

Practice Guidelines for ALIVE Comentoring: An Approach to Liberating Psychology Education and Training From the Inside Out

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Western psychology has historically been a field that has excluded from its training pathways individuals who are members of the racial and ethnic global majority (e.g., Indigenous, African, Latinx, Asian). While progress has been made, 83% of practicing psychologists and 75% of doctoral trainees are White and not representative of global diversity. We describe a set of practice guidelines for mentoring within psychology training that was codeveloped to respond to oppressive conditions. The framework for these guidelines was organically shaped and practiced over 5 years in the Advocacy, Liberation, Immigration, Vocational Psychology, and Education Lab. These practices are grounded in liberation psychology, centering the lived experiences of individuals who are minoritized in society and elucidating processes for eradicating oppression. Advocacy, Liberation, Immigration, Vocational Psychology, and Education comentoring is practiced by (a) creating safety and resistance from systems of oppression, (b) prioritizing care for each other's humanity, (c) awakening critical consciousness through honest dialogue, (d) coleading among minoritized individuals, (e) witnessing cultural virtues, (f) encouraging practices for social justice and structural change, and (g) collaborating across mental health disciplines. We offer insights for mentoring practice based on *testimonios* from seven students and faculty. These guidelines have implications for psychology training programs to become liberated from racist constraints.

Public Significance Statement

We present practice guidelines for mentoring to support people of the global majority, who are underrepresented in psychology. These are anchored in liberatory concepts, such as care for human dignity, cultural virtues, and social justice practices. Testimonies from students and faculty exemplify how this mentoring approach is supportive of thriving in psychology.

Keywords: liberation psychology, psychology practice, psychology education and training, *testimonios*, mentoring

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The full *testimonios* analyzed in this article can be made available in a deidentified manner upon request.

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The field of psychology has historically excluded pathways of education and training for individuals who are members of the racial and ethnic global majority (e.g., Indigenous, African, Latinx, Asian people) and other minoritized groups. While progress has been made over the last few decades, the current majority of practicing psychologists (83%) and doctoral trainees (75%) are White and thus are not reflective of global diversity (American Psychological Association, 2022; Cope et al., 2016). These inequities exemplify the many costs of racism, including educational inequities and barriers to workforce entry (Alvarez et al., 2016;



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Spanierman & Heppner, 2004). A recent interdisciplinary review outlined the factors contributing to racism (e.g., segregation, hierarchy, passivism, intergroup threat) that ought to be challenged and transformed in society and in Western psychology (Roberts & Rizzo, 2021). As the awareness regarding issues of racism continues to expand globally, including efforts to upend racism within psychological science is increasing (Buchanan et al., 2021), so does the need to liberate psychology from White supremacy that permeates, dominates, and constrains the field. It is key to nurture the liberation of psychological practice through education and training pathways. Science, practice, education, and training are interconnected processes that can be attended to synergistically to promote greater equity.

A Need to Transform Psychology

The current status quo in psychological practice is problematic and may inadvertently sustain White supremacy, a form of cultural hegemony that is maintained by practices, systems, and institutions that perceive Whiteness as a social system of Eurocentric expression or value, which is superior to social systems and cultures of other racial and ethnic groups (e.g., anti-Blackness), and that device structures that maintain this and replicate this perception (American Psychological Association, 2023; Grzanka et al., 2019; Liu et al., 2023). Indeed, people of the global majority are underserved by the psychology workforce, and their psychological needs are often inadequately addressed resulting in inequities in epidemiological outcomes. Research from nationally representative samples asserts that Black, Latinx, and Asian adults report higher depression and anxiety compared with Whites (Thomeer et al., 2023). Reports from the National Center for Health Statistics show that White adults are more likely (23%) than Black (13.6%) and Latinx (12.9%) adults to

receive mental health services (Terlizzi & Zablotsky, 2020). These disparities are further pronounced globally in regions that are afflicted by inequalities produced at the intersection of systems such as racism, (hetero)sexism, poverty, and economic marginalization, among many others (Liu et al., 2023; Subramaniam et al., 2021).

Unfortunately, efforts to address inequities in global mental health needs through policy and international programs tend to replicate colonial legacies (Cosgrove et al., 2020). These structural challenges at the local, national, and global levels may seem insurmountable without first considering who is at the table representing the field of psychology. We suggest that a key mechanism for creating structural change pertains to mentoring individuals who are part of the global majority as they seek to enter and prosper in the psychology workforce and to transform it. This involves designing and implementing liberatory approaches to mentoring within psychology.

Liberating Mentoring in Psychology Education and Training Pathways

Psychological practice as taught and learned in mainstream Western psychology education and training programs is largely informed by psychotherapy approaches developed for White populations, lacking cultural adaptation and cultural responsiveness and advancing individualistic approaches to practice that center on intrapsychic processes. As such, these graduate and undergraduate psychology education and training programs can be difficult to navigate for students and faculty of the global majority (Buchanan et al., 2021; David, 2014; Settles et al., 2021). For instance, students and faculty who are minoritized in the United States are expected to conform to dominant norms in academia (e.g., individualism over collectivism, productivity over rest and wellness), to learn science that overlooks the experiences of minoritized groups, and to withstand racism, (hetero)sexism, and discrimination (Comas-Díaz, 2020; Gabriel & Tate, 2017; Sanders & Gonzalez López, 2021). These are examples of White space and time (Liu et al., 2023), a process where anti-Blackness, White supremacy, and racial capitalism interlock to create private property and institutional inequities that benefit White people. There is extant literature that documents how people of the global majority and women in “the ivory tower” normally experience dehumanization, objectification, tokenization, exclusion, voicelessness, lack of respect, and lack of freedom (Gabriel & Tate, 2017).

Although there is some variation, the prevalent model of mentorship within psychology education and training is hierarchical and does not prioritize cultural responsiveness or purposefully paying attention to the backgrounds and needs of people from the global majority (Hernández & McDowell, 2010). Under existing mentorship hierarchies, one mentor holds the power in making various decisions that impact the mentee(s). Nevertheless, there are mentors,



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supervisors, training programs, and leadership development programs that are fostering transformative work, aiming to reduce the potential harm and foster healing in education and training settings (Chan et al., 2015; Neville, 2015; Pieterse, 2020).

Liberation psychology is an essential theoretical framework for examining White supremacy within institutions and society and when devising solutions to liberate our structures from such forms of oppression. Liberation psychology was popularized by psychologist and Jesuit Priest Ignacio Martín-Baró (1996) in El Salvador, Central America. The theory was penned for the context of rampant political tension and repression toward individuals who are marginalized in the society (Lykes & McGillen, 2021). The central critique offered by this theory is that dominant approaches to psychology are mostly concerned with the experiences of those who hold power and privilege in society, and thus it overlooks the lives of those at the margins. Liberation psychologists propose that the practice and research of psychology ought to be dedicated to understanding the experiences of the most vulnerable in society and to leveraging the tools of psychology to engage in action to extinguish oppression (Comas-Díaz & Torres Rivera, 2020; Montero et al., 2017). Examples of the application of this theory include developing community-driven surveys addressing disinformation (Martín-Baró, 1996, pp. 192–197), implementing comprehensive community empowerment programs (e.g., political education, civic participation, advocacy) that are grounded in interdisciplinarity (Montero et al., 2017), and integrating cultural forms of healing (e.g., Latino healing) in psychotherapy (Comas-Díaz, 2006). Examples of Latino healing integrate into psychotherapy ethnic psychology concepts such as interconnectedness, *cuentos* (stories), *dichos* (distilled folk wisdom), and *sanación* (Latino spirituality).

Liberation psychology approaches have an extensive history and broad impact that include informing education and training practices in psychology (Castañeda-Sound et al., 2024), creating a path for decolonization, which we understand as “a process of examining and undoing epistemological injustice, harm, and exclusion” (American Psychological Association, 2023, p. 4). For instance, the decolonial mentoring framework (Goertz et al., 2024) positions the mentor and mentee relationship in four pillars: rebuilding for an anticolonial future, resisting psychologization, reorienting to a decolonial psychology, and recognizing racial identity and power. This approach fits within a growing literature that highlights the usefulness of positioning mentoring as responsive to growing social justice inequities in society and of expanding the conceptualizing of who is a mentor and what the mentoring dynamic may look like (Domínguez et al., 2020; Miville, 2018). To decolonize psychology (i.e., liberate it from its Western and racist roots), it is pressing to develop new liberatory mentoring frameworks that center, uplift, and are guided by the voices and experiences of individuals of the global majority (Masta, 2021). These frameworks may support students and faculty of the global majority toward practicing a more equitable psychology.

Theoretical Grounding: Principles of Liberation Psychology

We define comentoring as a learning relationship where all involved contribute and benefit each other's growth and training. Hence, the power and authority of the mentor is shared and coconstructed, as there is not one definite mentor in this type of approach. Consistent with critical pedagogy (Freire, 1973) the person with the most access to power (e.g., advisor, faculty, supervisor) plays the role of facilitator in a comentoring relationship. The construction of the Advocacy, Liberation, Immigration, Vocational Psychology, and Education (ALIVE) comentoring framework and its practice guidelines is grounded in key principles of liberation psychology (Montero et al., 2017; Torres Rivera, 2020, pp. 44–48). To aid in conceptualizing mentoring practices through a liberatory lens, Table 1 aligns each component of ALIVE comentoring with corresponding principles of liberation psychology, as well as examples for how these may be practiced in psychology education and training. As a starting point, we agree with initial postulations by Freire (1973) that the central goal of liberatory practices is to rehumanize both the oppressed and their oppressors, both of whom have become objectified within systems that devalue their humanity. For this rehumanizing to take place, it is important to create spaces of safety and sanctuary from structural violence, where individuals may access emotional and social support and engage in healing that may precede liberatory behavior and resistance (Chavez-Dueñas et al., 2019; French et al., 2020). Mentoring



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relationships could become sites where such safety and initial healing can take place.

Furthermore, we affirm that comentoring practices that serve to deideologize and denaturalize problematic experiences (e.g., discrimination in psychological training) are supporting the liberation of mentors and mentees. Deideologizing consists of studying and analyzing dominant messages and realities for those who are marginalized, creating the space to critically question the structure of life imposed on them (Torres Rivera, 2020, p. 45). Along with deideologization comes denaturalization, which refers to intentionally describing oppression as an abnormal experience (Torres Rivera, 2020, p. 45). Relatedly, liberation psychology offers critical consciousness as another tool for liberation that can be applied in mentoring relationships. Critical consciousness can be defined as the analysis of oppressive conditions through dialogue, taking action toward changing these conditions, combining theory and practice in a dynamic praxis that may support the agency of individual and groups as they seek social change (Freire, 1973; Jemal, 2017; Montero, 2009). Hence, mentors and mentees who hold similar experiences of marginalization can engage in dialogue that promotes their mutual critical consciousness in psychology and in society.

Challenging power, also referred to as antioppressive ontology, is another principle of liberation psychology that can be fruitfully practiced in mentoring. Power is defined by Prilleltensky (2008) as “the ability and opportunity to fulfill or obstruct personal, relational, or collective needs” (p. 121). Liberation psychology aims to use power, even if it is willed power, to resist systems of oppression and promote liberation (Montero et al., 2017). As keenly noted, psychology is a political field, where power structures give meaning to information that construct reality (Sinha, 2022). It is worthy to recognize that an intellectual analysis of dysfunctional

power structures is not a liberatory practice on its own (Watts & Hipolito-Delgado, 2015). Challenging power is thus an active process that must be applied at all levels of society, including in education and training. To this end, mentoring relationships can challenge hierarchical forms of power and embrace collective empowerment through practices such as shared leadership and interdisciplinary collaboration that resist disciplinary competition and epistemological supremacy (Cadenas et al., 2024; Settles et al., 2020, 2021).

Virtues of the people are another helpful principle, which pertain to recognizing and appreciating the cultural strengths of minoritized individuals and communities (Torres Rivera, 2020, p. 46). This humble and wondrous view of both mentors and mentees is similar to strengths-based approaches that challenge the deficit perspectives that tend to be commonplace in education (Carales & López, 2020). Similarly, the principle of recovering historical memory refers to acknowledging that mainstream history is oftentimes written by the oppressor and that it is imperative for those who have experienced intergenerational oppression to connect to their cultural roots and ancestral wisdom (Sonn & Montero, 2009). To this end, mentoring relationships can serve as metaphorical spaces where mentors and mentees honor the virtues that each person and cultural groups hold and encourage each other to connect more deeply with their ancestral roots.

Aims of the Current Article

This article describes a mentoring framework for psychology training that was codeveloped by faculty and students (doctoral, master’s, and undergraduate) of the global majority to respond to oppressive conditions within psychology education and training pathways. The framework was shaped by 5 years of organic mentoring practices in the ALIVE Lab, where faculty and students navigated together the complexities of psychology training at a predominantly White institution (PWI). Seven distinct practice guidelines emerging from this framework are anchored in elements of liberation psychology. As an offering of support and evidence, this article provides *testimonios* from seven students and faculty who engaged in “ALIVE” comentoring. These reflections elucidate what the “ALIVE” space meant for each student, how it was uniquely experienced, how it was beneficial, and how it differs from other types of mentorship.

ALIVE Comentoring for Psychology Education and Training

During the fall of 2018, a junior faculty member and a handful of doctoral students in counseling psychology started a research lab to engage in research and academic mentoring that embodied elements of liberation psychology. This group was intended to serve as a counterspace from institutional and disciplinary oppression, a place where students and faculty



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could feel safe to be their full cultural selves, to learn about liberation psychology, and to practice research methods using antioppressive ontologies (Keels, 2019; Masta, 2021; Potts & Brown, 2015). Masta (2021) defined counterspaces as “spaces where Brown and Black students can promote their own learning, and where their experiences are considered valid and critical knowledge” (p. 354). This experience is also described as third spaces, where “individuals produce knowledge within a system, while also retaining the knowledge that comes from being an outsider to the system” (Masta, 2021, p. 355). This metaphorical space was cocreated democratically to be inclusive of the interests and cultural diversity of each member while centering the existence of groups that are marginalized in the United States and globally. Members of this group cowrote the following public statement:

We acknowledge that there are systems of historical oppression (e.g., racism, xenophobia, economic marginalization, sexism and heterosexism, ableism) that pervade institutions and structural policies, and from which individuals and communities seek liberation in order to thrive psychologically. As such, our research is participatory and situated within health and mental health systems, higher education and K-12 schools, and settings for community entrepreneurship and workforce development. Our research is grounded in community, it is responsive to sociopolitical contexts, and aims to inform practice and policy at all levels, from institutional to state and national. (ALIVE Research, 2023)

Evidently, the framing for the collective work of this group was oriented toward liberation from systems of oppression, and we were motivated by a desire to transform practice. Throughout the 5 years of the lab’s existence, we practiced an intentional approach to being together to disrupt oppression experienced in society and in psychology and internalized at the individual level (Davis, 2019; Tappan, 2006). The group

became a space to celebrate the humanity and dignity of each individual, to share the wisdom and intellectual gifts collectively held, to affirm ourselves as cultural beings, and to resist collective oppression. The lab was multigenerational and multidisciplinary, attracting students and faculty from other universities and disciplines (e.g., counseling, social work, special education). This space also served to disrupt hierarchical inequities by welcoming and supporting junior faculty members early in their careers and to disrupt divisions between academy and community through collaboration.

Being in this kind of culturally affirming space together certainly seemed to promote creativity to embrace psychology (practice, research, and training) in a way that was true to supporting each person’s identity and full potential. While structural limits that stem from oppression could not be eradicated by this space alone, the burden felt lighter to carry knowing that we held it collectively. Together, we created a sense of freedom from some of the colonized norms for interacting within psychology as a field (e.g., suppressing one’s cultural self). These practices allowed us to become more alive as humans seeking to usher psychological healing.

Constructing a Framework for ALIVE Comentoring

Members of the ALIVE group engaged in reflective dialogues to identify the unique elements of the space that we shared after it had been in existence for 5 years. The initial intent of this practice was to memorialize the work that had been done together through critical autoethnography (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012). This retrospective exercise aligns with liberation psychology’s concept of recovering historical knowledge. As the dialogues progressed, it became apparent that each member of the ALIVE Lab had unique insights regarding the ways in which mentoring in this context was different from other mentoring experiences. Across several meetings, each member of the group described what had made their experience unique in the ALIVE space, and these thoughts were visualized in a virtual whiteboard. Discussing and documenting these elements served to deideologize the experience of being a student or faculty member, to problematize circumstances related to psychology education and training, and to highlight the virtues of the group. Furthermore, engaging in this reflexive process reaffirmed that the approach to working together helped us awaken our critical consciousness and sustain our energy and efforts as we engaged in praxis within psychology. This reflexive process led to group consensus around the seven practice guidelines that best described our experiences (see Table 1).

Testimonios: A Decolonial Methodology to Liberate and Reconstruct

Testimonio is a first-person written narrative of a lived experience (Cervantes, 2020). It is a liberatory practice that



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helps individuals and communities feel heard. Sharing *testimonios* in groups provides an opportunity to witness an individual's pain and understand the realities of marginalization. *Testimonios* can also be understood as an intimate form of critical autoethnography that offers a pathway to lived experiences and their interpretations (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012). This method is also political as it promotes critical consciousness and interest in social justice action (Cervantes, 2020). Furthermore, *testimonios* highlight the legitimacy of lived knowledge, particularly for individuals whose lives are not well represented in mainstream academic outlets. *Testimonios* can take many forms (e.g., written narratives, illustrations, diaries) and have been used in multiple settings and fields, from urban school education to higher education and doctoral training (Comas-Díaz, 2020; Cruz, 2012; Domínguez et al., 2020; Romo et al., 2019; Sanders & Gonzalez López, 2021). Overall, *testimonios* are heavily aligned with liberation psychology tenets, including conscientization (i.e., critical consciousness), problematization (process of critically analyzing circumstances to gain new insight), deideologization (questioning of culturally imposed reality), and recovering historical memory (Torres Rivera, 2020, pp. 44–48).

ALIVE Comentoring: Practice Guidelines and Testimonios

The *testimonios* we present here are offered by a group of graduate students and faculty who identify as belonging to cultural groups that are minoritized and underrepresented in psychology and other allied mental health fields. The scholars who contributed self-identify as two Latinx faculty (a Venezuelan man, a Chilean woman) both of whom were formerly undocumented, two cisgender women doctoral

students in counseling psychology (a Ghanaian and a Chicana) both who are daughters of immigrants, a Honduran immigrant doctoral student in social work, a Black cisgender woman and master's student in mental health, and a Kurdish immigrant doctoral student in special education. These individuals held unique experiences with different forms of marginalization, including racism, xenophobia, sexism and heterosexism, poverty, war, and linguistic hegemony, among others. Collectively, this group held unique experiences in supporting the well-being of multiple communities facing oppression through practices such as community-based research, community empowerment education, specialized mental health practices, policy advocacy, special education and learning, and community organizing.

The following are the seven practice guidelines that emerged in our dialogues and analysis to identify our comentoring framework. We offer these components as not exhaustive, formulaic, or prescriptive. Rather, we affirm that being involved in comentoring that is grounded in these components has affirmed each of us in our journey toward becoming more liberated. Each of the coauthors chooses one of the seven practices that we collaboratively identified. We provided reflections (one to two pages) to these prompts: "How did you experience the ALIVE lab? In what ways was this co-mentoring liberatory? How did you experience this component (your chosen component from the list) of ALIVE co-mentoring?" The first and second authors initially read each person's *testimonio* together and chose about four different segments per person based on how well they represented different components. These two authors dialoged about how the chosen segments illustrated relevant component with nuance. After this, all authors provided feedback on selected quotes and their accuracy and provided an agreement to present them in this article. Quotes from each of the coauthors were included in the article. Here, we offer a description of each of these practices along with a *testimonio* giving voice to each of the coauthors.

Creating Safety and Resistance From Systems of Oppression. The collective space held in our ALIVE group was intended as a safe space in higher education, a sanctuary from oppression in the institution of psychology and in society. The practice of creating safe spaces is one that is applicable in higher education contexts when supporting students from underrepresented backgrounds, as well as in community research and mental health practice with individuals and groups who have endured and survived trauma (Campbell et al., 2004; Masta, 2021; Tucker, 2010). Interpersonal interactions in the ALIVE space were facilitated to promote psychological safety, "a shared belief amongst individuals as to whether it is safe to engage in interpersonal risk-taking in the workplace" (Edmondson, 1999, p. 354). Research suggests that psychological safety is promoted by supportive behaviors, supportive practices, and relationship networks and that greater psychological safety leads to



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positive work outcomes (i.e., team performance, learning, innovation, attitudes) by way of voicing ideas, knowledge sharing, healthy communication, and higher provision of feedback (Newman et al., 2017). Our comentoring approach embodied these predictors and outcomes of psychological safety. As an example, an intentional practice was to display attitudes of radical hope, unconditional regard, respect, and reduced criticism toward each other during our time and space together.

A Black cisgender bisexual woman (an immigrant and a student in master's of mental health) counseling describes in this *testimonio* the moment she decided to join the ALIVE lab. She attended a talk by one of its members and the interaction:

Provided me with a critical outlet through which to understand my social environment and my position within the nation-state. It broadened my perspective, allowing me to envision the reconstruction of social environments that fostered safety and inclusivity for marginalized identities.

She goes on to reflect how this mentoring space allowed her to become empowered by expressing her authentic self:

Being a part of the ALIVE Lab provided me with an inclusive and safe environment where all my identities were embraced and celebrated. It became a space that fostered growth, offering me the opportunity to share my experiences and flourish.

Notably, her reflections clarify the connection between feelings of safety and a subsequent sense of freedom to express herself.

Importantly, a culture of transparency started to emanate from the shared sense of psychological safety in our group. A deliberate practice that helped with transparency was making

it known what lab members were working on which projects and how to join a project if or when desired. Students would spontaneously share about their upcoming presentations (e.g., theses and dissertations), comfortably seeking feedback and encouragement ahead of these milestones. This is exemplified by the experiences of a Kurdish immigrant from Iran who was a doctoral student in special education at the PWI. He described feeling the shift in our shared space: "It was my first year as a doctoral student in the U.S. when I joined the ALIVE lab, and it was very exciting for me how diverse the ALIVE lab was. I felt safe! I didn't feel I was alone." He described experiencing safety despite having lived through exclusion as a member of minoritized groups, first in Iran and then in the United States. He also witnessed the impact of war in his past as a bilingual language teacher for refugees who arrived in Iran after the local war:

I was an apprentice in a lab in my undergraduate program and I saw that not everyone has equal access to necessary resources, such as funding, equipment, and opportunities for professional development, but when I joined the ALIVE lab I realized avoiding favoritism and providing fair and equitable access to resources is based on merit and need. In addition, I found that I have equal power and voice like everyone else in our team.

He also described how a sense of transparency regarding resources and safety to express opinions was new to him and made this mentoring experience distinctively unique.

Prioritizing Care for Each Other's Humanity. We intentionally created our shared space to deideologize and challenge the status quo that values productivity and self-sufficiency over human connection in academia (Settles et al., 2020, 2021). To this end, meetings among the group started with extended conversations about each other's current well-being and needs. The process-oriented dialogue prompt for the group tended to be "how are you doing today as a person, and what do you need from the group?" As group members shared about difficulties and stressors they faced, they were met with empathy, validation, and possible solutions that were organically volunteered by others in the group. The affirmation that each of us was "people first" was infused in all activities that the group conducted together. This orientation of care for our humanity is akin to the "person first, student second" approach to supporting students of color authentically in higher education (Luedke, 2017). We exhibited care and curiosity for one another, even if it meant dedicating less time in each meeting for project tasks. Importantly, feeling connected and cared for by our collective motivated the group to participate authentically, to invest more attention and effort to our projects, and to decline or express dissent when individuals felt at capacity. Overall, prioritizing care for our group's humanity enhanced the strength of our relationships and the synergy of the group.

The following *testimonio* was provided by a lab member who is a formerly undocumented Latinx immigrant, woman,



Kyana Hamilton

bilingual clinical psychologist, and first-year assistant professor at a PWI. Here, she describes the feelings of otherness that permeated her experience in academia:

Academia is one of the most colonized and White institutions in our society. The majority of people that succeed here are not like me. At times I've thought that expecting a sense of community and belonging within the academy was the wrong expectation to have, like I could only have that within my faith community or with my family and friends outside of academia.

She speaks to her experience of exclusion in academia that makes challenges seem personal (e.g., she thought that the problem was her "wrong expectation" to seek belonging). Additionally, she also illustrated the component of prioritizing care for each other's humanity:

In the ALIVE lab, it has sometimes looked like an actual, real check-in at the beginning of lab meetings. Not a trivial run-through of what we did during the weekend, but an actual sharing of how we were truly feeling. You'd be surprised at how little time this takes, and how helpful it can be. Other times it has involved sharing what makes us "feel alive," at the end of the semester, leading to both vulnerable and encouraging conversations.

She spoke to how checking in with lab members as humans first and researcher second allowed her to feel a sense of liberation that she has not experienced in other academic contexts. One vulnerable conversation that she recalled was sharing her experience as an undocumented person: "I remember sharing my experience of driving 15 hours to North Carolina to obtain a driver's license because as an undocumented person, I could not get one in my 'home' state. That felt liberatory to me." This *testimonio* reflects on the value of the space that the group created for her and how she felt we recognized her on a human level. This was a shift from

other academic spaces for her, and it is powerful that an undocumented person who had to strive to be recognized as a person can bring the challenge of not belonging to the ALIVE Lab and experience belonging in a space that was historically exclusionary to folks "like me." We also acknowledge that larger elements in the world, society, psychology, and higher education may create safety or the lack of it. Hence, creating a safe environment within psychology is complex, and the possibility of feeling safe may vary from person to person.

Awakening Critical Consciousness Through Honest Dialogue.

For us, comentoring among faculty and students of the global majority took place in a way that centered on honest dialogues, through which critical consciousness could be developed. To engage in critical dialogues, it was important to have a common language to define shared experiences and perspectives regarding oppression. To this end, members of the ALIVE group completed readings together to immerse themselves in the language of liberation. Additionally, the entire approach to sharing space during meetings was centered on dialogue where honest personal and educational experiences could be shared, and this kind of sharing was favored over adhering to a rigid agenda for meetings and overprioritizing productivity measured in tasks. This flexible approach to sharing experiences allowed members of our group to engage in vulnerable and honest ways, explicitly applying new language accessed through literature to name the forms of oppression they experienced in their own lives and more specifically during education and training in psychology. This level of radical honesty and explicitness allowed the group to feel validation about our experiences and to promote motivation and agency to engage in action to change oppression. During moments of disagreement or minor conflict, students would often look toward faculty to model how to acknowledge disagreements while calling in lab members to reflect and work through disagreements while maintaining a stance of care and support. This unwavering support and honesty within the group allowed us to move with relative ease during challenging moments. This conflict resolution also supported our critical consciousness as it showed us that disagreements can be handled in community while preserving our collective well-being. Navigating disagreement or conflict while maintaining care is key to critical consciousness development as it reflects what Freire (1973) referred to as the process of humanization of all, including the oppressor.

A Latinx immigrant faculty member shared the impact of learning from the lived experience of his graduate students: "By speaking from lived experience and within a safe and supportive space, each member of the group could challenge themselves and others to deconstruct the social issues we were concerned about in our research and practice." In his *testimonio*, he also described a memory from the first year of the ALIVE lab, when his critical consciousness about graduate student issues was awakened by being in dialogue

Table 1*Practice Guidelines for ALIVE Comentoring, Corresponding Liberation Psychology Principles, and Examples*

ALIVE comentoring guideline	Principle from liberation psychology	Practice example
(a) Creating safety and resistance from systems of oppression	Praxis, challenging power, rehumanization	Facilitating grounding exercises and supportive/affirming dialogues when systemic stress and oppression made individuals or the group feel unwell during certain parts of the semester (e.g., finals, before presenting a thesis). Dedicating ample time during meetings to acknowledge and celebrate small and big accomplishments by the group, for example, receiving an award, media features, proposing a dissertation, and feeling better after an illness or strain.
(b) Prioritizing care for each other's humanity	Deidiologizing	Each meeting started with a check-in, where individuals could share how they felt and how the group could support. This shifted our interactions away from the ideology of how academics and psychologists tend to interact and toward the needs of individuals in our collective space.
(c) Awakening critical consciousness	Conscientization	Dialogue regarding systems of oppression as experienced by each member, for example, tension between anti-Black racism and meritocracy narratives among immigrants of color
(d) Coleading among minoritized individuals	Collective action, empowerment	Each person in the group had the opportunity to lead portions of our meetings, to flexibly take more/less space to share their wisdom, and to lead specific tasks (e.g., data analysis, connection with a community group) based on choice, consent, and consensus.
(e) Witnessing cultural virtues	Virtues of the people, recovering historical memory	Individuals shared how concepts discussed during our meetings related to their own past experiences, cultural wisdom they inherited from family and ancestors, or what they witnessed in the community.
(f) Encouraging practices for social justice	Collective action, challenging	These practices involved conducting research that could inform social justice in research and practice, for example, a needs assessment of how students of color and gender-minoritized students can be supported in their leadership development.
(g) Collaborating across mental health disciplines	Antioppressive ontology	Opening and welcoming our space to individuals from disciplines outside of psychology who are also concerned with mental health (e.g., social work, special education) and inviting them to share their perspectives and wisdom.

Note. ALIVE = Advocacy, Liberation, Immigration, Vocational Psychology, and Education.

with students while writing an article about social class marginalization. He describes that the students helped him see how “social oppression manifests itself in graduate education.” He was sensitized by students’ describing their lived experience with class-based oppression (e.g., economic hardships) and how these were pronounced by experiences of gender-based and racial discrimination. He further described that “Incorporating academic literature, statistics, and figures, our group wrote an honest paper that encouraged greater critical consciousness about class-based oppression in graduate education within us as co-authors, as well as on the readers.” He shared that writing about this topic was liberating because he also experienced class-based struggles as a graduate student.

Coleading Among Minoritized Individuals. In practicing the ALIVE framework for comentoring, there was not a defined leader; rather we saw all of us as coleaders, each

person holding their own power. Lab members frequently consulted with each other about questions related to overcoming obstacles in their academic and training milestones (e.g., thesis, internship, tenure-track process). This allowed each member to feel a sense of agency to address our collective needs in education and training. Additionally, research projects were held by small teams, which allowed for different members to hold different leadership roles at certain points. We had conversations regarding how we can use our academic privilege to uplift the voices of the people in the community. Thus, we frequently leveraged community advisory boards or community consultation aspects to our research and practice. In these interactions, it was assumed that everyone can make mistakes; thus, there was no “specialized expert” in the room, and members were all learners who held privilege in some way. Importantly, while shared leadership was particularly helpful for our group of

individuals from the global majority, we acknowledge that this approach may also be applicable to alleviate power differentials that also tend to exist among White students and faculty who hold a range of power and privilege.

This *testimonio* from a lab member who identifies as a cisgender, heterosexual, Ghanaian American daughter of immigrants, and counseling psychology doctoral student at a PWI highlights her experience growing up in a White-dominant society, feeling “othered” or isolated, and having also having to navigate her bicultural identity within the “Black” or Ghanaian immigrant communities. In addition to reflecting on experiences of anti-Blackness and disempowerment, she reflected on how being in the ALIVE lab helped her develop a sense of empowerment and leadership:

The ALIVE Lab was the first community that I have experienced since entering higher education where I did not feel invisible. Building community and making connections with other people of color and people with marginalized identities made me feel seen, heard, and valued. Co-mentorship is liberatory as it offers such eye opening and different perspectives, emboldening me to believe in myself and navigate the world differently.

Additionally, she spoke to how different members in the lab each worked on their collective projects in a collaborative manner. “Some members of the lab focused on immigration liberation, others promoted vocational success among people of color, while others focused on disseminating mental health information and reducing stigma in the BIPOC community.” She reflected how “Being part of a team of people of color who have autonomy, and opportunity to publish a paper, work with community leaders, train researchers on anti-racist research training is liberation in itself!” Another lab member, who identified as Chicana, reported that coleading research projects helped her feel more empowered to take on other projects on her own. She shared how experiencing ALIVE comentoring helped her challenge her prior socialization and realize how she may disrupt power differentials:

I felt like my mentors in the past would often direct our session and I believed that I was just there to receive information and get directed. My lived experiences and how ingrained the value of *respeto* was growing up, reinforced my idea of how mentoring relationships should work. However, I began to see that I had a lot to offer my colleagues and classmates and that I should feel empowered to use my voice.

Witnessing Cultural Virtues. In our comentoring space, we welcomed the full identities and cultures of each individual. For example, whenever a new member joined the lab, members would introduce themselves using their identities to situate themselves within the larger society. Additionally, this would translate over into members’ academic writing where members would aim to take a strength-based approach when they wrote or presented at a conference about an oppressed group. There was a shared understanding in the group that

every member brought value due to their lived experience as a cultural being and people in the group would often encourage other members to discuss their heritage and how they were able to overcome hardships using different non-Western methods of healing (i.e., being in community, using spirituality). Members of the group also connected with others who spoke languages other than English. This was done purposefully as a form of resistance to how English dominates in academia. The following *testimonio* was written by a lab member who identifies as a Chicana cisgender heterosexual woman, daughter of Mexican immigrants, and doctoral student in counseling psychology. She spoke on how her experience in the lab transformed her ability to show her authentic self in academic spaces:

I began to transition in how I viewed mentorship and began to feel empowered in my class where I felt marginalized because I was the only person of color in my cohort. I felt empowered to share my knowledge and cultural experiences and how they related to class topics. I recognized that what I had to say was valuable and inherently powerful and this was why my ancestors worked so hard for me to get to this place.

This lab member also reflected on how she brought her cultural self to lab meetings, being able to share aspects of her cultural identity and her life that otherwise would be unspoken:

I felt comfortable sharing my cultural practices and felt that my culture’s different foods and holidays were recognized. For example, I felt comfortable in a lab meeting sharing about *Día de los Muertos* and how I was grieving family who passed away from COVID-19. The positive experience I received from sharing in the lab helped me share my grief and be authentic in other graduate spaces as well.

Encouraging Practices for Social Justice and Structural Change. Ensuring that practices for social justice and structural change were ever present in the ALIVE comentoring space was key. Even more important was encouraging that these practices be translated to settings beyond the ALIVE space. For instance, each student and faculty who were part of this space were engaged in projects that can be described as community-based, participatory, critical intervention (e.g., individual, group, and institutional) and action research. Topics included a liberation-based mental health intervention for Latinx middle-school students, posttraumatic growth and mental health outcomes among Latinas, racial and ethnic identities in activist attitudes and behaviors among Black immigrants and Black people born in the United States, protective aspects of leadership engagement among gender-minoritized students, and social justice and advocacy competencies among graduate students supporting immigrant communities. Our team discussed feeling like this work was rewarding while feeling the burden of wanting to conduct research of impact, with a nondeficit-orientated lens and

with nuance. Conversations helped us to ease these tensions. For example, we reminded each other to center the voices of community members in our projects.

Another practice for social justice and structural transformation was cultivating collaborative partnerships with community groups. This is in line with the synergies for ethical and transformative praxis that take place when community and liberation perspectives are combined (Montero et al., 2017). Finally, the ALIVE space also allowed for students and faculty to articulate the ways in which psychological practice, research, teaching, and personal experience may inform and enhance each other. This is aligned with the liberation psychology principle of leveraging the virtues and lived experiences of oppressed people (Torres Rivera, 2020, p. 46). For instance, when co-writing articles together, students and faculty approached the writing by first describing personal experience with the subject and thinking of this as expertise that could help fill gaps in the literature pertaining to clinical practice and intervention research. As an example, we developed an article with recommendations for practices to support immigrant youth. In doing so, we started by reflecting on our experiences as immigrants and the practices that would have been helpful to us. We then reviewed the literature, synthesizing helpful evidence-based practices (e.g., anti-racism educational methods) while also pointing to the gaps that we intuitively can fill. The conversations also helped us feel less isolated, which helped replenish our energy to continue engaging in this work.

In this *testimonio*, a Latinx faculty member recalls that during his second year in the ALIVE space, a doctoral student worked with him on a collaborative training program that was developed with psychological associations, immigrant rights organizations, and practicing psychologists and reached nearly 2,000 mental health providers:

The student who supported the project was so moved by the experience, that she dedicated her dissertation project to examining a model of multicultural and social justice competencies for advocacy with immigrants. She went on to recruit a national sample of graduate students and to conduct a study using advanced statistics. The study is the first to examine these competencies in the context of immigration, and the findings have important implications for the practice of psychology. Clearly, these efforts are having a ripple effect for promoting social justice and structural change, within psychology and in society, for the most oppressed communities.

While it was unintended from collaborating on the training project, this student was inspired to pursue an innovative dissertation project (Suro Maldonado, 2023). Findings from her study have applications to help psychologists develop competencies to become better advocates for immigrant communities.

Collaborating Across Mental Health Disciplines. The group of students and faculty who cocreated the ALIVE

group organically cultivated an environment where collaboration across epistemic boundaries took place. While the students and faculty who founded the research lab where ALIVE mentoring occurred were in counseling psychology doctoral programs, students and faculty from several fields (e.g., special education, social work, social psychology) and from across levels of education (e.g., undergraduate, master's, and doctorate) were welcomed to become active participants. The research projects led by the students and faculty were characterized by collaborations with community partners at various levels, including partnerships with university offices and programs (e.g., first-generation student programs, office of student leadership, office of institutional evaluation), collaborations with students and colleagues in other universities (e.g., coalitions with researchers and clinicians), and long-term participatory action research with community groups (e.g., immigrant-led organizations).

A Latina woman (an immigrant from Honduras and doctoral student in social work) reflects that “as an emerging scholar-practitioner, the concept of twinship or sameness as coined by Kohut and Stepansky (2009) comes to mind, along with one of my favorite quotes by Marian Wright Edelman, founder of the Children’s Defense Fund: ‘you can’t be what you can’t see.’” In her *testimonio*, she reflects on what made it possible for folks from diverging experiences to work together and what helped her relieve her anxieties about her future research and internship. She states that the co-mentoring group was “a community that not only resembled me in appearance, language, culture, mindset, and aspirations but one centered in our joint values of respect, inclusivity, authenticity, trustworthiness, among many others.” More specifically, she can identify and articulate her contribution as a social worker in an interdisciplinary team, especially one where most members are in the field of psychology: “As a social worker, my unique perspective enabled me to bring a person-in-environment approach and a macro lens that was welcomed and sought after, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of individuals within their broader contexts.”

Implications for Liberatory Practices in Psychology Education and Training

While society and the field of psychology are still grappling with racist legacies of exclusion in professional pathways, liberation psychology can help promote a future that is more inclusive and equitable (Alvarez et al., 2016; Buchanan et al., 2021; Montero et al., 2017). Infusing liberation psychology into new mentoring frameworks within training and education programs represents a promising tool for supporting people of the global majority to thrive in psychology and to potentially increase their representation in the psychology workforce (Comas-Díaz, 2020; Miville, 2018; Sanders & Gonzalez López, 2021). In this article, we described the organic creation of an ALIVE framework for

comentoring among students and faculty. Additionally, we offered a theoretical grounding to these practices in liberation psychology and *testimonios* from those who experienced this approach to learning and resisting oppression together. The advancement of ALIVE comentoring practices offers compelling training implications that underscore the power of flexibility, natural growth within psychology education, and paying attention to the emotional experiences of both students and faculty.

The framework we unpacked in this article affirms that establishing mentoring relationships that prioritize care, critical dialogue, and collaboration among minoritized faculty and students can contribute to a more inclusive and supportive training environment that fosters belonging. Intentionally creating and facilitating these types of supportive counterspaces may provide a lifeline of support within systems that can already feel isolating for minoritized faculty and students, particularly in PWIs (Masta, 2021; Settles et al., 2021). *Testimonios* from our group highlighted that both students and faculty felt supported by the collaborative space, and we felt that our experiences were “seen” by the collective recognition of systemic oppression. Moreover, ongoing community building also helped ALIVE members feel more connected to each other within and beyond our programs and less isolated within psychology as a field.

In terms of broader application in academia and practice settings, we hope these practice guidelines provide a theoretically grounded foundation and pragmatic examples of how to adopt a liberatory and psychologically safe comentoring practice. It is possible that some groups of practitioners and academics are already applying some of these components to varying degrees (Hernández & McDowell, 2010), and this framework may provide a more comprehensive structure to consider. Additionally, this framework may be leveraged to communicate training and education values, especially as psychology programs seek to recruit, support, and retain students and faculty with minoritized identities. Another key consideration is to discuss resources needed to implement these comentoring practices. The ALIVE counterspace was implemented in the host institution by leveraging regular support mechanisms for faculty and students (e.g., startup funding, tuition, and stipend of graduate assistants). However, the necessary resources for implementing these practices like this may vary by setting, and we would suggest that institutions devote adequate resources to specialized mentoring efforts. Finally, we are mindful of the shortcomings of liberation psychology, such as its lack of inclusion of queer and trans people in its initial writings (Singh et al., 2020). Thus, we encourage using a critical lens and including other relevant frameworks during implementation.

What took place with our ALIVE approach to being together is also reflective of what liberation psychologists from underrepresented backgrounds in psychology have identified to be helpful in their own journeys in this field.

Specifically, Dr. Comas-Díaz (2020) richly described how she drew on *comadre* mentorship (from women peers) and cultural healing to support her journey toward becoming a *mujerista* (Latina woman) leader. Furthermore, a liberation psychology analysis of the career of the first Chicano psychologist (Alfredo Castañeda) reveals that his prolific social justice research and practice were supported by accessing cultural strengths and values (Sanders & Gonzalez López, 2021). Finally, the ALIVE approach mirrors Dr. Miville’s (2018) assertion that mentoring can be a method to mobilize and advocate for change and that it is enhanced when one is backed by a community of diverse supporters.

It is significant that our approach centered on the care of ALIVE participants’ wellness, who would be providing mental health care to others through psychological training practica, internships, and future professional practice. Our approach involved the integration of flexibility, testimony sharing, and culturally responsive self-care practices while also sustaining critical consciousness development and deliberate actions (e.g., conducting community-based research, implementing psychological interventions) to promote social justice. This flexible dialectic of care and resistance is parallel to recent frameworks of radical and racial healing that conceptualize collective liberation and wellness as interconnected practices that promote the well-being of historically oppressed communities (Cadenas et al., 2024; Chavez-Dueñas et al., 2019; Diemer et al., 2015; French et al., 2020; Montero, 2009). Thus, psychology education and training programs would benefit from embracing such liberatory methods in mentoring to repair historical harm, prevent further exclusion and oppression, and uplift cultural wisdom in healing practices.

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