

# Healing a generation: Transmedia literacy and collective intelligence to promote a participatory democracy in Venezuela.



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**"Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."**

**"Love is the only force capable of transforming an enemy into a friend."  
Martin Luther King, Jr.**



# Subjective Reframing; Transforming the Learner and, by Extension, the Society



## Methodology

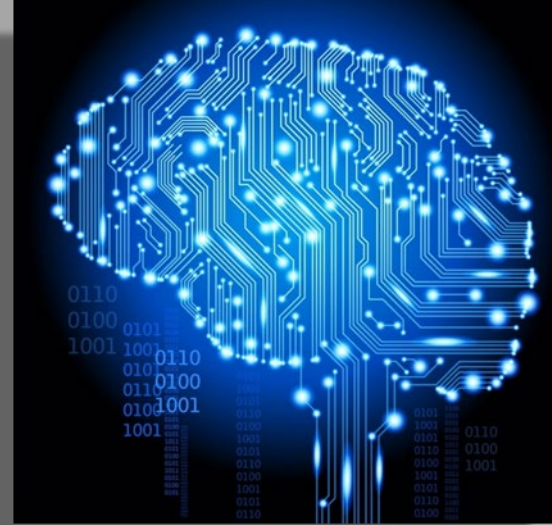
Ethnography (from 2015 to 2021)

**Objective:** To understand the complexities faced by a study group of 1500 Venezuelan Media and Journalism students ages ranging from 17 to 25 years, living under structural violence.

The information collected has served as the base for the design of a comprehensive pedagogical model capable of encouraging individuals to move beyond the restrictions of their prior worldview and to develop awareness, empathy, self-control, and emotional maturity. The subjects studied in this project have been enrolled in over 50 courses.



# Subjective Reframing; Transforming the Learner and, by Extension, the Society



## Methodology

**Data collection:** through interviews, focus groups, photographs, videos, and observations conducted at two different educational institutions in Caracas, Venezuela.

The first institution, Escuela de Cine y TV, is a small technical Film and Media school located downtown the city, with a population of 300 low-income students.

The second institution is the Andres Bello Catholic University with a population of 15000 students, encompassing individuals from all socioeconomic levels in the country. Data has been complemented with an extensive literature review.

In February 2021, 30 students from both institutions were asked voluntarily to write a 3 paragraphs testimonial recounting the impact of the pedagogical methodology on their lives; most of them have already graduated. They gave their consent to use their testimonies for this research.

## **The Embodiment of Violence and its Implications on the Learning Disposition**

**The living conditions of most Venezuelan students do not meet the minimum levels of consumption for basic needs such as food, water, clothing, shelter, sanitation, security, and healthcare.**

According to the Institute for Economic and Social Research (IIES), in its National Survey of Living Conditions (ENCOVI), Venezuela ranks as the poorest country and the second most unequal in Latin America and the Caribbean. The risk of exclusion is considerably higher among the poorest population between 12 and 17 years old, where 27% are in a situation of severe educational backwardness.

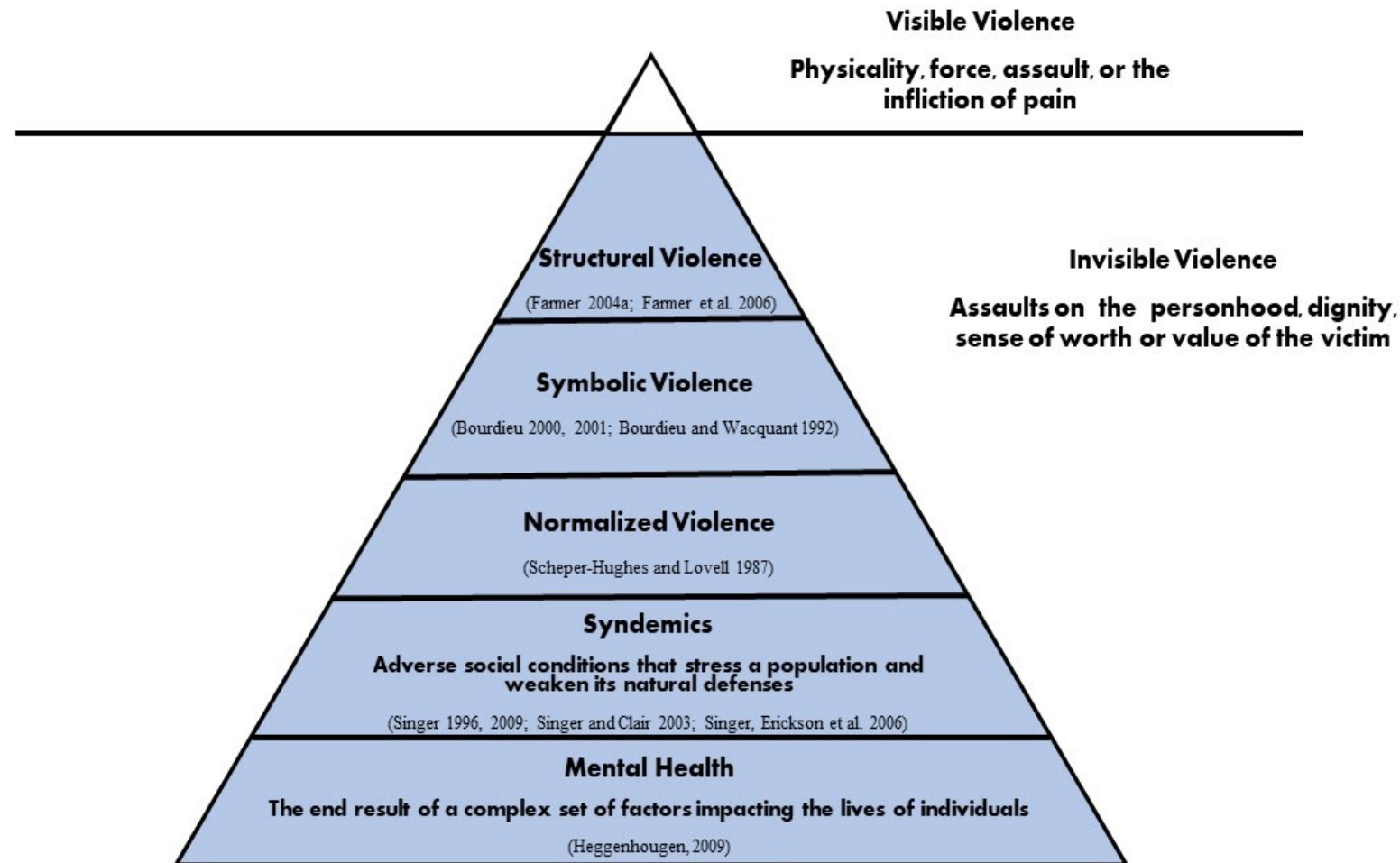
The ENCOVI report points out that of the 7 million 863 thousand individuals between the ages of 3 and 17 who are in the educational system, 40% miss classes "sometimes" due to water service (23%), blackouts (17%), lack food at home (16%), transportation (7%), teachers missing (18%).

Educational coverage has fallen more strongly in the population aged between 18 and 24 years. School attendance among individuals of these ages went from 48% in 2016 to 25% in 2019. Of the group between 18 and 24 years (3 million 136 thousand), about 2 million 282 thousand young people are not educated (ENCOVI 2019-20).

## The Embodiment of Violence and its Implications on the Learning Disposition

“Violence is a slippery concept - nonlinear, productive, destructive, and reproductive. It is mimetic, like imitative magic or homeopathy. Violence gives birth to itself. So we can rightly speak of chains, spirals, and mirrors of violence - or, as we prefer - a continuum of violence” (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004).

# The Social and Cultural Dimensions of Violence



## The Embodiment of Violence and its Implications on the Learning Disposition

“At the university, I overcame many obstacles despite the most serious situations, a destroyed economy manifested in peers without breakfast or lunch, which is difficult to study without having food.

Colleagues who do not have values and harm others, as well as supportive and professional ones.

The situation at the time period in which I studied communications was very complicated and critical, as one of the heaviest moments of repression began in the country. The students decide to go out to the streets to protest, hold marches, to fight for a decent future. Several peers went out to protest and never made it home” (Aguamiel Mendoza, 2021). Student of Documentary in 2017.



## **Subjective Reframing; Transforming the Learner and, by Extension, the Society**



**Encouraging individuals to move beyond the restrictions of their prior worldview and to develop awareness, empathy, self-control, and emotional maturity.**

## **Convergence Culture: where old and new media collide**



- **Convergence culture is a theory that recognizes changing relationships and experiences with new media (Henry Jenkins, 2003).**
- **Participatory culture, collective intelligence, and a converging technological environment.**

Transformative Learning

“Full development of the human potential for transformative learning depends on values such as freedom, equality, tolerance, social justice, civic responsibility, and education” (Taylor & Cranton, 2012).

High impact learning

“Freedom involves not just the will and insight to change but also the power to act to attain one’s purpose” (Mezirow, 1985).

Active learning

Allows the learner to autonomously take control of her/his educational process.

Emancipatory learning

“Reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it” (Freire P., 1970).

## Implementation of a comprehensive system of interrelated pedagogical components with democracy as an overarching conceptual framework

**The model has been executed in Venezuela since 2015**

Four fields of action are integrated into several journalism and communications courses:

1. **High Impact Projects: Transmedia Journalism and Human Rights**
2. **Reframing Reality: Documentary and Visual Anthropology**
3. **Multicultural Collaboration: Collaborative Online International Learning**
4. **The Healing Power of Nature: Ecotourism and Sustainable Living**

The strategy has been focused on the production of high-impact projects that provide solutions for the 17 Sustainable Development Goals from the UN's Agenda 2030.



## Experiential Learning:

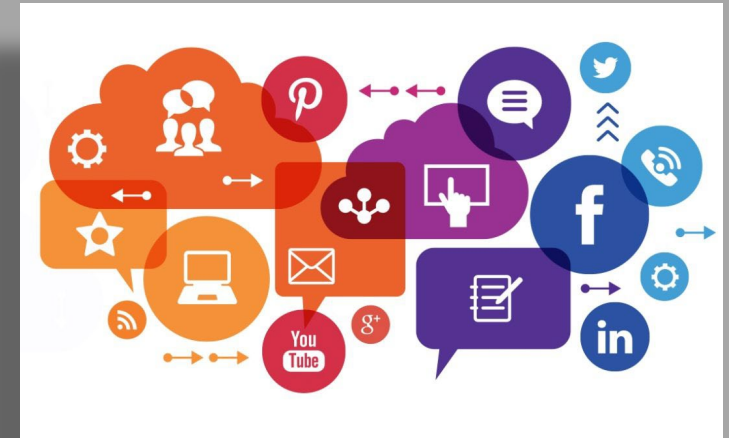
- ❖ The primary goal of the program is to train global citizens and professionals capable of performing adequately in the field of digital journalism through the design and implementation of high-impact projects that encourage critical thinking, professional ethics, collaborative work, and agency.
- ❖ Using a wide range of technologies of communication and information, the students become protagonists and content creators of their own learning.
- ❖ The participant has a leading role to produce written and audiovisual journalistic materials disseminated on social networks and digital media outlets such as blogs, web pages, and audiovisual channels, promoting the gestation of a living, diverse, and emerging cultural community.
- ❖ The students' work on social networks fosters an open educational approach, focused on the free exchange of knowledge and information.





### Program High Impact Project:

- ✓ Design a communication strategy based on an article from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights aiming to solve one or more SDGs.
- ✓ The project will be hosted in a series of digital media outlets and must be disseminated through social networks before the end of the semester.
- ✓ This exercise stimulates situations where discovery, creation of meaning from new knowledge, and cooperative learning are emphasized.



**During the semester, students work in teams to accomplish the assignments in eight stages organized under Bloom's Taxonomy.**



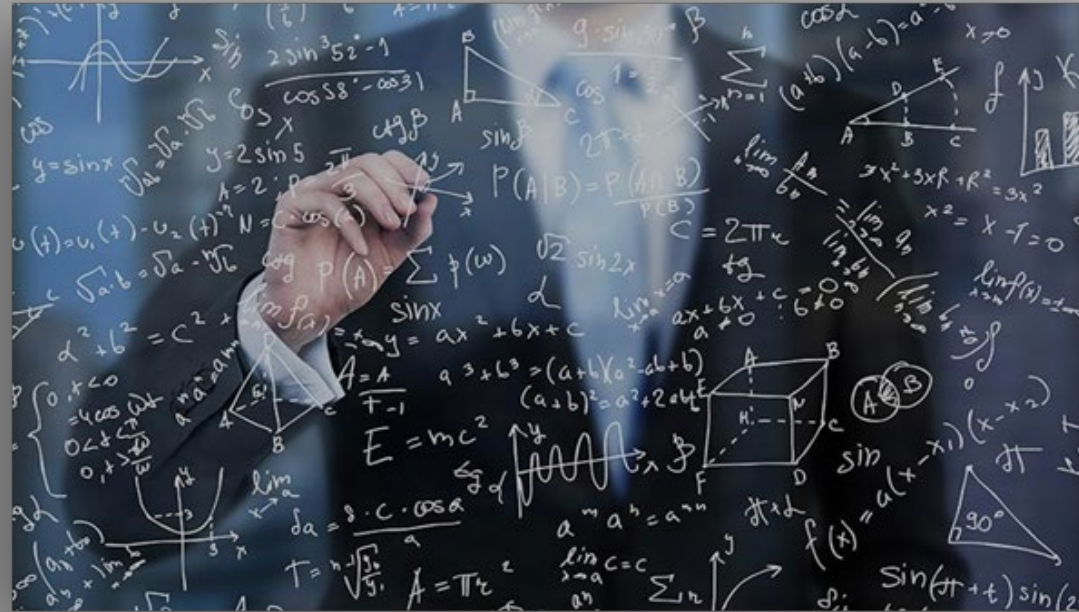
# 1. Remember: learners study and research the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the SDGs from the Agenda 2030



**2. Understand: they study and select specific items from both declarations.**

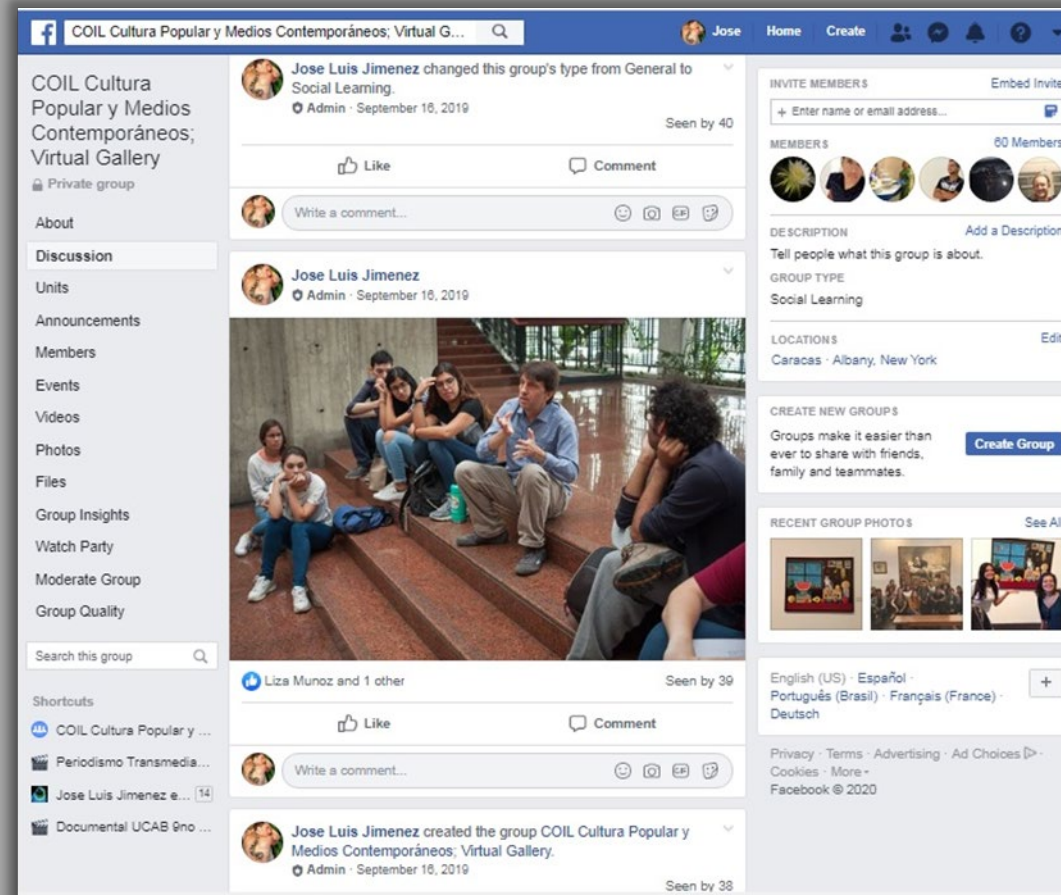


### 3. Apply: they establish objectives and justifications for the development of a communication strategy proposal.





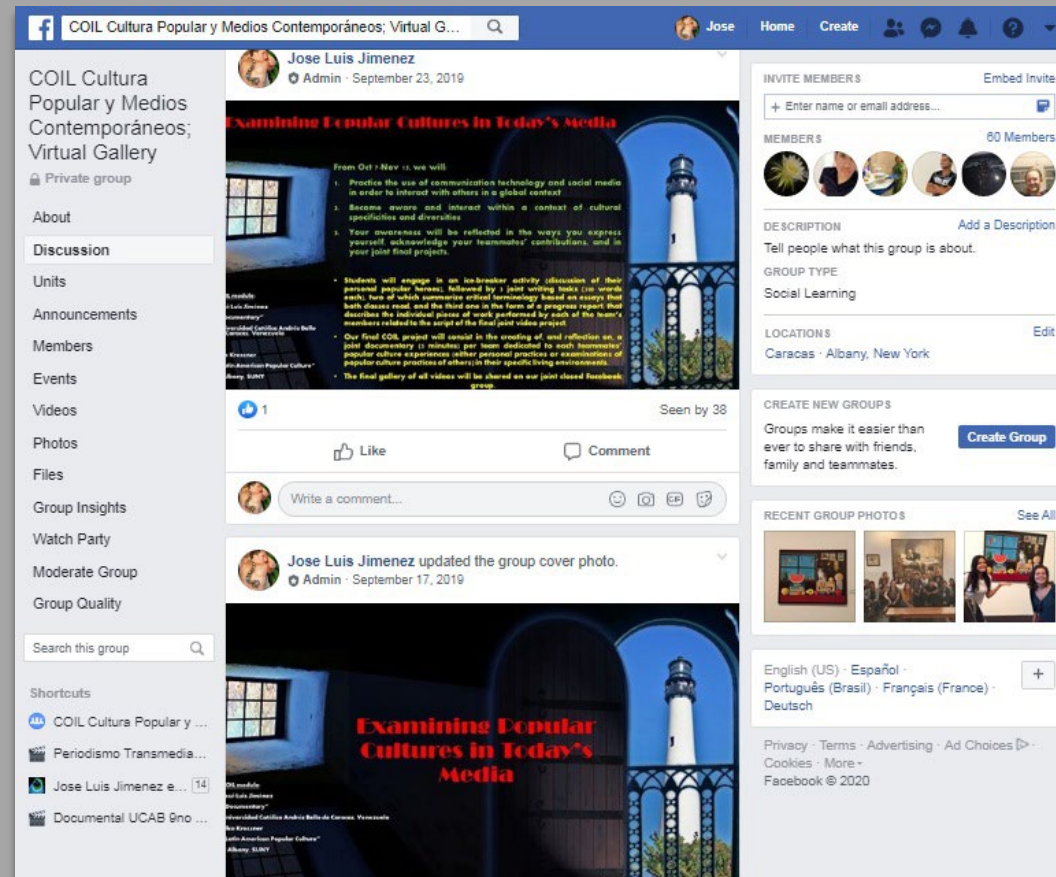
## 4. Analyze: they conduct a face-to-face survey with their potential audience to understand their needs and context.



**5. Evaluate:** they produce an audience report based on the information collected during the surveys to design their strategy.



## 6. Design: they develop a communication strategy to inform and educate the audience.



## 7. Create: they elaborate an infographic about the communication strategy.





**8. Engage:** they produce content and interact with a live audience to promote civic education, citizen agency, and social change.





## Results

**Individuals moved beyond the savior/victim state of mind to a context where they engaged with others in civic responsibilities and self-reflection.**

The trip to the Enchanted Ranch was magical because not only did we learn about ecology, history, and how to have a self-sustaining life, but we also had fun, shared, de-stressed and, at times, we forgot that we were out of the chaos. Full of magic and peace, we let behind the reality that overwhelmed us in our daily lives.

We must do eco-tourism in the spaces where it is still possible to do so; we must make that effort to know our city more, and we must open ourselves to these experiences.

Another reflection that I take away is that sharing with your university classmates outside of the classrooms also creates unforgettable memories and helps us to get involved differently, it is as getting a different view of who sits next to us in the classrooms day by day (Katherine Dalis, 2021). Student of Transmedia Journalism 2019.



## Results

- While developing high-impact projects, students confronted reality critically, and acted upon it; they exercised agency on their new understanding, moving beyond the restrictions of the prior worldview, developing qualities of awareness, empathy, self-control, and emotional maturity.
- In a context of multicultural collaboration, students manifested their pursuit of understanding throughout the process of critical reflection and discourse with their partners abroad. They obtained new knowledge, new experiences and confirmed having overturned previously held assumptions.
- Students were able to track the development of their own awareness, identified new competencies, and acknowledged cognitive challenges from the collaborative experience.
- When interacting with nature, individuals engaged with others through gestures of solidarity, openness, listening, and acceptance. Learners manifested that the natural environment had profound effects on their well-being, including better psychological disposition, and superior cognitive functioning.

