for acculturation, defined as the process of cultural and psychological change which takes place as a result of contact between two or more groups and their individual members. Berry suggested the existence of four acculturative strategies (different ways in which the immigrant population aims to achieve well-being), based on two dimensions: (1) orientation, or lack thereof, toward or away from their own group (preference for maintaining cultural heritage and group identity), and (2) orientation, or lack thereof, toward other groups (preference for taking part in and having contact with other cultural groups in the receiving society). By the combination of both dimensions, Berry establishes that integration is characterized by the interest that individuals have in maintaining their original culture and interacting with other groups. Assimilation occurs when individuals do not wish to maintain their cultural identity, but rather seek to interact with other cultures. Separation takes place when individuals wish to maintain their own culture and at the same time avoid interaction with others. Finally, marginalization is what occurs when there is little interest in, or possibility of, individuals maintaining their culture or interacting with others. Other models have since been put forward to expand on this one, such as the interactive acculturation model (Bourhis, Montaruli, El-Geledi, Harvey, & Barrette, 2010) and the relative acculturation extended model (Navas et al., 2005). These models, which belong to the mainstream perspective, have limitations which could be improved by taking into account at least four aspects of LP (Paloma, García-Ramírez, Camacho, & Hernández-Plaza, 2010).

Firstly, marginalization should not be considered an acculturative strategy chosen freely by the immigrant group (Rudmin, 2006). LP describes marginalization, rather, as a situation in which the minority suffers discrimination at the hands of the receiving society through an oppressive ideology, institutionalized by such control mechanisms as violence (restriction of free movement and residence), economic exploitation (unjust labor markets), cultural control (unappreciated values and traditions) and political control (suppressed participation and right to vote).

Secondly, rather than equating well-being with biculturalism (Sam, 2006), a positive relationship should be established between multicultural identity (or cultural autonomy) and the well-being of the immigrant population. Multicultural individuals are defined as having strong cultural roots as a reference point, but also as being open to borrowing elements of other cultures which they perceive to be positive for their own process of self-construction (Garza & Gallegos, 1985).

Thirdly, socio-economic factors and power relationships, rather than simply cultural identity, should also be taken into account in migration studies (Tseng & Yoshikawa, 2008). These elements are considered necessary in LP since inter-group conflicts may be more aptly explained by poverty issues than by cultural conflicts (Oliveri, 2008).

Finally, LP emphasizes proposals in which the immigrant population can achieve well-being in oppressive contexts, which are ideologically non-multicultural (Prilleltensky, 2008). A just, multicultural society is one that:

> Gives everyone the right to live well with his own cultural specificity, within a framework that offers real equality of opportunity, and an underlying democratic culture affording mutual respect, negotiation in the event of conflict and continuous development of the initial cultural models (Oliveri, 2008, p. 35).

From a LP approach, organizations can act as catalyst for a liberation process which may help the immigrant population in its resistance against oppressive

conditions, and in its transformation toward both a more active and critical identity and a more just context. Organizations act as mediators between the structural level of society and the spheres of the individual, and are therefore an ideal area in which the changes required to bring social justice and individual well-being can be promoted (Berger & Neuhaus, 1977; Prilleltensky & Prilleltensky, 2006).

Organizations which Perpetuate Oppression

Many kinds of organizations claim to support oppressed groups yet at the same time contribute to perpetuating the unjust structures in society. These organizations create the illusion of change by using discourses of liberation and promoting behavioral patterns which replace the need for real contributions. Below, three types of situations are described which can situate such organizations within the cycle of oppression.

Firstly, organizations may find themselves playing a part in a merely tokenistic system. That is, they may be informed of or consulted about situations which affect them, but they do not have any real decision-making power (Apfelbaum, 1989). This strategy avoids potential disruptive action by the oppressed group and thus ensures that the status quo is maintained (Wright & Taylor, 1998). This is the case with several consultative organizations in the arena of social policy for immigrants, who aim to provide a channel through which the different stakeholders in regional migratory phenomena can debate and present proposals to achieve community integration of the immigrant population. However, in many cases these organizations have no real decision-making capacity as regards regional policy.

Secondly, organizations may also suffer from the process of "co-option" (Ife, 1995), whereby members become part of the very power structures which they originally opposed. One example is that presented in the study by Balcázar et al. (2011) which analyzed the situation of a local organization which offers support and defense for Hispanic families with disabled children in the United States. Under pressure from some parents to improve some of the services offered, the director of the organization eventually threatens these parents by saying she will report them and their illegal status to immigration services. Unfortunately, this director held her position due to her past work in defense of the immigrant Hispanic population of the country.

Thirdly, a limited perspective of the concept of empowerment can also lead organizations to maintain practices which are not sufficiently critical of the status quo. The term empowerment was originally defined as a process by which individuals take control of their own lives (Rappaport, 1981). This concept

stimulated community psychology in practical and intellectual terms, helping it reach an understanding of the relevance of convergent solutions in community issues; improving our vision of the individual as a human being with fully developed needs and rights; promoting the symmetrical relationships between professionals and members of the community; and bringing to the fore those settings which act as mediating structures in society (for a compilation these contributions, see Serrano-García, 2011). However, despite best efforts to conceptualize empowerment from an ecological point of view (Peterson & Zimmerman, 2004; Zimmerman, 2000), this process is still generally discussed on the individual level, ignoring the fact that power dynamics can have effects on many levels (Fisher, Sonn, & Evans, 2007). Thus, many interventions guided by empowerment theory suggest raising individuals' personal power in order that they may take effective action over their own lives—for example, by increasing self-esteem or self-control—but work little to affect policies or the resources available (Riger, 1993). That is, they promote empowerment that "involves participation and control, but not necessarily a fair share of the resources in society" (Nelson, Prilleltensky, & MacGillivary, 2001, p. 656). Consistent with this approach, Riger (1993) states that "empowerment of all disenfranchised groups could be dangerous" (p. 284), that "situations which foster community may be the opposite of those which foster empowerment" (p. 288), or that "becoming empowered may reduce the interdependence that produces a strong sense of community" (p. 289). This is explained by the fact that she considers individual empowerment may generate competition for resources between those who are empowered, thus weakening the community. Thus, empowerment and community can be constructed as incompatible objectives. Vázquez (2004), as well as collating the various arguments pertaining to the limitations and inconsistencies of the concept of empowerment as an instrument for liberation, also denounces empowerment as a construct generated by the capitalist society of the United States, which is particularly centered on individual objectives and scarcely adapted to less invisible realities of oppression, such as those taking place in Latin American societies.

In LP, however, liberation (structural and personal change) is considered achievable only through community contexts. That is, liberation and community are not only compatible, but communities established around organizations are essential for achieving liberation. In this way, LP considers focus on the process of individual empowerment, as if individuals were isolated entities, or empowering for self-interest, to be counterproductive. This practice would lead a small minority to climb an unjust social ladder, maintaining the status quo within an individualistic, competitive ideology. One good example of this is described by Ellacuría (1999), in his denunciation of the use of uni-

versities as a mechanism by which some members of the oppressed majority have managed to become part of the oppressive minority and work actively to perpetuate the privilege which they have accessed. This critique can be applied to the work of Hrabowski and Maton (1995), in which talented African American students achieved great academic success in a predominantly white university after having been through an intervention program. This represents a success story on the level of these few individuals but is completely contrary to the principles of liberation, since this interpretation merely extends individual success, rather than weakening unjust social structures. In contrast, in the case of liberation, members of organizations cooperate and work in connection with others, not only in search of individual or group well-being and benefit, but also to bring about structural change in such a way as to build a fair society for all parties. In this sense, the key organizational element which can be a catalyst for well-being and social justice is the construction of interconnected networks of organizations which promote liberation.

Organizations which Promote Liberation

Liberation Promoting Organizations (LPOs) are community settings which act as a "collective political power" (Heller, 1989), whereby active participation by members helps to create the economic, social, and physical conditions necessary for social change (Wandersman & Florin, 2000). Participation by immigrants in LPOs helps them in their resistance against oppressive social conditions. This works through the sharing of experiences with others who are in a similar situation, the formation of critical thought as a means of establishing a connection between the personal situation and the structural conditions from which they suffer, and the development of skills and concrete actions which allows participants to transform unjust structures. These mutually reinforcing processes together break the cycle of oppression.

In previous studies, we have analyzed the ways in which immigrant grass-roots organizations allow (a) reconstruction of the self and sense of citizenship amongst activists, (b) better integration of communities, and (c) the construction of a more just multicultural society (Paloma, García-Ramírez, De la Mata, & Amal, 2010). LPOs can thus act on an organizational level with consequences on individual (individual well-being) and structural levels (social justice).

Social justice and individual well-being are interrelated, interdependent dimensions (Prilleltensky, 2004). Not only is well-being built on policies for social justice which correct physical, educational, and economic inequality (Payá, 2000), but it is also enhanced by, and positively associated with, participatory commitment to the construction of a just society (Klar &

Kasser, 2009). This is especially true of hedonic well-being (life satisfaction, positive affect), eudaimonic well-being (personal growth, vitality), and social well-being (social integration).

Our proposal for a conceptualization of the structures and dynamics of LPOs in an ecological context is based on the four-dimensional organizational structure proposed by Maton (2000): structural, relational, cultural, and instrumental components. It also draws on the previous six-dimensional proposal: a common belief system, planned activities to achieve goals, relational environment, a clear role structure, core individuals or leaders, and organizational mechanisms assuring the maintenance and the adoption of changes required by the contextual situation (Maton, 2008; Paloma et al., 2010). In this study, we define the content of this dimensional structure in LP terms (García-Ramírez et al., 2011; Martín-Baró, 1973, 1985, 1987), from our own experiences with organizations in their effort to promote the rights of oppressed groups and eliminate injustices (Manzano-Arrondo, 2004, 2006, 2011; Manzano-Arrondo & Paloma, 2007; Paloma et al., 2010), as well as from comparable experiences to be found in international scientific literature (Anderson, 2010; Gooden, 2008; Nelson et al., 2001; Piper, 2010; Williams, Labonte, & O'Brien, 2003). Using a LP approach, the four dimensions are analyzed as organizational elements which contribute to the process of the liberation of immigrant populations, and are characterized by the content of the dynamics which are described below.

The structural dimension implies the fair distribution of resources between members of the organizational setting, a role structure which permits the participation of all members, and organizational mechanisms which ensure that decision-making is transparent and horizontal. This type of structure creates an atmosphere of shared responsibility between members, and a shared project which includes them in group actions. As this structure swings into action, it becomes a model by which the construction of social justice beyond the confines of the organization can be stimulated. Anderson (2010) describes the workings of an organization which was created to fight for the rights of migrant domestic workers in the United Kingdom. This organization, which included members who were domestic workers themselves and others who accompanied them in their cause, worked in a horizontal way, with mutual support between members, membership open to individuals of any ethnic origin, and norms of participation by all members in political activities. These features also made the achievement of the organizational objective (legal status recognizing immigrants' right to work) easier.

The relational dimension relates to the existence of positive, high-quality relationships between members of the organization and with members of other organizations. This type of interpersonal and inter-group rela-

tionship eliminates isolation, reinforces social networks, and allows feelings about individual and group problems to be shared. In this way, day-to-day difficulties can be dealt with a more positive attitude. Through their implication in such organizational settings, individuals and groups come to realize that their experiences are not unique circumstances, and that they share common roots. These activities develop critical thinking, which in turn unmasks the discourses of oppression which maintain oppression and injustice. In their work with ethnic minorities in New Zealand, Williams et al. (2003) found that oppressed individuals who share their life experiences with others in similar settings receive, in exchange, a feeling of self-transformation, greater self-confidence, restored pride in their cultural identities, a sense of belonging, and a source of courage and inspiration in others. Thus, individuals develop a sense of self-efficacy with regard to effecting social change (Paloma et al., 2010).

The cultural dimension is related to the belief systems and liberational values which guide the organization in its work against the dominant oppressive system. In her description of the organizations in the Afro-Caribbean population of Canada, Gooden (2008) highlights how the Canadian Negro Women's Association included as part of its discourse the need for the group to have a political voice at a national level in order to denounce and overcome issues traditionally ignored in the Canadian black movement (institutionalized racism, discrimination against black students in the education system, and so on). The liberating culture of an organization includes having the courage to fight oppression on its different ecological levels, inspiring other organizations, constructing networks of action and resistance, and elaborating a broad vision of society in terms of justice.

The instrumental dimension refers to the methods that an organization uses to fight for social change. From the LP point of view, the tools and methods used by organizations should (a) promote those organizations and social movements, (b) recuperate the historical memory of the group in question, (c) unmask the dominant narratives or the so-called "common sense" of the oppressor, (d) work on the strengths of the group itself, (e) promote critical thought and action amongst members of the community, and (f) campaign for the community's institutions to manage the community's needs, fighting for its rights and denouncing injustice through political participation (Martín-Baró, 1987). In this way, when social justice is finally achieved, it will have been the fruit of a joint project between all types of LPOs, motivated by more than just the problems facing their own particular groups. In their study of a Moroccan immigrants' organization in Spain, Paloma et al. (2010) describe the different activities designed to promote the integration of this group in Spanish society. These include training activities to facilitate access to resources in the receiving society; celebrations of their own culture, which help to consolidate a multi-faceted identity; informational meetings about their rights, which help them advocate for the equal treatment to which they are entitled; and educational mediation to reduce prejudice within the local community.

Another relevant point for the liberation process is that of the interconnectedness of different LPOs acting as nodes. Piper (2010) emphasized the importance of basing activism for immigrants' rights on a strong trans-organizational network in order to achieve greater strength and influence in the implementation of political measures. Indeed, LPOs are born of existing organizations and in turn stimulate the emergence of other organizations experiencing direct or indirect oppression. These, in turn, generate, share, and develop proposals for social change. The result is a complex network of interconnections between LPOs which act as nodes in this network of resistance to oppression and promotion of a just, multicultural society. A network of organizations oriented towards liberation therefore works together, both for social change (i.e., putting an end to unjust social structures), and for individual well-being.

Discussion

This study has focused on the application of Liberation Psychology to migration studies. Specifically, we have emphasized the transformational role that LPOs can play when they are interconnected in the construction of a just, multicultural society in which immigrants and locals have comparable levels of well-being. We have also conducted a critical analysis of the role currently played by some organizations, which, although it may contradict their intentions, are currently contributing to the perpetuation of systems of oppression.

In its broadest sense, this paper is a call to immigrant and local populations, and to the scientific community, to construct a more equitable multicultural society together. The immigrant population must of course be interested in organizing itself and becoming more connected, both within itself and with organizations in the local community, as described in our outline of LPOs. However, the conclusions of this study should not suggest that the responsibility for successful integration lies only with the immigrant population through community action. Rather, the real emphasis of this study is on the need for social transformation requiring the involvement of both immigrant and local populations.

To an extent, the notion of the local population as an oppressive group is a simplification of human behavior. Indeed, those who are termed oppressors are often also oppressed (Fisher & Sonn, 2008; Fryer, 2008) in the complex network of social relationships within

which they move. It is also true that oppressors may not be at all conscious of the processes in which they take part (Watts, Williams & Jager, 2003). For this reason, the struggle against oppression calls for educational work to help groups understand the oppressive reality that they are helping to (re)produce (Freire, 1970). Given that power is found more in the relationships between individuals rather than in the individuals themselves (Serrano-García, 1994), the struggle against oppression requires relevant action in these relationships, rather than sole focus on the role of individuals as oppressors.

Asymmetrical power relationships initiate and maintain processes which are harmful to society as a whole, such as violence (García-Durán, 2007), psychological distress (Chattopadhyay, 2003), and the use of resources to counter the effects of discrimination that could be used for other, more fruitful objectives (Padilla, 2000). The struggle against oppression is therefore a worthy objective for society as a whole, not only for oppressed individuals and communities.

In this way, local populations may stimulate or play a part in stimulating actions related to (a) support for the foundation and maintenance of immigrant organizations; (b) the promotion of links between these organizations and organizations from the local community; (c) encouragement for liberating organizational structures, relationships, cultures, and instruments; and (d) cessation of merely tokenistic measures and others which perpetuate oppression; by putting in place forums dedicated to joint decision-making. In other words, local population must embrace an open attitude towards overcoming their role in the dynamics of oppression.

Similarly, it is also worth noting the need to place liberation or social transformation at the heart of scientific interest, at the intersection of different disciplines as well as the communities directly involved (Maton, 2000). One possible way to advance along this road is through community coalitions, or "formal multisectoral collaborations that involve representatives of diverse community institutions working within an organizational structure to improve community conditions" (Chavis, 2001, p. 309). In our research experience, the Coalition for the Study of Health, Power and Diversity [*Coalición para el Estudio de la Salud, el Poder y la Diversidad, CESPYD* in Spanish] emerged as an attempt to go beyond the current limitations of intercultural research and the community experiences of immigrant populations (e.g., discrimination, poverty, and social fragmentation). This university research group is coordinated by community and experimental psychologists from the universities of Sevilla, Cádiz, and Huelva, but is a multi-discipline team also made up of nurses, psychologists, and community activists. CESPYD uses collaborative, reflexive methods which combine research and action, helping in the liberation process for immigrant populations

(García-Ramírez, Albar, & Paloma, 2010). The researchers of these coalitions test liberation theory in practical experiences and redefine theory in light of practice. Practical experiences that have enriched the theory are then communicated to the wider scientific community.

In LP, the role of the psychologist can no longer reflect the classic view of promoting well-being in members of the immigrant population and working with them individually. Rather, it must incorporate liberatory practices, strategies with which the immigrant population, as a group which is interconnected with other social partners, can fight against oppression and achieve social justice through individual and collective well-being. The approach offered by LP with regard to migration is a challenge which requires us to transform the social structures which perpetuate injustice in immigrant populations and deny their opportunities for enhanced of well-being.

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