

Mujerista Perspectives of Power in Psychotherapy

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Land and Forced Labor Acknowledgement



Power

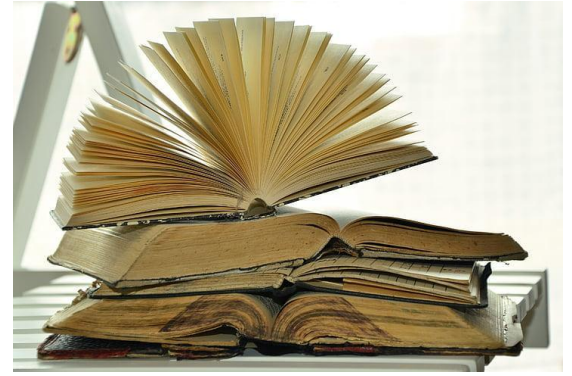


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Merriam-Webster Dictionary, n.d.



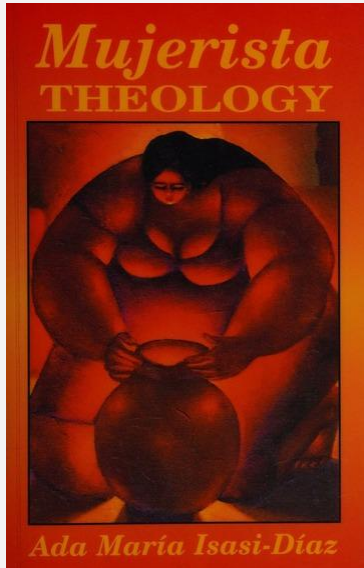
Power is....

- ability to act or produce an effect.
- the legal or official authority, capacity, or right.
- possession of control, authority, or influence over others

How does Power look different from a Mujerista Framework?



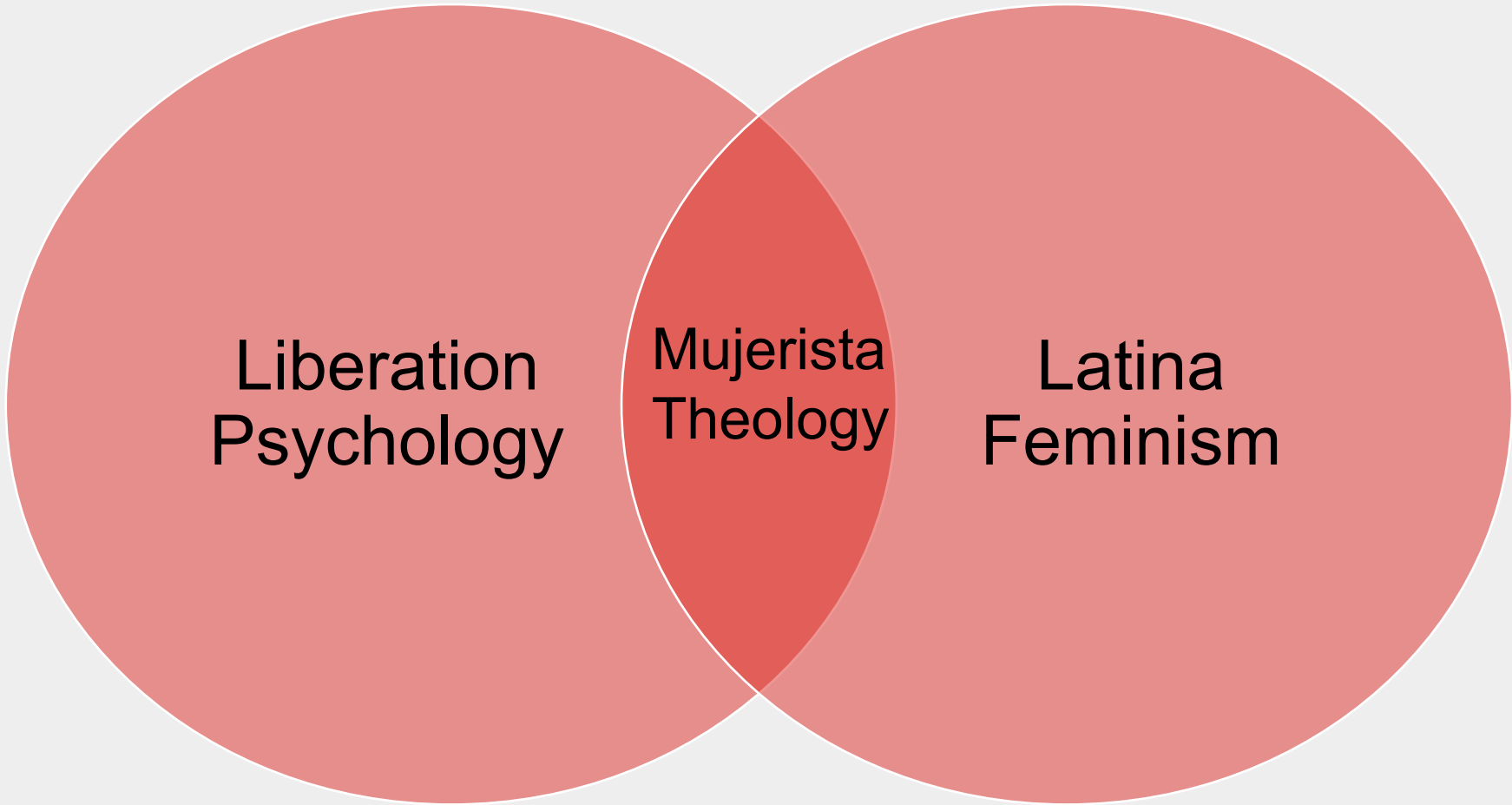
ORIGINS OF MUJERISTA PSYCHOLOGY



- Mujerista Theology, Dr. Ada Maria Isasi-Díaz
- Feminist liberation theology, centered in the perspectives of women of color.



2013



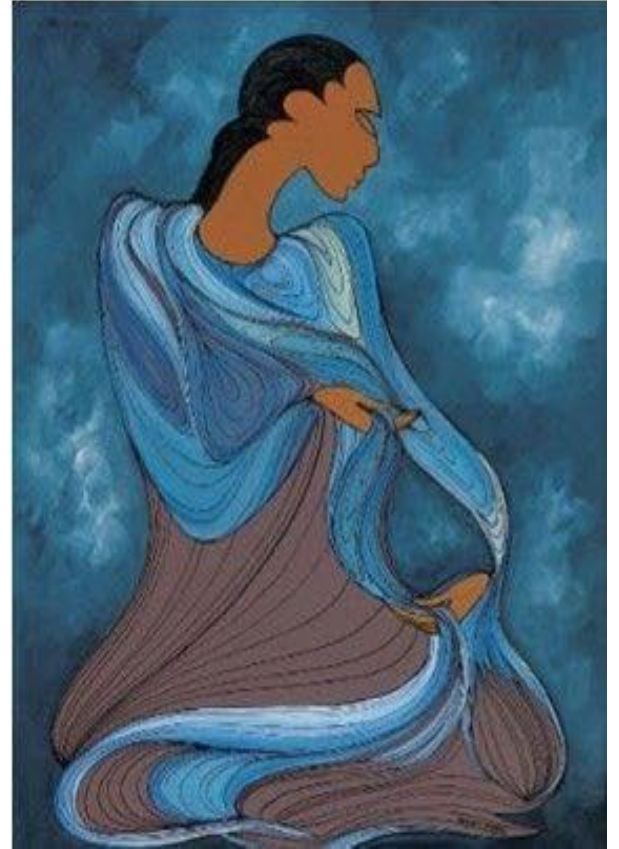
Liberation
Psychology

Mujerista
Theology

Latina
Feminism

Key Concepts

- Development of a new consciousness
- *Lo cotidiano* (everyday life)
- *La Lucha*



Art: Maxine Noel



Isasi-Díaz explains, “La lucha- the struggle- is never ending. That is why we have to see it as a way of life and not something that we do: it is part of who we are (Isherwood, 2011, p. 12).”





Mujerista Psychology

- Latinx Feminist theory infused with a spiritual Feminist Liberation approach
 - Commitment to social justice for all oppressed people.
 - Endorsement of universal & international solidarity (La Lucha)



Psychospirituality - Reclaiming Sacredness

- Combines mainstream psychology with spiritual tools to foster healing, liberation, spiritual development, and spiritual activism
- Spiritual practices may include: praying, altar making, and lighting candles as coping mechanisms (Castellanos & Gloria, 2008).



“

“Those of us who belong to marginalized, oppressed groups have come to understand that what is called "objective" is simply the understanding of a given group of people who have the power to impose that understanding as normative in society.”

-Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz, En La Lucha/In the Struggle: A Hispanic Women's Liberation Theology, 1993



Implications for Psychotherapy

Power Dynamics in Psychotherapy

- Power dynamics in psychotherapy have to do with the power imbalances between a therapist and their client.
- Traditional psychotherapy is designed to have power imbalances, with the client providing sensitive and private information to the therapist.
- Understudied topic as applied to clients and therapists with intersectional identities.

Mujerista Understandings of Power

1. Decolonial Perspectives on Power (Lugones, 2010)
2. Intersectionality and Power
3. Power through Activism and Advocacy, & Resistance and Resilience
4. Spirituality and Power
5. Challenges to Navigating Power- Systems and Structures
6. Transformative Power-Collective power



Integrating a Mujerista Approach for Empowerment

Therapeutic Decolonization (Comas-Diaz, 2016) promotes:

- Recovery of ancestral wisdom
- Integration of indigenous and spiritual perspectives into mainstream treatment (e.g. Tonantzin, nepantla)
- Spiritual development (honor visions, dreams, etc.)
- Identification of both coping skills and pathways for thriving.



Brown's (2018) - Feminist Therapy View of Power & Analysis

- Somatic
- Intrapersonal/ Intrapsychic
- Spiritual/Existential
- Interpersonal/ Social-contextual

Case Study Activity

You are a therapist at a 4-year university, and Ana comes in for an intake session. She was seeking a Latinx therapist, or someone who identifies as an ally to minoritized communities. Ana is 21 years old, and is in her junior year. Her parents immigrated to the US from Oaxaca, Mexico and have worked as farm workers in the central valley all her life. She has 3 younger siblings aged 9, 12, and 16.

Lately she has missed a lot of classes and can't seem to focus at school or at her part-time job at the Women's Resource Center. She says she feels anxious and finds herself scanning her social media feed looking for information, and realizes she has wasted 3-4 hours. Ana has been avoiding her friends because she doesn't think they understand her fear for her family. She shares that after this presidential election, she is concerned about her family because they are immigrants.

She also has been avoiding her family. She often is protesting and raising awareness of human rights violations, but they worry about her and don't want her to get hurt or arrested. They would prefer that she were quieter and didn't take life so seriously. As part of the intake, you ask about her religious and spiritual views. Ana shares that she was raised Catholic, but her parents are Zapotec. She is trying to learn more about her ancestors and their spiritual practices and ceremonies.

Ana's goals for therapy are to be more focused, find the energy to attend classes regularly, and to figure out ways to keep her family safe from deportation.

We have come to realize that we are not alone in our struggles nor separate nor autonomous but that we...are connected and inter-dependent. We are each accountable for what is happening down the street, south of the border, or across the sea.



–Gloria Anzaldúa (2002, p.19)

*Thank you to all people who
fight for justice, human rights,
and the peace to breath and
thrive Ometeotl*

References available upon request-
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Dedicated to Dr. Susan L. Morrow

