

Elaborations on (a) Decolonising Africa(n)-centred Feminist Psychology

Abstract

In a previous article we sought to clear up some of the conceptual confusion on African psychology whilst simultaneously engaging with what it entails to do a decolonising African psychology. We dealt with questions such as: Is African psychology identical to psychology in Africa? What is the main dispute between Africa(n)-centred psychology and Euroamerican-centric psychology in Africa? Might 'Blackening' psychology decolonise the discipline? And what can be gained from imbricating decolonising perspectives and feminist Africa(n)-centred psychology? In addition to the necessary work aimed at countering coloniality in psychology through thinking the world from Africa and the global South, that article began to invent a certain kind of writing as method – including story-telling, facilitation, dialogues, interruptions and mutual learning. We have since deepened on that method and, in this contribution, while seeking to elaborate on the last question in particular, that is to say, what is to be gained from closely linking and diffracting psychology through a prism of decoloniality, Africa(n)-centredness and feminism, the plan is to enact aspects of a decolonising method.

What we do in this article is to deliberate on the question of what can be gained, and what might be lost, from the diffraction of psychology through an emergent decolonising Africa(n)-centred feminist project. Borrowing the idea from, amongst others, Haraway (2004), we take diffraction as generative of patterns, shape-shifting, and relocation and not reproduction (and yet there is always a necessary loss) (see also Bozalek & Zembylas, 2017). "Diffraction", she says, does not produce 'the same' displaced,

***Kopano Ratele^{1,2},
Nick Malherbe^{1,2},
Josephine Cornell^{1,2},
Sarah Day^{1,2},
Rebecca Helman^{1,2},
Refiloe Makama^{1,2},
Neziswa Titi^{1,2},
Shahnaaz Suffla^{1,2}
& Siphso Dlamini^{1,2}**

¹Institute for Social & Health Sciences, University of South Africa

²South African Medical Research Council-University of South Africa Masculinity and Health Research Unit

*Correspondence:
Kopano Ratele
c/o Masculinity and Health Research Unit,
South African Medical Research Council,
PO Box 19070,
Tygerberg, 7505
kopano.ratele@mrc.ac.za

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as reflection and refraction do. Diffraction is a mapping of interference, not of replication, reflection, or reproduction. A diffraction pattern does not map where differences appear, but rather maps where “the effects of difference appear” (Haraway, 2004: 70). To think diffractively is to consider not only the bends but also heterogeneities, flux and the possibilities for breakdown and reconstitution (Engle & Wong, 2018). Indeed, as Barad (2014: 168) writes, diffraction, whose legacy owes much to feminist theorising, “is not a set pattern, but rather an iterative (re) configuring of patterns of differentiating-entangling”. Deploying the concept of diffraction, alongside employing a certain method of writing and thinking together that itself diffract, we test how psychology might look like, could be, or can be made to do when it is taken through a prism composed of Africa(n)-centredness, decoloniality and feminism. In a previous article (Ratele et al, 2018), we sought to clear up some of the conceptual confusion on African psychology whilst simultaneously engaging with what it entails to do a decolonising African psychology. We dealt with questions such as: Is African psychology identical to psychology in Africa? What is the main dispute between Africa(n)-centred psychology and Euroamerican-centric psychology in Africa? Might ‘Blackening’ psychology decolonise the discipline? And what can be gained from imbricating decolonising perspectives and feminist Africa(n)-centred psychology? In addition to the necessary work aimed at countering coloniality in psychology – that is to say, the persistence of the controlling colonial idea of a static, annihilating, racist difference – through thinking the world from Africa and the Global South, that article began to invent a certain kind of writing as method – including storying, facilitation, dialogues, interruptions and mutual learning. We have since deepened on that method and in this contribution, while seeking to elaborate on the last question in particular – how might diffracting psychology through a prism formed by elements of Africa(n)-centredness, feminism, and decoloniality – the plan is to enact and expand on aspects of method of collaborative writing as inquiry. As in the previous article, each contributor was asked to think of a question of her, his or their own related to the key question underlying the paper and what is to be achieved or what escapes from the diffraction of psychology through decoloniality, Africa(n)-centredness and feminism. In Figure 1, on the following page, we have attempted to creatively represent how psychology, when diffracted through a prism constituted of feminism, decoloniality and Africa(n)-centredness, may become something else, something that may at the very least emerge in reconstituted *patterns*, a new set of other shapes and entanglements that generate yet more possibilities for further diffractions.

From the individual responses, dialogues and collective work we drew out five different but related ideas – or more appropriately, knapsack of paraphernalia that have emerged from the work so far – towards (a) decolonising and decolonial Africa(n)-

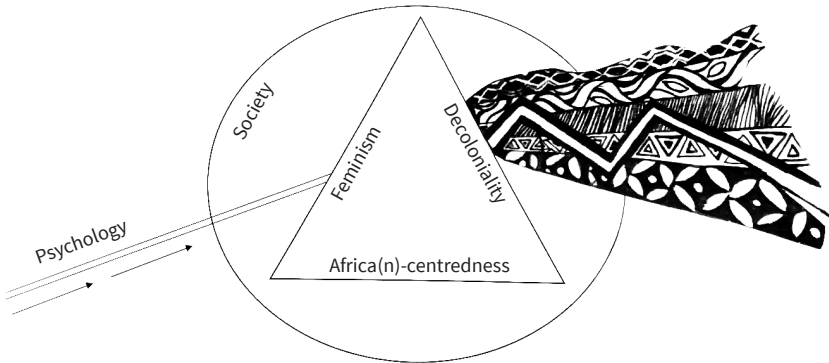


Figure 1. Diffraction of psychology through a prism of decoloniality, Africa(n)-centredness and feminism

centred feminist psychologies: (i) making place in and taking up space where we come to and use knowledge; (ii) accompaniment as antidote; (iii) working with affect to advance collective justice; (iv) radical inclusive praxis; and (v) diffracted reflexivities of justice. These are taken as a dynamic, unbounded, entangled, and non-exhaustive set of ‘provisions’ for the journey of imagination as well as working collectively and individually to bring to life and enact a feminist decolonial Africa(n)-centred psychology. We must however underscore that our nascent work has only begun this conversation, that there are myriad other ways by which we can try to bring about this kind of anti-psychological psychology. Each and all of these modes for thinking and action ought to be continually contested and engaged with, perhaps most suitably through the kind of collaborative writing that we demonstrate in this article.

Methodologically, every question and response was then picked through by the rest of us via discussion and debate with the intention of mutual learning and interference. In this process, having asked the question, the question becomes another’s and the collective’s, not the one who came up with the question. Having offered the first response to a question, the response becomes another’s and ours. This confrontation with knowledge ownership and this way of learning to yield to the sharing of ideas raises the likelihood of disagreement, psychological resistance, and strain while being generative, constitutive and re-creative. The article is then taken through several iterations and corrections before submission to external peer review. This collaborative way of working which we have come to see as a method (see Richardson & Adams St Pierre, 2005) (about which we briefly expand below) is demanding, unsettling, and involves fluctuating authoring labour, and yet can prise open possibilities for writing differently, and indeed for decolonising knowledge production.

On collaborative writing as method of inquiry; or how did we work on this article?

We started thinking more seriously about the idea of collaborative writing as inquiry when we had a workshop whose aims was to write a collaborative book on Africa(n)-centred feminist community psychology early in 2019. Instead of an edited text with chapters written by different authors – of course, there is a space for that kind of book for building decolonising and decolonial /Africa(n)-centred/feminist psychologies – we wanted to write a genuinely co-authored book in which the manuscript would have the imprint of each of the seven collaborators. Among other things, what we have thus far is that the collaborative work will involve the storying of events or experiences whose intention is to bring to life particular ideas; breaking bread together; dialogues on ideas, books, articles, television shows, films, and anything else thought to be of relevance to the central idea of the book; and light exercise in one room. Each of us took time to facilitate periods when we came back to discuss what we had been writing in smaller groups. The aim with these activities is more than merely the production of a book but more significantly mutual learning while we bring into existence something that was not there before, in this case Africa(n)-centred feminist community psychology. We wanted to rewrite power relations as we wrote with each other, and play with how we write and what we produce.

Some of us have the experience of how in our being, education, and work as psychologists or other kinds of professionals we get incubated into of what we might refer to as “a culture of the master of knowledge”. This is to say, believing and perpetuating the idea of the individual as the source of ideas, who historically has tended to be a white colonising male. The celebrated source of colonial knowledge can of course be black, female, queer, disabled, or somebody else other than a person identifiable as a white male. Our incubation in a culture of the master knower generates a certain preciousness about words, concepts and ideas; precisely a colonising attitude to information, knowledge, and understanding. Our method of working is an attempt to readmit our being and our knowledge, what we are and what we understand about the world, as fundamentally relational social effects. We are made by others. The greatest part of what we know about all we know comes from an assemblage of experiences with our families, friends, teachers, students, conversations with others, questions we have asked and have heard been asked and responded to, what we read, and what we see.

We soon came to realise that collaborative writing as we envisage it, and not as is usually done where collaborators might write different sections or edit each other’s work, is very difficult. We also remain suspicious whether mutual learning can emerge from collaborative writing or if the production of the article is really the only or main

outcome for all or the majority of such a group. When we try to write collaboratively and want to challenge hierarchies, there will be plays around power and resistance. When we tell one another stories, especially if those stories involve us as actors, there is vulnerability. One member of a group might be a better storyteller than others. Another will have more facility in English – as the language in which we write – than others. And others still might have more embodied, close-up experiences of the effects of racism, poverty, or sexism – or any experience that is conveyed on paper – than others, even though they may have less fluency to tell a moving story. All of these differences and diverse abilities pose unique as well as familiar problems and may contribute to some or all of us resorting to that with which we are most familiar. Facilitation is therefore a key component of the method. Understanding and reminding each other that people bring with them their histories and status into the writing room is imperative. In our country, these histories and statuses are always transfused with racial and cultural superiorities and inferiorities, which intersect with economic subjugation and aspirations, as well as gender and sexualised unfairness, making for working together across racial, sexual, economic, language, and gender so much harder. We can only tell with the passing of time if anything has changed in each, some or all of us, and whether we have done some work towards subjective decolonisation of our writing and thinking.

Can psychology advance a social justice agenda?

In their 2018 article on decolonial feminist psychology in Africa, Shose Kessi and Floretta Boonzaier ask whether psychology is able to advance a social justice agenda. It is a question with which we want to begin our interrogations on the journey toward Africa(n)-centred decolonial feminist psychologies.

Kessi and Boonzaier (2018) begin by noting that, throughout the discipline's history, many influential strands of psychology have indeed sought to address issues of social justice from a range of political perspectives. The two psychologists conclude that those working in the tradition of critical psychologies have to understand that “[t]he potential for social and political change lies in the possibility of problematising and challenging hegemonic forms of subjectivity” (Kessi & Boonzaier, 2018: 303), as they themselves have sought to do through the development of a space for decolonial, feminist psychology in Africa which challenges the regressive impulses of much contemporary mainstream psychology. From this perspective, subjectivity and differences are always socially situated, relational and in need of ongoing problematisation.

The question by Kessi and Boonzaier is one in which some of us (whose names are on this paper and surely other psychologists and students of psychology) have an unnerving personal and political interest. Yet, while we certainly agree with Kessi and Boonzaier (2018), we wish to emphasise that those looking to advance

decolonial social justice agendas within the institutional and disciplinary confines of psychology face several limitations related to the epistemic location of psychology, its contemporary embodiment, and the tools available to the discipline. In addition to drawing from critical theories and approaches developed outside of psychology, we therefore urge those who would create and support decolonising Africa(n)-centred feminist psychologies, wherever possible to bring their work into formalised and emerging activist politics. This requires of psychologists and students of psychology to engage with intersectional, interdisciplinary, civil society and radically political spaces, as well as to form collaborations and partnerships that will enable the development of a decolonial feminist justice agenda that is inter-sectoral – and indeed extra-sectoral – in its approach. In activating such receptive psychologies that are alive to decolonising, Africa(n)-centred and feminist activist currents, psychologists and students of psychology will be pressed to lean into the political and personal contradictions therein. In other words, instead of attempting to neutralise the various tensions that exist between and within different strands of progressive politics (see Parker, 2007), students of psychology and psychologists should endeavour to use their discipline to draw out the points of connection between decolonial, feminist and Africa(n)-centred struggles, using the values of each to subvert potentially regressive elements and political blind spots. In this way, a psychology which is aware of its limitations does not understand itself as representing a socially just, feminist or decolonial agenda per se, but instead offers itself as a tool for creating radical ethico-political solidarities between seemingly distinct agendas.

Is there a need for psychology, be it decolonised, Africa(n)-centred, or feminist?

Imagining and creating decolonising and decolonial, feminist, Africa(n)-centred psychologies implies taking seriously the question that several radical African scholars, such as the legal theorist Tshepo Madlengozi¹, and commentators have asked: do we need psychology? The question is that if psychology is such a colonial enterprise why would those interested in decolonisation and decoloniality continue to shore up psychology; why try to renovate it, deEuroamericanise it, or decolonise it; why not of simply discard it? The real need, it would seem, is for something radically new beyond psychology, something built-for-purpose.

It is true that although psychology continues to attract large numbers of students in South Africa, the discipline still generates suspicion – rightly so – from critical citizens because it is alienated from, and alienates the home cultures and discounts the structural conditions from which the majority of those students come (Ratele, 2019).

¹ Tshepo Madlengozi, personal communication, August 16, 2019, Nelson Mandela University, Nelson Mandela Bay.

Also, psychology continues to battle with finding its purpose and audiences beyond the small educated elite, which remain mostly white, and its African voice(s). Particularly because of the latter reason, psychology is therefore still not quite at home in African countries such as South Africa in the company of the majority of the population.

What the notion of a discipline out-of-place suggests is that if there is a need for, let us say, a psychology that is decolonised or useful to decolonise the world, the primary charge for those who would continue to see a place for psychology is simple and two-fold. First, the task is to dealienate psychology itself. Second, it is to give psychology African voices as a specific mode of centring Africa in psychology. By African voice(s), we intend psychology written and taught in African languages and African languages as the languages of psychotherapy. The projects of decolonising psychology and of giving psychology African voices are tied to locatedness in African value-worlds as well as African structural conditions (Ratele, 2015). In this light, an undecolonised or neocolonised psychology is a discipline out to displace, alienate, and evacuate some minds of their cultures. Since it is characterised by but refuses to acknowledge the coloniality that inheres in it, psychology therefore remains a discipline that prefers an extractive knowledge economy, such an economy being precisely what coloniality engenders.

Location matters. Location, it should be noted, does not only concern seeing Africa and people in African countries from Africa(n)-centring perspectives, but also looking at the world, at the US, Europe, Latin America or Asia from Africa. Without locating ourselves to see, for example, participants in a study conducted in a town in a country on the African continent, from the perspective of the values they desire to live out and live with, we are inclined towards Othering them and Africa as a whole, coloured by Euroamerican normativity and values. Or when we minimise their struggles for water and health services because we are interested in something else, say memory, exercise, or HIV, we are always likely to impose our views on them and perhaps Africans at large. These inclinations and impositions of others' views over Africa extend to ontologies, epistemologies, methods and theoretical explanations. As such, immersing ourselves in the lived and denied realities, in the norms and beliefs, and in the ideals and policies that govern the societies of the people with whom we work can only enable us as researchers to ask more meaningful questions. As students to have more meaningful engagement with our studies, as therapists to be able to better heal those we wish to give succour to, and as teachers to have more rewarding classes.

Making place and taking up space

Psychology is not practiced in a vacuum; it is always located in time and space. We should therefore always consider the power geometries of psychology (Massey, 2005).

To map out where psychology is done in space across this country and continent, and where we are located in these spaces is to learn something about the meaning and practice of this discipline. That is, we are obliged to examine the spaces and places in which psychology comes to be, as well as what constitutes its disciplinary boundaries.

Psychology is 'done' in universities, in research councils behind security gates, glistening laboratories and fluorescently lit lecture theatres, carpeted conference venues. It is 'done' in air-conditioned publishing offices, suburban private practices, psychiatric hospital wards, crowded waiting rooms, and busy clinics. These 'places of psychology' are the product of socio-historical processes (Lefebvre, 1991). However, in as much as these places of psychology are produced to 'house' it, so too are they productive (Massey, 2005). Psychology's places are active archives of the norms and practices that permeate the discipline. The hegemonic micro- and macro-organisation of the institutional spaces of psychology produce particular embodied subjectivities for those located within those spaces (Dixon & Janks, 2018), those who learn, those who practice, those who teach, and those who are treated and controlled within these spaces (Kessi & Boonzaier, 2018). Yet, while the dominant institutional spaces of psychology produce particular meanings and subjectivities, they are also open to re-imagination and re-creation towards change. As hooks (1990) suggests, the creation of a place of resistance is a process of transgression, a rethinking from both the centre and the margin.

An interesting act of making place and taking up space within the mainstream is the Hub for Decolonial Feminist Psychologies in Africa (Kessi & Boonzaier, 2018). The Hub is a research and teaching space situated in the Department of Psychology at the University of Cape Town that seeks to respond to the challenges of decolonising psychology departments in South Africa. The Hub is constructed to be a symbolic space that challenges the historical and contemporary silences and omissions in psychological research and practice. As a material space itself, the very room of the Hub, converted from an old computer laboratory in a psychology department, is also a place where students and staff members can meet, debate, reflect, write, challenge, question and learn to do Africa(n)-centred feminist decolonising psychology.

Another effort that has attempted to rethink the margins and centres of knowledge making is our own research institute and its units. While the Hub room takes up space inside a university, the location of our own research home is intended to make a place of transdisciplinary psychology on the margins. Although our institute is affiliated with a university, with many established and resourced campuses, our research sites are intentionally situated in neighbouring communities within peri-urban locations that remain largely excluded from the sphere of mainstream psychology. We may at times

be frustrated by the accompanying challenges of location, but the place and work produced here is – for the most part – one of openness. It is a place easily accessed by community members for and with whom our psychology is ‘done’. Our location seeks to shift the bureaucratic and managerial centre of influence. Through this resistant spatial arrangement, we aim to disrupt the cartographies of power and hierarchies of subjectivity that continue to characterise work in psychology. A decolonising Africa(n)-centred feminist psychology is thus tethered to spatiality, involving both the creation of new spaces and the reconfiguration of existing institutional places.

Accompaniment as antidote to invasion

To build a decolonising Africa(n)-centred feminist psychology, we are challenged to move away from viewing the individual as the centre of analysis and locus of knowledge in ways that have usually obscured the social, economic and political contexts in which people live, labour, love, and learn (Kessi, 2016). Fanon (1963/2004) proposes “to walk in the company of man (*sic*), every man, night and day, for all times” (236) as a possible antidote to the cultural invasion (see Freire, 2000) enacted by mainstream psychology. Liberatory applications of psychology offer accompaniment as an antidote to the oppressive work of psychology (Watkins, 2015). To accompany others requires a deviation from the mainstream psychology path to walking with those on the margins, the wounded, violated, displaced, and homeless (Dennis & Moe-Lobeda, 1993). Accompaniment thought of this way samples but moves beyond, the idea of the holding space within the psychotherapeutic dyad (Hordyk, Dulude & Shem, 2015). However, the notion of accompaniment that is being offered here is one that breaks the construct of *the frame* in psychotherapy, the unspoken rules between a therapist and a client. A decolonising Africa(n)-centred feminist psychology will acknowledge that the frame is by its very definition a limitation.

Accompaniment is a *mutual* process – albeit one constantly challenged by structural and interpersonal inequality – of *being with* and *sharing* that occurs until a predetermined task has been completed, as decided by the accompanied and the accompanier. It is a process allows psychologists and psychology students who wish to employ decolonising or decolonial Africa(n)-centred feminist psychologies lens to consider the diffraction of their expertise and knowledge in order to do the work against social injustice and coloniality (Adams, Dobles, Gómez, Kurtiş, & Molina, 2015). Accompaniment is undertaken through critical witnessing, which resists suffering as spectacle, and instead acts as a salve to structures characterised by inequality and oppression that are denied or repressed by broader society (e.g. Sacipa, Vidales, & Galindo, 2007; Watkins, 2015). Fundamental to this mode of accompaniment is the de-individualisation and de-pathologisation of the lived realities of the subaltern. Here, affect, praxis and solidarity coalesce to do the work of social justice (Sacipa, Vidales, &

Galindo, 2007). Accompaniment involves transforming our own subjectivity as well as developing critical consciousness and interpersonal practices that may be employed to foster empathetic political solidarities. For possibilities of social change to emerge, psychology students and psychologists need to engage in the process of social and psychic decolonisation (Watkins, 2015). This requires us to abdicate our positions as ‘experts’ and ‘experts in the making’ to undertake the slow and challenging process of interrogating our positions and how broader structures of violence and domination play out in the psychology and materiality of everyday lives. This work on subjectivity and political consciousness invites psychology students and psychologists to engage in diffracted critical reflexivities that build ethical relations between the accompanied and the accompanier.

Working with affect to advance collective justice

Much psychological research has been concerned with affects. However, as Wetherell (2012) has argued, the predominant trend in this work has been to conceptualise affects as individualised and internalised states. The affective turn in the social sciences has, in many instances, seen a collapsing into a focus on neoliberal subjectivities that forgo community, justice and social accountability for an intensively individualised mode of self-interest (Teo, 2018). Psychology, like many other disciplines, oftentimes reproduces a binary between thinking and feeling, through which emotions or affects are positioned as the opposite of rational and scientific knowledge. For example, Law (2016) has articulated the ways in which psychologists have been disciplined either not to feel or not to report on their own feelings. Yet, “affect is social” (Canham, 2018: 325) and is always tied in with the political, the cultural, the ethical, and the everyday (Bakko & Merz, 2015). The failure to engage with our own feelings of powerlessness, (in)vulnerability, discomfort and privilege is deeply political and can re-inscribe injustice and inequality. To engage in work that is geared towards collective justice, it is necessary to reflect on feminist and decolonial articulations of affect.

A focus on affect features centrally in both feminist and decolonial analyses, including in relation to both the psychical and embodied effects of coloniality, slavery and patriarchy (Canham, 2017, 2018; Pedwell & Whitehead, 2012). Rather than conceptualising affects as individual psychological dispositions, Ahmed (2004) argues that they exist as mediations between the psychic and the social, and between the collective and the individual. Affectively disruptive subjects who “refuse to let go of suffering, who are even prepared to kill some forms of social joy”, make visible the restrictions and violences of the contemporary context, as well as present alternative imaginings of equality and justice (Ahmed, 2004: 50). In a similar tenor, Canham (2017, 2018) recognises the centrality of affect – when theorised within the systemic-

subjective nexus – in decolonial praxis. A focus on affective disruptions and affective agency, as social and political phenomena, is therefore an important starting point for building feminist decolonising Africa(n)-centred psychologies, particularly in relation to structural inequalities of coloniality, capitalist exploitation, and patriarchy. A critical engagement with affect includes harnessing the affective formations of the collective towards agentic and critical ends, as well as reflecting on our own affective responses, in our respective contexts, and as a constituent of ethico-political work. We are called on to pay specific attention to the ways in which some affects serve to preserve the unjust status quo and how conscious, disruptive collective affects can give rise to action against oppression (Teo, 2018).

Radical inclusive praxis

Grace Musila (2017) contends that the gaze is the product of being trained in Euroamericanised epistemological traditions. For us, here, the gaze is primarily the colonial patriarchal figure behind the one-way mirror, the unsocialised master observer, author, teacher, therapist and subject of psychology. In addition to including some and excluding others, the colonial patriarchal gaze functions to interpret and order what comes into its purview, such as it does when it racialises the world so as to rule it. The gaze functions to objectify, as in instances when it sexualises women's bodies for the master's enjoyment. The gaze criminalises, as when the poor are signified as delinquent. The colonial patriarchal gaze owns, subordinates to the master, pathologises, infantilises and, ultimately, to command the Othered. Colonial exclusion is thus always an Othering process intended to order the world. Yet, this world-ordering is not one of separate-but-equal differences. To the contrary, colonial exclusion is about social, political, economic and epistemic hierarchies and ownership. Racist and anti-poor exclusion, for instance, being a constitutive element of colonial psychology, is one of the difficulties facing those of us who seek to decolonise the discipline. The tragedy is that the colonised subject may then internalise the colonial patriarchal gaze, reproducing its harm against herself and her people. The internalised gaze, as Fanon (1967/2008) puts it, meaning the introjection of the master, can be as powerful a mechanism for perpetuating exclusion as the coloniser's gaze.

To imagine into existence Africa(n)-centred decolonising feminist psychology is to aim to move towards unsettling the colonial patriarchal gaze in all its dimensions through forms of looking back, making new worlds, speaking back, and changing the agenda – founded on oppositional consciousness and action – that privilege marginalised knowledges and subjectivities. Making other worlds, as a decolonial attitude (see Maldonado-Torres, 2017), implies (re)crafting and retrieving psycho-political praxes and imaginaries that bring into focus alternative ways of approaching otherness. This liberatory lens is able to make way for a radical praxis of inclusion located at the

intersections of humanisation, justice and an ethic of plurality. To radically include foregrounds and influences how a feminist decolonising Africa(n)-centred psychology could be done, by whom, for whom, where, and for what purpose. Critically, radically inclusive praxes are directed at the fracturing of the epistemic project of psychology (see Huniche & Sørensen, 2019) that is self-limiting and endorsing of regressive disciplinary vestiges. Fracturing of this kind entails “critical border thinking” (Mignolo 2000) – producing disruptive knowledge and relations from within, but also new relations and practices in relation to the dominant structures of coloniality – so that we begin to both identify and cause “cracks” in the patriarchal colonial gaze.

Diffractioned reflexivities of justice

Our diffracted engagement invites us to (re)situate ourselves, to (re)consider our positions, and to (re)know. This diffraction, as “a narrative, graphic, psychological, spiritual and political technology for making consequential meanings” (Haraway, 2000: 102), has offered us compelling and instructive spaces from which we attempt to diffractively interact with ourselves and one another, our ideological and theoretical frameworks, practices and methodologies, as well as our oppositional (see Sandoval, 2000) efforts in imagining and crafting at-home psychologies. These encounters inevitably italicise the dialectic of inclusions and exclusions in psychology in South Africa, as elsewhere on the continent; the crossing points of health, inequality, oppression, materiality and marginalisation; the reproductions of racialised and gendered hierarchies within and by the discipline; the politics and ethics of knowledge-making and practice; as well as the structures, pedagogies and traditions in service of hegemonic and complicit psychologies. If such interactions are indeed legitimate moments towards more emancipatory consciousness, epistemes and applications in psychology – as opposed to mere confessions of privilege – how might we harness reflexivity, indeed diffract reflexivity to do the work of liberatory praxis where Africa is the locus of history, perspective and experience? After all, in the face of psychology’s intransigence and its self-legitimising claims, the risk remains that critical attitudes towards reflexivity may themselves be transmuted, co-opted or subverted into re-centring and re-inscribing the very forms of authority and privilege that we seek to counter here.

As a heuristic, we suggest that diffracted reflexivities of justice, as an engaged site from which to reorganise knowledge forms and praxes, contribute to the conditions of possibility for decolonising Africa(n)-centred feminist psychologies. Here, thinking critically and acting critically are mutually constitutive and, braced by forms of politicised and embodied consciousness and affects, arch towards the systematic uncapture and (re)makings of Africa’s psychologies. Axiomatically, this assumes an *accounting for* – what we teach, practice, research and write; who does this; how we

do this; and for what purpose. It also obliges a plural and relational knowledge politics that detracts from the individualised will to power to honour different referents and ways of knowing and doing. Yet, we remain alert to totalising notions of justice, and recognise that justice – in its social, gender, epistemic, representational, material and other iterations – is socially, historically, culturally and relationally constituted (see Teo, Gao, & Sheivari, 2014). Besides, the constraints of coloniality on Africa's decolonial aspirations (see Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2014) loom large. At the least then, diffracted critical reflexivities of justice comprehend the irreducibility of the onto-epistemological, ethical and substantive organising principles of the psychologies that we contest, and the psychologies that we pursue in Africa. We observe critical reflexivities of justice as situated within, and traversing between, enactments of resistance, transformation and solidarity. Simultaneously, they are not exempt from the messiness that accompanies critique and attempts at destabilising the master schemata that authorise the psychology in which we have been disciplined.

If psychology is to address meaningfully the imperatives for feminist, Africa(n)-centred, decolonising psychologies we must certainly demur to the singular focus on the micropolitics of affect, identity, relationality and inquiry, as manifest in and through dominant psychology. Instead, we have to ask a new or different set of meta-reflexive questions that exceed the current theoretical and practice boundaries of reflexivity, and be willing to perform the requisite intellectual, relational and emotional labour. Though not a panacea, our own experiences suggest that diffracted critical reflexivities of justice may do well towards the project of decolonising psychology, critically centring Africa in it, and radically gendering it.

What are the drawbacks to granting psychology a place in decolonial, Africa(n)-centred and feminist projects?

The final question we asked ourselves is whether there are drawbacks to granting psychology a place in decolonial, Africa(n)-centred and feminist projects and what are they? Dealienating psychology, as well as situating within it African voice so as to privilege a kind of locatedness, does not mean that psychology is let off the hook. We are to remain aware of the discipline's regressive political impulses that have, for so many years, characterised its practice (Kessi & Boonzaier, 2018). Indeed, psychology continues to make ruinous capitalism, racism, sexism and other unjust systems appear innocent or sophisticated, while repeatedly rendering oppression a product of negative thinking and individual failure, and activism a symptom of envy and resentment (Parker, 2007). In our attempt to forge psychology anew by bringing it into contact with decoloniality, Africa(n)-centredness and feminism, we must therefore remain cognisant of the fact that although politics is certainly psychological, it is never just psychology.

While we risk neutering radical politics with the introduction of psychology, this is by no means an inevitable outcome. If psychology is rejected as the start and end points of decolonial, Africa(n)-centred and feminist projects, we can begin to envision its place within such emancipatory processes. For instance, when therapists, university teachers, and students of psychology work from Africa(n)-centring radical feminist *politics*, rather than a set of disciplinary assumptions and orthodoxies, they are able to stretch the capabilities of their discipline. Similarly, in refusing the misguided assumption that psychology can form the nucleus of decoloniality, psychologists are able to draw on psychology to assist with the fatigue and psychological distress experienced by those engaged in decolonial projects. Finally, if psychologists explicitly prioritise Africa(n)-centredness over an implicit Euro-American-centredness within their discipline, they are able to sensitise psychological work to a variety of mental health practices that may not understand themselves as psychology, and may in fact openly reject this label. If embracing the way that psychology bends and contorts under the emancipatory requirements of feminism, decoloniality and Africa(n)-centredness gives rise to something that looks very little like psychology as we know it, then so be it.

If we are to reject psychology as an oppressive ideological apparatus, politically progressive activity needs to guide psychology, rather than the other way around. This task requires reflexive engagement from psychologists and with psychology so that both are decentred within efforts towards social, systemic, epistemic and material justice (see Teo 2018). There is, however, an unavoidable paradox here, which sees us trying to move away from psychology in an effort to building something that still conceives of itself, to a large degree, as psychology. Indeed, if psychology is neither the start nor the end point of Africa(n)-centredness, decoloniality and feminism, the task of locating the discipline between and within these political currents is fraught with uncertainty, which is rarely embraced by the ‘expert’ psychologist. Yet, it is in this liminal space that psychologists must learn to use their discipline to further decolonial, Africa(n)-centred and feminist agendas without predetermining what these agendas, or even what psychologies themselves, look or feel like. In this regard, we begin to address many of the politically regressive drawbacks of psychology by hailing it as subservient to the liberatory demands of the moment.

Conclusion

Rather than offering conclusive remarks, reflections of the process of collaborative writing may be in order. What we sought to do in this article is a sort of show-and-tell wherein we offer questions, elaborations and knapsack of supplies on what we imagine a decolonising Africa(n)-centred feminist psychology might look like, do, and enable. neighbouring communities within peri-urban locations. We wanted to show, that is,

how we have used the space (physical, theoretical and conceptual) created through collaborative writing to demonstrate Africa(n)-centred feminist decolonial praxis.

The article sought to deliberate on the question of what can be gained, and what might be lost, from the diffraction of psychology through a prism of decoloniality, Africa(n)-centredness and feminism. An effect of the diffraction, we offered paraphernalia for doing and enabling feminist, Africa(n)-centred and decolonial projects for psychologists and students of psychology, namely: (i) space (ii) accompaniment, (iii) affect, (iv) inclusive practice, and (v) diffracted reflexivities of justice. We offer these as a shape-shifting and entangled materials with the help of which we can imagine and enact an Africa(n)-centred feminist decolonial psychology.

Given the inherent power dynamics present in collaborative work, we were – we are – apprehensive about the possibilities of mutual learning from writing together in the manner we do here because, while “collaborative writing has the potential to disrupt, challenge, and open possibilities both in the academy and the wider world” (Wyatt & Gale, 2014, p.295), it can be disconcerting for the collaborators. As mentioned earlier, each author led on different components of the article, meaning that the article was taken through several iterations, before we arrived at this point. Collaborative writing positions the individual in the precarious position of being simultaneously an insider and an outsider, constantly moving between the individual voice and a partial/collective voice. This is to say, through collaborative writing, the individual occupies the position of insider with respect to the collective contribution, and yet is an outsider when engaging with the other individual’s contributions. In turn, collaborative writing offers the individual’s work to the others’, the collective’s, assessment, interference, consumption, and critical eyes. As Speedy says, “collaborative writing opens up these multiplicities for the scrutiny of all writers and readers whose work is engaged with the opening of imaginative and other spaces between lives” (2012: 353-354).

The article has to be read as the result of our collective effort which seeks to disrupt the idea of “isolationist and exclusionary ways of knowing that exclude marginalized peoples from occupying the academy as knowledge makers” (Wyatt & Gale, 2014: 295). We feel that the effort and process of collaborative writing lends itself to decolonial, Africa(n)-centred and feminist agendas by making explicit, at a micro level, the politics and idiosyncratic elements of knowledge production – including social and personal differences, power dynamics, contours of intellectual debate, positions, and experience. While we hope that our work instigates critical engagement, we offer it with a degree of trepidation and anxiety, both amongst and for ourselves as well as in relation to a wider readership.

While we are interested in the diffractions of psychology through a decolonising, Africa(n)-centred and feminist prism, the process of collaborative writing in and of itself opened up numerous other diffractions (related to, for example, voice, ideas and knowledges) which, if left unexamined, can also reproduce exclusionary and/or domineering ways of knowing and modes of knowledge creation. For this reason, we reflect here on how this process of writing with one another allowed us to engage with the very notions we have conceptualised in this article, that is, space, accompaniment, affect, inclusive practice and diffracted reflexive justice.

We are at the beginning of working this way, of using diffracting conversations and productive interference towards liberatory psychologies. There are of course a myriad other ways by which students, teachers and therapists can try to bring about this kind of anti-psychological, diffracted psychology. The tools for imagining something new and emancipatory that we have offered must not be taken as truths but have to be continually contested, engaged with, expanded, perhaps most suitably through the kind of collaborative writing that we demonstrate in this article.

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