

## Chapter 4

# Methodological Proposals for a Renewal of Antiracist Socio–Educational Action

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Anti-racist socio-educational intervention is not proving effective at combating contemporary racism. Traditional awareness models suffer from serious limitations that prevent them from achieving their stated objectives. In this chapter, these limits are described and explained, based on an analysis of the dominant models implicit in current anti-racist intervention. Second, two new conceptual tools are proposed that are essential to reframe anti-racist action, so that socio-educational intervention is truly able to transform and eliminate moral boundaries. Finally, several operational proposals are presented and described to renew anti-racist socio-educational action from a critical-transformative perspective: critical reflexivity, the decolonization of one's own culture, understanding to transform, the enabling of racialized and discriminated groups, participatory communication, and communicational empowerment.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The anti-racist efforts traditionally made by public and civil institutions through socio-political activism and socio-educational action (which includes formal and institutionalized education, and citizen awareness, or social education, in a broad sense) have been insufficient to eliminate classical racism. They also exhibit serious limitations when it comes to effectively combating contemporary racism.

The new faces of racism and its heterogeneous expressions feature continuity with “old” forms of racism, but contemporary racism replaces race with ethnicity, culture and identity. In forms that are more subtle than explicit, this racist discourse and practice now has a moralizing intention, as it seeks to

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-7283-2.ch004

coexist with democratic and egalitarian values. That is, the moralizing dimension of the new racism is part of an attempt to make it compatible with democratic principles. In this context, classical anti-racist socio-educational action has exhibited certain limitations (Pedersen et al., 2005; Gibb, 2003; Ahmed, 2006) and must be enhanced in order to effectively combat today's new racism.

This chapter focuses on anti-racist socio-educational interventions that begin by identifying the limits of traditional awareness actions. It aims to provide new theoretical/conceptual tools and innovative operational guidelines to deploy a critical/transformational anti-racism that accelerates or intensifies processes of personal and social emancipation and liberation through social and educational action.

## **LIMITS OF ANTI-RACIST SOCIO-EDUCATIONAL INTERVENTIONS**

The anti-racism strategies of institutions and non-profit organizations have focused mainly on communication and awareness. Traditional awareness models suffer from serious limitations that, far too often, prevent them from achieving their stated objectives.

Over the last decade, from the critical perspectives of anti-racism, so-called 'moral' or 'functional' anti-racism has been criticized. This consists of a set of anti-discriminatory policy and intervention strategies that deny the structural nature of racism, focusing only on its attitudinal aspect. These approaches exclude individuals and groups who are victims of racism, reproducing paternalistic and salvationist models, and deprive anti-racism of its transformative and political power.

In order to revitalize anti-racism efforts, we must expose the implicit intervention practices and models that, without realizing it, reproduce the logic of inequality. We must become aware of the unconscious or implicit underpinnings of actions that are not always consistent with their explicit intentions (Aguilar-Idáñez, 2010). All people, including those who declare themselves anti-racists and engage in anti-racist socio-educational action projects, may harbor prejudices, stereotypes or a certain ethnocentrism in their ways of being, thinking and acting, without even being aware of this (Aguilar-Idáñez, 2011). It is necessary, then, to identify and understand those frames of reference that, unconsciously and impulsively, guide actions, in order to be in a position to carry out actions that ensure success. The way we design our anti-racist social intervention actions, our strategies and work methodology are based on implicit models formed by frames of reference that reflect a simplified and schematic construction of reality that serves to explain it, providing a general referential outline that unreflectively guides our actions. It may be uncomfortable, but we must realize that our ways of working with and for victims of discrimination, against racism and towards a more just society, are often based on values, assumptions and stereotypes that can legitimize and reproduce new forms of racism that, while more subtle, are equally harmful (Aguilar-Idáñez, 2011).

The implicit models that underlie any anti-racist action primarily depend on and are determined by the interrelation of three elements: how racism is defined and, in particular, what its main causes are; what strategies are deemed most legitimate for dealing with the problem; and how the people involved are defined, and, specifically, what roles and statuses are assigned to them.

The dominant models implicit in current anti-racist social intervention are presented below, grouped into these three elements.

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