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The rise and fall of academic community psychology in Palestine and the way forward

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Abstract

In this article, I examine the inception of a decolonised community psychology programme in the Palestinian colonial context and its subsequent decline and setback. I describe the background to the Palestinian colonial condition, and the theoretical inspiration for the programme by the short-lived experience of grassroots organising during the first Palestinian *Intifada* is illustrated. Specific pedagogical and research activities, marked by the influence of the Latin American liberation psychology model, are presented and discussed. These include a focus on praxis, dialogical education, conscientisation and community participatory action research. I consider the influence of the South African experience on the programme principally in reference to Steve Biko's notion of Black Consciousness, which translated to Palestinian collective-national identity, as well as relevance in psychological knowledge. In the concluding section, I appraise the setback of the programme in light of administrative and epistemological debates with related disciplines that shifted from psychological-individualistic reductionism to social-cultural reductionism. I conclude with the assertion that unless framed within the context of the broader anti-colonial national liberation movement, a decolonised community psychology has minimal chances to survive and thrive.

Keywords

Community psychology, decolonising, Latin America, liberation, Palestine, South Africa

Teaching and programming for a decolonised community psychology, as liberatory praxis in colonial contexts, not only receives inadequate institutional support but may also be thwarted by complex systems of intertwined reactionary forces entrenched in the colonial condition itself. Following the decolonising turn in the social sciences, as well as in parts of psychology, I examine here the

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challenges that faced the development of a graduate programme in community psychology in the Palestinian colonial context. Its inception, during the time of decline of the Palestinian National Liberation Movement (PNLM) and the increase in economic dependency, Western funding, and neocolonial practices, was inspired by both Latin American and South African enactments of liberatory community psychology. Furthermore, quite ambitiously, the programme aspired for a liberatory form of community psychology while drawing on the short-lived experience of community grassroots organising during the first Palestinian *Intifada*[1] of 1987. In reaffirming the slogan 'the personal is political', I will offer specific reflections on my personal experiences of teaching and programming for a decolonised community psychology in Palestine. In discussing the migration of ideas from one colonial context to another, the article highlights the relationship between academic psychology and anti-colonial national liberation movements, and challenges to enactments of decolonising psychologies during the current phase of globalisation and Western capitalist hegemony in the form of donor funding.

In the first section, I describe the Palestinian colonial context and the primacy of the 'colonial condition' within which decolonising community psychology was envisioned as a liberatory praxis. I highlight the dominance of colonial knowledge (especially psychology) at Palestinian universities, the experience of community grassroots organising during the first *Intifada*, the political shift and re-emergence of neocolonialism through Western funded projects, and the development of the community psychology programme within this rather complicated context. In the next section, I reflect on specific experiences of teaching and facilitating student research projects, located within the clear intent of incorporating liberatory practices emanating from the Latin American and South African experiences. I then describe the organising of the first international community psychology conference as the culminating stage in the development of the programme and the establishment of academic community psychology in Palestine. I describe the setback of the programme and the epistemological struggle over defining community psychology. I conclude with reflections on the way forward.

Academic community psychology within the Palestinian colonial condition

The project of Zionist-settler colonialism in historic Palestine is manifest in the fact that Palestinian people today do not exist as a unified and cohesive community in a clearly defined geopolitical space. As part of the colonial condition (Fanon, 1963), Palestinians are scattered in various sociopolitical contexts and communities: one group lives in its native homeland, which was conquered in 1948, and holds official Israeli citizenship; another group lives in the occupied West Bank and Gaza (WBG) and has been under Israeli military occupation since 1967; the rest of the Palestinian people are dispossessed refugees in exile. The focus of my discussion is on the Palestinians in the WBG, where Palestinian universities have been established under Israeli colonial rule. Israeli colonial practices in the occupied WBG since 1967 include labour exploitation, fragmentation of Palestinian lands, settlement activities, hegemony over Palestinian education, restriction of people's movement, and continual political harassment and military intervention, rendering life for the native population oppressive and intolerable. It is within this native education under persisting colonial conditions that (academic) decolonising community psychology, as described in this article, was envisioned, developed, and subsequently eschewed.

During the first two decades of Israeli colonial occupation (1967–1987), Palestinians in the WBG managed to establish an extraordinary network of grassroots community organisations, including student unions, women's working committees, labour unions, youth voluntary organisations, and a wide variety of professional organisations (Makkawi, 2009). This bottom-up community organising

was initiated and maintained by community activists who were ideologically and politically linked to the PNLM in exile. Palestinian grassroots community activists received no assistance from academic Palestinian psychology at the time. When the *Intifada* erupted in 1987, it was this community cohesion and well-organised grassroots movement that sustained the struggle and assured community resilience.

Popular education during the first Palestinian *Intifada*, and within the context of prolonged periods of closure of schools and universities, embodied a particular form of liberatory community psychology enactment. Palestinian teachers and students in the WBG constituted a dynamic force in the organisation of community-based (and militarily declared illegal) educational activities (Hussein, 2005). Although declared illegal by the Israeli colonial army, neighbourhood committees of *Intifada* activists organised and conducted popular (and underground) education activities in ad hoc classrooms throughout the community. Palestinian universities, and in particular Palestinian academic psychology, at that time failed to understand and cultivate grassroots manifestations of community psychology. We inherited this failed legacy of Palestinian academic psychology when we opted for the decolonising community psychology programme at Birzeit University two decades later (Makkawi, 2009, 2015).

Colonial education and Western knowledges have dominated within Arab academic institutions (Abouchedid, 2006). Psychology was introduced to the Arab World through Egypt by colonial powers of the time, and since then Arab universities have been uncritically importing, reproducing, and teaching mainstream Western psychology (Makkawi, 2015). For example, Arab psychologists rarely conduct studies on topics of importance to people living in the Arab world. Instead, they are more likely to design studies drawing on pre-existing research instruments and methods for examining constructs that predominate in the West (Farraj, 2001).

Yet, Palestinian universities in the WBG are considered not only as centres for higher education but also as symbols of survival and resistance to the Israeli colonial occupation (Bruhn, 2006). Despite their anti-colonial inception and self-nomination as key players in the national liberation movement, Palestinian universities, however, resemble many of their sister institutions throughout the Arab World in their failure to emancipate education and psychology from its colonial past. Palestinian universities continue to teach mainstream, Western individualistic knowledge, and fail to place the development of higher education within its anti-colonial historical context (Makkawi, 2015).

The signing of the Oslo political agreement between the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization and the government of Israel in 1993 halted the popular *Intifada*. As support for the newly established Palestinian Authority, the Palestinian community was subsequently, and deliberately, invaded by Western capitalist funding in the form of donor money. A mushrooming network of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) gradually replaced the indigenous grassroots community organisations. Many of these organisations provide overlapping and sporadic services, sometimes to the same population, depending on the availability of external funding. The staff and administrators of the mental health NGOs appear to function in a form of non-generative circularity expressed as writing proposals for funding, receiving the funds, implementing the funded project, writing report to the funder, and moving on to writing the next proposal. Despite the fact that many of these mental health NGOs operate centres within the community, their frameworks for intervention are awkward and primarily apply individualistic approaches to counselling and psychotherapy (Makkawi, 2009). Our experience indicates that these NGOs are intended to achieve the following objectives: (1) penetration of the social fabric of the colonised community; (2) co-option of Palestinian organic intellectuals, with the intent to de-politicise, distract, and distance them from involvement in the struggle for self-determination; and (3) maintenance of economic dependency as a means of ensuring academic dependency among Palestinian intellectuals.

Parallel to this network of mental health NGOs, there has been a growing body of reductionist research on the psychological reactions of Palestinian children and youth to military violence. By and large, the most investigated construct in this research is the prevalence of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among Palestinian victims of military violence. The methodological and conceptual critique of this 'trauma research industry' is well established in the literature. What stands out as peculiar in the Palestinian experience is the construction and measurement of such a diagnostic category on the individual level of abstraction when the traumatic event is based on the collective level of abstraction (i.e., collective-national identity). The individualistic nature of this research is translated into interventions aimed at 'fixing the individual victim so that he/she can adjust better to the colonial condition' (see Makkawi, 2009). It is within this colonising context that we aspired for the decolonising of community psychology in Palestine, attempting (against all odds) to revive community grassroots manifestations from the 1980s.

Birzeit University community psychology programme

Unlike the fact that liberation community psychologies in Latin America and South Africa were established during historical moments of revolutionary transformation and liberation, the academic inception of the community psychology programme in Palestine came at a historical moment of defeat of the PNLM, and when neocolonialism manifested in the form of donor funding and economic dependency. The community psychology programme at Birzeit University was established on the premise that opting for a paradigm of critical community psychology with an interdisciplinary outlook and decolonising praxis is an ideal orientation. However, the interdisciplinary nature of community psychology that we advocated in the programme has repeatedly exposed us to issues of boundary definition with related disciplines such as sociology and anthropology. Similar claims of practising community psychology were also made by many NGOs, typically by appending the word 'community' in the title of the said project. From the outset, we had to negotiate the identity of the emerging programme within the problematic terrain of knowledge claims and competing interests, enacted within the context of neocolonial economic dependency described here.

The Birzeit University programme was inspired by the assumption that the individual's psychological well-being in this colonial context is to a large extent influenced by the ongoing Zionist colonisation, oppression, repression and exploitation. We endeavoured to examine and demonstrate the influence of ongoing colonial occupation, military violence, the colonialist separation wall, checkpoints, economic embargo, the rise of poverty, economic dependency, imprisonment, torture, assassination of activists, school closures, and the systematic destruction of the Palestinian community's infrastructure on people's mental health and the observed increase in community risk factors (Makkawi, 2009). Our key premise while working with groups and communities within this repressive colonial context builds on the idea that community critical conscientisation (Freire, 1970) is by and in itself a process of psychological liberation, resilience and mental health promotion.

In envisioning the emerging Masters Programme in Community Psychology at Birzeit University, I wrote that

> it is possible to place the various traditions of community psychology on a continuum, where at the individualistic and reductionist end of the continuum we can locate the USA school of community psychology, whereas, at the transformative and liberationist end of the continuum we locate the Latin American school of community psychology, better known as Liberation Social Psychology (LSP). (Makkawi, 2009, p. 76)

However, it would be naive to interpret this statement as a value judgement in support, or rejection, of theories solely based on their geopolitical source rather than their ability to help us understand and transform our local colonial condition. It was only natural that community psychology founded in similar colonial contexts would be relevant to our own colonial condition.

I also noted that 'the Latin American model of liberation social psychology provides an ideal framework for understanding and arguing for critical community psychology for occupied Palestine' (Makkawi, 2009, p. 77). Beyond interconnected experiences with colonialism in Latin America, South Africa and Palestine, our deep solidarity is rooted in the way by which liberating theories and ideas can travel from one colonial context to another, keeping in mind that 'what makes a theory reactionary or progressive is not so much its place of origin as its ability to explain or uncover reality and, above all to strengthen or transform the social order' (Martin-Baro, 1994, p. 24). I continue to maintain that liberation psychology in the form in which it emerged in the Latin American and South African contexts has distinctive potential to help us understand and transform the repressive colonial condition in Palestine. Below, I highlight specific enactments of teaching and research within the programme, and reference these to insights from the Latin American and South African experiences.

Critical engagement with text

Key influential elements of the liberation social psychology (LSP) implemented in the Palestinian community psychology programme include Paulo Freire's (1970) concepts of *praxis* (the dialectical interplay between theory and practice), *dialogical education* (students construct their own knowledge through active engagement with the learning process as opposed to 'banking education'), and *conscientisation* (the process of developing critical consciousness about their oppressive colonial condition). In line with Paulo Freire's (1970) dialogical education, this activity intends to facilitate students' critical thinking, conceptualisation of their ideas and their expression in writing, and re-conceptualising core ideas from the texts based on their real-life experiences. Following the reading of the assigned text, our students write a 1- to 2-page reflection paper, which accordingly includes (1) critical summary of the main ideas, (2) critical engagement with one or two concepts from the text, and (3) synthesis and re-conceptualisation of the concept based on their own social realities. These reflection papers are used as bases for classroom discussion and in-depth dialogue. Bringing into the discussion the students' own life experiences not only augments their understanding and re-conceptualisation of theoretical ideas but also constitutes a key foundation for the *conscientisation* process, which is central to their own liberating education.

Community participatory action research projects

The Community Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach, shaped significantly by the contributions of Colombian intellectual Fals-Borda, (1987), is also central in Latin American community psychology. In this sense, the researcher and the community are engaged in collaborative research projects focused on specific community issues that are defined by the community itself. This shift away from traditional positivistic research is a liberatory experience for colonised communities that have been for so long subjected to research by colonisers (Tuhiwai-Smith, 2012). Our students are required to conduct PAR from the early stage of their enrolment in the programme. The students are supported through the following steps: (1) conduct initial review of the existing body of knowledge, (2) make initial contact with an identified community and negotiate entry to the site, (3) identify key community members as potential research partners, (4) establish collaborative agreement regarding the research process with community members, (5) negotiate

agreement about prospective community intervention, (6) define a relevant research problem in collaboration with community members, (7) collect and analyse the data, and write a research report, (8) share the results with community members, and (9) develop and implement a community intervention programme. Through this activity, our students learn the foundations of community psychology while they are engaged with the community and begin to sharpen their own critical awareness about real issue they find relevant for the emancipation of their community.

Collective-national identity and student research projects

In South Africa, the quest for relevance and indigenous forms of liberatory psychology included anti-apartheid psychologists writing surreptitiously. Tony Naidoo (2000) refers to an article he co-authored about the need for relevance in psychology, which was published under the name Anonymous (1986) during the anti-apartheid struggle. In post-apartheid South African community psychology, the intellectual and political legacy of Steve Biko (1978), the founder of the Black Consciousness Movement, has been central and inspiring. While the apartheid regime had structured political categories of the colonised community based on racial makeup, the Zionist colonial regime in Palestine has done so based on the year in which Palestinians were conquered. Biko's notion of Black Consciousness, above and beyond racial categorisation, resonates well with our understanding of Palestinian collective-national identity as a psychological resource in our teaching and research. The question of relevance of psychological knowledge, which is fundamental to South African community psychology, has been inspiring to the critical and context-sensitive approach in our curriculum and research projects, and linked with knowledges native to the Palestinian people's anti-colonial struggle for self-determination.

We shifted our general approach to research and the construction of knowledge to be more consistent with indigenous and decolonising methodologies (see Tuhiwai-Smith, 2012), to be applied by our students as indigenous researchers with inherent sensitivity to local community needs and challenges. We framed our emerging research within the broader theoretical and methodological tools of the grounded theory tradition (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), allowing for inductive construction of knowledge. The question of collective-national identity, which has traditionally been neglected in trauma research in Palestine, is now placed in the foreground of a number of students' research projects.

As non-reductionist critical community psychologists, our understanding of Palestinian collective-national identity as a *psychological* construct – informed by Social Identity Theory (SIT) (Tajfel, 1981) – repeatedly exposed us to unproductive controversies with sociologists and anthropologists working on the concept of identity from their own disciplinary perspectives. I restate the argument by contemporary scholars of SIT, in their attempt to avoid falling into social reductionism:

> Social identities are more than a list of socio-demographic groups that can be used to classify individuals (e.g. gender, age, ethnicity, religious). Social identities are relative, they differ in the extent to which individuals perceive them as *psychologically meaningful descriptions of self* (i.e. they are more or less central to our self-definition), and their function and meaning can change over time. (Haslam, Jetten, Postmes, & Haslam, 2009, p. 6)

Building on Muldoon and Lowe's (2012) theorising about the role of social identity in coping with war-related traumatic experience, I summarised elsewhere the ways by which the Palestinian's sense of collective-national identity (as an accentuated form of social identity in this case) can be constructed as a protective factor in the face of Israeli military violence (Makkawi, 2016). According to Muldoon and Lowe (2012), individuals are exposed to military violence in war

environments because of their group membership and belonging to the targeted group and not as isolated individuals (Criteria A1 for PTSD); social identity mediates the subjective experience of the traumatising event and provides information needed for appraisal of the event (Criteria A2 for PTSD); social identity facilitates the anticipation and predictability of military violence as the traumatising event (not sudden event like a car accident); military violence activates the individual's sense of social identity where self-categorisation is lifted to the group level when the conflict is identity affirming; and social identity protects group members from trauma because it provides bases for receiving community level social support (see Makkawi, 2016). This theoretical trend offered direction to many of our students' research projects.

Some of our student's research projects include (1) the role of collective-national identity in psychological adjustment following trauma of military violence, (2) changes in psychological sense of community in the Palestinian context between the first *Intifada* and the current era, (3) psychological effects of Israeli colonial racism on Palestinian university students across the green line, (4) colonial mentality and the experience of Palestinian youth in Jerusalem, (5) community resilience and home demolition in Jerusalem, (6) the role of NGOs in the commodification and marketing of Palestinian subjectivities to funder states in the colonial context, and (7) the psychological and social aspects of the confrontation in the interrogation cells. These research projects paved the way for further examination of key psychological constructs framed at the collective level of abstraction, positioning the trend towards research as emancipatory praxis within the Palestinian colonial context in the desired direction.

The international community psychology conference

Realising the importance of situating our emerging community psychology programme within the evolving scholarship on decolonising community psychology, especially as articulated by scholars who operate epistemologically from the Global South, we believed an international conference on community psychology in Palestine would be an excellent opportunity to expand the work that we do and strengthen our international relationships with like-minded scholars in the field. In May 2013, we organised an international conference as a culmination of the developmental phase of the Masters Programme in Community Psychology at Birzeit University. The conference featured international representation of, and dialogue between, the various paradigms and models of community psychology enacted in the global context, while seeking to facilitate the development of a context-bound model of critical community psychology for the Palestinian people. Some highlights of the conference included (1) 2-day pre-conference workshop on Photovoice as emancipatory community psychology praxis, which was facilitated by South African psychologists Mohamed Seedat, Shahnaaz Suffla, and Umesh Bawa; (2) post-conference workshop on liberation psychology praxis, which was to be facilitated by Venezuelan psychologist Maritza Montero (Montero was denied access to Palestine by the Zionist colonial authorities and instead her contribution to the conference was presented through a pre-recorded keynote presentation); (3) a wide range of invited keynote addresses, including presentations by Carolyn Kagan, Mark Burton, David Fryer, Dolores Gierbolini, Maritza Montero, Tony Naidoo, Mohamed Seedat, Rita Giacaman and Abaher Elsakka; and (4) concluding symposium featuring deep dialogue among this group of critical community psychologists and an audience fervent for alternative perspectives to already familiar colonial knowledge in psychology.

The description of the concluding symposium of the conference is worth quoting at length:

> In our ambitious efforts to develop context-bound, but yet, globally integrative model of critical community psychology for the Arab-Palestinian context – a context which is characterised by prolonged

settler-colonial condition – we have been inspired by the enactment of critical community psychologies in diverse situations such as Latin America, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand and Europe. Comparing these situations with our Arab-Palestinian colonial context, we can find in each a remarkable set of socio-political similarities as well as uniquely specific set of differences. Learning from, and reflecting back, on this array of similarities and differences within which critical community psychologies have been enacted around the globe is a never ending praxis. Within what could be characterized as a 'Globally Shared Project of Critical Community Psychologies' which are committed to the liberation and emancipation of the oppressed majorities of the world, we are seizing this rare opportunity, as critical community psychologists, to engage together in genuine dialogue between speakers and audience members with regard to an emerging model of critical community psychology for the Arab-Palestinian people in their colonial context . . . the primary task of this symposium is to uncover, explore and discuss what can be learned from critical community psychologies, as constituted around the world, in order to develop and re-constitute a Palestinian model of critical community psychology which is effective and appropriate to the promotion of the interests of Arab-Palestinian people. 'Learning from' means not only avoiding mistakes or mere 'borrowing', but also raising critical questions from our colonial context that call for rethinking 'taken for granted' theoretical claims and practices. The underlying challenge, therefore, is to engage in a debate where what it is to be 'similar' and 'different' is not dominated by colonizing discourses. The deeper task is therefore to facilitate debate about what would constitute a decolonised critical community psychology by and for the Arab-Palestinian colonial context. (Birzeit University, 2013, p. 33)

The conference was not only a local highlight in community psychology development but also dismantled our isolation and helped us establish an international network of colleagues and comrades working towards decolonising community psychology. We truly hoped, and so believed, that our embryonic attempt of decolonising community psychology in Palestine was gaining new momentum and contributing to the decolonising/anti-colonial discourse in psychology, already in full force in the Global South.

The unexpected setback

Immediately after the conference and upon the ceasing of the donor funding, the programme's director and convener of conference was removed from his administrative position. The programme has since been managed by anthropologists and sociologists, shifting the pendulum from psychological reductionism to social and cultural reductionism. This shift was not unrelated to epistemological and administrative conflicts with people in power during the developmental phase of the programme, but also cannot be read in isolation of the hyper-reaction to the remarkable success of the programme and its emerging academic identity as decolonising community psychology.

Writing about the possibilities for community psychology in Egypt and Lebanon, Mona Amer, El-Sayeh, Fayad & Khourt (2015) indicate that language might be one issue: 'In Arabic, the word of community *(mujtama)* also refers to "society", which poses potential confusion between community psychology and sociology' (p. 58), a compelling observation. It was a mid-range administrator whose academic training is in Arabic Literature (with poor command of English language) who decided that community psychology is actually a branch of sociology, putting an end to the conceptual debate about the nature of community psychology! One of the challenges facing anti-colonial scholars working on the peripheries, to use Hussein Bulhan's (2015) words, is that '. . . local tyrants find threat in ideas unfamiliar to them, assuming what they do not know or understand is necessarily subversive' (p. 245).

This authoritative pronouncement about the nature of community psychology did not go without opportunistic anthropologists and sociologists celebrating and appropriating the programme. Reductively located within the core of their respective disciplines, this takeover left non-reductionist psychology behind. Language misinterpretations among some administrators are only the symptom

of the problem. The deeper problem, however, has to do with intellectual integrity among academics in the colonial context when economic dependency on Western funders is most likely to result in the academic dependency of the colonised (Alatas, 2003).

When non-reductionist psychology appears to be too complex to explain or understand in such a problematic academic milieu, the shift from psychological reductionism to social and cultural reductionism becomes an easy route that provides pragmatic answers to academic debates in this emerging field. When culture in the most conventional sense of the word becomes the main defining factor of community mental health under the colonial condition (because 'culture' is what we know), our academic integrity and ethical commitment to the community we serve resultantly comes into question. As Mohamed Seedat (1997) reminds us, 'Cultural sensitivity in and of itself is restricting as long as cultures are reified, portrayed as static and regarded as the primary force – above power and oppression – determining the psychological life of humankind' (p. 265). There is more into native culture under colonialism than mere folklore studies.

Academic dependency on Western knowledge production in the era of economic dependency (Alatas, 2003) was the most unexpected of all challenges facing teaching and programming for critical community psychology in the Palestinian colonial context. Rather than being supported to direct their energies towards the development of critical and decolonising community psychology, critical community psychologists in this part of the world are engaged in needless struggles with colleagues and administrators over disciplinary boundaries that diminish their energy and enthusiasm. International networking and solidarity with colleagues and comrades working towards decolonising community psychology in the Global South is therefore vital to sustaining our intellectual integrity and commitment to a psychology that is relevant and liberating for our people.

As we continue to struggle with the task of liberating psychology in colonial contexts by trying to understand the individual within his or her oppressive context, we clearly need to avoid falling into the 'easy way out' by adapting social and cultural reductionism as the panacea for all mental health problems. In describing the emerging paradigm of critical psychology, Thomas Teo (2015) writes,

> Individual subjectivity is embedded in social, cultural, and historical contexts. The term *embedded* refers to the fact that 'context' is not an external independent variable, is not a concept or reality that can be detached from individual mental life, but constitutes the content, and even the form of mental life. Society, culture, and history are interwoven with the very fabric of subjectivity. (p. 245)

Conclusion

Decolonising psychology as part of the trend of decolonisation in the social sciences is based on the assumption of the demise of formal forms of colonialism. It is devoted to the task of liberating colonised and post-colonial communities from the psychological distortions that continue to mark the well-being of the native people. Extending this discourse to understanding the Palestinian settler-colonial condition and opting for a paradigm of decolonising community psychology all at the same time – while the settler-colonial condition persists and manifests in the total control of the native land and the fragmentation of the Palestinian people – are both illuminating and challenging tasks. The unique lesson that can be concluded from the Palestinian experience is that it is imperative and critical to combat the psychological ramifications of Zionist colonialism in Palestine *simultaneously* as the Palestinian people are engaged in the anti-colonial struggle for self-determination. Addressing the psychological consequences of Zionist colonialism at this stage of the anti-colonial national liberation struggle offers a unique contribution to the growing paradigm of decolonising psychology while at the same time may facilitate the process of self-determination and the ending of colonialism in Palestine. Still, opting for the choice of decolonising community

psychology in the context of the current power structure, the fragmentation of the PNLM, and the increase of economic and academic dependency on the capitalist centre is at times overwhelming.

In our attempt to develop decolonising community psychology in Palestine, we dared to raise critical questions that were instigated by the Latin American and South African colonial experiences. While decolonising community psychology in Latin America and South Africa evolved during the transformation of their respective anti-colonial national liberation movements, decolonising community psychology in Palestine was born during an era of deep setback and defeat of the national liberation movement. The challenge, then, for decolonising community psychology in Palestine is to realise that unless it is dialectically connected to the national liberation movement, it risks being just another academic cliché during an era of neoliberal economic dependency. As complex as it appears to be, I firmly believe that decolonising and non-reductionist community psychology that is relevant to the Palestinian colonial context maintains equal epistemological distance from individualistic-psychological reductionism on one end of the extreme, and social-cultural reductionism on the other end, towering over both as the only viable path to liberatory praxis.

Funding

Note

1. Palestinian uprising against the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza.

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