

Chapter Two

A New Musical Score, a Horizon, and Possibilities for Meaning Making

A Decolonization Paradigm

bfbbbd2a3467252c6d03798b847352b5
ebrary

I will introduce this chapter with a short story that occurred to me after having a conversation with a family therapist and taita (shaman) about his view that most people from the dominant culture in the South American countries he visited saw themselves as Westerners, yet they were living under conditions of colonization.

There was an old quirquincho (armadillo; from the Quechua *khirkinchu*) lying near some rocks somewhere in the Andes. She was listening to soft and musical sounds that the wind brought by going through the cracks of the rocks; with her eyes closed, she basked in the sweetness of these sounds and felt them throughout her shell. She also loved to wait till dawn to hear the frogs croaking in the swamps. As she listened to their songs, she immersed herself in their melodies but cried, wanting to be able to sing with such harmony. The frogs always let her know that she would never croak like them. One day, a man passed by with a couple of canaries. When the quirquincho heard them singing, she followed the man until she had a chance to ask them how to sing. She learned to listen to her own sounds, to trust her own knowledge, and to develop melodies that became a part of the Andean landscape. Who would have thought that a quirquincho could sing and maybe even dance one day?

In his introduction to *Interculturalidad, Descolonización del Estado y Conocimiento*, Walter Mignolo (2006) explained that decolonial thinking involves various narratives and ways of life, living, and doing that exist and develop “parallel and complementary to social movements that move along

bfbbbd2a3467252c6d03798b847352b5
ebrary

the edges and the margins of political and economic structures,” and that become themselves as they detach from an image of a whole that makes us believe that there is literally no way out. The detachment that decolonial thinking promotes involves confidence that other worlds are possible (not a unique and new one that we believe may be the best, but other or different) and that these worlds are in the process of planetary construction (Mignolo, 2006, p. 10).

In this chapter, I will review the underpinnings of the modernity/coloniality collective project and a decolonization perspective, inclusive of standpoint and Chicana feminists’ theories, to assist us in creating those new melodies that the *quirquincho* produced, that is, melodies that today fuse the Andean and African rhythms and instruments of our ancestors with those from other parts of the world, including Europe and Asia.

The modernity/coloniality collective project utilizes a paradigm rooted in Latin America that runs counter to such modernist narratives as Christianity, liberalism, and Marxism, and locates itself at the borders of these systems of thought. It reaches toward ways of thinking that are in contradistinction to Eurocentric philosophies (Escobar, 2007; Mignolo, 2005; Maldonado-Torres, 2005; Quijano, 2000b). The modernity/coloniality project has been nurtured by liberation theology and philosophy, critical theories of modernity and postmodernity, Chicana feminist theory, South Asian subaltern studies, and African philosophy, among others. This paradigm has recently been enriched by third-world feminist critiques (Lugones, 2003, 2005, 2010) and Grosfoguel’s (2006, 2007) examination of epistemic privilege. Let us look at the following vignettes to ground these concepts in the everyday lives of Latino and Latin American families in South, Central, or North America, or *Abya Yala*¹, as the *Kunas* refer to the whole of the American continent.

Ana Gonzalez is a single Latina working-class mother of two who lives in the New York-New Jersey metro area. Her daily routine involves waking up at 5:30 a.m. to get her children ready for school, dropping them at the bus stop, getting to work at 8:00 a.m. to labor at a factory until 5:30 p.m., with a half-hour break for lunch. Her children are picked up in the afternoon at the bus stop by her neighbor, and Ana takes them home by 7:00 p.m. During the next two hours, she helps them with homework, cooks dinner, and gets things ready for the next day. Ana works hard to provide for her children, hoping that their lives will be different than hers. However, she usually misses attending her children’s back-to-school nights and parent-teacher conferences because she is completely dependent on her employment and has no flexibility to negotiate a different schedule.

Ana’s brother, Mario, is serving jail time for his involvement in the selling of contraband. He is one of the many Latino prisoners who, as a group, make up one-third of federal prison inmates (Pew Institute, 2009) and are overrepresented in the U.S. jail system. He is housed in a private correctional

facility where he can work for a very low minimum stipend due to his good behavior and no prior criminal history. Though he earns \$1.25 an hour for an eight-hour workday manufacturing garments, the corporation that owns the prison, Corrections Corporation of America (CCA), receives billions in annual revenues from prison labor (Hammes-Garcia, 2004). Mario's wife and mother-in-law are now taking care of the three children.

Neither Ana nor Mario's children learn anything about their family's country of origin, Ecuador, except for what they sometimes hear at home. They have never visited the country. They understand Spanish but cannot speak or write it. In spite of the family's efforts to counteract the larger social milieu in which they live, they learn that they have an ethnicity (are unlike others), that they are dark, and that their phenotype does not conform to the ideal standard—that being of Latin American descent is not as valuable as having European ancestry. At the large and ethnically diverse public school they attend, they learn that children coalesce with their own ethnic group; if they have friends from other ethnic groups, they might have to explain why to their Latino peers.

This codification of differences around race is not a new experience for this family in the United States. It can be traced back to the Spaniards' invasion of today's Southern Abya Yala and the First Nations' holocaust. A key demarcation of difference between the conquerors and the conquered was that of "race," and it implied that there was a supposed biological structure that made some people naturally inferior to others. This demarcation is well and alive but has many forms and degrees of sophistication. For example, Ana's family migrated from the central highlands to the coastal city of Guayaquil, where they quickly learned that the local Montubios were different (read: superior) to Mestizos like them.

Marlen Gutierrez, a twenty-three-year-old female from a lower-middle-class family and student attending a prestigious college with sliding-scale tuition, travels to school by bus. The bus route takes her through areas of the city she lives in where she witnesses the pain of beggar adults and children, young girls at the doors of brothels, homeless dogs, and people selling food and contraband in the street to make a living. Those who have cars can take a route through the hills surrounding the city and never confront the sight of everyday pain in a country where 5 percent of the population owns 95 percent of the lands and wealth while everyone else scrambles for the leftovers.

As a psychology major, she is exposed to a curriculum that covers basic psychological processes (e.g., learning, cognition, emotion) and their application in areas including clinical, organizational, and educational psychology. The curriculum is based on a body of knowledge primarily produced in the United States and Europe, and the majority of authors are White males. Unless she takes an elective course that would specifically address other contents and authors, or undertakes a specialization in community psycholo-

gy. Thus, the psychology that she will practice will be fundamentally shaped by Eurocentric ideas.

Marlen's brother, Fabio, used to work for a local security company. When a British private military (paramilitary) company reached out offering jobs in Iraq, he took a job with a very high salary. Fabio was able to provide for his parents and Marlen for a while. After graduation, Marlen gets a full-time, minimum-wage job with a managed care organization. She is trained to diagnose and develop behavioral programs for individuals with depressive and anxiety symptoms. Her family pressures her to get married and have a family; however, she is attracted to women and has a relationship with a college mate that she hides from her family. When Fabio returns from Iraq, he searches for jobs but remains unemployed. His plans to marry his girlfriend Alexandra and have a family are postponed.

Catalina Perry and Sebastian Pernaut, a married couple attending graduate school in Illinois, United States, found themselves expecting a child and are planning how to organize their new family and their studies. Catalina meets with her chemistry lab friend, Patricia, at a popular Mexican taco shop where they each look like and behave like any other White student. They are served by the dark-skinned, Spanish-speaking daughters of the Mexican owner's establishment. Catalina shares with Patricia her excitement and plans. Catalina and Sebastian's families are fully engaged in the welcoming of the baby and in helping the couple through this transition. The families have known each other for generations and treasure their migration histories to South America and their French and British heritage. Although Sebastian's family tried to persuade them to pursue graduate education in Europe, the couple chose to go to the United States to take advantage of the business and financial networks that Catalina's family has there.

Catalina was born in the United States, where her father brought the family for a few years to further his family's salmon export company, which is one of more than 900 medium-size Chilean companies that sell products to the United States. Bilateral agreements between the countries allow for more than a thousand Chilean professionals to enter the United States for work purposes each year. Catalina plans to take a term off from graduate school while Sebastian continues studying. Her parents will arrive a month before the baby's delivery and his parents will visit afterward. Their siblings will take turns visiting and helping them with the baby. The couple plans to travel to Santiago during winter break, which is summer in the southern hemisphere, to spend the holidays with family, baptize the baby, and look into bringing a nana (domestic servant) back to help them.

In each of these cases, access and opportunity—as well as likelihood to choose, achieve, and develop as a person, as a family, and in a trade or in a profession—are shaped by class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, and ability. Although Ana and Mario Gonzalez and Catalina Perry and

Sebastian Pernaut have migration experiences involving the South and North of Abya Yala and even have knowledge of English and Spanish, their worlds are vastly different due to their historical classes and their ethnic ties to an ancestry that, over hundreds of years, developed both discourses and social structures to retain the differences that separate them today. Marlen Gutierrez does not even know that her ways of thinking, her professional identity, and even her own personal opinions are closer to those of a White, urban, middle-class woman from the United States than to a nana from Perú, Colombia, Ecuador, or Chile.

Ana, Mario, Marlen, Fabio, Catalina, and Sebastian's communities and families are embedded in asymmetrical relationship patterns driven by economic, political, and social forces. Although the everyday challenges and solutions these individuals face are not determined solely by these forces, they influence the individuals' participation in cultural identities and practices. For Ana, Mario, and the rest, their ways of thinking, behaving, and relating involve both their own agency and the hand of cards, so to speak, they each have to deal with at a given time.

The decolonization perspective articulated by the Latin American modernity/coloniality collective project and Chicana feminists, and the contributions from standpoint feminists, offer us a conceptual framework for interpreting and articulating how the world looks to some of us when we know, experience, speak, and imagine it while situated in the dwellings of double consciousness, border thinking, and subaltern epistemologies. The decolonization perspective also helps us orient ourselves toward resignifying the multiple overlapping and divergent but coexistent patterns of ethnicity, gender identity, race, sexual orientation, and epistemic and economic relationships with which we live (Grosfoguel, 2005).

COLONIALISM

The conquest and colonization of America was the formative moment in the creation of Europe's *other*; the point of origin of the capitalist world system, enabled by gold and silver from America; the origin of Europe's own concept of modernity (and of the first, Iberian, modernity, later eclipsed by the apogee of the second modernity); and the initiation point of Occidentalism as the overarching imaginary and the self-definition of the modern/colonial world system (Escobar, 2004).

Colonization has been a key constitutive factor in shaping our world. Abya Yala (Consejo Mundial de Pueblos Indígenas, 1977) was likely to have been populated by 60 to 110 million people before Columbus (Mann, 2005). In *Open Veins of Latin America*, Eduardo Galeano described the greed of the conquerors as follows:

America was the vast kingdom of the Devil, its redemption impossible or doubtful; but the fanatical mission against the natives' heresy was mixed with the fever that New World treasures stirred in the conquering hosts. Bernal Diaz del Castillo, faithful comrade of Hernán Cortés in the conquest of México, wrote that they had arrived in America "to serve God and His Majesty and also to get riches." (1973, p. 13)

After contact with Europeans throughout the continent, First Nations people endured outbreaks of smallpox, measles, influenza, and other infectious diseases, making conquest and colonization more viable (Mann, 2005). Widespread violence, disease, and slavery were devastating to First Nations peoples, who had complex societies and highly developed civilizations, like those of the Maya, Inca, and Azteca (Bonfil Batalla, Dennis, 1996). They became a commodity, and women and girls in particular were treated as sexual objects (Wiesner-Hanks, 2000; Todorov, 1987). Thus, *mestizaje* resulted from the trade and rape of women, which over time was even regarded as a desirable means to redeem one's lack of blood purity in what we, today, call Latin America.

A person with First Nations ancestry could achieve personal and social progress by mixing with Spaniards and Creoles to Whiten, although this was not an option for those who had African ancestors (Castro-Gómez, 2007; Rodriguez, 2007). At the time, these Mestizos were called *Ladinos* by Spaniards. However, De la Torre (2009) observed that the social, political, and economic hierarchy was always clear: Spaniards or Portuguese first, then Creoles, Mestizos, First Nations peoples, and Blacks.

Creoles, or Criollos, were people who saw themselves as of Spanish origin but were born in the colonies. After independence from their European masters, the Creole elites continued or developed new forms of violence against First Nations peoples to appropriate their lands and labor. Examples of the deterioration of First Nations peoples and the complexities that evolved in their relationships with Ladinos and Criollos after the formation of the Latin American republics can be found in the literary works of Jorge Icaza (*Huasipungo*, 1999), Ciro Alegria (*El Mundo es Ancho y Ajeno*, 2003) Miguel Ángel Asturias (*Hombres de Maíz*, 2005 [1949]), and Rosario Castellanos (*Balín Canán*, 2003), among others. Although some may consider this historical legacy irrelevant, it has shaped the lives of all who inhabit these lands; furthermore, life is not so different now for many people in today's Abya Yala. Let us look again at Catalina and Sebastian's lives.

Catalina and Sebastian travel during Christmas to their native Chile to be with family and baptize their baby, Carolina. Catalina's family always had a female domestic employee or nana working inside the house; this employee attended to the children and to general cleaning and cooking in the household. In addition, another employee was hired to work a couple of days a

week to finish these duties and to help with shopping and keeping up the garden.

Catalina's nana, Amanda, is a Mestiza born in the Araucania region, the land of the Mapuche First Nations people. Lacking employment and hoping to give her children a better future, Amanda's mother had left her homeland with her two children and migrated to the capital. She worked as a nana for Catalina's great-grandmother and grandmother. Eventually, Amanda began working for the family.

Like her mother, Amanda earns a low salary with no benefits or social security. However, because this job pays better than a factory job and affords her a little more flexibility, she chooses to stay. Amanda grew up knowing her place in the society as a brown, Mestiza-looking woman with less than a high school education and no family and community connections to support her identity, development, and accomplishments in life. Like other nanas, Amanda has to wear a uniform that clearly identifies her as such. When she used to help her patrona, Catalina's mother, with Catalina and her siblings at the golf club, Amanda was not allowed to enter spaces reserved for members and guests only.

As a teenager Amanda had an unplanned pregnancy that turned into a miscarriage; she also had an abortion following her rape by one of Catalina's relative. The family quietly helped her find a place where it could be performed, and they paid for everything. Although Amanda does not complain about her working conditions and likes the family, she currently has no scheduled working hours, no holidays, and no rights that protect her from any kind of potential abuse by her employers. Catalina and Sebastian are considering taking Amanda to help them with Carolina or asking her to help them get one of her family members to do so.

According to a recent Chilean national survey addressing Indigenous and non-Indigenous women's opinions about the conditions of their livelihood (Humanas, 2011), 84 percent of all the women felt the most discriminated against in their work places; Indigenous women felt more discriminated against in their life, and in specific areas such as politics (99 percent) and the media (96 percent). The results indicate that the main problems the Indigenous women face involve poverty, lack of opportunity, and lack of recognition. Therefore, the overall legacy of racial discrimination and economic exploitation that usually includes lack of education, or a low-quality education, and lack of access to health services, persists today.

Though positive social and economic changes have occurred in the last five hundred years, the social and economic structures and discourses that maintain access, opportunity, and stability for some and not for others are still in place. Scholarly works addressing the complexities of race, class, and gender continue to document inequality among racial groups and between

women and men (Bastos, 1998; Bengoa, 2000; Cirio, 2003; Wade, 2010; Winkler & Cueto, 2004).

A general understanding of colonialism is relevant to anyone working in a mental health field because, as Monk, Winslade, and Sinclair (2008) explained, it has influenced the entitlements that people claim, the privileges and lack of privileges that they may have, family composition, life expectations, and even how they respond to adversity. These authors affirmed that “the psychological effects of colonization that persist to this day cannot be fully understood by counselors and by their clients without taking account of the history of the cultural relationships reproduced by colonization” (p. 56).

In a similar vein, Duran, Firehammer, and Gonzalez (2008) insisted that therapists pay attention to how, in this age, colonization is accomplished not with guns and threats, but through people who change the hearts, minds, and spirits of others by promoting their own cultural belief systems. Therapists have the duty to avoid acts of colonization. Within the fields of psychology, counseling, social work, and family therapy, Martin-Baró (1982, 1990, 1994), Comaz-Díaz (2007), Duran and Duran (1995), Duran, (2006), and many others (Comaz-Díaz, Lykes, & Alarcón, 1998; McNeill & Cervantes, 2008; Rober & Seltzer, 2010) have discussed how colonization and its legacies must be attended to in the development of therapeutic practices that address social context in a life-affirming way.

According to the modernity/coloniality collective project (Escobar, 2001, 2003, 2004; Grosfoguel, 2005), *colonialism* refers to a form of political and judicial domination over the means of production, work, and livelihood that one population assumed over another through a historical period that can be marked as ending in 1824 with the independence battles that freed Latin America from Spain. These scholars have contend, however, that the end of colonialism, marked by the independence of the colonies beginning in the 1800s, did not end the power relationships that produce and legitimize oppressive differences between forms of knowledge, groups of people, and societies.

Peruvian sociologist Anibal Quijano (2000a, 2000b) asserted that a process based on the “knowledge of the other” has been extending oppression, for example, through institutions of education that reinforce the practice of studying others by inviting those others to contribute to their knowledge-building efforts while keeping their status in society marginalized and their contributions valued only when they become part of larger dominant discourses reinforcing the powers in place. Thus, colonial relationships persist, although mutated through discourses, symbols, and collective representations of social life about incommensurable differences that privilege some over others. The notions of race, gender identity, and culture are at the forefront of such discourses, establishing those who lack privileges as the other.

For example, Ana's parents were born in a country that could be considered politically independent since 1830. However, Ecuador, like most countries in the Caribbean and Central and South Abya Yala, has been under the economic and political yoke of the United States, the international banking community (the United States and Europe), and international corporations in various ways, even until today. Ecuador has a population of 13.8 million people; it is both geographically and ethnically diverse, and it has a relatively long, albeit unstable, experience with democratic rule. According to a report from the United Nations Development Programme (2008), despite a significant reduction in poverty in the last ten years, poverty and inequality are connected to gender, geography, and ethnicity, and persistent poverty encourages increased emigration.

As a family of humble origins from the highlands, with high school-level education, and limited access to credit, jobs, and education, Ana's family migrated to the United States in the 1970s with tourist visas; they stayed and worked their entire lives in manual and service occupations. Through the Immigration and Control Act of 1986, they became residents and, eventually, acquired citizenship. While Ana and Mario grew up having to negotiate their ethnic minority status at school, in the neighborhood, and eventually in their jobs, their parents had to do so to a lesser degree because their lives were organized mostly within the boundaries of the Latin American neighborhood where they settled.

As a heterosexual, able-bodied Latina of low socioeconomic status, Ana's path in life is typical of a woman from her generation and in her circumstances. She finished high school and entered the workforce to help her parents, got married in her early twenties to another Ecuadoran immigrant, and had two children. He became economically and emotionally abusive, was eventually unfaithful, and left the country, leaving her with the sole responsibility for raising the children. Ana is also mostly responsible for her aging parents' well-being.

She is the caretaker for the previous and the next generations. She is the culture bearer in the family, a typical role that women play in most cultures. In her job at the factory, she excels in her duties to counteract the racial prejudice that she experiences from supervisors and higher-level management. In spite of her achievements and resilience, Ana's life is intertwined with a longstanding historical legacy of institutionalized forms of sexism, racism, and classism that impacts her life in major ways.

COLONIZATION OF BEING

Mignolo (2005) and Maldonado-Torres (2005) used the term "colonization of being" to refer to the ideas and practices that have made particular groups

of people invisible. This is clearly seen in the visual media and in mass marketing methods throughout history (e.g., portrayals of and references to the typical “American family” often exclude large sectors—usually those at the margins—of the population, for example, Latinos).² According to Mignolo, the colonization of being operates through conversion to the ideals of modernization and Western democracy.

The Creole-Mestizo elite, for example, elevates and follows Western European standards by promoting lighter-skinned people in the media; and by borrowing flawed for-profit models of health management that have proven ill-equipped to serve people (for example, Colombia used the U.S. for-profit healthcare model as the template for its current health managedcare system, with disastrous consequences) (Jasso-Aguilar, Waitzkin, & Landwehr, 2004). Another powerful instrument of conversion involves importing academic standards based on hierarchical, exclusionary systems of power, which requires future professors to pursue studies typically in Europe and North America and to then implement the very knowledges and practices that came about from the epistemic expansion of the Western world (Dowling, 2008).

COLONIALITY

According to Mignolo (2000a, 2000b, 2005), *coloniality* refers to the systemic suppression of subordinated cultures and knowledges by the dominant Eurocentric paradigm of modernity, and the emergence of knowledges and practices resulting from this experience. It addresses the “power differential, not only in the accumulation of riches and military technologies of death but in the control of the very conception of life, of economy, of human being and labor” (p. 53). The emergence of knowledges and practices at the margins has the potential to engender distinct alternatives, thereby fostering a pluriverse of cultural configurations.

Mignolo articulated two interrelated aspects of the coloniality of being: the systemic suppression of local knowledges and the emergence of alternative knowledges resulting from this oppressive experience. Marlen’s case offers an illustration of the former in a secular higher education context. Throughout her elementary, high school, and college education, she barely learned that First Nations peoples and people of African descent existed in her native country and that there were lively small communities there in contemporary times. In addition, any knowledge or practice considered part of that country’s popular knowledge was systematically undermined and dismissed as fetishizing, primitive, and superstitious. The history lessons she received barely mentioned the achievements and contributions of ancestors other than Criollos. In spite of their mixed ethnic heritage, Marlen’s family was never connected to anything related to First Nations customs, practices,

or rituals. They were mostly connected to their lower-middle-class cultural milieu in which there is a legacy of hybrid traditions involving herbal medicine and curanderismo. However, the more she consumed Western psychology knowledge in college, the more removed she became from anything that had to do with her local upbringing and culture.

Regarding the emergence of alternative knowledges, there is enormous variation in knowledges of health. For example, throughout Abya Yala, there exists a rich reservoir of knowledges about well-being, including knowledge about the use of myriad indigenous plants and practices that involve developing an awareness of one's actions and the impact that those actions have on others (Ascani & Smith, 2008; McNeill, Esquivel, Carrasco, & Mendoza, 2008). For example, in their book *Curandero Conversations*, Zavaleta, Salinas, and Sams (2009) explained that *curanderismo* is a term used first by anthropologists to describe the healing systems of people. The authors documented many Mexican curanderismo practices in use today.

Another example of the use of First Nations healing practices involves yajé or ayahuasca ceremonies. Yajé is a brew that has been used for ritual and healing purposes in the Amazon basin since pre-Colombian times, and it is integral to ritual practices, myths, cosmologies, art, music, and most other aspects of cultural life (Gow, 1994; Reichel-Dolmatoff, 1997). However, its use for medicinal and spiritual purposes has grown beyond the Amazon borders. In Colombia, local groups host taitas (First Nations shamans), who administer this medicine in ceremonies, following traditional indigenous protocols that are attended by people of all socioeconomic classes and ages (Uribe, 2008).

In Peruvian contexts, it is called ayahuasca, and outside indigenous contexts, it is integral to a broader practice of plant-based ethnomedicine (Luna, 1986). It is consumed in religious contexts in Brazil and the United States (e.g., Santo Daime and União do Vegetal); indigenous-style ayahuasca healing ceremonies are conducted in the Amazon, all over Abya Yala, Europe, Australia, and New Zealand, and some parts of Asia (Dobkin de Rios & Rumrill, 2008); and it is privately consumed by people who buy the dried plant material through the Internet (Halpern & Pope, 2001). The brew is typically prepared from two plants, *Banisteriopsis caapi* and *Psychotria viridis*, which contain harmala alkaloids and dimethyltryptamine (DMT). Its ceremonial use produces a biochemical synergy resulting in profound idiosyncratic psychoactive effects (Shanon, 2002).

Although it is not within the scope of this chapter to address the history and contemporary issues related to the use of DMT, it is worth noting two issues that reflect the continued challenges that indigenous healing practices present to our contemporary "modern" world. First is the dilemma that Western liberal democratic states have faced while trying to simultaneously uphold religious freedom, and punitive "drug" control laws that deem DMT a

controlled substance. Second is the ways in which cultural globalization provides opportunities for First Nations peoples to obtain recognition, acceptance, and empowerment (Tupper, 2009).

Based on the notion of subaltern knowledge, introduced by Guha (1993) and Prakash (1999), and Bhabha's (1994a) ideas on borders and spaces of knowledge production and subordination, Mignolo (2005, 2009a) further developed the idea of decentering knowledge construction by multiplying the loci of enunciation by incorporating the point of view of subordinate groups at any colonial moment from the 16th century to the present. Thus, the emergence of alternative knowledges resulting from the oppressive experience of coloniality is the conceptual location for border thinking. In Mignolo's view, border thinking emerges from the fissures between the ways in which modernity describes the world, and the colonial histories, memories, and experiences of wounded subordinate groups.

As Escobar (2003) stated, "The conquest and colonization of America is the formative moment in the creation of Europe's Other. This is the marker that crystallizes binaries such as subject/object, self/other, nature/culture into a system of hierarchical classification of people and nature" (p. 60). Feminists have explained that gender and racialization processes are patriarchal and colonial tools of "otherization" that have justified violence toward women and people of Color. So while in a patriarchal system the notion of "woman" is constructed as other and marginal and secondary to man, who is at the center (Beauvoir, 1970), in a Eurocentric system, people of Color are constructed as other, marginal, and secondary to White people who are at the center (Dussel, 1992). When race and gender are seen in relation to each other, along with other dimensions such as sexual orientation and class, a "matrix of domination" (Collins, 1998) emerges, highlighting how interweaving systems simultaneously impact a family.

Thus, when we develop therapeutic models explicitly based on differences that construct the "other," we assist in reinforcing the dialectical connectedness of the privileged self who studies and helps the other, and the marginal other who is studied and intervened with by the members of the dominant group. The invisibility of this dialectical connection is embedded within White privilege and thus reinforces the explicit decentering of equity through barricades of economic, social, and political access. To "other" someone is dehumanizing and contributes to delegitimizing their culture as inferior, thereby facilitating, even justifying, their oppression (Almeida, Hernández-Wolfe, & Tubbs, 2011). Uruguayan writer Eduardo Galeano (2000) described this process of delegitimization by pointing to the way dominant cultures understand those whom they have converted into an other as those who do not speak a language but a dialect, do crafts but not art, and who have a folklore but not a culture.

"THE HUBRIS OF THE ZERO POINT"

Colombian philosopher Santiago Castro-Gómez (2010) coined the term "the hubris of the zero point" to refer to the knowledge of the observer who cannot be observed. This is the foundation of the notion of objectivity and the foundation of today's social science. In his book, *La Hybris del Punto Cero: Ciencia, Raza e Ilustración en la Nueva Granada (1750–1816)*, Castro-Gómez argued that European philosophers such as David Hume, Immanuel Kant, and John Smith, whose seminal works comprise the foundation for the social sciences, constructed a discourse in which the peoples colonized by Europe were characterized as less developed and their ideas as primitive; at the same time, these philosophers praised the market economy, political institutions, and science conceived by the Enlightenment as the most advanced stage of humanity's development.

Castro-Gómez discussed Edward Said's (1978) analysis of modern colonialism, in which domination by force is not the only method of domination; another method is discourse about the other embedded within the everyday lives of both the colonizers and colonized. According to Castro-Gómez, studying the relationships between the Enlightenment, colonialism, and social science from Latin America sheds new light on Said's analysis in *Orientalism*. Castro-Gómez asserted that Whiteness was the first cultural and geographical imaginary of the world-system from which the ethnic division of labor and the transfer of capital and raw material was globally legitimized. He addressed the question of how "America" is at the center of European Enlightenment discourse and how it was read, translated, and enunciated in the New Granada (today's Venezuela, Colombia, and Ecuador) from a philosophical perspective.

His hypothesis is that Creole thinkers translated and enunciated this discourse without attending to their own cultural, historical, and ethnic location as a result of their belief in being "limpios de sangre" (of clean blood). They constructed the idea of having clean blood and continued a tradition of racist European ideology and used it to elevate themselves over everyone else born in Abya Yala. Thus, they positioned themselves as the dominant group vis-à-vis the other: Mestizos, First Nations peoples, peoples of African descent, and the combinations of these groups. The Creole elite who controlled access to education appropriated the Enlightenment's discourse of the social sciences to differentiate the knowledge they possessed from local and popular knowledges, thus demarcating further distinctions between social classes.

His work helps us understand how such an ethnically diverse region with the largest population of Mestizos developed a social representation of the other along similar lines to those established by Europeans earlier and in other parts of the world. Castro-Gómez (2007) explained:

What the Enlightenment proposed was to legitimate, by way of science, the establishment of disciplinary apparatuses that permitted the normalization of bodies and minds to orient them toward productive work. But it is precisely in the enlightened project of normalization where colonialism fits so well. Constructing the profile of the “normal” subject that capitalism needed (White, male, owner, worker, heterosexual, etc.) necessarily required the image of an “other” located in the exteriority of European space. The identity of the bourgeois subject in the seventeenth century is constructed in opposition to the images of “savages” who lived in America. (p. 429)

Let us look at an illustration of how Creoles positioned themselves as the dominant group vis-à-vis the other groups in Argentina. Buenos Aires and Montevideo were the most important ports in that part of the Atlantic Ocean and became the entryway of African slaves that populated the interior of the continent. Most of the Africans who populated Chile, Perú, Uruguay, and Argentina came from the regions that we know today as Angola and the Congo and spoke Bantú languages. While in the 1778 census the Black population was robust (e.g., Tucumán, 42 percent; Santiago del Estero, 54 percent; en Catamarca, 5 percent; Salta, 46 percent; en Córdoba, el 44 percent; en Mendoza, el 24 percent), throughout the 19th century there was a continued decrease until, at the end of the century, there was a massive influx of European immigrants (Bello & Rangel, 2002; Cirio, 2003; Rotker, 1999; Stubbs & Reyes, 2006). Rotker (1999) explained that the population declined but did not extinguish. However, they disappeared from the official census, and it is possible that the traditions and identity characteristics that held their communities together may have become less powerful over time.

Although Afro-Argentines are alive and vibrant today, since the 1780s the Argentinian elite and the various waves of European immigrants made their Black population invisible. A 2005 pilot study surveying the presence of African descendants in two neighborhoods, one located in Buenos Aires, and the other in Santa Fé, revealed that 3 percent of the population knew about their African ancestors (Stubbs & Reyes, 2006). Like their counterparts in other parts of South Abya Yala, the state assumed its mission to Whiten the population as a prerequisite for the development and progress of the territory, using the promotion, from the constitution, of the White European population, the restriction of African or Asian immigration, and also to the denial of Black reality in the country (Chambers, 2003; Hofbauer, 2003; Loveman & Muniz, 2007; Loveman, 2009; Schaefer, 2008; Wade, 2008).

STANDPOINT EPISTEMOLOGY

Feminist scholars (Alarcón, 1990; Anzaldúa 1987, 1997, 2000; Collins, 1986, 1998; Haraway, 1988; Harding, 2003, 2008; Lugones, 2003; Sandoval,

2001; Moraga, 2011; Pérez, 2003; Wiley, 2001) have reminded us that we always speak from a particular location within power structures. Nobody escapes the class, sexual, gender, spiritual, linguistic, geographical, and racial hierarchies of the “modern/colonial capitalist/patriarchal” world-system. Specifically, feminist standpoint theory states that social location systematically influences our experiences, shaping and limiting what we know. Thus, what one can know is influenced by the kind of experiences one has; what we know is learned and known from a particular standpoint. Knowledge is embodied rather than acquired through a universal, disembodied, rational mind. Social inequalities generate distinctive accounts of nature, and social relationships and inequalities of different social groups create differences in their standpoints.

A standpoint is not a perspective but a critical reflection on the ways in which power structures and social location influence what and how we know. Harding (2004) defined standpoints as distinctive insights about how hierarchical social structures work, and Wylie (2003) defined a standpoint as “a critical consciousness about the nature of our social location and the difference it makes epistemically” (p. 31). Standpoint epistemology takes a step further: the analysis of the hubris of the zero. The hubris of the zero point makes visible that, in Western philosophy and sciences, the subject that speaks is always hidden from the analysis under the guise of objectivity. Thus, there is a claim to a truthful universal knowledge that conceals the geographical, political, social, and epistemic location of knowledge production. Standpoint epistemology articulates the ways in which knowledge production is shaped by social location.

There are several aspects of standpoint epistemology that deserve our attention: It is a form of knowledge that is primarily achieved collectively; it involves a commitment to making visible the ways in which social location shapes and limits scientific inquiry; and it advocates for the equitable inclusion and participation of members of marginalized communities in the process of knowledge construction (Inteman, 2010). According to standpoint epistemology, critical consciousness about knowledge and power is achieved by communities. While individuals may contribute to the accomplishment of critical consciousness within an epistemic community in different ways, the idea is that this is a social epistemology. For example, individual people of Color in the United States who were regularly stopped by the police and often were mistreated or even abused without any apparent reason may not have seen this experience as an expression of racism, and may have doubted how prevalent such mistreatment was in some states. Only when these experiences are articulated within communities of concerned individuals does there emerge a questioning of the status quo, practices of resistance, accountability, and policy change.

For example, Juan, a medical student attending a mid-Atlantic prestigious university, went to a relative's funeral in New Jersey. On the trip from the cemetery to his aunt's house, he and his family were stopped for speeding while driving 60 miles per hour in a 55-mile-per-hour zone. The group was forced to stand on the road in the rain for an extended period of time while the police searched the car. Civil lawsuits brought about an investigation by the Department of Justice into the activities of the New Jersey state police in 1998. It was found that there was a consistent pattern of racial profiling in motor vehicle stops along the New Jersey Turnpike.

According to a report from the U.S. Department of Justice (2000), Black drivers, who accounted for 17 percent of the state's population, made up 70 percent of drivers who were searched and had a 28.4 percent chance of carrying contraband. In contrast, White drivers had a 28.8 percent chance of carrying contraband and were searched far less often. Thus, as a group, Latinos were able to see the patterns of this form of racism and its effects.

Standpoint epistemology also involves mapping the "practices of power, the ways the dominant institutions and their conceptual frameworks create and maintain oppressive relations" (Harding, 2004, p. 31). It takes an ethical and political stance in rejecting the idea of science as a "value-free" enterprise, and in examining power relations, institutions, policies, practices, methodologies, and technologies that maintain oppression, in order to question, change, or abolish them.

For example, Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) explained that Western research brings with it a particular set of values and conceptualizations of time, space, subjectivity, gender relations, and knowledge that influence the gaze of the researcher. Accordingly, research on Indigenous peoples in the majority of cases has involved the extraction of knowledge for the benefit of the Western researcher and Western science. This knowledge has produced a wide range of negative consequences for Indigenous peoples, such as having their social and spiritual worlds explored, measured, and even appropriated.

In addition, those who have experiences of marginalization in one or more areas (Collins, 1998; Wylie, 2003) have special insights resulting from their having to learn the ways, values, and practices of dominant groups in addition to those of their own group. The experiences and knowledge generated from inhabiting spaces of marginalization often require that one learns well the practices and knowledge of dominant groups. The new knowledge generated from the marginalized standpoint regarding dominant practices and groups may help serve both those in dominant and marginalized positions. These new perspectives should be considered when taking into account the fluidity of social locations and without presupposing an essentialist definition of the social categories by which standpoints are characterized.

Finally, one should not assume that standpoints of the oppressed are automatically epistemically advantaged (Wylie, 2003), but that for this knowledge and contribution to be truly valued and articulated with the rigors of other bodies of knowledge, “there must be some sort of equality of intellectual authority and uptake of criticism.”

DECOLONIZATION

Mignolo (2011) invited us to consider decolonial thinking as a critical theory and “the de-colonial option as a specific orientation of doing.” We will examine and illustrate the following concepts to differentiate what these scholars mean by *decolonization*, including colonialism, coloniality, colonization of being, and the hubris of the zero point.

The experience of coloniality is a *sine qua non* for decolonization. From the perspective of the modernity/coloniality collective project, decoloniality must be thought of from the epistemological and political space of the “colonial difference” (Quijano, 2000a) or the “colonial wound”—that is, the experiences and subjectivities of the damned of the earth, of the victims of modernity. The point is not to adopt an anticolonial or anti-European stance, as it must be recognized that we speak from the perspective of the colonial wound, which was itself created by coloniality; we inevitably draw on knowledge produced from the other side of modernity, and cannot pretend disingenuously to be dislocated from that modernity.

Decoloniality refers to the processes through which people who are socially, politically, and geographically outside of hegemonic structures resist the rules and racialized hierarchies within which they are confined. This process is also about developing ways of being, knowing, doing, and relating that affirm knowledges and practices at the margins that have the potential to engender distinct, articulate alternatives to dominant practices.

Feminist queer Chicana scholar Emma Pérez (1999, 2003) has spoken of the decolonial imaginary as a space in between, where systems of domination are negotiated, and a space to inhabit and hold while at the same time challenging those systems. Pérez (1999) explained that social positioning should not be read as a binary describing, on one end, oppression and victimization and, on the other, privilege and perpetration. She insisted that multiple social positions are always at work, and this creates a liminal identity in which “one negotiates within the imaginary to a decolonizing otherness where all identities are at work in one way or another” (p. 7).

Escobar (2001, 2004) characterized decolonization as thinking through and from the practices of subaltern groups in contrast to the hegemonic, universalist epistemology from the perspective typical of a person having a White male body and located in Christian Europe and the United States.

Other authors (Quijano, 2000a, 2000b; Mignolo, 2009) have argued for an epistemological detachment or delinking from Eurocentric ways of thinking. Mignolo (2009) named this detachment “epistemic disobedience.” Decolonial thinking requires that this detachment be from the global hegemony of the knowledge model that represents the local European historical experience at epistemological and political levels. However, the modernity/coloniality collective project’s decolonization proposal is still influenced by the same theories and epistemologies that it criticizes. This proposal offers us a way to subversively reorient traditional theoretical frameworks into a deep questioning of ourselves.

Decolonial thinking is distinct from other critical projects in that it takes root at the colonies and excolonies in accordance with “an-other epistemology” and seeks a change in content, and in the limits and conditions of conversations (Mignolo, 2006). The project occupies itself with unearthing and articulating alternative ways of thinking from its dwellings in double consciousness, Mestiza consciousness, border thinking, and subaltern epistemologies.

Pérez (1999) distinguished between the colonial imaginary, that cognitive system that supports and rationalizes the continuing colonial systems, and the decolonial imaginary, which allows one to conceive of new possibilities, new categories, and social locations outside of the imposed and normalized colonial logics. She pointed out that even the colonized embody and are constrained by the colonial imaginary. In the following example of a therapeutic intervention using a perspective that integrates standpoint epistemology and a liberation-based healing framework for practice, I illustrate how we can think outside the traditional box of mental health and create other ways of healing.

A PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATION

The following case study recently published by Almeida, Hernández-Wolfe, and Tubbs (2011, pp. 50–51)³, illustrates a community-based healing model using three family processes: critical consciousness, empowerment, and accountability. At its core, the model is an analysis of power, privilege, and intersectionality, and it will be further examined in chapter 5. For now, let us look at this community-based intervention.

Ishmael, an eighteen-year-old African American young man, was a part of a therapy program for youth on probation.⁴ His mother was serving time for drug charges, his father was serving life for armed robbery, and he had no grandparents or relatives around. He was raised by his elderly godmother, who had less than a high school education and was receiving governmental assistance. Although she offered him a nurturing environment throughout his

childhood, he, like many other adolescents, faced many challenges around gang initiation, drugs, and early fatherhood during his junior year in high school. He was referred to Affinity Counseling Center (ACC) where he entered a therapeutic community that offered him a way to understand and name the ways in which his life, and the lives of many in his close circle, were largely shaped by categories such as race, class, gender, sexual orientation, ability, religion, and other markers through a process of building critical consciousness. Many gang members had been court ordered to this center because of their repeated involvement with the criminal justice system, including many who had grown up with him and attended the same schools.

Ishmael was confronted by structural barriers to getting an education and a lack of social capital that could mitigate some of these barriers. Due to the enormous number of teens with complex difficulties in his school district, teachers were overwhelmed and often had limited expectations for their students. At Affinity Counseling, a therapeutic community embraced him with stand-in parents, elders from his community, peers who shared lived experiences, therapists, and activists. This healing community allowed him to process and reconsider many typical challenges facing teens in his circumstances.

As therapy progressed, Ishmael considered attending college and was later accepted at a local university. Therapists supported his dream by partnering with community activists/allies and clients who acted as mentors. But his dream of college entrance came with newly discovered barriers. He learned that entry into college did not entitle him to secure financial aid because, in the United States, student loans—state and federal—require a cosigner. The college that accepted him offered no financial options for this young man who wanted and deserved to break free from the cycle of poverty that had trapped his parents and many others in his community. Allies from a Baptist church offered to cosign on his behalf, with the condition that he attend a few church gatherings, but Ishmael was Muslim and was unwilling to accept an offer that involved worshiping another god.

The therapeutic community turned to a network of community allies who focus on justice through praxis and partner with them on a range of community-building/therapeutic initiatives. The Alliance for Racial and Social Justice (ARSJ), a group that engages in civic initiatives in which they lend their privilege and unearned benefits to those with disadvantages, agreed to research the case and eventually chose to support Ishmael's college dream by offering to cosign the loans.

Since they are an activist organization, not a philanthropic organization, it was important that Ishmael engage with them in activist projects. They invited Ishmael to participate in a range of community-building projects, including voter registration and Court Watch. These initiatives were designed to reinscribe the visibility of disaffected youth and to legitimize their presence

within their own communities. This transformative endeavor facilitated Ishmael's reclaiming of his community as a contributing citizen, a milestone critical to his college launching. He was excited to be part of the process of restoring his overpoliced and disenfranchised community to its citizens. He also accepted an invitation to participate with ARSJ and present at the White Privilege Conference. He became a co-trainer on dismantling White privilege, reporting about those with collective disadvantages and expanding communities of resistance. All of these community-based assets became part of his social and cultural capital.

The day before he left for college, ARSJ, Affinity Counseling, and the Institute for Family Services (IFS) planned a celebratory ritual of his launching. Ishmael was embraced by a circle of mentors, community allies, clients with diverse problems from multiple backgrounds, and therapists. In the circle, he provided the final signature to the completed loan application and was presented with numerous gifts for his dorm room. Ishmael gave out thank-you cards to everyone, and, struggling to hold back tears, told the group, "I never had any family, and you are not even my family, but I see what family looks like."

As the celebration continued, members from ARSJ, as well as diverse members of the circle, both allies and clients, offered numerous reflections, such as the following: "Ellen and I are really proud of your perseverance throughout this past year and your sense of hope and even when every system around you seemed to shut you out"; "Ishmael, you have spent quite a bit of time in my home so you know that even as a White woman, I am a single GLBT parent and my 13-year-old is constantly having my lifestyle challenged by her friends' parents. I would never have survived financially, however, in spite of my college education, if it were not for my parents' consistent economic support. I think that legacy is often not spoken openly about."

The African American allies, members of the Baptist church, initially struggled with the fact that Ishmael turned down their offer to attend a few Sunday gatherings in exchange for the funding the church could offer him. They argued that even though he might today identify as Muslim, the African American community had a long tradition of participating in the Baptist faith. They had difficulty dialoging around the issue of difference within group and within faith. They also had difficulty grappling with the construct of privilege and power from their religious stance, although they were, in the end, able to come to terms with understanding the potential loss of a child from their community due to an assumption of identity/politics/cultural/religious homogeneity. After numerous conversations, the pastor and church committees decided to appoint a special committee that would, in the future, handle the dilemma that Ishmael handed them. They decided that a young

Black man trying to go to college against all odds must receive whatever aid they could offer, and his religious preference ought not to be a barrier.

SUMMARY

In this chapter I examined the underpinnings of the modernity/coloniality project and reviewed the following key concepts: colonialism, coloniality, the hubris of the zero point, and decolonization. The systemic suppression of subordinated cultures/ways of knowing (coloniality) is perpetuated through a dominant Eurocentric paradigm of modernity, and it comprises two key interrelated aspects: the continuous marginalization of local knowledges, and the unfolding of alternative practices and ways of knowing that endure and develop from this marginalization. Therapeutic models that are grounded in Eurocentered ways of healing perpetuate oppressive perspectives that reinforce coloniality. I discussed how they relate to standpoint epistemology and explained how we always speak from a particular social location, which is embedded within interwoven power structures, and how the hubris of the zero point has been used to sell and sustain the idea that science is “value free.” Finally, I offered Ishmael’s case as an example of another way to think about therapy and therapeutic interventions. If the reader is interested in using this material for further reflection, I provide a set of open-ended questions for dialogue in the Appendix. In the next chapter I will discuss the borderlands perspective and the notions of nepantla, intersectionality, and social and epistemic location.

NOTES

1.4 Abya Yala is the name that the Kuna people give to this continent to mean “continent of life.”

2. This is beginning to change in the United States due to the efforts of Black advertising entrepreneurs who have challenged the status quo of marketing only to White audiences.

3. Excerpts from this case have been reprinted here with permission from *The International Journal of Narrative Therapy and Community Work*, Dulwich Centre Publications, www.dulwichcentre.com.au.

4. Affinity Counseling Center (ACC), the Institute for Family Services (IFS), and the Alliance for Racial and Social Justice (ARJS) collaborated to assist Ishmael.

bfbbbd2a3467252c6d03798b847352b5
ebrary

bfbbbd2a3467252c6d03798b847352b5
ebrary

bfbbbd2a3467252c6d03798b847352b5
ebrary

bfbbbd2a3467252c6d03798b847352b5
ebrary