

## **Community and Ecological Fieldwork and Research at Pacifica Graduate Institute**

In 1996 Pacifica initiated a non-clinical doctoral program in depth psychology with a community-based focus of practice. The theoretical foundations of its community and ecological fieldwork and research practicum were drawn from depth psychology, ecopsychology, and liberation psychology, including the latter's privileging of participatory action research (PAR) as a research approach. Liberation psychology provided an essential critique to the often individualistic, Eurocentric, and ahistorical practice of depth psychology, and its normative practice with primarily white economically privileged individuals. It also offered models for group and community work with the goals of creating liberatory knowledge and transformative action to create more just, peaceful, and sustainable communities. Ecopsychology widened the lens of both depth psychology and liberation psychology, underlining human interdependence with natural and built environments and other-than-human animals.

## **Community and Ecological Fieldwork and Research in the Community Psychology, Liberation Psychology, and Ecopsychology Specialization**

In 2010 the Depth Program spawned two specializations: Somatic Studies and Community Psychology, Liberation Psychology, and Ecopsychology (CLE), each developing its own distinctive approach to fieldwork and research. In the latter, critical community psychology and Indigenous Psychology were further elaborated in the curriculum, contributing to the theoretical and practical soil for fieldwork and research.

The Community Psychology, Liberation Psychology, and Ecopsychology specialization is a bold initiative to forge transdisciplinary and transformative approaches to the critical personal, community, cultural, and ecological challenges of our time. Accomplishing this necessitates a radical engagement in re-conceiving psychology as a potentially liberatory and restorative force in society, one engaged in initiatives to promote social, economic, and environmental justice, peacebuilding, and ecological sustainability. It necessitates the development of forms of community praxis, including fieldwork and research, that embody its values and are effective in helping to accomplish the liberatory aims of communities, groups, and individuals.

Below you will find brief elaborations of the key theoretical strands developed in our specialization and some of their essential contributions to fieldwork.

### **Depth Psychology and Fieldwork**

*The self comprises infinitely more than the mere ego, as symbols have shown since time immemorial. It is just as much another or others as it is the ego. Individuation does not exclude the world but includes it.*

Jung, "Der Geist der Psychologie," *Eranos Jahrbuch*, 1946, p. 477

*Therefore anyone who wants to know the human psyche...would be better advised to... bid farewell to his study, and wander with human heart through*

*the world. There, in the horror of prisons, lunatic asylums and hospitals, in drab suburban pubs, in brothels, and gambling-hells, in the salons of the elegant, the Stock Exchanges, Socialist meetings, churches, revivalist gatherings and ecstatic sects, through love and hate, through the experience of passion in every form in his own body, he would reap richer stores of knowledge than text-books a foot thick could give him, and he will know how to doctor the sick with real knowledge of the human soul.*

Jung, CW 7: par. 409

While lay people had been studying depth psychological ideas since the beginnings of depth psychology, training and doctoral programs focused on clinical application, often within a medicalized diagnostic frame. In 1996 Watkins, the founding coordinator of community and ecological fieldwork and research at Pacifica, proposed that in lieu of students sequestering depth psychological theories and practices in the consulting room, that they could also explore their usefulness in other settings, such as schools, workplaces, and community groups of various kinds. Since depth psychology is helpful to individuals who desire to live more consciously in relation to themselves and others, could not the diffusion of such depth psychological understanding beyond the small group who could afford therapy be useful? In addition, might the depth psychologist's ways of being--what can be characterized as depth psychological sensibilities--be useful in settings other than psychotherapy and analysis? Students and fieldwork faculty were invited to explore these possibilities in relation to the social, community, and ecological issues they were passionately concerned about.

From studying the commonalities in the underlying practices in psychoanalytic, analytic (Jungian and archetypal psychology), object relations, and phenomenological clinical work, Watkins (2000a) described some of the essence of depth psychological practice in relation to "the liberation of being." In summary, the depth psychologist understands that the ego's knowledge is partial and reflects the dominant mode of knowing in a given society. The individual is comprised of multiple "voices," in dynamic relation with one another, some subjugated and silenced. To attend and listen to those that have been marginalized and extruded from consciousness, attention to the margins is necessary, often best accomplished by attuning to emergent thoughts, feelings, and images and entering into dialogue with them. These outliers radically supplement egoic understanding. Watkins (2000a, b, c) and Lorenz (aka Shulman) (Lorenz & Watkins, 2001, 2002, 2003) drew a parallel between the intrapsychic dynamics described by depth psychology and the ways colonization occurs through marginalization, derogation, oppression, and consequent suppression of multiple knowledges and histories. They suggested that the modes of careful listening to what is at the margins of awareness in a single person is of use in social settings where these dynamics play out to create interpersonal and intergroup marginalization and oppression.

Through a study of the work of Russell Jacoby (1983), Ellen Danto (2005), and Neil Altman (2006, 2009), who each studied the suppression of the social dimension of psychoanalysis in the U.S., it became clear that the "fieldwork" Pacifica students were improvising could be theoretically and practically linked to the early history of

psychoanalysis in Berlin and Vienna. From 1918-1938 many psychoanalysts worked outside the consulting room and committed themselves to working with people who could not afford psychoanalysis. The individualistic and often decontextualized orientation of depth psychology in the U.S. that the fieldwork philosophy had been critiquing and attempting to redress was an orientation that actually evolved in the U.S. due to the political climate of McCarthyism post-World War II (Watkins & Shulman, 2008; Altman, 2006; Watkins, 2006).

The holistic and interdependent understanding of psychological well-being--seeing individual, familial, community, environmental, and cultural well-being as inextricably interlinked that was being developed in the Depth Program—had a root in the early chapters of depth psychology in Vienna and Berlin. These chapters were forged in the context of the economic and social devastation caused by World War I, the rise of fascism, and the expansion of colonialism. Psychoanalytically oriented depth psychology was conceived in an atmosphere of acute consciousness of the impact of social inequalities, anti-Semitism, and bourgeois conventionality on psychic health.

According to Danto (2005), in addition to their analytic practice, many psychoanalysts in Vienna and Berlin were deeply involved in initiatives for free clinics for psychoanalytic treatment, free clinics for reproductive health care and education for women, initiatives to help women struggle against various forms of domination and abuse, experimental schools for inner-city children, school-based treatment centers for children traumatized by war and poverty, settlement house psychology classes for workers, the first child guidance clinics, suicide prevention centers, attention to building conditions for peace and stability in Austria and Europe, innovative political initiatives, support of the kindergarten movement, and architectural initiatives for public housing that would help build urban families' sense of community, a sense understood to undergird psychological health. Their advocacy for children issued from the great needs of children after World War I, psychoanalytic developmental insight into the importance of early childhood for later psychological health, and awareness of the traumatizing effects of poverty and violence on child development.

Following a symptom closely and listening for its communication of meanings, led the attention of the early founders of European depth psychology to the family, the community, and to Western culture itself. Side-by-side with studies of individual cases and their psychodynamics, we find depth psychologists struggling to understand the psychological dynamics and/or consequences of cultural issues. Many have been led beyond the consulting room to the community to study and address cultural and environmental issues that they have come to understand both arise from the psychological dimension and impact psychological well-being.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A few examples of this are as follows: Freud's reflection on war in the light of instinct theory; Wilhelm Reich's involvement in community birth control education, and the study of the effects of culture on the body; Harry Stack Sullivan's work on peace issues and on civil rights in the American South; Karen Horney's education of the general public regarding the psychological toll of sexism; Robert Jay Lifton's study of genocide in the wake the Holocaust, and his participation in rap groups with Vietnam veterans; archetypal psychologist James Hillman's critique of American culture -- its naiveté, hubris, manic speed,

Some analysts, such as Jung, became involved in cross-cultural studies in order to see more clearly into the particular configuration of psyche in their own culture, as well as into the collective or shared dimensions of psyche. Alongside attention to cultural pathology and its psychic residue, Jung and other depth psychologists have studied and drawn inspiration from different cultures' spiritual and mythological traditions, and their artistic and imaginative practices. Alfred Adler emphasized the central importance of the sense of community or *Gemeinschaftsgefuehl* that binds individuals together to generate a collective feeling of deep belonging and responsibility to care for each other and the world.

To hold in mind the intricate workings of psyche in the context of the complex dynamics of culture and history is a difficult undertaking. Within the history of depth psychology there is much work that has retreated from this bold challenge, narrowing its focus to individuals denuded of their cultural and historical context, and neglecting an examination of its own cultural bias and shadow. In this specialization we also draw on theories, insights, and practices from liberation psychology, critical community psychology, ecopsychology, and indigenous psychologies. These offer critiques of depth psychology, as well as providing needed extensions of depth psychology.

### **Liberation Psychology and Fieldwork**

*...the choice is between accompanying or not accompanying the oppressed majorities....This is not a question of whether to abandon psychology; it is a question of whether psychological knowledge will be placed in the service of constructing a society where the welfare of the few is not built on the wretchedness of the many, where the fulfillment of some does not require that others be deprived, where the interests of the minority do not demand the dehumanization of all.*

Martín-Baró, 1994, p. 46

Liberation psychology is an orientation that seeks to develop and encourage local understandings and practices that can support people's desires and actions to create a more just, peaceful, and sustainable world. Liberation psychology was first articulated as

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and violence, as well as his studies of transportation, kinds of power, white supremacy, imperial wars, the design of cities, the claiming of citizenship, the politics of beauty, and responsive environmentalism; Louise Madhi's interviews with youth regarding their experience of the threat of nuclear apocalypse while also working to engage teens in initiation experiences so lacking in American culture; Marion Woodman's research on anorexia and cultural attitudes toward obesity and femininity, and her creation of restorative contexts for psyche/soma integration; Michael Perlman's exploration of our relations with the trees around us in the face of widespread ecological destruction; Andrew Samuel's psychology of politics and the hidden politics of the psyche. Presently, many of the members of the Association for Psychoanalysis, Culture and Society (APSC, see <http://www.apcsweb.net/>) are engaged in psychoanalytically informed activist projects. The International Association of Analytical Psychology (IAAP, see <http://www.iaap.org/>) has also turned its attention to a range of social issues over the last decade. Division 39, the psychoanalytic division of the American Psychological Association, has developed an activist arm (see [psychoanalyticactivist.com](http://psychoanalyticactivist.com)).

such in the 1980's by Ignacio Martín-Baró, a Spanish born Jesuit and social psychologist working in El Salvador. Martín-Baró envisioned a psychology that would acknowledge the psychological and community wounding caused by war, racism, poverty, and violence; a psychology that would support historical memory and critical reflection; and a psychology that would aid the emergence of the sorts of subjectivity through which people felt they could creatively make sense of and respond to the world. What we reach for, said Martín-Baró, "is an opening—an opening against all closure, flexibility against everything fixed, elasticity against rigidity, a readiness to act against all stagnation" (p. 183). Who we are in the present contains a kernel of something ideal in the future: "hunger for change, affirmation of what is new, life in hope" (p. 183). Psychology should be able to support this opening and to learn from those who are already doing so.

Martín-Baró argued that by considering psychological problems as primarily individual, "psychology has often contributed to obscuring the relationship between personal estrangement and social oppression, presenting the pathology of persons as if it were something removed from history and society, and behavioral disorders as if they played themselves out entirely in the individual plane" (p. 27). Instead, liberation psychology should illuminate the links between an individual's psychological suffering and well-being and the social, economic, political, and ecological contexts in which he or she lives. In this specialization, we work to widen the original focus of liberation psychology to include the ecological, and thus we speak of eco-liberation psychology and practices.

Liberation psychology is built on an interdependent paradigm, understanding that psychological well-being is intimately connected to familial, community, intercommunity, and ecological well-being. It has generally been practiced in groups within communities so that participants can learn from each other through dialogue, construct together critical understanding (conscientization), develop common aspirations, dreams, and visions, and work in solidarity with one another to achieve these. Group work is also necessary to help address the traumatic effects of colonialism and neocolonialism, and to build communities of resistance and public homeplaces in the face of destructive ideologies and their practices that assault well-being (Watkins & Shulman, 2008).

Like depth psychological practices, liberation psychology also builds upon dialogue as a basic cornerstone of practice, following Paulo Freire's articulation of the importance of dialogue. Contrary to customary therapeutic practice, however, the practitioner positions him or herself alongside community members, rather than in a hierarchical and expert position, and does not invoke psychodiagnostic approaches that individualize distress. This is necessary so that one does not impede participants' own empowerment and meaning-making, and to aid in understanding the larger sociocultural and historical context in which individual distress and misery occur.

In liberation psychology accompaniment is a principal mode of being engaged with community members. Accompaniment (Watkins, 2015) involves longterm commitment to working with others to achieve liberatory aims, through the provision of such things as individual and community witness and support, solidarity in relevant social movements,



assistance with networking with communities at a distance suffering similar conditions, research on needed dimensions, contribution to empowerment, and amplification of a group's struggle to educate civil society. While liberation psychology is most strongly established in Latin America, Martín-Baró's work has become a rallying call to psychologists and cultural workers on all continents to place into conversation their theories and liberatory practices, and to work in their local context to construct a more just and sustainable "world in which it will be easier to love" (Freire, 1989, p. 24).

### **Critical Community Psychology**

*Transformational validity...is concerned with the degree to which community research and action strives to transform social structures. The more transformative and the less ameliorative the intervention, the greater the transformational validity of the critical research and action.*

Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005, p. 285

In this specialization we study critical community psychology, an orientation to community psychology that embraces the values of social justice, emancipatory praxis, empowerment, and inclusion of people who have been marginalized by hegemonic structures in society. It challenges epistemologies, ideologies, and worldviews—including those of mainstream psychology--to reflect on how these perpetuate conditions of injustice and oppression. Critical community psychologists work with communities to legitimize popular knowledge, generate new, inclusive knowledge, develop innovative paradigms, and envision radical transformative praxis. In authentic collaboration with local people and the places they inhabit, critical community psychologists co-construct knowledge, imagine new possibilities, and work to implement and evaluate such possibilities to promote social change and individual and community well-being. Critical community psychology aims to address the global challenges of our time such as poverty caused by colonization and neo-colonization, war, racism, xenophobia, forced migration, unemployment, man-made environmental disasters, and corporate monoculturalism. To address these challenges, psychology must be transdisciplinary. Its practice must be based on critical reflection and action that transforms the structures and policies that reproduce inequity rather than focusing exclusively on ameliorative actions. Critical community psychology must work in partnership with communities to address environmental injustice, and grapple with the effects of pollution, climate change, water and food shortage, while working together to transform actions and policies that maintain and aggravate these egregious situations.

Our communities need psychologists who can de-construct and correct history to overturn the manifest, hegemonic narratives so that the more hidden and repressed narratives of the social, economic, and political context of psychological and community life can be heard. It is necessary to know how to identify ideologies, to see their psychic consequences, and to critique them. Accompaniment and solidarity are needed by individuals and communities who are burdened by experiences of collective trauma and oppression. In addition, psychologists can support and participate in the facilitation of

protective cultural strategies with historical legacies of fostering resilience, struggles of resistance, and survival. They can focus their efforts on sustaining conditions for these traditions to flourish and thwart attempts to further marginalize, or obliterate them. Such depth psychologically minded eco-cultural workers can learn to facilitate dialogue, to be animators for groups seeking critical consciousness of the everyday situations they are encountering. They can map local assets, and conduct appreciative inquiry and empowerment evaluation of what is working in a community setting, what its gifts are and where members think change may be useful. Critical community psychologists can work to co-create spaces where community members can listen to their dreams and aspirations, work through conflicts, and deeply inquire into their most pressing problems. By working with a community to identify and hold their vision, psychologists can participate in building the kinds of inspired solidarity that are necessary to realize what we most deeply desire. Such psychologists are scholar-activists; some are gifted in liberatory arts, documentary filmmaking, community theater, or writing. They craft their roles and activity by identifying their and others' visions, carefully working with others to understand the actions needed to move from present reality to desired dream.

Community psychology informs fieldwork through its emphases on the research and evaluation of community projects and interventions, taking care to understand if intended impacts have been achieved and what unintended social, cultural, and environmental effects may have also been created. Critical community psychology presents an interdependent understanding of well-being, and a differentiation of ameliorative approaches from transformative approaches (Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2007). While ameliorative approaches may help to address immediate needs, they do little to nothing to change the social context, which generates the need. We ask fieldworkers to attend to both dimensions of their work, learning not only how to be of immediate use but how to intervene with others in policies and laws that contribute to the psychosocial and ecological conditions communities and natural and built environments suffer.

## **Ecopsychology**

Ecopsychology calls attention to Western and neo-liberal cultures' neglect of their embeddedness in built and natural environments and to their objectification and exploitation of the natural world, relating to it as either a scenic backdrop or a resource to be depleted for economic profit. Ecopsychology calls us to understand the interdependence of human well-being with the well-being of other-than-human nature. Environmental concerns have both social and psychological dimensions, in their causation, perpetuation, effects, and restoration. In CLE we focus on environmental justice since the effects of environmental degradation occur disproportionately in poor communities and communities of color.

Ecopsychology's central goals are to heal the alienation of Western people from the natural environment and to examine and transform their modes of thinking and behaving that have led to the imperilment of ecosystems around the world. In contradistinction to

Westernized and neo-liberal societies, as land based peoples many Indigenous communities have maintained and rely on an integral connection to the natural world, even in the face of cultural and genocidal assaults. For some the inherited capacity to maintain this relationship along with the interconnected spiritual practices has been understood as a part of “cultural resilience” and linked to survival (Grandbois and Sanders, 2009; HeavyRunner and Morris, 1997). These culturally embedded values and epistemologies must serve as models for the development of Western ecopsychological paradigms to restore relations with nature. At the same time, however, it is critically important that any embrace of these paradigms include both full acknowledgment of the particular Indigenous sources to mitigate against cultural appropriation, and the sustained confrontation with the violence many of these communities continue to suffer through colonialism and neo-colonialism. As a discipline based on the practices of communities whose systems of knowledge have historically been subjugated and disregarded by the mainstream, ecopsychology has a responsibility to learn from Indigenous ecological leaders in the field, stand in solidarity with them, and advocate for the environmental and social justice that has been denied their communities.

We understand ecopsychology as a corrective to Euro-American psychology’s neglect of the impact of built and natural environments on the human psyche and on communities, and of the human impacts on the environment. Since the well-being of humans and the natural world are inextricably connected, ecopsychologists are critically needed to heal human/nature divides, creating pathways for human/nature/animal relations, as well as working to create the increased awareness that is a necessary step to the restoration of habitats and the creation of built and natural environments that are sustainable.

Our specialization’s focus on indigenous psychologies, critical community psychology, and liberation psychology contributes the important dimension of environmental and social justice when engaging ecopsychology. Climate change, environmental pollution, toxic waste disposal in communities of color, disparities in health, and the extraction of natural resources disproportionately affect marginalized communities and regions. We engage approaches that acknowledge this injustice and work toward transformations that benefit all human and other-than human animal communities and ecosystems that live in interrelationship with one another. At this moment in history psychologists are called to not only accompany and witness other humans, but other species, ecosystems, earth, and water, working with communities to claim their interdependency and to cultivate their care and social power to foster sustainability.

### **Indigenous Psychologies**

*If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time.  
But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then  
let us work together.*

Aboriginal activists group, Queensland, Australia, 1970s

Indigenous Psychologies are systems of knowledge based on paradigms that originate in particular localities and cultures (Kim et al., 2006). Native peoples of the Americas, aboriginal peoples in Australia and New Zealand, Chinese, Japanese, African, Hawaiian,



Filipinos, Latin American, and Indian scholars (among others) are contesting the imposition of colonized epistemologies and bringing their own systems of knowledge to the center of discourse. The worldwide call for Indigenization was preceded by the paradigm crisis in psychology experienced in the late 1960's (Kim et al., 2006). This was influenced by neo-colonial rejection. The collective contestation is that existing psychological theories are not universal but must be understood in their ecological, historical, philosophical, religious, political, and cultural contexts. Indigenous psychologists criticize Euro-American psychology in its fundamental assumptions based on linear models of causality. They contest the imposition of standards based on positivist paradigms and Cartesian dual thinking that separates mind, body, psyche, nature, and spirit. Historically, social science research has applied White supremacist assumptions using Darwin's theory of evolution and the guise of natural selection. These assumptions helped to justify systems of power, sustained violence, oppression, and exploitation of others for the sake of monocultural expansion and colonization of people of color and nature. In contrast, Indigenous psychologies emerge from epistemologies (how we create knowledge), ontologies (what is knowledge), and axiology (the implicit values in knowledge construction) that hold at their center the values of interdependence, relationship, and stewardship of natural resources and biodiversity.

Under Indigenous psychologies the conception and development of the self encompasses the individual embedded in the context of family, culture, and nature at large. Indigenous psychologists highlight the concept of relationships between human and non-humans and the natural world. The process of knowledge creation is conceived as ceremony (Wilson, 2008). Praxis is based on relationship building that promotes shared identity and interdependence. Multi-methods are applied to enhance awareness as one-with-the-other. Research results remain in the community and the participants decide what to do with them.















These efforts and revolutionary movements known under Indigenous Psychologies are finding an emancipatory language to challenge imperial forms of knowing and being in the world. They contribute to the restoration of value from sources of knowledge derived from animism, ritual, and spiritual traditions. According to Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013), this redistribution of "ontological density" is a key component of decoloniality that can perhaps begin to address the "technologies of imperialism...that continue to exist in the minds, lives, languages, dreams, imaginations and epistemologies of modern subjects..." (p.11). These movements are co-constructing alternatives and building partnerships with silenced intellectual traditions to decolonize science and address imperative issues of cultural and ecological genocide (Ciofalo, 2015).

The study of Indigenous Psychologies remind fieldworkers that all cultures have ways of addressing well-being and the threats to personal and community thriving. Too often Western trained practitioners unconsciously or consciously privilege their own ways of knowing, imposing frameworks that displace and disempower the sources of meaning and resilience in a community or society, contributing in maintaining the status quo instead of transforming it into alternative and holistic forms of being in the world that are guided by values of social and ecological justice, peacebuilding, and sustainability. To

study community and ecopsychology in the light of liberation and indigenous psychologies commits us to deeply explore and address the profound effects of injustice, violence, and exploitation on psychological, communal, and ecological well-being.

## Summary

Placing these approaches in relation to one another creates a firm foundation for an interdependent understanding of the complex psychological, sociocultural, and environmental problems we face. Their convergence educates the fieldworker about the cornerstones of a libertory praxis of community and ecological fieldwork and research:

-  Deep listening
-  Dialogue
-  Collaboration
-  Witnessing
-  Conscientization
-  Prophetic imagination and visioning
-  Accompaniment
-  Solidarity
-  Respect for multiple forms and expressions of knowing, including art
-  Participatory action research and evaluation
-  Attention to both ameliorative and transformative praxis
-  Building with others public homeplaces (Belenky, 1996), communities of resistance (Hanh & Berrigan, 2001), and sites of reconciliation (Watkins & Shulman, 2008)
-  Co-creating policy and legislative changes that support just and healthy communities
-  Supporting sites and practices of decoloniality

The community and ecological fieldwork and research portion of your CLE experience is designed to help foster your capacity to understand psyche, culture, and nature in dynamic relation to one another and to develop your theoretical and practical skills in working with cultural, community, and ecological issues that affect psychological well-being. Through engaged community and ecological fieldwork and research we dedicate our actions and express our commitment to rebuilding fragmented cultural and ecological connections, and to co-creating democratic, dialogical, joyful, sustainable, and nonviolent living.

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