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Community Social Psychology in Brazil

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Des comptes-rendus de deux Conférences organisées en Psychologie Sociale des Communautés, l'une à São-Paulo en 1981 et l'autre en 1988 à Belo Horizonte, nous extrayons une revue de ce qui a été réalisé dans ce champ depuis dix ans. Au début, les buts visaient la santé mentale et l'éducation populaire sans focaliser sur le rôle des psychologues. Dans les rapports de 1988, nous observons une définition plus claire de leur travail en conseil et en dynamique des groupes, à la recherche de la prise de conscience et de l'organisation des individus dans les communautés.

Une recherche participative entreprise dans une *favela* est présentée en détail, amenant une systématisation de la théorie et de la pratique en Psychologie Sociale des Communautés.

By using the published reports of two conferences on community social psychology, one held in São Paulo in 1981 and the other in Belo Horizonte in 1988, we present an overview of the developments in the field over a 10-year period. In 1981, emphasis was placed on mental health and popular education and not on the role of the psychologist. In 1988, however, the psychologist's role was more clearly defined: using counselling and group dynamics to reach consciousness and the organisation of communities.

Participative research undertaken in a *favela* is reported in detail, which systematises theory and practice in community social psychology.

INTRODUCTION

A study of community social psychology in Brazil cannot be undertaken without consideration of the economic and political background of the country and Latin America as a whole. In 1964, a military coup led to the installation of a dictatorial government in Brazil, and the beginnings of extreme repression and violence. At this time, gatherings of five or more people were considered subversive. All democratic liberties were suppressed: direct elections for the posts of president, governor, city and town mayor were abolished. Although Congress was retained, only two parties

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were represented—the government and a recognised opposition. All other political parties were considered illegal and therefore abolished.

The first years of the military regime were characterised by the so-called "economic miracle", but which in fact saw inflation and foreign debt escalate out of control, to the further impoverishment of the Brazilian people. These circumstances led psychologists to review their role and their responsibilities to the population as a whole, and what influence they might bring to bear in helping people.

The need for review was deeply felt in the universities. The 1968 Student Movement made a particular impact in Third World countries, where it was felt that ivory-tower universities could no longer be tolerated. The relationship between teachers and students was reconsidered, together with a re-evaluation of the institution as a whole. In this context, academics questioned their professional practices within psychology departments. Thus began a crisis within psychology as a scientific discipline. At the same time, the anti-psychiatry movement shifted its focus from mental illness to mental health and prevention, especially among the poor, the oppressed and those forgotten by the state.

It was during this time that "community psychology" appeared in the U.S.A. and in several Latin American countries. Community psychology was to entail professional action undertaken in the name of the impoverished, although most work undertaken at this stage had a strong tendency towards assistance and manipulative interventions, and the use of techniques that lacked necessary critical analysis. Although the intentions were good, the results were rather poor.

Outside the universities, physicians and psychiatrists considered public health and preventive action. They created community and mental health centres which, according to Andery (1981, p. 12), were designed to improve the outdated psychiatric hospitals; however, the changes tended to be superficial rather than structural.

Also in the 1960s, a preoccupation with popular education and adult literacy emerged as an instrument of awareness. This was seen in the work of Paulo Freire and others, in which professionals participated, including psychologists. The concern was not with defining specific professional procedures, but developing activities related to civic involvement instead. These experiences led psychologists in the 1970s to develop community action aimed at popular education and, through that effort, to increase public awareness.

Thus we find two strands to community social psychology: (1) the prevention of mental health, in which psychologists, psychiatrists, and social workers acted together, and (2) popular education with the participation of educators, psychologists, sociologists and social workers.

In 1981, a conference was held in São Paulo in which these two practices

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were shown to overlap, and a new question evolved around the theme "What is a community?". Is "community" possible in a capitalistic society, based on the idea of competition? Or is it a utopian idea that can only be achieved some time in the future?

This report is based on two conferences held in Brazil in the 1980s:

1. The First Regional Meeting of Social Psychology in the Community, which took place in São Paulo in 1981 and which discussed reports of practices carried out in the 1970s.
2. The Second Regional Meeting of Social Psychology in the Community, held in Belo Horizonte in 1988, which reviewed experiences of the 1980s.

Both conferences were organised by the Brazilian Social Psychology Association (ABRAPSO), having as goals to exchange experiences and, most of all, to make sure that the same mistakes were never made again. A number of reports were presented to an audience of more than 100 professionals, including psychologists, social workers, educators and sociologists.

1981: GROPING FOR AN UNDERSTANDING OF COMMUNITY SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

H. Figueiredo (1981) presented a community mental health project undertaken in Jardim Santo Antonio, the main theme of which was a contract with society. This project was initiated at the Catholic University by a group formed by two psychology professors, a sociologist and an administrator, all of whom were also engaged in working directly with students in fieldwork associated with a psychology course. In July 1979, the team rented a house, from which they offered a variety of services: individual and group psychological counselling, follow-up work with mothers and children, and the promotion of meetings with neighbours in the area in order to define future programmes. The continuing physical presence of the team was considered an important factor in developing local participation.

The team detected several different themes of interest in its pursuit of mental health matters. Among these were loss of cultural identity due to migration, the action of the mass media in transmitting messages with a certain ideological content, and the absence of any structure or organisation in the population. Other themes included issues related to the sociological infrastructure, e.g. low salaries, urban violence, and physical and psychological fatigue.

Following these experiences, the team defined its objectives, which

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included the "raising of awareness" through group participation in order to de-emphasize individual solutions.

Pedro C. Pontual and Paulo Moldes described the work undertaken by the Centro de Educação Popular do Instituto Sedes Sapiens—SP, which involved several outlying districts of São Paulo City. The professional team divided itself into smaller groups, the size of each being dependent upon the population demands of each district. It was proposed that there be interdisciplinary intervention in health and education, having critical overtones in its application. Professionals from health and education, together with journalists, psychologists, sociologists, social workers, theologians, economists, geographers, engineers and architects participated in discussing the following themes: (1) the importance of legalised self-organisation by workers; (2) the importance of organisation as a factor in the raising of awareness; and (3) the role of the professional as a facilitator who encourages and initiates, but never "leads". With regard to the latter, Pontual (1981, p. 30) states: "In this sense, what really identifies any professional engaged in popular movements is his role as a popular educator, though he can give a more specific contribution in the field in which he was trained." He goes on to say that, while psychologists must deal with group dynamics and meetings, and with methodological and evaluative questions, they must also deal with the tensions and problems of relationships, without setting limits.

Another point raised was how people come to question themselves in terms of how much they know about their own reality. It was suggested that psychologists might undertake research on the events and characteristics of a particular locale. The results were presented as cartoons and compiled in such a way as to be of use at meetings where they could be discussed. In this way, the basic problems of an area could be defined, such as a lack of nurseries, district hospitals and rubbish disposal. Discussion could also be supplemented by video-films. In this context, people are motivated to find the means for fulfilling their needs.

A third report presented at the 1981 conference by Alice Vassimon (1981, pp. 39–45), evaluated the use of psychodrama with suburban women. This work can be classified as popular education, in that a group is helped "to find their own reality, their own culture" (Vassimon, 1981, p. 41). The professional team was made up of educators belonging to an institution of popular education (GETEP), who at the time had been working in the city district for 4 years. The work began with 60 women who were anxious to discuss their daily problems, e.g. those related to their husbands, homes, families, etc. For 2 years, the interdisciplinary team tried to solve the problem of "how to make the group independent, assuming their own history and their own way" (Vassimon, 1981, p. 41).

These women became known as the "Mothers' Group". They strengthened their ties with the local school, organised an arts fair and worked at

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the district hospital, giving training courses for pregnant women. As the women became progressively more independent, assistance from the interdisciplinary group was cut back.

Vassimon's report ends with a consideration of psychodrama as "an extremely healthy way of approaching [group work]", because "through psychodrama people don't need to express themselves verbally, and since talking is not always easy for them . . . it's very important to stimulate liberation, so they can define the direction of their own reality" (Vassimon, 1981, p. 48).

Brühl and Malheiros presented their ideas about creating a graduate course in community psychology at the Universidade Federal da Paraíba in the northeast of Brazil. They defined two courses of action: (1) the development of education aimed at mobilising and organising community groups so as to promote their own attempts at solving their problems; and (2) the development of assessment practices to evaluate those groups already in existence. Brühl and Malheiros (1981, p. 102) stated that psychologists' efforts "must be in the sense of solving individual crises so as to help to overcome the origin of the situation which is the social contradiction". This happens through "awareness raising" practices.

Health care workers also discussed work undertaken with teenage girls, theatre productions, etc., in which they stressed that the group is the basic unit for clinical intervention as well as for preventive and educational practice.

At the end of the 1981 conference, the role of the psychologist in the prevention and cure of mental illness and in educational "awareness raising" practices was questioned. It was asked, "What is specific to psychologists in these functions, in a way which is different from the practice of other professionals?" And, "What is the university's role in all this?" (Conclusions, 1981, p. 187).

At this time, there was a fragmented view of the individual in professional practice in community psychology, compared with 1988. At this point, learning was considered a process in which education, therapy and "awareness raising" were different functions. The only factor these had in common was that of group relations: it is through our contact with other human beings that we discover reality, both individually and in society. Otherwise, the different ideas were caught up in a discussion of techniques rather than considering the nature of the human psyche and the nature of the individual who interacts with others.

1988: SEARCHING FOR SYSTEMATISATION

At the 1988 Community Psychology Conference held in Belo Horizonte, the contributors tried to define the specific character of psychological practice in communities. Great emphasis was placed on the techniques of

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group dynamics, as can be observed in Elizabeth Bomfim's (Bomfim, 1988, p. 200) report. She indicated that it is from the knowledge of groups and institutions that popular organisation is achieved. The experience of Vila Acaba Mundo Slum in Belo Horizonte was reported by her and Marilia N. da Mata Machado. They reported on the activities—apart from the training of psychology students—that teach self-organisation techniques to communities. Their resources included video-tapes about slums and information regarding community rights that can be called upon in a community's search for solutions to its problems. Group activities were also used to emphasise the development of a "place for the freedom of the word", aimed at organisational schemes such as cooperatives. Therapy was also emphasised in helping promote self-respect.

In Vila Acaba Mundo, Alayde M. Caiafa de Arantes (1988, p. 150) undertook work with teenagers "where psychologists [were] not mentioned", but where handicrafts were used to increase their understanding of social relations and the rules that are necessary for group development. Elizabeth Bomfim states that the psychologist's responsibility is to "help the individuals to dominate the conditions of their lives so that they can have autonomy in creating a healthy existence" (Bomfim, 1988, p. 202).

Angela Caniato presented a paper which evaluated work carried out in a community by the Maringá University, in association with a health unit. She concluded that the "psychologist collides with the theoretical limits [of her own discipline] and the University background [of the practitioners]" (Caniato, 1988, p. 180). These limitations do not permit psychologists to answer the questions regarding psychosocial assistance demanded by users of health units. She goes on to say that "the citizen disappears into [the ideologically based idea of] a sick person who looks for psychological care" (Caniato, 1988, p. 181). The need to recover the individual person, with his or her own subjectivity, from this ideological definition, becomes the psychologist's responsibility.

Finally, William Cesar C. Pereira (1988) undertook an analysis of the idea of individualism as a by-product of modernism, through a consideration of the film *The Working Class Goes to Paradise*. He concluded by stating that the person is a victim of the relation between individualism and modernism, both physically and subjectively, because the outlook its arbitrary power structure engenders in fact denies subjectivity. This work reconsidered the element of power in social relations, pointing out the need to differentiate between the concepts of "power–work–service" and "power–domination–authoritarianism". The first of these concepts is one of mutual influence, while the second, according to the author, is a "fetish".

Summing up the 1988 meeting, one can see a development in the concept of the psychologist's role in community psychology. He or she is

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seen to be responsible for the development within groups of "awareness" and the ability to exercise self-control over the events in the lives of the members of the group through cooperative and organised action.

It is of the utmost importance for the power relations network that constitutes daily living to understand both arbitrary violence and transforming cooperative action. On the other hand, the latter can only be accomplished when individual subjectivity is restored, which implies understanding one's own world representations, emotions and affects, which are the defining elements of one's uniqueness.

The various experiences cited have shown the importance of the group for establishing a common knowledge base on the one hand, and for permitting self-reflection on issues of joint action. Thus awareness and activity become fundamental categories of the human psyche, which includes most of what we know about behaviour, learning and cognition. Subjectivity implies identity, a category that leads to an awareness of the individual who is expressed through his or her affect, the related motivational considerations, and his or her relations with others.

These three fundamental categories (activity, awareness and identity) are established through such mediators as language and thought. These are essential tools for social relations which make up the contents of consciousness. Social relations are developed through activities which in turn are affected by emotions; thus unconscious content can be found in conscious manifestations such as language, and this content can be related to activity and to the individual's sense of identity.

Basically, the psychologist works with language and representations. His or her milieu in community psychology is that of group relations, which are an essential link between the person and society. The emotions that are commonly related to subjectivity are used to work on the person's awareness, on his or her activities, and on his or her sense of identity. With this assistance, it is hoped that individuals will one day develop and live in a true community.

AN EXPERIENCE WITH *FAVELA*[1] WOMEN: PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH AS AN OPERATIONAL TOOL FOR EPISTEMIOLOGICAL PREMISES IN COMMUNITY SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

The following detailed research adopted the "participatory research" approach for collecting and analysing data, in order to overcome the aforementioned problems that have arisen in community social psychology

[1]A *favela* is a group of shacks built of wood, tin or even cardboard. The owner usually has no legal claim to the land, and public services such as water, sewage, etc., are lacking.

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in Brazil: the restriction to an option of action, disregarding any theoretical-practical systematisation that would enhance the recovery of such action in terms of its production of knowledge. In other words, community social psychology is far from being a practical science that opposes the theoretical ones.

Our standpoint is that this area of psychology is an investigative praxis, essentially committed to human emancipation, in which action should be constantly reflected upon in the light of theory. Such a procedure allows for the enrichment of the theoretical body of psychology as its practice is transformed by the light thrown upon it by the social context in which such action takes place.

Participatory research is a methodological proposition, whose procedures materialise the ontological and epistemological premises of community social psychology, i.e. they both share the same hope for the future: the recovery of science's libertarian character as it promotes human emancipation.

Their histories blend, for they are the products of the same social forces which saw a libertarian outlook throughout the world, and led science to question its dominating tenets, as well as its positivistic paradigm of scientific neutrality. Both were influenced by the popular experiences developed according to the "pedagogy of the oppressed" (Freire, 1974), the aim of which is to recapture popular knowledge and generate a research style implied in educational action.

Both deny scientific neutrality, but vouch for science. They question the validity of the postulating positivism, knowledge objectivity only as a function of logical–formal methodological procedures, but want to recapture that which is empirical, in order to be able, through an analysis of historical determinants, to return to concrete knowledge.

The action of community social psychologists indicates that their own presence as researchers is, in itself, an intervention. If this is so, why not shoulder the responsibility of the intervenor's role and research its configurations while participating in the process, or act while researching situations in which individuals actually think, talk, act and build their own life histories?

This was the core of our proposition as social psychologists using participatory research to help organise a group of women who had already been demanding water, light and sewage for their *favela*. At the same time, by comparing the resulting modifications with theory, the researchers would be able to increase their knowledge of the same process in actual daily situations.

To sum up, our proposition starts from the theoretical premise that consciousness builds itself in one's action and interactions, and should not be assessed in an isolated manner, as an abstraction.

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Participatory Research Procedures

The participatory research procedures were designed and defined by the participants rather than by the researcher. They were gradually built up according to action development, after reflecting upon them.

Participatory research attempts to transform a project into a research process, something that demands creativity and enthusiasm on the part of the researcher. However, this does not imply a lack of methodology. It is already a procedural approach, linked to a scientific idealism which can never be misinterpreted as positivism.

Being undoubtedly a dangerous scientific position, it entails extra attention, special care and frequent evaluation, or otherwise it will be turned into an approach that does not go much beyond the merely "empirical", or which only generates much participation but little knowledge (Veiga, 1984).

A brief overview of research carried out using this methodology will allow us to outline some common features. The first common feature is that of acquaintance. The researcher must progress from outsider to someone who is willing to join with the group to overcome their problems—from alien to friend to comrade (Souza, 1983). It is also at this stage that the researcher, along with his comrades, becomes acquainted with the problem and delineates the research problem. The researcher must try to understand the problem in full in order to mobilise and organise the group in question.

At this stage, a number of techniques are used for data collection, including quantitative techniques and sampling, as well as the use of secondary data. The collection of data is almost always carried out by the researchers themselves, who also work on elaborating the instrument. Both strategies are purposefully used to promote organisation during this incipient research phase. They can be termed "warming up" techniques.

At the outset, the researcher must immerse him or herself in the reality to be assessed. There are many ways to do this. Some are invited to join groups already in existence or become involved with them by offering help. Many researchers who offer their services to oppressed groups are able to mobilise and organise them to fulfil their needs, while at the same time capitalising upon knowledge as a consequence. Other researchers offer their help on a mutual basis. Some create client–professional relationships, in order to modify people's ways of thinking and behaving, intentionally manipulating them. Still others become agitators, stirring up civil strife in order to stress their predicament.

The ways in which researchers become immersed in the reality of that to be assessed indicate different concepts in participatory research:

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1. Research seen only as a source of information to maximise the effectiveness of those involved, without any concern for incorporating such action into a body of knowledge.
2. Research whose sole purpose is to promote action among a group of people. It is the kind of research that builds itself upon the action process and reflection.
3. Research seen as a means to supply more accurate data to the researcher.
4. Research using mobilising and organising strategies among a community based on political premises that are strange to the community in question.
5. Research that is reflected upon and systematised to render it more effective or to be incorporated into a body of scientific knowledge.

Reflection is frequently used both to decide upon the course of action to be taken and how to organise the community accordingly, or to centralise information and discuss its implications with the community being researched. These meetings usually take the form of small groups (matrix groups) or, less frequently, assemblies where deliberations are necessary. Some techniques are borrowed from psychology (psychodrama, group dynamics, sociodrama) and used to facilitate collective reflection, in order to deal with the affective aspects which inevitably come to the surface and can otherwise undermine collective action when not properly accounted for.

Sampling. The criterion of representativeness of a population is not statistical, but obeys qualitative research principles: it defines representativeness as a function of the whole in which the research takes place; it accepts ideographical nomography, i.e. it captures singularity as a synthesis of the multivariate determinants of reality. This is the reason why participatory research works with matrix groups, generally formed from the community's leadership, long-term residents or those actively engaged in the community.

If the matrix group is not already in existence, it is formed at the outset of research. The researcher is able to reach the population or community, here understood in its broader sense, through the matrix group, which works together with the researcher during each stage of the research, including data collection and analysis.

The criterion of representativeness in participatory research can be called qualitative or expressive representativeness. It takes into account a group which, despite being a minority, expresses its situation.

Samples are drawn purposefully, i.e. people are chosen according to their relevance to the matter or the situation to be assessed. "Participatory research believes that statistical representativeness can make the minority

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disappear, since most of the time it annihilates the researched subject" (Thiollent, 1985).

Data Collection. Most techniques for data collection are qualitative in nature, but not exclusively so. At the beginning of the research process, sampling and a questionnaire are used to define the group's problem. The main techniques are borrowed from anthropology: life histories and field diaries, as well as open and group interviews.

Most research is aimed at rebuilding the group's collective memory of the problem being studied (social movements, local leaderships, etc.). This rebuilding is seen as necessary for painting a clear picture and clearing up any contradictions, upon which the research will be developed.

This recollection allows for linking the individual to the universal, starting from the most simple and immediate, going through the contradictory process of constituting reality, to finally reach the concrete as a mediating and complex system of relations, which are never grasped by immediate observation.

Data analysis is also qualitative in nature and preferably collectively carried out, but collective here does not imply that the whole community participates. The degree of participation will depend on the scope of the research and its analytical complexity. When the researcher carries out the data analysis, the results will be presented to the community for re-evaluation.

Communication of Results. The final report always follows an easy and simple pattern of communication. In many cases, cartoons, films or videotapes are used in an attempt to break away from the "academic" and knowledge being seen as an elitist pursuit. However, it must be kept in mind that simplicity does not mean simplistic.

During the 4-year study, the researcher lived in the *favela*, joined the women in their daily life, caused transformation and was herself transformed. The research became one of the many threads of the relations network of the women studied. Under the scrutiny of positivistic methodological tenets, the research may sound somewhat loose and illogical, riddled with mistakes and lucky hits, advancements and setbacks, or even tricks. The best-laid plans were not always followed through, and while relations were being established and transformed, new problems arose which were also absorbed by the research, changing its features.

Lack of logic does not mean disregard for methodology. On the contrary, a serious concern was to avoid the research falling into the trap of simple spontaneousness or activism (common errors in community psychology). Participatory research, using an investigative strategy based on materialistic dialectics, becomes clear as it evolves, registering the

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process of resulting action in terms of knowledge, while it enhances the advancement of social practice as well as general theory.

Specific Procedures with the *Favela* Women

The researcher had approached the *favela* in order to build objectives that would embody action to achieve common needs; to undertake research that would enable an analysis of consciousness, in its relations with material living conditions and changes, to the extent that the research itself became a transforming praxis, incorporated into the daily lives of those being researched. It was an attempt to direct political practice towards building a conscious, free and happy life.

Though many women belonged to the *favela*, not all of them were able or willing to participate in the research. It was therefore decided to form a matrix group of eight women who had already been involved in social movements. Coming from the working class, the matrix group felt the stigma normally associated with such a background. They were also easy targets for other prejudices, such as the colour of their skin (they were all negroes) or the fact that they were immigrants from the country's northern and north-eastern regions. Generally referred to as the "scum of the working class", they were thought unfit for socially productive activities, a dirty, lazy and passive bunch, unable to perceive their own suffering.

However, during 1979–80, these same women, who had always suffered society's contempt, emerged from their social obscurity and took hold of the newspaper and magazine pages, startling society with their organisation and participation in movements that promoted real change, however small.

During the 4-year research period, the researcher attended the *favela* once a week, spending the whole day participating in the daily life of the *favela* and the matrix group. In addition to their normal activities, the researcher helped organise handicraft, manicure, hairdressing, sewing, and reading and writing courses.

With the aid of the matrix group, the researcher compiled a questionnaire with the aim of understanding the *favela* women's complaints, claims and needs. The researcher compiled a field diary and recorded all meetings, gatherings and conversations, as well as each woman's life history at the end of the research.

The analysis of data, especially that pertaining to the women's life histories, was geared towards the avoidance of presumptive categorisation, which may have classified them incorrectly. The main idea was to understand the logic behind the path taken by the women to rebuild their own lives, and the mediation of language, for language objectifies subjectiveness and renders subjective that which is objective (Lane, 1989, p. 6).

At the beginning, the group met to discuss such topics as their bodies,

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sexuality, politics, participation in social movements and the problems faced by the *favela* in an attempt to develop a critical consciousness favourable to a changing political environment. After a month of these weekly meetings, something emerged that changed the direction of the research. The women in the matrix group needed to be able to get away from the helplessness and resignation of their normal daily lives if they were to face their problems.

It was evident that the *favela* women were aware of their plight and, to a certain extent, their reality. However, although they felt strongly about matters, they lacked the motivation to take action. One woman said:

> We had the idea but didn't have the strength. Everyone knew water and electricity were needed, right? But we didn't have the energy to fight for it.

In addition to a lack of motivation, they were always busy with housework, which, although it took up a lot of their time, did not guarantee a better quality of life for them or their children, as was stated by another woman:

> I'm broke . . . don't even have money to buy bread. My children have the habit of eating bread for breakfast. They don't like milk porridge. Last week I didn't come to the meeting because I didn't have money to buy bread.

It became evident that consciousness raising alone would not be enough to improve the women's living conditions. Reflection upon this matter led to the conclusion that the *favela* women's fatalistic outlook on life was not due to alienation, but a realisation of the severity of their situation which made them powerless to act.

To counter this lack of motivation, it was decided to change the objectives of the meetings. Instead of merely reflecting on their situation, the women would undertake handicrafts to generate income. This idea is based on the theory that awareness is not autonomous (Lane, 1980; Leontiev, 1978). It is by comparing existing material conditions that the possibilities of qualitative improvement become apparent. This is related to critical awareness. The modalities of awareness and the terms of existence are mutually related. The unveiling of poverty does not alter the real situation.

There is no point in discussing problems and having a critical point of view, if the social relations and the activities remain the same. The concrete transformation of conditions must be foreseen and acted upon. On the other hand, it is not productive to go ahead with action regardless of reflection. Consciousness does not transform itself automatically, but as a consequence of activities developed and reflected upon.

In order to avoid the handicraft activities becoming simply another task that generates income, which only requires the mechanical contribution of

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the worker, it was decided to reflect upon the nature of self-managed work. The objective was to get the matrix group members to ponder about what they were doing as a whole. They were required to set up and organise the handicrafts themselves, decide upon any marketing plans, and then distribute equally among themselves any profits.

The Handicraft Activities. The handicraft activities in the *favela* were initiated as an attempt to establish those abilities the women already possessed, especially those they had brought with them from their place of birth, including food recipes. The group had to be self-motivating, one person teaching another, each improving their own abilities and communicating with others their findings. In this cooperative process, they would develop their own individualism, seeing themselves in the mirror of their peer group.

But these efforts seemed doomed to fail, because the women repeatedly stated they didn't know how to make anything. They would argue that, had they been able to make anything, they wouldn't be living in a *favela*. Moreover, they insisted they were only interested in courses for their children, for they considered that they didn't possess a "good enough head" to learn anything themselves.

As identifying the abilities of the women at this stage was difficult, it became necessary to initiate some training. The strategy used here was based on the behavioural techniques of motivation and learning, i.e. positive reinforcement.

Because of a concern that the women would shy away from the handicraft activities because they had already considered themselves incapable of learning anything, the course began with a simple activity, but one which at the same time would produce quick and attractive results, i.e. painting on materials to produce dishcloths. These were easy to make and the printing did not have to be perfect.

The money obtained from sales was distributed among the women depending on how many each produced. The money was not used to buy new materials as had originally been planned, but was given to the women to have an immediate effect on both the subjective and objective levels. The first classes were a success. The tasks were easily learned and the women were stimulated to go on working.

After initial hesitation, due to their doubts as to their ability to learn, the women became so absorbed in the activity that they lost track of time. After 3 hours continuous work, they would complain that it was too early to stop, even though they were aware that chores were piling up at home.

They were amazed at what they could make, and even invented new designs. Their children and their husbands began to take an interest in what they were doing, and there was always the added advantage of being

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able to earn extra cash from sales. Every week they would bring with them an enthusiasm for work. One woman said: "I'll make this one really nice, so my husband will think this one is prettier than last week's."

The idea was to increase the complexity of the task gradually, so that the women would feel capable of overcoming their learning difficulties, always stimulating creativity. All innovations were welcome. From the dishcloths, the women progressed to tablecloths and then to T-shirts, to use all the possibilities the technique offered.

To diversify the production and to avoid monotony, a simple sachet-doll was designed and produced by the women. It was designed with a straight body without legs or arms, so that it would be easy to make. The pattern was distributed, and the technique of painting the doll's face was taught to the participants. They agreed to bring finished dolls the following week.

What a surprise! Some women brought, in addition to their sachet-dolls, others which were beautifully made, with complete bodies, arms, hands and legs. They made pairs such as brides and grooms, ballet dancers, etc. All were made with shiny materials and filled up with rice. Marinalva, one of the women said, "Bader's dolls didn't have arms, and the legs looked like worms. Look at this new one, Bader."[2]

The women arrived at the same time, delighted and anxious to show their dolls. They said the dolls were made from the pattern they had received, and while making them they remembered the dolls their mothers and grandmothers used to make for them to play with in their childhood. They wanted to copy these dolls to show the teacher and to show their own children. One woman said:

> There, in the north of Brazil, mothers make dolls for their children and the children get really happy. . . . Do you want to bet my doll will be the first one to sell at the bazaar? The children will be dying to buy it.

It is interesting that, up until then, they had never remembered these dolls. They had not even made them for their own children, and hadn't even remembered that they could make them. This was the crucial moment for the group, the symbolic moment of independence from the teacher, the regaining of the personal meaning of creation. The women began to exert intellectual control over what their hands could produce and, at that moment, realised that they need not be subjected to external control and alienated from their own need for action. They began to create in an independent way, and this stimulated their memory, articulated their past and their present, and resurrected hidden emotions.

Gradually, the group became self-generating, taking control of itself.

[2]Bader was the name of the researcher.

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The women took charge of the act of production and began to have enough initiative to improve the running of things. Two members of the group, the same two who made the dolls in the first place, joined the Mothers Club, which operates in the *favela* 4 days a week. They learned things which they could apply to diversify and improve the working of the group. Another woman brought a friend to teach the group how to make crochet shoes. Everyone tried to find outlets where they could purchase cheaper materials.

By taking charge of the act of production, some women felt as if they had been reborn. Marinalva said:

> I don't sleep too much anymore. Before, I was always sleeping, always tired. Now I spend all night at the sewing machine. I was a lost case. I'd begin something, not finish it. . . . Now I want to learn to make everything, to work, to study, to look after my house, to bring up my children. I'm never tired.

Although the handicraft activities reduced Marinalva's sleep, because it demanded her dedication and effort, to produce became enjoyable. To make things was not an obligation with uncomfortable unconscious overtones. It became a free and self-conscious activity. Emotions were re-established during production. The meetings were pleasant. We all laughed a great deal. And the women would take care of their appearance before attending the meetings. The same Marinalva said:

> Was it work? Yes, it was, wasn't it? But to me it was enjoyable! It was fun embroidering, making crochet, sewing and chatting. One thing is work . . . another thing is enjoyment. While I was making crochet, I was having fun. Did we get money from it? A little, but better than doing nothing at all.

It is interesting to observe that handicraft is an activity which demands sacrifice and many hours of work. It is, therefore, not simple. But if Marinalva spends "all night" at the sewing machine, she doesn't get tired.

During the handicraft activities, we see the women finding satisfaction in their work, because they were not physically and spiritually deprived. They were more than just part of the system.

Critical Reflection as a Fundamental Element in Work Relations

To avoid the centralisation of power in one person, critical reflection about the activities and the production and commercial functions is important. This practice was always maintained. Without critical thinking, activity becomes automatic, mechanical and breaks the psycho-physical link in the production process. Thus humans suffer from having lost the one quality

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that is exclusively human, i.e. the capacity to think things through before acting.

Any activity, whether it is intellectual or militant, does not stimulate creativity or thinking when it becomes a routine. It never reaches consciousness and therefore does not become critical. Then it becomes repetitious and compulsive. Reflection is the only capacity to avoid psychological death, the consequence of alienated work or the crystallisation of consciousness. Critical analysis implies having to face the consequences of group action, especially in crucial situations. It is to think about the activity and its relation to the social history that contains the action. Also, if the activity is not accompanied by thought, it remains isolated from awareness.

With the *favela* women, the break between their thoughts and their living activities had become very serious. One could even say that they rarely used their capacity to think. This was due not only to the dullness of their activities, but also because it wasn't worthwhile for them to think critically. Any initiative of this kind was met with either more work or recrimination and failure. It was always met with suffering; their minds and their bodies became two separate identities, which permitted them to forget their complaints and needs, which they felt would never be satisfied. Luzia said, "I stay home and I think. It gets on my nerves."

Ever since these people were little children, thinking was separated from doing and became synonymous with sadness. To think is to suffer. It means to acknowledge pain and suffering, which is unbearable, and can only be relieved by undertaking activity in a mechanical way. Perhaps the handicraft activities can be considered therapeutic. It can be argued that what happened was a training process, preparing the women to adapt themselves within a capitalistic framework.

The use of work as a therapeutic technique to integrate people into the system of production was analysed by Friedman (1972, p. 196), who emphasised the creative capacity of work when it is organised in a humane and cooperative form:

> . . . in workshops, slowly new people joined the groups starting with easy, light and simple activities which were paid and efficiently organized. They were rebuilding social habits, human relations, interests and a sense of responsibility in them, suggesting a recovery of the material and moral world, a restructuring of the personality, a re-adapting of these people to the world which they can understand, before returning to it carefully, before they were ready, to that which had frightened them.

The difference between a therapy group and a group producing handicrafts for commercial purposes lies in the fact that there was no intention on the researcher's part to return the women to that which had afflicted them, overcoming the conflict with life that they had experienced at a

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subjective level. Rather, an attempt was made to prepare them at a collective level to face what was bothering them: alienation from work.

Emotion as a Fundamental Mediator in Consciousness Processing

As the research developed, emotion surfaced as a fundamental mediator in consciousness processing. This occurred mainly because of the participatory strategy in researching, for it allowed a strengthening of the affective bonds between the participants, thus enhancing its investigative success.

Had the research limited itself to representations regarding politics, the state, society, etc., one might not have reached the universal dimension of the matrix group's consciousness. This consciousness could be seen in their actions, dreams and emotions, which were based on the universal principles of justice, equality and human rights.

However, at a moment of extreme emotion, the consciousness of the group as a whole was expressed by the president of the *favela* inhabitants association, whose daughter had been raped by one of the *favela* residents. Her answer made the researcher ashamed when she was asked whether she feared her other daughter might be raped too. She replied it was not only her daughter who was in danger, but all the girls in the *favela*, and thus she feared for all of them and not only for her daughters.

In the formal interview situation, the respondents expressed only heavily laden slogans. It was only in informal interviews during their participation in the neighbourhood mobilization that it was possible to apprehend their subjectivity. Thus the participatory research strategy allowed us to focus on another dimension of the women's subjectivity which formal research strategies would not have looked at.

When interviewed about the reasons which had led them to participate in these movements, they talked only about the need to fight collectively, to learn how to undertake dialogue with the authorities and to present rational arguments so that they may be viewed as responsible citizens. When social movements were the topic of discussion during moments of light conversation, the women expressed the enjoyment they felt, the opportunity to get out of the house, to meet other people, "to become someone". The reason was no longer rational, but emotional. It was no longer the performance of a duty, but a search for pleasure.

The movement they had been involved in liberated their emotions where there had only been passive sadness—the "affective zero" (Sartre, 1965). The movement, more than fighting for the fulfilment of basic needs (water, power, sewage), had been an attempt to fulfil affective needs. They had not only striven for the recognition of their rights as citizens, but also for the right to lead a truly human life.

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Emotion turned out to be one of the mediations through which the movement was able to prepare the women for the leadership roles they carry out today at the *favela*. Both the *favela*'s mobilization association and the handicraft activities transformed the women's lives and aroused their consciousness from a state of "dying" to a "time for living". All of the women divide their lives into two: a time for dying and a time for living, each of which envelopes different portions of chronological and biological time. The time for dying is when all emotions are replaced by a state of apathy, effectively a neutral state—it is a time of thirsting condemnation. One acts automatically—what one thinks is not what one does, and what one does is not what one feels. One of the women in the matrix group said:

> Before participating in the *favela*'s mobilization and the handicraft activities I felt as if I was not a woman. I was a lifeless woman; I didn't live, didn't see anything, didn't feel. I lived as if I was in jail.

When speaking about the time for dying, the women neither speak with emotion nor talk about emotion. The dominant theme—an almost relentless punishment—is work in the fields to appease one's hunger, forever unsuccessful, but with no complaints to that effect, except for the lack of freedom, the passive life and the "affective zero".

The time for living should not be misinterpreted as living well; it is an invitation to live, even though it may not be comfortable. It may take place in a work environment—it is a time of freedom to dedicate oneself to "life work"—as was the case with the handicraft activities. The passage from a time for dying to a time for living is not due to some special happening or change of activity, but a recovery of the psycho/physical/social nexus, overcoming the split between reflecting/feeling/acting.

Therefore, to be born to life is not a biological or rational event only, but also an emotional one.

> I began living, I guess, after I came here and joined the movements.
>
> I began living when I started working in the circus with the artists. Before, I didn't live. Then everything was life, despite the hard work and the discomfort.

It is not easy to detect questions of subjectivity and individual experiences in consciousness using traditional scientific methods, and "psychology is rather far from the problem", as Klineberg states (apud Lederer, 1980, pp. 19–35). By taking account of emotion when collecting the data, the research discovered the importance of emotion as a fundamental mediator in consciousness processing. Besides reaffirming the theoretical premise that consciousness and activity are undissociated categories mediated by language, it was also shown to be necessary to take account of emotion—as fundamental a mediator as language, and the

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expressive system that precedes language (Wallon, 1938, p. 7)—which permeates and builds thinking, representation and consciousness.

For the last decade, under the influence of rational positivistic thought, research about emotion has been neglected in social psychology (Scherer, Summerfield, & Wallbott, 1983). With this outlook, passion, desire and emotion have been viewed as deforming elements in objective cognition, as actual antonyms to consciousness, and for that matter should be eliminated. "Sentiment is only a nocive element in rational activity" (Ryle, 1962, p. 106). Following this traditional line of thinking, emotion is seen as a regrettable flaw in an otherwise perfect cognitive machine.

The few studies centred on emotions do not incorporate them as fundamental mediators in the consciousness process, since they hinge on the evolutionary model that goes back to Darwin. Emotions are seen as adapting resources which are specifically called forth by momentary stimuli, according to the studies by Tomkins (1963), Izard (1977) and Ekman (1972). This has been changing recently in the social and human sciences. A good number of publications can be found which deal with emotion and affective behaviour. Social psychology has developed studies on the role of emotion in social interaction and social organisation, where the regulation of emotion is seen as central for the understanding of social behaviour (Scherer et al., 1983, pp. 359–360).

Agnes Heller, a contemporary Marxist philosopher, and a disciple of Lukács, has been reflecting on the role of emotions in social homeostasis (Heller, 1979, p. 96). According to Heller, emotions are cognoscitive and situational feelings without which social existence would be impossible. Through emotion man is able to react to the other, to the eye of the community (Heller, 1979, p. 124).

Emotion has a cognoscitive content. It is socially learned, and is instrumental to cognition. The cognoscitive and situational dimensions of emotion, depicted by our research, and already pointed out by Heller (1979), Scherer (1982), Scherer et al. (1983), Wallon (1938; 1979) and Martinet (1981), reinforce its significance as a mediator in consciousness processing and thus in community social psychology praxis.

Emotion stands between reactive automatism and intellectual activity, keeping a double relationship with both: one of affiliation and another of opposition. It is a means of objectifying subjectivity, and rendering subjective that which is objective through learning, which takes place during the socialisation process (Wallon, 1938, p. 7).

In fact, thinking and feeling are mutually interspersed. Consciousness is emotion, reason and action. It means to feel, to understand and to act. Without feeling, learning is artificial. Without action, feeling and knowledge are innocuous. Consciousness should be considered in its explanatory cognitive form as well as in its intuitive emotional aspect. Whenever

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this unity is broken, consciousness freezes and the physical–psychical nexus is torn apart in activity, blocking consciousness processing.

CONCLUSIONS

It is hoped that the present research presents the possibility for rethinking theoretical questions in line with the practice of community social psychology, providing the latter is transformed into an *investigative praxis*. Community social psychology must transform its action into action-research, in order to seize its practice in terms of knowledge.

The action-centred participatory procedure employed in this paper has allowed us to overcome the split between applied science and pure science, as well as between action and reflection, because it built itself around handicraft activities that had the community's participation. Action was registered, alongside reflections and discussions, which produced a wealthy array of data for a theoretical analysis of the consciousness process. Also, the subjectivity–objectivity dualism, which commonly impairs the practice of community social psychology, was overcome by the participatory research strategy.

All of the aforementioned community social psychology studies performed in Brazil share a common aim: to unchain consciousness-promoting action, geared towards self-determination and an active standing in the world, guided by the political ethics of human emancipation.

Actually, community social psychology is searching for real alternatives that can transcend man's being chained to daily life. However, such alternatives have usually been identified with actions in the realm of thought and ideas, as if objectivity and subjectivity were dual autonomous entities, or even as if consciousness could determine reality.

Although based on the theoretical premise that consciousness builds itself in action and therefore cannot be analysed as an abstraction, our research restricted itself to the realm of ideas, when it suggested that a women's matrix group hold weekly meetings for discussion and reflection on their daily living problems, in order to reach a critical understanding of society and thus develop a transforming action.

As it evolved, the research clearly showed that the recognition of poverty alone does not alter a real situation, for thought is not autonomous, detached from reality. Only when linked to material living conditions, can one glimpse the possibility of a qualitative leap towards critical consciousness.

Without advancing into action, a more vicious kind of alienation can be generated, restricted to the individual and the psychological, causing a split between consciousness and action. The reverse holds true too, for jumping into action alone is not enough to cause a deepening of awareness either.

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At the same time, consciousness and activity interlink and determine each other, and they are brought face to face and are surpassed by reflection.

The reflection and self-management involved in handicraft production and commercialisation, unleashed by the research with the matrix group (much more so than the meetings held for reflection), demanded intelligence, initiative and a lot of thinking on the part of the women, giving rise to the acting/thinking/feeling which gave them back their self-esteem and self-confidence. The theoretical principle that consciousness and activity are undissociated was thus confirmed, showing that psychologists must overcome such dualism as a priority in their consciousness-raising practices.

Community social psychology must reinstate the fundamental unity between reason and sensation, and knowledge and emotion in its strategies developed to organise and make people conscious of their ability to transform situations. Therefore, it becomes necessary to surpass psychological theories which split man into opposing entities, and emphasise one or another separately.

It becomes essential to rethink emotion when analysing consciousness processing, in order to improve the practice of community social psychology, because one tends to identify self-fulfilment with a rational action well accomplished. Political activity is seen as solely rational, where feeling is taken as something harmful and should therefore be fought against and repelled, instead of worked out.

It is by acting, feeling and understanding that an individual's consciousness can be transformed, and it is in this environment that community social psychology should be practised, once it is committed to overcoming any hindrances to human freedom and emancipation, "in order to reduce to a minimum the distance between mankind's essential characteristics and its individual singularization" (Lukács, 1977, p. 84).

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