# Introduction:
# Collective Memories of Colonial Violence

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Colonialism, that Loomba calls "the most complex and traumatic relationship in human history" (2005, 8), has left its mark on international relations, social relationships within nations, and the ideologies and imaginaries of virtually all the peoples of the world. Understanding colonialism and its consequences is therefore essential to comprehending the dynamics and conflicts of the contemporary world. This special focus was born out of a desire to bring social psychological studies on colonialism to broader attention.

The collective memories that members of formerly colonized and formerly colonizing countries hold about the colonial times, and particularly about colonial violence, still permeate their current relationships. On the one hand, these memories certainly weigh on diplomatic contacts between formerly colonized countries and their former colonizers, the latter being frequently suspected of pursuing "neo-colonialist" policies. On the other hand, they also undermine intergroup relationships within societies, such as those between indigenous peoples and majority societies in former settlement colonies like Australia, New Zealand, Canada, or the United States, or those in Europe between immigrants from former colonies and their host societies. This violent past also has enduring consequences on former colonized people's identities and wellbeing. The 2001 Durban World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, which gave rise to passionate discussions, recognized the colonial past as one of the main sources of racism, xenophobia, and intolerance towards Africans, Asians and indigenous peoples. The way this violent past is collectively remembered today is therefore a crucial factor for understanding contemporary instances of intergroup conflict, prejudice, stigmatization, and racism. Conversely, collective memories of the colonial times could also be instrumental in promoting intergroup reconciliation,

mutual respect, and mutual recognition in and between contemporary societies.

In spite of this, social psychological studies have long neglected this theme. Theorization and empirical enquiries are scarce, even though many objects of inquiry of social psychological research (interracial or interethnic relations, relations between immigrants and host societies, stereotypes and prejudice) have roots in a colonial past that moulded the representations, ways of thinking, and behaviours of those who lived through it. In addition, even after the decolonization process, this influence continues to permeate the social and cultural identities of the populations formerly involved in the colonial experience, still deeply affecting inter- and intra-group dynamics. By neglecting it, social psychology runs the risk of "naturalizing" the asymmetrical relationships that derive from colonialism.

Let us consider three examples. Image theory proposes a series of out-group images: enemy, ally, colony, degenerate, barbarian, dependent, and imperialist (Alexander, Brewer, and Herrmann 1999; Alexander, Levin, and Henry 2005; Herrmann et al. 1997). The out-group image of interest for our present purpose is "colony" (Herrmann et al. 1997) or "dependent" (Alexander et al. 1999). According to this theory, this image forms in situations in which the out-

group is perceived as weaker than the in-group in terms of both power and culture. "Colony" refers to an out-group image that actually formed within the concrete relations of colonization and which, once the illusions of decolonization had dissipated, returned to centre stage with neo-colonialism (as Image Theory rightly demonstrates). However, Image Theory addresses such images in an unhistorical mode, without investigating their reasons, causes, or ideological background.

The second example concerns the Stereotype Content Model, which proposes that low levels of competence are attributed to low-status groups, whereas attributions of warmth vary as a function of the quality of their relationship with the dominant group (cooperative or competitive) (Fiske et al. 2002). Studies conducted in various countries have consistently found that ethnic minorities and immigrant groups are perceived as less competent and more or less warm depending on their relations with the majority (see Lee and Fiske 2006 for the United States; Sibley et al. 2008 for New Zealand; Volpato and Durante in press for Italy). However, these studies generally fail to explain how these judgments of competence and warmth often formed and then sedimented because of the unequal balance of power imposed by colonialism (Blanchard and Bancel 1998).

A third example relates to the body of studies on acculturation. As Bhatia and Ram point out (2001), these studies take insufficient account of the "colonisation of minds", underestimating the long-term effects of the colonial legacy and the way it goes on modelling the migrants' identity and acculturation processes. A global review of studies produced within mainstream social psychology also reveals a degree of ethnocentrism among researchers, who tend to focus on the majority's perspective at the expense of the minority.

The extraordinary work of Gustav Jahoda (1999) is a welcome exception to this pattern. Jahoda analyses the changes in the European imaginary of other peoples in relation to the evolution of colonization (from conquest to settlement and/or exploitation). He shows that after colonization a shift occurred from a representation of the other as barbarian or savage (based on the animal metaphor) to a representation

of the other as child-like, primitive, and lacking intelligence, morality, and emotional control.

Recently, however, with the general changes brought about by globalization and the appearance of new cultural paradigms in the discipline (Kitayama and Cohen 2007), interest in themes connected to colonialism has increased significantly in social psychology. Three fields of empirical study and theoretical elaboration on colonialism have emerged: research on collective memories or social representations of the past and their links with social identities; research on the role of group-based emotions in the way groups deal with their past; and research on colonial mentality, the legacy of colonialism among formerly colonized people, and its influence on their self-representations, self-esteem, and mental health.

## 1. Social Representations and Collective Memories of the Colonial Past

Studies on collective memory have burgeoned in social psychology in the past fifteen years, following the increasing interest in collective memory studies in other disciplines such as history (Nora 1984), philosophy (Ricoeur 2000), and sociology (Olick 1999). Social psychologists particularly investigate the links between collective memories and social identities. Collective memories serve several identity-related functions. First of all, group members relate to shared representations of their past in order to define their social identity. As nicely put by Liu and Hilton (2005, 537): "History provides us with narratives that tell us who we are, where we came from and where we should be going. It defines a trajectory which helps construct the essence of a group's identity, how it relates to other groups, and ascertains what its options are for facing present challenges." In short, collective memories give content to social identities that enables group members to recognize that they all belong to the same group, that this group has a continuous history (Sani 2008), and that it will continue to exist in the future. Second, in line with Social Identity Theory (Tajfel and Turner 1986), these memories can be used as dimensions of inter-group comparison, so that representations of the group's past may enhance group identity if the comparison favours the in-group – i.e. "our past is better than yours". Conversely, being reminded of negative aspects of the group's past may threaten social identity and elicit defensive

reactions, such as legitimizing these events, minimizing or negating them, or blaming out-groups (Baumeister and Hastings 1997). Finally, collective memories can be used to legitimize present-day actions of the in-group. Representing the in-group as a victim of past events has often been used to justify current or planned actions towards out-groups (Devine-Wright 2003).

Social psychological studies on collective memories of colonization are still scarce, but there are interesting exceptions. Licata and Klein (2005) compare the representations of different periods of Congolese colonial history of former Belgian colonials and colonized Congolese, which are still an important part of both groups' social identities; Pereira de Sa and Castro (2005) study Portuguese and Brazilian social representations of the "discovery" of Brazil; and Volpato and colleagues (Volpato 2000; Volpato and Cantone 2005; Durante, Volpato, and Fiske 2010) analyse representations of the colonized during the Italian Fascist era.

### 2. Dealing with the Past: The Role of Collective Emotions

Several studies in the past decade have sought to analyse the influence of people's emotions about their group's past negative actions towards an out-group on their attitudes towards its present members and towards politics of reparation (see Iyer and Leach 2008 for a review). This current explicitly addresses the colonial relationships of domination and submission. The first set of studies were conducted by Doosje, Branscombe, Spears, and Manstead (1998), who showed that some Dutch participants experienced collective guilt when reminded of acts against Indonesians committed by their ancestors. These studies also showed that participants who identified weakly with their country experienced more collective guilt and expressed more support for reparative actions than those who identified strongly.

The seminal study by Doosje and colleagues (1998) initiated a lively current of research that demonstrated that experiencing collective guilt had positive effects, such as supporting reparation policies or public apologies. However, collective guilt is not an automatic consequence of remembering (or being reminded of) the in-group's past misdeeds. On the contrary, it is a rather rare phenomenon, because it involves incorporating negative elements into the group's social

identity. So group members often try to "forget", minimize, or negate events that could trigger this negative emotion (see Wohl, Branscombe, and Klar 2006 for a review).

Following Doosje et al. (1998), some researchers have tried to identify the antecedents of collective guilt (Branscombe and Doosje 2004). Others investigated the consequences of collective guilt, confirming the link between this emotion and support for reparation (Iyer, Leach, and Crosby 2003; Leach, Iyer, and Pedersen 2006; McGarty et al. 2005; Pedersen et al. 2004; Swim and Miller 1999). Other authors indicate the role played by other group-based emotions, such as anger or shame. For instance, Brown and colleagues (2008) conducted three studies in Chile investigating the emotions that Chileans of European origin experience towards the Mapuche, an indigenous group that has suffered great discrimination and mistreatment.

### 3. The Colonial Heritage among Formerly Colonized Peoples: The Colonial Mentality

A third group of studies focus on the "colonial mentality" that still characterizes individuals and groups who were subjected to colonial domination. As a psychological construct, the colonial mentality is "a form of internalized oppression . . . characterized by a perception of ethnic or cultural inferiority" (David and Okazaki 2006, 241). This mentality, born during periods of direct domination, was reinforced through decades of "internal colonialism" (ongoing oppression in the home country or in a host country after emigration) (Okazaki, David, and Abelmann 2008).

The theoretical antecedent of this series of studies can be found in Frantz Fanon's writings (1967, 1968), which have recently attracted renewed attention in the psychological field (Cheng 2001; Davids 1997; Hassan 2003; Hook 2005; Kebede 2001; Moll 2002; Swartz 1995; Tatum 2002), as well as in subsequent trends in postcolonial studies (Loomba 2005; Williams and Chrisman 1993; Young 2001). Fanon addresses the psychological consequences of colonialism, especially the dynamics of internalization of self-depreciating identities among the colonized. Today, research on colonial mentality represents a promising path for studying the consequences of the asymmetrical relationships imposed by colonial, later neocolonial, policies on the psychological

wellbeing of individuals. As Okazaki, David, and Abelmann emphasize, "there is enormous social, psychological, and infrastructural work in producing the colonized person" (2008, 96).

In the Philippines, in India, in Latin America, in the indigenous communities of North America, in the Pacific islands, and in Australia and New Zealand, research is currently examining how individual psychologies are influenced by the colonial past. Attitudes, beliefs, or behaviours reflecting self-shame or the desire to resemble the dominant group instead of perpetuating one's own cultural heritage have been observed, for example, in Puerto Rico (Varas-Diaz and Serrano-Garcia 2003), in Mexico (Codina and Montalvo 1994), among native Americans (Brave Heart and DeBruyn 1998; Duran 2006; Duran and Duran 1995), and in South Africa (Richards et al. 2005).

Parallel research is being conducted about immigrants originating from former colonies. Studies on the mental health effects of the colonial mentality of Filipino immigrants in the United States (David and Okazaki 2006) show that colonial mentality is negatively correlated with ethnic identification and individual and collective self-esteem, and positively correlated with cultural shame, assimilation, and depression. Other studies, using the semantic priming or Implicit Association Test paradigms, show that cognitions linked with colonial mentality can operate automatically, independently of conscious control (Okazaki et al. 2008).

### 4. The Present Issue
This special focus presents eight studies linked with the three fields outlined above. Three papers address the field of social representations and collective memories (Leone and Mastrovito; Cabecinhas and Feijó; Licata and Klein); three others deal with the influence of group-based emotions on attitudes and behaviours linked with the colonial past (Mari, Andrighetto, Gabbiadini, Durante, and Volpato; Allpress, Barlow, Brown, and Louis; Figueiredo, Doosje, Valentim, and Zebel); Lawson-Te Aho and Liu address an issue connected with "colonial mentality"; finally, Sibley investigates the ideologies that prevail in New Zealand regarding the legacy of colonization and legitimize material and symbolic inequality.

This set of papers thus provides a global overview of the different kinds of current social psychology research concerning colonialism. The studies use diverse methodologies, with qualitative (Leone and Mastrovito; Cabecinhas and Feijó; Lawson-Te Aho and Liu) as well as quantitative methods (Licata and Klein; Mari et al.; Figueiredo et al.; Allpress et al.; Sibley).

Different geographical and historical settings are addressed. Cabecinhas and Feijó deal with the Portuguese colonization of Mozambique. Licata and Klein examine collective memories of the Belgian colonization of the Congo. Two studies focus on Italian colonialism in the Horn of Africa: Leone and Mastrovito investigate the transmission of historical memories through an analysis of school manuals, while Mari and colleagues study the emotions of guilt, anger, and shame these events provoke among Italians. Figueiredo and colleagues compare the Dutch colonization of Indonesia and Portuguese colonization in Africa. One of the studies presented by Allpress and colleagues analyzes British emotions regarding the colonial past of Kenya, while the other focuses on the emotions Australians of European origin experience about the treatment of the Aborigines. The colonization of Oceania is also addressed in two complementary articles about New Zealand: Lawson-Te Aho and Liu examine how referring to Maori culture could help foster effective strategies for tackling the high suicide rates among Maori youth, while Sibley investigates the ideologies that contribute to maintaining structural inequalities between non-indigenous New Zealanders and Maori.

Although most articles focus on the point of view of former colonizers, three papers also present data collected among formerly colonized peoples. Thus, this special focus seeks to counter a general tendency—often observed in the international social psychological literature—to give more space to the points of view of dominant social groups. But authors from formerly colonized countries are still underrepresented in this set of articles. It is a challenge for future research on the social psychology of (post-)colonialism to better include the perspective and invaluable knowledge of the colonized.

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