Psicología, el mundo del trabajo y la subjetividad:
Valerie Walkerdine en conversación con Hernán C. Pulido-Martínez

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Psychology, the World of Work and Subjectivity:
Valerie Walkerdine Talks to Hernán c. Pulido-Martínez

Abstract

In this Interview Valerie Walkerdine traces the critical psychology's trajectory in the United Kingdom, as well as her own relationship, as one of the founding figures, with this field. Memories about the constitution and transformation of critical psychology create the context to explore different roles that psychological knowledge has in relation to the world of work. The connection between critical psychology and conventional psychology, the role of work within critical psychology, the relevance of critical interventions and the possible future for critical psychology are articulated along the interview.

Key words: critical psychology, work, subjectivity, psychological culture, neo-liberalism.

Resumen

En esta entrevista Valerie Walkerdine considera el desarrollo de la psicología crítica en el Reino Unido, así como su propia relación con este campo del cual ella es una de sus figuras fundantes. Memorias acerca de cómo se constituyó y se ha transformado la psicología crítica sirven de contexto para explorar los roles que el conocimiento psicológico tiene

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en relación con la construcción de la subjetividad en el mundo del trabajo. El lazo entre la psicología crítica y la psicología convencional, el papel del trabajo dentro de la psicología crítica, la relevancia de las intervenciones de este corte y el futuro de la psicología crítica se articulan a lo largo de la entrevista.

Palabras clave: psicología crítica, trabajo, subjetividad, cultura psicológica, neo-liberalismo.

About Valerie Walkerdine

Professor Valerie Walkerdine is pioneer and leading figure of Critical Psychology in the United Kingdom. She was a member of the group around the *Journal Ideology and Consciousness* that in the 1980's radically transformed British psychology. Among her most important books are *Changing the Subject: Psychology Social Regulation and Subjectivity* (with Henriques, Hollway, Urwin & Venn, 1984/1998); *Mastery of Reason: Cognitive Development and the Production of Rationality* (1988); *Daddy's Girl: Young Girls and Popular Culture* (1997); *Mass Hysteria: Critical Psychology and Media Studies* (with Blackman, 2001); *Growing up Girl: Psychosocial Explorations of Gender and Class* (with Lucey & Melody, 2001); *School Girls Fictions* (1990); *Democracy in the Kitchen: Regulating Mothers and Socializing Daughters* (with Lucey, 1989); *Estudios culturales y comunicación* (with Curran & Morley, 1988*)*. Valerie Walkerdine has published more than 200 articles. She is also founder and editor of *The International Journal of Critical Psychology,* which was established in 2001.

The interview

The interview was conducted specifically for the special issue on Subjectivity Work and Organizations of this journal. It took place on October, 2006 in Valerie Walkerdine's office at Cardiff University. It lasted more than one hour. After that the interview was transcribed and reviewed in various meetings. The final version was authorized by Valerie Walkerdine.

Critical Psychology

Pulido-Martínez – I borrowed the title of this interview from your book *Changing the Subject. Psychology, Social Regulation and Subjectivity* (Henriques et al, 1984/1998). This book meant a breaking point in British psychology. It started a particular critical psychology movement here, and became a reference point in critical psychology around the world. There are four main aspects that I would like to explore in this interview, first, what is critical psychology at this moment, second, the relationship between critical psychology and subjectivity, third how this relationship have changed in your own work throughout these years and finally I would like to explore your own perspective about the critical psychology's agenda. Then, let's start with these questions: At this moment what is critical psychology? What is the role of critical psychology?

Walkerdine – I think that critical psychology is many different things. I always call critical psychology a bit of an umbrella that covers different kinds of approaches to psychology and subjectivity. So I want to explore it by taking it back to development from the 1960's onwards. In the 1960's I first became aware of attempts to produce a radical psychology in Britain; there were magazines with names like *Red Rat*. *Red Rat* tries to argue that psychology was oppressive, it was ideological, it was unscientific, and so that it could be a psychology that was associated with the radical politics.

In my own work I got together with a group of other psychologists, we were all very young at the beginning of the 1970's and we felt that the problem with this kind of radical psychology was that it took the view that psychology could be a sort revolutionary science, you could get rid of the ideology, the bourgeois ideology, and you could just do radical science, and actually that that was unsophisticated as a position because it assured that a revolutionary science would somehow stand outside of ideology (Adlam, Henriques, Rose, Salfield, Venn & Walkerdine, 1977). So rather, we turned to developments in European social theory particularly at that time the work of structuralism and post structuralism, and what was interesting about that if you think about the work of Althusser (1970,1971) and Foucault (1977, 1979a, 1979b) in particular, it placed subjectivity and the human sciences absolutely centre stage in ideas about how the social works, government, governance, regulation and those ideas, which place then the psychological centre stage in understanding the social, social change, transformation that seemed to be terribly exciting to us and I would say that that work, which also in its way, emphasizes the semiotic and the discursive, was the forerunner of a rather British tradition of critical psychology. Although at first that work was not very well known in psychology, nevertheless it does lay the ground work for what became critical psychology.

But I think when I say critical psychology is an umbrella, there are many critical psychologies, which have their antecedents in different moments, different politics.

So, for example, I think North-American critical psychology is much more related to an activist tradition of community psychology, which was never particularly well developed in Britain (Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002). And obviously, Latin American approaches to critical psychology; as far as I understand them, relate much more to ideas about liberation psychology (Martin-Baro, 1996). So, I think that I like to call critical psychology an umbrella, because it shelters all these different ways of being critical about psychology and trying to provide a platform from which one can do a different kind of psychological work and engage with what psychology is and what psychology does.

Pulido-Martínez − You have mentioned critical psychological work in Latin America and in the United States. But I would like to explore the critical work here in Britain. There are different branches here. Could you please talk a little more about these branches? What characterizes them?

Walkerdine − I suppose, perhaps the best known branch to the people who may read this journal is discursive social psychology that seems to emanate from Potter and Wheterell's book (1987). In essence that comes out of the same discursive tradition that I am talking about, but it is itself a methodological critique in social psychology, so I mean, it comes out of a really humanist trend in social psychology, an anti-experimental trend, but the psychological is not to be located in the person, in behaviour or in a psyche but in the social world and therefore in discourse. So that everything that was explainable through internal states can actually be understandable through external issues particularly discourses. That, I suppose, is the best known strand, but for me I find it quite empiricist, also that it has lots of holes in it really, because it seems to radically remove the psychological from the subject, but at the same time, it assumes the subject who can utilize discursive resources. So, there are a set of problems it does not solve… theoretical and political problems.

So, I would say another tradition is the tradition that comes from the book you mentioned *Changing the Subject* (Henriques et al., 1984/1998), which takes a position much more related to Foucault or from Foucault, which understands power, governance and regulation as absolutely central and tries to understand how the "psy" operates to regulate and manage subjects and also produce subjects who could regulate themselves and manage themselves. And I would say another position is that taken by Ian Parker, which uses Foucault, but analyses discourse differently, with more reference to materiality and to lacanian psychoanalysis (Parker, 2002, 2003) which says yes, that is great but is not enough, how do we experience that governance and regulation?

Therefore we have to understand the ways that people hold together and experience the contradictory and conflicting demands of having to be governed and regulated in ways that may not go together smoothly. So our attempts to be an individual means holding together lots of different things, and therefore some people would turn to what is sometimes called the psycho-social. That is a relationship between unconscious processes and the social world. It is a way of thinking about that, but at the same time being quite critical of traditional psychoanalysis. I think there is also emerging another tradition in Britain (Cromby, 2004), which is just beginning, which is one that says that the discursive work really ignores the body, and therefore some of the things that we try to ignore in looking at the social, which were the biological, the genetic, the embodied are so important in current regulation and in the ways that we experience life, or the life world, that we have to critically engage with embodiment. If we do that we have to look at how in the present world regulation, management, ways of being are global, and so we have to look at how the local and global are connected together in complex ways, so you will get people who are starting to look at embodiment, affect, sensation, and the ideal of things linking, being related, flowing, and there are some interest in the work of Deleuze, but that is just beginning here.

Critical Psychology – Mainstream Psychology

Pulido-Martínez − Critical psychology is very active in the UK and it seems to be progressing, but at the same time mainstream psychology is a very strong tradition here, so how is the relationship between traditional psychology and the critical perspectives? Is there an established relationship? Is there a kind of dialogue? Is critical psychology trying to be institutionalized?

Walkerdine − When I started working as a young academic in psychology, when I finished my Ph D, I think, in Britain at least, that kind of critical work I am talking about existed much more outside psychology than it did inside psychology. So in many ways, it was easier to do this kind of work in sociology that it was to do it in psychology. But slowly, more and more psychologists became interested in critical work, I would say a lot of the students, undergraduate students, were always interested in critical work, so there has been a pressured on the British Psychological Society to introduce this more into the undergraduate curriculum, which they control. The British Psychological Society controls what is taught in the psychology undergraduate curriculum. And there now is reference to critical psychology, to qualitative work, much more emphasis on a critical history of psychology. So there is now room

for this work, there are more academics teaching it, particularly in social psychology but not only in social psychology. I would say in areas such as social, health, work, developmental psychology and to some extent in new cognitive work you will find critical perspectives now in the undergraduate curriculum. But I think the other change that particularly interest me here in Cardiff is that there is much more openness to place psychology in an interdisciplinary setting. So that the distinctions between the psychological and the social get to be broken down, the real disciplinary problem about what constitutes the psychological and what constitutes the social, which do not make any sense really when you do critical work, in an interdisciplinary contexts find a place where you can explore that more easily.

Pulido-Martínez – How is the response of critical researchers not directly involved in psychology in regards with critical psychology perspectives?

Walkerdine – I do not know how it is in Colombia, but in Britain there is a longstanding of other social scientists being suspicious of psychology. Because, they think psychology is essentialist, reductionist, and so they would traditionally say that they did not want have any to do with psychology. But of course, what happens is that frequently sociologists, anthropologists, cultural theorists, people working on social politics, they need to refer to psychological concepts, their work does not work without the kind of things that critical psychologists do. So that is what I like working in interdisciplinary settings, because, it means that that dialogue is possible. Once they understand what you are trying to say and that you are not being essentialist or reductionist, actually, I find that people in other social sciences are really interested. And more than that, they understand that critical psychologists have a theoretical and methodological understanding that they themselves do not have and that their work needs what we have to offer.

Pulido-Martínez – The following question is about how critical psychologists could be located in the academia. According to what you said, critical psychologists can offer special skills and analyses in terms of social problems. Is there a kind of training specific for critical psychologists? If it is so, what would be this specific training in critical psychology?

Walkerdine – I can only speak by what I know about and here at the undergraduate level, we try right from the first year, right for the very first lecture, to teach students that there is not one psychology, that there are psychologies, that these are contested, that there are even different histories of psychology. And also that psychology is not a positivist or empiricist science; it is not simply something that depends on discovering findings. That this is not the case – this is never the case

– that there are never findings that we can understand in isolation from the historical and theoretical places that those findings emerged. So my aim in introducing critical perspectives is really to have students from the beginning understand that. I think what is a problem is to introduce students to critical work, say, in the third year of undergraduate work, I think that is too late. I think that what they need to understand is something about how you do psychology and that theoretical work is important in psychology, that understanding how certain ideas emerged, why they emerged at that time, what are the issues that are around that lead to their emergence. How if you come with one idea you develop one kind of method and you get one kind of result, but if you have another idea you would use a different method and you would get a different result. If you can get students thinking that way critically and understanding that there is this relation between history, theory, method, then they are much more open and critical psychology is not this kind of radical think that you add on at the end that they think is not mainstream psychology. All I am talking about is approaching psychology in a more open way, then, I think, you are introducing critical work. You introduce it from the beginning, it is not a big deal, and you just introduce that as a way of engaging and working. And you recognize that psychology always addresses social issues, it has always being brought into addressing social issues. Somebody like Rose (1999, 1996) discusses really clearly that psychology has always being brought in to engage with particular social problems. So you look at the relationship between those social issues and psychological theory and method from the beginning. I am sure to a Latin American this will seem really straight forward, because I am sure that is what you always do. But in Britain there has been a much a more empiricist tradition, as though psychology was some kind of pure science, more like physics… or more like 19th century physics really. I think you introduce psychology as social science and you teach it in the way that I suggested then it is not at all difficult to integrate critical work in psychology.

Critical Psychology and the World of Work

Pulido-Martínez – You have briefly mentioned the areas in which critical psychologists are interested in. It seems that the world of work is not a main concern for critical psychologists. Why do you think that critical psychologists just leave aside the world of work?

Walkerdine – It is an interesting question; I think it is perhaps because of where critical psychology has come from, because a lot of British critical psychologists started off studying social psychology and… I mean I cannot answer your question very well because I do not

really know why they have not been very interested in the world of work. But I suppose that one issue might be in Britain that work has been the province of organizational psychology, which has been a particular branch and critical psychologists have not seen that as something that they should be interested in, but that is something they should be interested in, and I think the other is perhaps that work and labour more particularly have been the province of sociologists. So you got a lot of critical sociological work, and now a lot of critical management work, but I am not absolutely sure why psychology has been very slow to engage with it critically. But it is very important that it does… terribly, terribly important, because just as sociologists and management theorists miss out issues about subjectivity and the place of the psychological in governance, that critical psychology know about in other areas, as you know very well, the same is equally true in the world of work. There are ways sociologists in particular address these issues that do not touch central issues about subjectivity and subjectification and they need input from critical psychology.

Pulido-Martínez – What I can see is that the relation between critical psychology and the world of work was important for the group around Ideology and Consciousness (Adlam et al., 1977), even though they did not explicitly engage with problems related to work; work was a very important issue. The group developed different ways of considering problems of work; however other critical psychologists seemed not to be interested in the world of work.

Walkerdine – Well I think it was because that group around Ideology and Consciousness were initially interested in Marxism, in European social theory so you know, Marxism and Marxist social theory and sociology have always been interested in work, workers and class, and work because is about workers and therefore about class. That is why I think whereas you will get other and perhaps younger people in critical psychology that have not come through that tradition (Adlam et al., 1977).

Pulido-Martínez – This leads to the next question about your work that I think is very important. You have been constantly considering the relationship among the world of work and psychology, and the production of the subject with concepts like class and living experience. In your early work like in *Democracy in the Kitchen* (1989) you deal with these issues where psychology is more academic, and in your recent work "Freedom, Psychology and the Neo-liberal Worker" (2005) the role of psychology changed completely. Could you please tell us about how this relation has evolved and the reasons why this relation evolved?

Walkerdine – I think, it comes from my own experience. I grew up in Britain in a working class community. My father was manual worker and my mother worked in a school kitchen. I had a very keen eye for injustice. But one of the things as a student that I started to notice was that class was the province of men. It would be men who talked about class, it would be me who talked about worker, it would be me who could be workers. Class was a topic for Marxism, it was a masculine topic, a very macho topic really. And that it was dealt with in terms of economics and sociology. And that moreover working class people were only interesting if they could become agents of revolutionary change. So the ideas about ideology and particular notions of false consciousness really annoyed me. Because it suggested that people like me and my family could not see what was happening in some ways, that there was something wrong with our consciousness and that we had to be made to see. But that was not my experience, my family and the community that I grew up was not particularly politically engaged, but that did not mean that they could not see, that did not mean that did not understand… they lived injustice, they lived it all the time, they understood exactly what class meant. They experienced it in the body, they experienced it socially, they experienced it emotionally and I felt really that nobody was working on these rather ephemeral issues to do with subjectivity and what it meant to experience class, so I was I guess frightened as a working class student in an extremely middle class setting. Because when I went to the University the numbers of working class students was really quite small and the higher you got in high education the number of working class students would be even smaller so by the time you get to the Ph D you will be lucky then if you knew anybody who is working class or who admit to be working class, so that meant that people would kind of hide, they would hide themselves they would change their accent, they would change the way they behaved, they would change what they did. So that they could in essence, I am sure you are familiar with the term, passing for white, blacks passing for whites that would be like passing for middle class, so you would pass. You would try to get a way with pretending that you were just like everybody else. I became really interested in that and how people passed, and how then, in a sense, you have to be two people, because you have to manage in this middle class setting and yet at the same time you are somehow split off from this other you, this you who had grown up in a different place, where a different kind of subjectivity was demanded. In fact the kind of subjectivity that was wanted in the middle class setting was derided, I mean people did not want it, they called it posh, they laughed at your accent and they would not like it. So you learn to be two people, but

how are those two people joined together? Well they join together very painfully, it is very painful and it is a very difficult emotional experience. So it took me a lot of courage, but I thought I have to talk about this; I have to write about this, because none of the men who were interested in class are engaging with it in this way. So that is how I started to work on this kind of issues, I worked on it theoretically, I worked on it methodologically, I worked on how, in a sense, your subjectivity was engaged in a field work and what it meant to look at, to engage with working class people and working class families. How do you look? What are you looking at? Is it like looking into the jungle for middle class researchers, so like how do these issues that were so difficult and painful for me enter into how psychologically we describe the experiences of class? And so in a sense I did not come at these issues through work, it is just that I came at work because work is just a central issue to class, for working class peoples' experience and I started to work on issues around neo-liberalism because I could see that what was happening in Britain, and other so called advanced industrial countries, was that working class communities based on a place of work like a factory or a coal mine were breaking down with globalization. And after the 1980's things started to change and that created a set of difficulties for people in more traditional communities, because the idea that you become an individual, that you are flexible, that there is a flexible workforce, that you have got to be able to change yourself, these were things that were being promoted as self management techniques, but, of course, were very difficult and painful for working class people whose formation had been different, at a different moment in a different way. So, that is how I started to get interested in those issues to do with globalization and transformation. But, I suppose, because for me the psycho-social issues were tremendously important I was always interested in the relationship between modes of management and regulation, the kind of foucaultian issues, and how they are lived and experienced. So some people would say that one of the problems is that I am always going on about pain, I am always talking about pain, and I thought about this, why am I not talking about happiness? But I suppose because my experience was that working class people, of course do deal with a lot of pleasure and lot of happiness but they also deal in this context with a lot of oppression and a lot of pain and so I want understand not how they were duped, how they could not see, how they were stuck, but how they lived these things.

Pulido-Martínez – Reading your books, of course you are dealing with pain, but also what emerge is that working class people enjoy life independently of what

psychologists and researches have to say. In *Democracy in the Kitchen* for instance, what emerges is the contrast between the working class way of life and what the researches thought about the working class.

Walkerdine – Yes, I think that is really important because *Democracy in the Kitchen* was a critique of previous research looking at working class families. I felt they were like as though they were either at a jungle or a zoo. They were looking at these animals but actually they were frightened of the animals, they were looking at lions who were roaring, but they did not understand the roaring and it was frightening, they did not know how to engage with it. But of course if you just see this, this was just how life is, this is just normal, I could say to myself that I recognize this, what is the big deal, this is just how life is, so actually I need to not pathologize it, because pathologization is what happens with not just working class but all "Othered" people all the time, they are always pathologized, because they are always pathologized by those who are looking at them from the outside. I think that psychologists who occupy a particular position that I am talking about, which is that you occupy this dual position, you know, you have been educated but you are also overt that you have to use that. I think that is politically, terribly important to use it in order to present a view of something that is not pathologized or as presenting pathologization as something, which comes from the outside, and is imposed onto the lived experience of these people. So pathologization is, in Foucault's terms, a technology. Psychological technologies, which pathologize need to be taken apart and understood, and different ways of understanding the experiences need to be put forward.

Pulido-Martínez – Psychology occupies different places in your work. For example, in books like *Democracy in the Kitchen* (1989) you are analyzing the role of academic psychology in producing the working class mothers and daughters as different, as the "other", in *Growing up Girls* (2001) you used psychoanalytic concepts to understand the living experience, the subject positions of women and in your recent publications about the construction of the neo-liberal subject, it seems to me that you go beyond psychology as an academic discipline to consider the psychological culture that is manifested in the world of work (Walkerdine, 2005, 2006).

Walkerdine – I suppose that we can move from psychology describing a particular kind of experience to a more foucaultian position that I articulate, which is that psychology is a technology through which certain kinds of experience are regulated and therefore pathologized. But I suppose that what I have been thinking more recently is that psychology is a rather late part of a history of individualization. Let's just take one

moment in that history, it is the moment of the development of the European colonial expansion, which is also the moment of the rising of science in Europe, so it introduced certain modes of scientific governance.

One of the arguments that some people make is that these moments introduced for the fist time a gaze, a look at the individual as a subject, because colonial modes of governance and other modes of governance more generally treat this individual like an animal, a plant, a thing that has to be studied, that has to be known, that has to be understood. So you separate this one being from its social world and organization, from the social relations that are the subjects world, if you like, and you can see this exemplify in Descartes idea that I can think, I am, I impose this thinking on the world, I can see, I can classify, I can know, but what I know is one individual, so what I want to do is to radically re-think this because what is done is produced as an object to that gaze, this automized individual who psychology much later of course, by the late 19th and 20th centuries we come to describe. But the antecedents of them are there at least in the 17th century. I am sure we can trace them further back, what they do is that they take the individual out of the complex relations in which subjects make sense and subjects are, so what I want to do it is to bring that back.

Even us psychologists, when we are describing something, we describe a person interacting with something, so I want to foreground those relationalities because I think that is what subjectivity is. Now, that for me is not the same as discursive psychology because those relationalities are not just happening in discourse. They are in the affective, embodied, engagements, relations that make up our world. So sometimes they are varied ways that we can feel, but we can not necessarily talk about the ways we are connected. They are also in everyday artefacts. In some researches I am doing at the moment, one women described to me how as a child she liked entering the world, the adult women world of her community and that took place because all the men went off to the factory and the women used to put their washing out at the back, so there were particular days, washing was out, women would talk to each other they would share their experience, they would on those days talk about their marriages, they would talk about their children, they would talk about the difficulties they had. So actually her embodied sense of how you talk about your emotional life is linked to a particular day of the week, a whole social space about women together doing their washing. I think that is a form of social relationality where you can not separate emotional experience or doing emotion in a more ethnographic sense, and what she feels from the places and times that she came to do

those emotions, like washing days and women together. So if we explore the materiality of all those relations, how they happened, when they happen, where they happen, the geographies of them, the histories of them we are also at the same time exploring affective relations, we are exploring those places that hold us in place through which we come to see ourselves, to know ourselves, to recognise ourselves.

Pulido-Martínez – One of the most debatable aspects of your work is the relationship with psychoanalysis. It seems to me that you are leaving this way of theorizing. In your article recently published in Soundings (Walkerdine, 2005) the analysis about how the neoliberal workers is constructed, is not related to psychoanalysis, something new is emerging.

Walkerdine – Well, I would like to think so. But it is difficult, I mean, it is the same problem, I think what I am talking about feelings, sensations, affective relations are the province of what psychoanalysis places in the unconscious, but I am interested not in a kind of drive or a kind of sense, I am interested in a radical re-working of psychoanalysis, really, in which we understand what I said about this kind of social relationality, and we understand how that lived consciously and unconsciously. I think that it is possible to understand a potential in psychoanalysis. That is that although is quite common to teach psychoanalysis as the idea that we have an unconscious, it is somehow ours, it belongs to the subject in our minds. Actually I don't think that is where, even for Freud, the unconscious was in any simple sense, I think it was in a dynamic, it was in a relationship, it is in a space between and surrounding people, it is not in a person. Because this whole point I am trying to describe, what a mother and an infant feel is that something happens in that relation, so what happens is in the relation, it is not in the person, it belongs in the relation, it is in the space that it is relational. Now although there are relational analysts who now take that issue forward ( ) I don't think that they start where I would start, they still start with the mother – infant relation. I want to start in all the relations that make up the social world or a life a world. That is where relationality is, and therefore if there are unconscious it is in all of those places. So to start with the mother – infant relation, or family relations as those that explain all other relations I think it is not right. Of course family relations need to be in there as one side of relationality, but it is not the only side. This is a work I just started to do and so I am only really beginning. I think it is really interesting and exciting.

Critical Psychology and Social Interventions

Pulido-Martínez – Let me ask you a very important question for Latin America. What are these analyses – this theoretical work and the critique of psychology – useful for? Are they useful for interventions? Are they useful for academic debate?

Walkerdine – Well the first thing I would like to say is that I do want to make a plea for a theoretical work because I think that although it may no see initially, immediately useful I think that unless we unpack certain kinds of concepts as Foucaultian for example, to show us how are these, are used in government, in governance, in regulation, in management, unless we understand these things, and consider them in a different way we can not intervene, or we can intervene but it might not be such an effective intervention.

So for me, theoretical work and intervention go hand in hand, we have to engage, we have to think about issues. But when we think about issues and then engage, of course, we think about concrete issues, the real issues we deal with, and therefore we have to intervene. So let me give you an example of this work I just describe about washing days. It is in a community that have lost… it was a steel factory, making steel and it was gone, there is no work in town. The government puts lots of money into these towns to try to encourage regeneration. But my view is unless you can understand how the community formed, how the ties in the community formed, how people sense of themselves formed in relation to that, their terrible sense of loss, their feelings about how you can re-make it, their attempts to built something new, unless you understand all of these issues about subjectivity and sociality, it is a waste of money, the governments are wasting their money.

I think this happen all the time with interventions that you get these interventions that are suppose to make things better, more modern, more effective, but often they are asking the wrong questions, they are not helpful . So that is one thing, I think that critical psychological work is desperately needed in a lot of these things, because they brought in psychologists who are not understanding things in the way we would. They do not have a critical concept, they introduce essentialist, psychologized solutions which in fact in many ways bring in as many problems as they solve, so that is the first thing, or they are bringing people from other disciplines who then ignore some of the issues of subjectivity.

But I think more critically, the kind of relational issues I am talking about is about working at the grass roots. I think that working at the grass roots with community organizations, with political organizations, we have to understand how a globalized world works today, and we have to understand how international markets, and global economy, and present governance try to create workers, citizens, markets. We got to understand that because we got to understand how that this pressure on people both to consume, to have wealth, and all the pleasures associated with that, and at the same time the kinds of modes of sociality, the ways of being, the patterns of relating that come together, so it is not point out trying to liberate, engaging in liberation. Liberation in my view is something that Nikolas Rose (1987, 1996) has demonstrated really well falls into neo liberal approaches to freedom. Multinational capital and governments know have to do freedom, they know have to do freedom really well, and so we can do a politics of liberation which just tie people into becoming better neo-liberal subjects.

So we got to have other strategies, we got to have other engagements, and I think we are beginning to try to work out what those other engagements would be, and so I think, yes, there are immediate ways in which we can work now. As in your own work to look critically at what we see as a kind of modern intervention and modern change and the problems associated with that and the difficulties for psychologists in Colombia trying to implement them. I think we could look at all of those and we can also, then try to develop new ways of thinking, new ways of working, new ways of working with people, also this comes from the kind of working class girl in me, we need not to make the same political mistakes that is to impose we think, we can see, we think we can know something that other people don't know, we got to work with people, we got to understand where they are, no political intervention will work if we have not engaged with and understood what people know, what they are, what they see, how they understand something. It would be a waste of time and it won't work. Because believe me, if you think that the Left can not do it they Right certainly can, they do it very well.

Pulido-Martínez – You mentioned that it is impossible to understand the actual, the present social problems without considering a global perspective. Could you please me what is your vision of critical psychology in a global perspective? What would you like?

Walkerdine – What I would like? I have some basic things that I would like. I would like psychologists and psychology students all over the world to be able to study critical perspectives in psychology. I would like them to be recognized, I would like them to be known, I would like psychologists to know about these things, to not be afraid to be able to use them, to be able to use them in their work, to be part of the global network in which they know other people, they understand, they hear about work in other places, and they meet each other and learn from it. That it is what I would like more than any think else, that is what I always want to,

because I know how hard it is for many psychologists to do critical work in many places, even in some countries to have people to talk to, to know there are other people out there who are interested in the same things. So I don't have a vision of a critical psychology, because I think that would be a megalomaniac vision. I am not interested in a kind of "Valerie Walkerdine's critical psychology". In fact I am absolutely not interested in that. What I am interested in is simply that there be a space for people to be able to find support for the work they are trying to do, and to know about other work and to know each other and therefore to build supportive alliances and networks. That is what I would like.

Pulido-Martínez – What would you like for the future of critical psychology here in the UK?

Walkerdine – I think I would like the same things, I would like it to be a vibrant field in which people are able to learn about this from the undergraduate level onwards, that they can do this work, that there are lots of opportunities within psychology to do it in what ever field they are in, and that also this work is known about in relation to other social sciences. So that the view of psychology as essentialist and reductionists disappears because people will understand that there is this vibrant work of groups of people who are engaged, because I think that is what life is, it gives us a sense of aliveness, and the aliveness is true in the sense that we are supported , that we know, we can see that there are other people who think like us, who feel like us, who are trying to do things, another basis of that we do thing together we try to build things, that is what I would like. I just do really want to say that I am really only interested in sort of school of critical psychology in that sense, because I am very suspicious of guruness, you know, that whole kind of guru thing, I don't like it politically and I think it is probably a rather masculine thing, which I don't like very much. But I think that because I struggled so hard in my career to be able to find spaces to do this work, which is why my biggest concern is that there be spaces that can flourish. I think some critical psychologists really would like to destroy the mainstream, but the mainstream is powerful and global, I think that is a lost cause, I don't think we are going to destroy the mainstream in that way, to keep mounting critiques. What is much more likely is that we have global networks of people who are strong because they are there, they are known, they do this work, they know about each others work, they provide spaces for publishing it, they provide spaces for talking about it, they provide spaces for doing it, and it is that, in my view, that would be more effective in dislodging anything than taking a kind of…, you know, trying to batter down the door of mainstream psychology.

Pulido-Martínez – Now the last question to conclude this interview: What do you think would be an international critical psychology agenda?

Walkerdine – Well… this is just off the top of my head, but one of the things that I think would be an international agenda it is to make the agenda properly international. One of the things that happen it that even critical psychology gets dominated by people in countries that have more resources, better resources and institutions, and that means Anglo American and that also means probably people who speak English, you know, countries were English is spoken. So that also means that you don't need to hear about work from people who do not publish in English. I edit an international journal but it is only in English and despite my attempts you tend to get people whose English is good enough to submit, that probably means they are trained in an English speaking country, so you tend then not hear about critical work on other agendas and in other places. So my agenda for a really international critical psychology is a place in which we really could provide a proper exchange to know about what people are trying to do in countries, in all the countries, so that we understand what the engagement is, we understand what the struggles are, we understand what the problems that people are dealing with are, that will be really an international critical psychology. Unfortunately, I think it is a long way of happening because it is very difficult because people in poor countries can not travel, this happens all the time, but I think what we probably have to do it is establish it through the means that we can establish it, like on the web for example, we have to find ways of overcoming language barriers, we have to promote local organizations that can talk to each other, that would be my vision, so it is not so much an agenda for doing some particular kind of critical psychology by simply for that to be an international critical psychology.

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