Approaches to social work from a decolonialist and intersectional perspective: A Latin American and Caribbean view.

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**Introduction**

In this chapter, I assert that intersectionality and decolonialist thought confront the consciousness and practices of social work that have developed from hegemonic knowledge. This dominant consciousness has nurtured many of the theories, methods, techniques, and practices that have been taught and reproduced in Latin American and Caribbean professional activity. In many places, these practices have been uncritically and ahistorically adopted in the form of so-called “professional intervention,” conceptualizing social work with those who live in Latin America and the Caribbean based on knowledge that was developed outside of our realities. Decoloniality and intersectionality are presented as a way of conceiving of our professional projects outside of the pattern of modern colonialism’s power. These approaches require certain aspects to be radicalized (Maldonado-Torres, Sobre la colonialidad del ser: contribuciones al desarrollo de un concepto 2007).

Social work from a decolonialist and intersectional perspective maintains a constant view towards the social conditions that allow and perpetuate oppressions, as well as the objective of developing professional counterparts and approaches that allow us to understand them, confront them, and eradicate them. From professional training in social work to all areas of the profession’s field and attributes, assuming counterhegemonic and anti-oppressive practices is recommended, positioned outside of European modernity and always situated within our Latin American realities.

This chapter is positioned in an analytic and contextual mapping marked by the realities of Latin American and Caribbean geography and history as we live it, suffer in it, and survive it—not as it has been told to us. Desde ese lugar, será la base del pensar situado y ubicado, el locus de la mirada la génesis del pensar. Decolonialist thought regarding the profession within Latin America and the Caribbean is carried out in the way that has been outlined by Bautista, and “implies a transcendence of modern ontology and the modernity-postmodernity project” (84).

Through this decolonial approach, we will attempt to illuminate the logic that has structured economic, social, political, and gender-based relationships in Latin America and the Caribbean, and that are precisely the spaces where social work frames its professional practice working with materiality of the effects produced by coloniality in “the bodies, lives, plans, and possibilities” (Hermida y Meschini 2017). In this approach, intersectionalities are adopted as an essential element of the so-called decolonial turn that requires us to assume the impact of the multiplicity of identities. This is essential in a continent where the *mestizo* and the diverse are the rule rather than the exception. Finally, we present examples of decolonial turns that have been put into practice in Latin American and Caribbean social work in order to carry out professional activity.

**Coloniality**

The decolonial category was coined by the Modernity – Coloniality – Decoloniality Group with three principal subcategories: **The coloniality of power**, **the coloniality of knowledge**, and **the coloniality of being** with a variety of intellectuals, most notably Santiago Castro-Gómez, Enrique Dussel, Ramón Grosfoguel, Edgardo Lander, María Lugones, Nelson Maldonado-Torres, Walter Mignolo, and Aníbal Quijano. From different schools of thought and epistemic influences, this group was influenced by the thinking of Césaire, Memmi, Fanon, and by Dussel’s philosophy of liberation, among other theorists (Maldonado-Torres 2011).