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Abstract

This paper presents some reflections on the process of creating research, from the point of view of a psychologist working in an academic environment in a developing country which is undergoing social transformation. It explores some tensions between global and local concerns in research, and reflects on the relation between research, art, narration, and the person of the researcher. The ideas presented are based on the personal reflections of the author after developing a methodology for a qualitative research project. The aim is to open up areas of inquiry into the process of constructing research, rather than providing final answers, thus honouring the postmodern assumptions that are tentatively put forward as vehicle of innovation in research in a global psychology.

Reflections on the Local and the Global in Psychology: Innovation, Liberation and Testimonio*

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This paper presents some reflections on the process of creating research, from the point of view of a psychologist working in an academic environment in a developing country which is undergoing social transformation. It explores some tensions between global and local concerns in research, and reflects on the relation between research, art, narration, and the person of the researcher. The ideas presented are based on the personal reflections of the author after developing a methodology for a qualitative research project. The aim is to open up areas of inquiry into the process of constructing research, rather than providing final answers, thus honouring the postmodern assumptions that are tentatively put forward as vehicle of innovation in research in a global psychology. Key Words: Local, Global, Psychology, Testimonio, and Postmodern

Between the Local and the Global: Innovation, Liberation and Testimonio

"The challenges of today's world require a 'new' psychology... We need to be aware of the risks of a global 'monocultural' psychology" (Marsella, 2007, p. 5).

Working as a psychologist in an academic environment in a developing country which is currently in the midst of social and political transformation, confronts one with many ambiguities and tensions in terms of local and global issues in psychology. Having lived almost my whole life in Pretoria, South Africa, and being a white middle class woman, necessarily impacts on the way I view psychology and research. Having also spent the last 18 years working on a university campus in Mamelodi, a township[1] to the east of Pretoria, further impacted on these views. Lecturing psychology, doing research, and training counsellors and professional psychologists in this context brings an awareness of the limitations of mainstream approaches in the field and a sensitivity to social justice issues. It forces one to become aware of the differences between social worlds that have been historically, politically, geographically, economically and culturally separated. It highlights issues of in-betweenity, marginalisation, culture, and difference. This paper presents some of these tensions and reflects on possible ways of developing a truly global psychology that is inclusive of the knowledge at its margins and may be revitalised thereby. It explores how processes of qualitative inquiry could serve as avenues towards the development of such a psychology.

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[1] Designated areas of settlement close to towns and cities where non-white people had to live during apartheid.

The ideas presented are based on personal reflections after developing a methodology for a qualitative research project. The aim of the project was to conserve and document the local knowledge developed in a psychology department, in response to experiences of marginalisation of staff after being incorporated into other institutions. This situation offered a challenge of responding appropriately to a complex situation through developing a qualitative method to address the research problem. Social constructionism, narrative psychology and postcolonial theory informed the premises of the study. These epistemological lenses position the person and socio-political location of the researcher at the centre of the research endeavour. Issues of power/knowledge, voice and marginalisation prompted the researcher to investigate ideas around research as activism and vehicle for liberation, resulting inter alia in the use of a testimonio to document the research findings.

Between the Local and the Global – Situating the Researcher

It was with hesitation that I wrote the first paragraph above. Many years of training in psychology has taught me not to draw attention to the person of the researcher in a discussion of research, especially not in a first paragraph! First-person writing belongs to literature and art, or, at most, to the subjects of qualitative psychological research studies, to be analysed afterwards by an invisible researcher. I have come to question these assumptions and I am emboldened in this by Ian Parker (2002) who proclaimed: "The first rule to break is, "don't talk about yourself" (p. 2). He states this within the context of calling for a critical psychology. A global psychology may have to be a critical (Parker, 2002, 2005; Walkerdine, 2002) as well as a postmodern (Kvale, 1992) psychology, as it puts psychology and psychologists at the centre of our reflections, which are done from a theoretical platform which includes the main actor doing the reflection. Therefore I will be explicit in including myself in this exploration and theoretical reflections on research in a global psychology.

Working in an African context has taught me about the interface between western and third world perspectives in psychology (Eskell-Blokland, 2005). I learnt how clients bring an ecosystem of meaning with them, a network of understandings and contextual situatedness. I learnt how the therapist is also contextually situated, and how two people, when meeting in a therapeutic relationship, create a new system which connects two worlds of understanding. I take this learning to research, drawing from ecosystemic (Keeney, 1979), social constructionist (Freedman & Combs, 1996), postmodern (Kvale, 1992), and narrative psychology (Howard, 1991; White & Epston, 1990) perspectives. This has led me to explore family therapy in African contexts (Bakker & Snyders, 1999), Frantz Fanon's colonial psychology (Bakker, 1993), the practice of psychology in African contexts (Bakker, 1999; Bakker & Mokwena, 1999), local relevance of psychology, and so forth. The central question in this work was how to negotiate the interface between different contexts while advancing social justice (Aldorondo, 2007). I travel between middle class suburbs and township every day and this is not a journey that is innocent. I travel between places that are not only different culturally, but different in terms of political and socio-economic power and privilege.

The circumstances of my life and work have led me to investigate the interface between psychology and Africa from a Foucauldian perspective (Foucault, 1970, 1973,

1977, 1980). From this perspective, one has to consider how psychology as "technology of modern power" (Foucault, 1980, p. 238) has played itself out in (or, often, been rejected by), the various strata of knowledge (Foucault, 1970) embedded in African contexts. Power cannot be ignored when looking at the history of psychology in Africa or any other "third world" or previously colonised country. For knowledge, in a postmodern world, is not innocent any more, nor was it ever innocent before. The psychology that we teach our students, the research we impose on our "subjects", the therapeutic techniques we apply in our practices, we ourselves, are wielding power and constituting identities and practices. Psychology has played a role not only in literally enslaving peoples and other colonial and oppressive practices (Fanon, 1967a, 1967b), but carries the power to seduce us into enslaving ourselves, sometimes pleasurably, sometimes painfully so (Foucault, 1977).

A Critical, Postmodern, Global Psychology?

This postmodern awareness of power/knowledge may be part of why people get together these days to talk of a global psychology. The margins are talking back at the centre (Spivak, 1990), and including "cross-cultural" psychology in conference proceedings and textbooks is not enough to deal with those voices from the margins any more. Psychology has a definite hegemonic centre (Eskell-Blokland, 2005), situated mostly in North America and Europe, and it has been carrying gender, class, political, ideological and cultural agendas into the world from this centre. How does it do this? And what response does it receive back? People who study the processes of colonisation may offer useful ways of thinking about this process.

If we consider for example African people's perceptions of, resistance against and appropriation of modern western secular knowledge during colonisation, we find an attraction-repellent ambivalence. In the words of the Senegalese poet and statesman, Leopold Senghor (July, 1968): "It not only destroyed, it built; it not only killed, it cured and educated; it gave birth to a new world" (p. 18). Just as technologies of power, such as psychology, vary between overt control and implicit persuasion, modes of resistance extend over a wide spectrum. The responses of the colonised mostly "hover in the space between the tacit and the articulate, the direct and the indirect" (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1991, p. 31). The colonised reconstrue themselves while transforming the coloniser:

> Even as they are consumed by the European capitalist system – consumed, ironically, as they consume its goods and texts – these "natives" of other worlds often seek to seize its symbols, to question their authority and integrity, and to reconstruct them in their own image. Sometimes they do so in open defiance; sometimes through strikingly imaginative acts of cultural subversion and re-presentation; sometimes in silent, sullen resistance. (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1991, p. xii)

These processes may be similar to what happens when psychology is brought to cultural contexts where it has previously been unknown.

One has to mind the "three Fs": Fanon (1967a), Freire (1970) and Foucault (1980), when facing a classroom of students on a campus adjacent to an informal

settlement of shack housing. I often teach from a glossy textbook written for American college students, where the "centre" is very much the USA, and Africa is very much "cross cultural" (relegated to the status of "Other"), if mentioned at all. This book, with its calm but sometimes appropriately humorous, well organised, rational, centred voice speaks to us seductively (Bakker, Eskell-Blokland, & Ruane, 2007). We go home and conceptualise ourselves as part of this world, with its fast food, consumer culture, individualism, competition – we aspire, we want to buy into it as we buy the book, the education,… the global? As we imbibe psychology, we work at improving, finding, rediscovering, enlightening our individual "selves", recently severed from its communal, cultural, family roots. We learn to "work at" relationships, "learn to communicate", for we can always improve ourselves (Foucault). The social, economic and political context fades to the background.

Figure 1. *Minding the three F's.*

 Bakker, T. M. (2007)

A global world is a world of western hegemony and fierce inequality (Foster, 2005). The local and the global are not discrete entities but shifting localities, a "runaway world" of new uncertainties (Giddens, in Foster, 2005, p. 2). A global world invites shifting identities and discursive kaleidoscopes. If we step back to view and situate modern knowledge and its postmodern mutations in a global context through the lenses of postcolonial theory, we need to explore and deconstruct the process of othering that constitutes this culture and its forms of discipline (Spivak, 1990). We now have the task of connecting with forms of culture which challenge rather than confirm "psychology's strange model of the world as built up out of self-contained individuals" (Parker, 2002, p.

16). This task confronts the researcher with a number of binaries (some of which will be touched on in the rest of this paper) and invite us to bridge them:

Binaries in Research

Marginal – mainstream
Indigenous - universal
Social process – technical procedure
Questions – answers
Stories – facts
Narratives – statistics
Conservation – development/improvement
Local relevance – international stature
Common knowledge – expert knowledge
Disadvantaged – advantaged
Context – problem
Description of ecology – analysis of elements
Value-driven – resource-driven
Access / inclusion – elitism / exclusion
Art – science
Presentation – representation
Community – hierarchy
Search – re-search
Therapy / community / research integrated – therapy / community / research separated
For the underprivileged – for the privileged

Binaries Confronting the Researcher

Personally involved – officially distant
Subjective – objective
Insider testimony – outsider description
Interlocutor – interviewer
Scribe – expert analyst
Ordinary people – experts
Conversations – interviews
Activism – conformity
Other – insider
Research with – research on
Resistance – colonisation
Speaking out – speaking for
Writing ourselves – being described and inscribed
Participation – passive subjectification
Writing ourselves – writing about Others
Making the familiar strange – making the strange familiar

Research as Resistance

The world remains a playing field of power/knowledge fields (Foucault, 1980) with small local centres of resistance against powerful dominant knowledge, including western psychology. Dominant knowledge, including psychology, are attractive and seductive, but with an underbelly of oppression. As psychologists, including researchers, we are the agents of its power. Its underbelly hurts those most who are far from the centre; for Foucault (1973, 1977), the mad, the sexually deviant, the incarcerated; for psychology, the marginal places, the out-of the way people; for universities, the poor (Foster, 2005) and the powerless. Research tends to bypass,

> small-scale organisations, minorities, and other powerless or poor people who are looking for solutions to everyday problems in particular contexts.... These social groups, belonging to the middle and low end of society's power spectrum, are poorly connected to universities and rarely influence university research agendas. (Greenwood & Levin, 2000, p. 90)

A critical, global psychology that is inclusive of those who are distantly connected to its centers of power, has to be subversive of a quest for a unitary body of knowledge (Hook, Bowman, Smith, & Terre Blanche, 1999). It has to avoid supra-theorizations by basing criticism in specific, local and micro-contexts. This enables the production of non-centralised, "dispersed and discontinuous offensives" (Foucault, 1980, p. 81) whose validity "is not dependent on the approval of established regimes of thought" (p. 81).

Each society has its "regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth, that is, the types of discourses which it accepts and makes function as true" (Foucault, 1980, p. 131). The knowledge producing these discourses assume ascendancy over others and alternative knowledge become disqualified. Foucault refers to these knowledge as subjugated knowledge. They include local as well as erudite knowledge that have been superceded by the truth claims of the dominant knowledge. "In our society, 'truth' is centred on the form of scientific discourse and the institutions that produce it; it is subject to constant economic and political incitement" (Foucault, p. 131). Subjugated knowledge can be recovered and insurrected, however, and this is how research becomes resistant and how criticism does its work.

What happens when psychology is re-articulated in a union between local, subjugated knowledge and dominant knowledge? When it is exported to new corners of the world, the response is very similar to what happened during colonization:

> When re-articulated by the native, the colonialist desire for a reformed, recognizable, nearly-similar other, is enacted as parody, a dramatization… For in the "hybrid moment" what the native re-writes is not a copy of the colonialist original, but a qualitatively different thing-in-itself, where mis-readings and incongruities expose the uncertainties and ambivalences of the colonialist text and deny it an authorizing presence. (Parry, 1987, pp. 41-42)

Figure 2. *Local re-appropriation of the knowledge of the colonizer.*
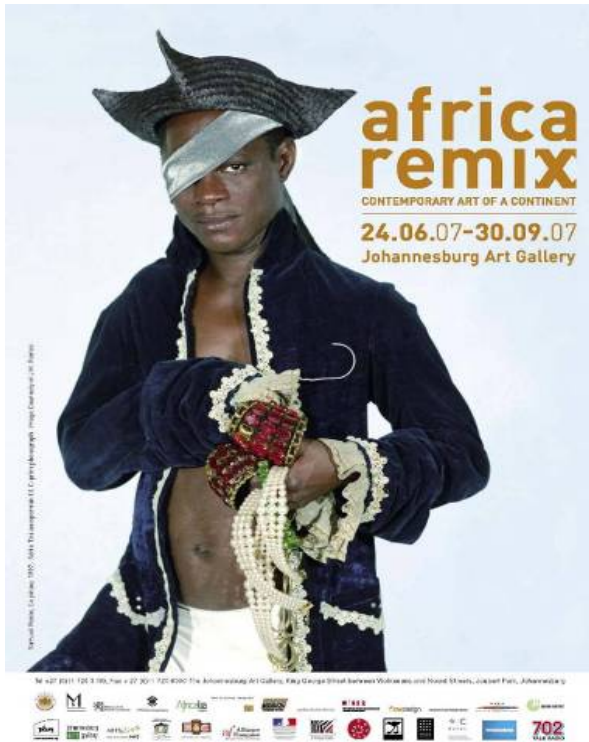
Samuel Fosso: 'The chief, the one who sold Africa to the colonisers'. 1997. Photograph from official invitation to Africa Remix Exhibition, Johannesburg, 24 June 2007.

A global psychology needs to recover and insurrect the subjugated knowledges situated at its margins. Foucault (1980) insists that liberty is found in practice, that resistance is only possible at a local level and constituted through action appropriate to a specific context. Dissent derives from knowledge of the intricate manner in which the power of a specific context operates; a knowledge that only a participant can have (Foucault). The researcher-participant can work to open a space for dissenting voices to be heard, rather than speaking for others.

A Local Research Study in a Global World

In 2003, I initiated a small, very local research study. The research is documented elsewhere (Bakker, 2007). For the purposes of this paper, I will focus primarily on the story of the research – the process.

Up to the beginning of 2004, I was part of a psychology department situated in eight campuses in settings similar to ours in townships across South Africa. We had just developed a new, more locally relevant curriculum designed to cater better for our students, most of whom were English second-and third-language speakers from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds. We were training registered counsellors to work in surrounding communities. Our trainees were staffing a clinic and community outreach programme on the campus. We were excited about the way we were developing psychology to fit with the local cultural and socio-economic context. Our work was

guided by values such as local relevance, respect for indigenous knowledge and knowledge application in local, historically and economically disadvantaged township contexts. The training carried an explicit social justice agenda (Bakker, 2005). We were working and writing from the margins of psychology towards the centre2.

It was at this time that the then Minister of Education announced plans for the restructuring of the higher education landscape in our new democracy. Our historically black university was to be divided up between different historically advantaged (previously white) universities (HWUs), each campus becoming part of a different university.

Figure 3. *A local research study in a global world.*

Terri Bakker, June 2005   Willem Louw, June 2005

The research "problem" evolved out of my initial experiences during the incorporation process. It soon became apparent that we were entering not only a different organisational culture, based on different values, but that the work we had built up was in danger of disappearing. Our previous values were silenced in the incorporation process, to be replaced by an emphasis on international competitiveness. Through the incorporation our local knowledge became subjugated to the dominant knowledge of the receiving institution. What had been planned as an effort to a more equal educational landscape, threatened to extinguish valuable work that had been done not only in our department but in our university as a whole, to the benefit of students who did not have access to the more distinguished previously "white" universities. Efforts to "improve" education appeared to close the door on education for the disadvantaged as well as on locally appropriate community and therapeutic services and research that had been developed in a context of scarcity and lack of resources and dealt with issues that were pertinent to the daily lives of people in the townships.

I soon discovered during informal conversations with colleagues and senior students across the different campuses of our previous university that they shared many of my experiences of alienation, marginalisation and voicelessness. Undergraduate

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[2] However, in a postmodern world, the centre and the margins are both unstable and ambiguous. I might be considered a first world researcher working in the third world, but also as belonging to the third world in terms of the rest of the first world.

students voiced their dissatisfaction in the form of campus protests which erupted a number of times over the following years but had no or little impact on the process. We felt excluded from decisions taken about our lives and work. The decisions were, however, made in the name of political and social transformation, which were supposed to benefit previously disadvantaged communities, making it hard to voice any dissatisfaction. Our experiences resonated for me with those of colonial subjects becoming the voiceless subjects of a colonial discourse of improvement. The incorporation, like colonialism, was clothed in the modernist grand narratives of enlightenment, progress and development (Kvale, 1992). We had become like colonial subjects who were examined, documented and surveilled (Foucault, 1977). We found ourselves at the receiving end of a discourse of improvement, sometimes an extremely patronising one. In the words of a colleague:

> If you just think of the whole idea of us being incorporated into them, you are being given the label that you're second-rate, under-resourced, pathetic, and you need to join something that is beautiful and that runs smoothly, that they can help us. Yes, we need some resources and everything but we really don't need help in that sense. We run effectively, we're fine and we do wonderful work. And I think there is a perception (and I think the students feel it too) that we're being told we're useless, we have no value, and thank goodness they are going to assist us. (Bakker, 2005, p. 55)

Conservation and Innovation

In 2003, I confronted this situation by initiating a research project, using all I have learnt and experienced to understand and plan the project. This being a global world, I found myself reading about languages and cultures that were on the brink of extinction (Abley, 2003). I noticed stories of efforts at conservation of cultural heritage, including intangible heritage resources (Bouchenaki, 2003). I realised that the body of work we had established was similar to cultural knowledge being under threat of extinction. The research project became an effort at conservation. The research aimed to re-establish cultural resonance for our now marginal narratives, as well as documenting local knowledge and thereby regenerating it (White & Epston, 1990). I assumed that the conservation of such local knowledge may serve as a resource that may be of benefit to future developments in the discipline within the context of the new institutions and that the process of engagement with the research would conserve a discursive context of legitimisation for participants, thereby counteracting experiences of alienation.

The research method was inspired by the work of qualitative researchers (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) specifically in the field of action research as participative inquiry and practice (Brydon-Miller, 1997; Reason & Bradbury, 2001). Participants consisted of staff members of the then Vista department of psychology (across campuses), as well as senior students and previous students. Participation was voluntary and the background to and nature of the project explained to all participants. A snowball sampling procedure (Neuman, 2000) was followed, whereby a number of people were personally approached and then requested to suggest and invite others. A total number of 25 participants were

involved. Thirteen participants were full-time lecturing staff in the department. The number of years that they had been lecturing at Vista ranged between three and 21 years. Lecturers were situated at five of the Vista campuses. Lecturers, senior lecturers, associate professors and full professors were involved. Fourteen participants were, or had previously been, students at all levels of undergraduate and postgraduate professional training courses. Four were, or had previously been, intern psychologists at one of the psychology clinics. Categories overlap as some participants had been involved at more than one level, in more than one role, and/or on more than one campus. Ten participants were male and 15 were female. Eight were black and 17 were white.

The research questions were explored with participants through 14 unstructured individual and three focus group interviews. All staff and some students were interviewed individually. One participant contributed only in written form. Approximately 18 hours of interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. The interviews were loosely organised around the following questions:

1. What do you consider valuable in the work you did on your campus that did together as a department?
2. What did you personally find valuable in the way we went about it?
3. What was unique about it all?
4. What is worth conserving?
5. Would you say that our work together contributed to the development of an indigenous psychology? How do you understand this concept?

During the course of the interviews, it became clear that participants also had a need to talk about their experiences of being incorporated into new institutions, as well as the implications thereof for students. These experiences were thus included.

I identified themes in the material and then ordered and summarised the information in the form of a collective statement loosely based on the concept of testimonio (Beverley, 2004) consisting mostly of verbatim excerpts from the interviews linked by descriptive summaries written in the first person plural. The testimonio was then offered to participants for reflection, addition and correction. After further changes, the final testimonio was made available to all participants in the form of a hard bound copy. It was my original intention to do follow-up interviews a year later to establish to what extent our work and values had been maintained in the new institutions. However, a lack of funding and time precluded this. Through informal networking, however, many participants stayed in contact and exchanged ideas, some in direct response to the study.

This being a global world, the study was informed by global movements in the social sciences and departed from a post-modern (Kvale, 1992), social-constructionist (Gergen, 1999) paradigm. Narrative psychology and postcolonial theory informed the premises of the study. The testimonio was constructed by inquirers who were, simultaneously, participants in their worlds. It became a story that a group told itself about itself (Steier, 1991). Such research is a social process, rooted in language (Gergen & Gergen, 1991), a process of conversation and dialogue, and the "knowledge" generated thereby becomes "open, bold, engaging, accessible and conscious of its own insecurity" (Barnett, 2000, p. 409). The study became research as activism, an action research project

(Reason & Bradbury, 2001) that attempted to give voice to those who had been rendered voiceless.

Testimonio

The research product was in the form of a testimonio, a literary form that originated in Latin America and involves a first-person narrative of witnessing told by a participant in socially and politically charged events (Beverley, 2004). In our case, these events were the enforced incorporation of university campuses within a political agenda that were perceived by many as having consequences that were unjust. The incorporation also threatened what we perceived were significant advances in social justice through our educational and professional training practices, and the testimonio was an effort to build alliances to take these forward. Informed by postcolonial studies and the debate over multiculturalism and identity politics, Beverley (2004) shows how testimonio at once represents and enacts new forms of agency on the part of previously repressed social subjects, as well as how it forges new forms of alliance between subjects and artists, scientists, teachers, and intellectuals in a variety of local, national, and international contexts. Testimonio first entered the field of qualitative psychological research when it was introduced in Denzin and Lincoln's (2000) *Handbook of Qualitative Research.* Beverley (2000) defines testimonio provisionally as follows:

> A testimonio is a novel or novella-length narrative, produced in the form of a printed text, told in the first person by a narrator who is also the real protagonist or witness of the events she or he recounts... The production of a testimonio generally involves the tape-recording and then the transcription and editing of an oral account by an interlocutor. (p. 555-556)

My research study employed a polyphonic testimonio, where the document was constituted of accounts by different participants in the same event and the author served as interlocutor.

The purpose of a testimonio is to give voice to those who would be silenced by a larger, more dominant discourse. It is a form of oral history, allowing for local knowledge to be recorded and shared.

> It is an "emergency narrative" - involving a problem of repression, poverty, marginality, exploitation, or simply survival that is implicated in the act of narration itself… The predominant formal aspect of the testimonio is the voice that speaks to the reader through the text of an I that demands to be recognized, that wants or needs to stake a claim on our attention… The presence of the voice, which the reader is meant to experience as the voice of a real rather than a fictional person, is the mark of a desire not to be silenced or defeated, to impose oneself on an institution of power and privilege from the position of the excluded, the marginal, the subaltern. (Beverley, 2000, p. 556)

Brabeck (2001) identifies a dilemma confronting researchers who work with subaltern peoples, in how to mediate the tension between identifying common ground on which to stand in solidarity against oppression, and at the same time maintaining and respecting the differences between us that limit the extent to which we can hear the expressed voice and share in the reality of the marginalized. She suggests that testimonio has important lessons for the psychologist in how to mediate this tension. It facilitates the relationship between the "first-world" psychologist working with for example a "third-world" participant towards a re-appropriation of voice and redefinition of reality to contest imposed constructions. This is a theme that testimonio shares in common with participatory action research and feminist ethics, both of which emphasize the importance of subjective experience as the basis for knowledge and encourage re-appropriation of traditionally silenced voice and agency:

> The speaker of testimonio is a subject in her/ his own right, not someone who exists for us. This subject gains identity through belonging to the community. If we understand the voices of subaltern peoples as existing for our benefit, if we privilege individual voices and universal truths, we continue our attempts to control third-world peoples through our elite gaze. Moreover, we deny the speaker's ability to appropriate us, our science, technology, and discourse. The speaker of testimonio is not only a witness, but has the power to create her/ his own narrative authority and to negotiate her/ his own conditions of truth and representativity… To read testimonio, then, is to lessen the tension between the first world self and the third world other-- not to deny difference, but to understand distance as a lesson in the possibility of coalition politics. (Brabeck, 2001, n.p.)

Research Towards Solidarity

Richard Rorty (as cited in Beverley, 2000) distinguishes between two cognitive modes: the "desire for solidarity" and "desire for objectivity". Firstly, humans can tell the story of their contribution to a community (the desire for solidarity). This community may be the actual community in which they live, or another actual one, distant in time or place, or quite an imaginary one. Alternatively, they can describe themselves as standing in immediate relation to a non-human reality (the desire for objectivity). These are two ways in which humans try to give sense to their lives by placing them in some larger context, as well as two ways psychologists do research.

According to Beverley (2000) testimonio has become prominent in the social sciences in recent years in part because it intertwines the above two desires. This makes testimonio ideal for a global psychology as it speaks to objectivity while ensuring solidarity. Cross-cultural psychology often only speaks to objectivity and does not cross the divide between center and periphery or question the power imbalance inherent in the research enterprise. In contrast, a truly inclusive, global psychology, also speaks to solidarity and thereby avoids sustaining subalternity by giving a platform for previously unheard voices to speak:

> If the subaltern could speak - that is, speak in a way that really *matters* to
> us, that we would feel compelled to listen to, then it would not be
> subaltern... One of the things being subaltern means is not mattering, not
> being worth listening to, or not being understood when one is 'heard'...
> The human sciences and the university are among the institutional
> constellations of power/knowledge that create and sustain subalternity.
> (Beverley, 2000, pp. 559-562)

The challenge when writing a polyphonic testimonio, is to convey what really matters. Most of our testimonio consisted of the actual words spoken by the participants, so as to ensure immediacy. For example a colleague, who had herself been a student and lecturer at both Vista and the neighbouring HWU, expressed her experience as follows:

> I'm not sure where my students will be going, with the merger. I'm not
> sure whether they will have taxi money to go to [HWU], I never had… I
> had to take three taxis to [HWU] for a class at quarter to eight, without a
> car... The [HWU] students don't appreciate that, they don't understand
> that... They think it's automatic! You have to be in a lecture, you have to
> be early... And with my Vista students I can understand, I know what it's
> like to sit in three taxis on my way to class... I know what it's like to leave
> the house at half past six and walk through a veld[3] and be scared because I
> could be raped, I could get my purse snatched… Here I can say to a
> student who is struggling, I'm here, I've done it, I walked through that...
> You know and that, for me has been, personally, so rewarding - to be able
> to share my story, and to have a student graduate who at first year never
> had passed, and to see them walking onto that stage, with a degree, it's
> really...They would not have walked on that stage if Vista wasn't there.
> (Bakker, 2005, p. 25)

Reading the above words has a similar effect on me than reading a novel - it inspires solidarity and inspires action towards social justice. However, testimonio is not the only kind of narrative to affect the desire for solidarity. Maybe all research is a form of narrative - stories that we tell ourselves about ourselves. What would happen if we construe all research as forms of art? Would we then have to ask ourselves of our research: does it make us see the world in a new way? Does it make the familiar strange and the strange familiar?

Having approached the research in an almost intuitive way, drawing upon my previous knowledge and experience within my work context to find an appropriate response to a painful and unjust situation, it was only later that I realized that the research study was rather unusual in terms of common definitions of 'research', in terms of its frame of reference, purpose and design. I realized that it entailed a kind of 'methodology of the "heart" (Pelias, 2004) which was particular to my person and work context. This became clearer as the research process developed. The "interviews" were not traditional interviews, in that the "interviewer" was not trying to "find information" – I was having a conversation with a valued colleague or student around themes that were close to both

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[3] Overgrown unbuilt area, often between the township and adjoining cities or towns

our hearts. We were not talking to "record data" – we were working together to put into words what had become difficult to express, and to formalize and document what we valued in our work together. Even though I remained in the role of interlocutor, there was a shared history and shared sense of injustice that was a far cry from any attempt at "objectivity". The conversations were similar to therapeutic conversations, but also reminded me of community gatherings – they had a subversive feel to them, as in the following conversation about the incorporation of one of the Vista campus psychology departments (Bakker, 2005, p. 56):

The Conservation of Psycho-Diversity

With the two departments here, there isn't a celebration of the different languages we speak. Instead, there is more of 'Let's get to a common language as quickly as possible, for it's uncomfortable to have different rules'.

I think in our case it's not even 'develop a common language' but more 'you'd better learn *our* language NOW!' [laughter]. But…are you saying there is an argument to be made for celebrating differences and capitalising on them, rather than trying to iron them out?

Yes, because this [the Vista campus] is an amazing place actually. There are lots of arguments for conservation. It is interesting that many descriptions of well-ness include the idea of variety, include the idea of more alternatives, more options...

Inclusiveness rather than exclusiveness?

...just more choices to make... If you only have one interactional style that you use to deal with all demands you're obviously going to develop symptoms for it's not going to work in all contexts. If you want to talk about the wellness of the psychology department and even of psychology there's a good argument to keep variety rather than narrow it down and say let's all become the same...

So you're saying that differences between how we do things here and how they do things there could actually contribute something valuable?

Yes, yes.

Both there and here?

Yes, but I'm not saying that we must just keep totally separate programmes … it will be good for the department if there is that particular identity that remains here.

Like bio-diversity being healthy for the ecology?

Yes, yes… psycho-diversity! [laughter]

I like that!… So is that something of what you would like to see, in future, happening?

Yes, the idea of the value of conservation, because it adds to diversity and complexity.

The writing of the testimonio, and input from participants on the writing process, sensitized me to literary and artistic issues – how to structure and narrate in such a way as to make it more readable? Should we include photographs? These were aesthetic considerations, not methodological ones.

The research process also impacted on interpersonal processes within the department and the new universities. Colleagues spoke to each other about their conversations with me, after I had left. Email conversations ensued. A sense of solidarity had been re-established. Some colleagues spontaneously sent me reflections on their experiences during the incorporation and during the research process. Some handed the testimonio around to their new colleagues, some of whom took up further conversations with them and myself subsequently, conveying reactions ranging from solidarity to, at least, respectful curiosity. The testimonio, like literary work, had developed a small life of its own, which differed from the kind of life that most research reports or research articles seem to have. It re-established a sense of pride and self-worth, as well as a demand for justice. In the words of one colleague:

> I experienced the interview as meaningful and valuable in that it provided an opportunity to think deeply about meaningful issues related to learning/teaching that are not often expressed in the dominant discourse in this area. (Bakker, 2005, p. 57)

Another colleague said

> I was so excited when you said you want to do this research. Because now finally you've got some paper to show some paper-pusher. Because you can't explain this to them. Yes, they can come visit once. But you can't explain this experience. You need to have lived it. And you need to have lived it for a few years... So I think we need to somehow put these experiences and these thoughts and, these feelings (because most of them are feelings), we need to put them on paper. (Bakker, 2005, p. 57)

These response and experiences raised all kinds of questions: Was I busy with art or with science? Was this a community, a therapeutic, or a research project? Can it be more than one? Can we extend our definition of psychology beyond its disciplinary borders? Is it fruitful to venture into literary theory, even art, to understand research? Most psychotherapists would concede that they are involved with a creative, innovative task that borders on art. Some would agree that they are storying lives. They would certainly agree that they bring their whole selves to their work. Can we do the same when we define ourselves as researchers?

Research, Narration and Art

Reason and Bradbury (2001) in a seminal introduction to their *Handbook of Action Research*, appropriately titled "Inquiry and participation in search of a world worthy of human aspiration", ask similar questions. I believe there is much in their approach that should direct the search for a global psychology, especially as it pertains to

research. If research is understood as "a way of being and doing in the world" (p. xxvii) the researcher shares the spirit of Lyotard's description of the postmodern artist:

> The text he [sic] writes, the work he [sic] produces are not in principle governed by pre-established rules, and they cannot be judged according to a determining judgement, by applying familiar categories to the text or to the work. Those rules and principles are what the work of art itself is looking for. The artist and writer, then, are working without rules in order to formulate the rules of what will have been done. (Lyotard, 1979, as cited in Reason & Bradbury, 2001, p. xxvii)

Thus, the testimonio evolved a style and themes of its own, including a theme speaking of "dusty streets and chickens – resources and opportunities"

> I miss the chickens. There were chickens roaming around the campus for a long time... I enjoyed the fact that this was OK with everybody… I sometimes think of the chickens as a metaphor for people here who are free-range, have calcium in their bones... As opposed to the battery-type chickens that are mass-produced elsewhere. I like to believe our work is of the free-range kind, not the battery kind.
>
> I love the vibrancy of the streets, to see the stalls on the side of the streets and to see the dogs running around and the chickens and all these little entrepreneurial projects going up on the side of the road… There's such a rich culture and it's so different from the ordered structure of some of the streets in the suburbs... The vibrancy is also about being tolerant... One can tolerate the kids running up and down the roads with their wheels and their little cars and the water splashing over and the dogs and the goats... It almost gives me a sense of people have the freedom to do what they need to do in their space. So if they need to have goats for their survival they can have their goats... They can run their trades, industries, from their shacks. So it opens up opportunities for people who have so little to at least be able to try and live, try and survive, and some of them can actually even wander across the road and maybe get into the university here and study further and get some skills and go out there and do even more. Whereas, for me, the [receiving institutions] almost have such a filter system, that only certain people will get in and only certain of those will actually get through. (Bakker, 2005, p. 22)

This kind of text and these kind of images grew spontaneously out of the interviews. The words might have been very different if another person was doing the "interviewing". There is a growing awareness that "doing research must be expanded to include those artist-like processes that are already there, but filtered out of ordinary research writing" (Steier, 1991, p. 4). Johan Rowan (in Reason & Bradbury, 2001) similarly stated as early as 1981 that research should be worth doing for yourself and others involved in it:

> If we want to know about people, we have to encourage them to be who they are, and to resist all attempts to make them – or ourselves – into something we are not, but which is more easily observable, or countable, or manipulable. (Reason & Bradbury, 2001, p. xxvii)

This is even more important if we are doing research across cultural and economic divides, or with those segments of society that remain marginal to mainstream international research practices. If not, we are not (re)searching but colonizing:

> The essence of colonisation inheres less to political overrule than in seizing and transforming others by the very act of conceptualizing, inscribing, and interacting with them in terms not of their own choosing; in making them into pliant objects and silenced subjects of our scripts and scenarios; in assuming the capacity to represent them, the active verb itself conflating politics and poetics. (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1991, p. 15)

This kind of colonization happens easily when teaching psychology. In the words of a student:

> You talk of those things like Sigmund Freud to people around here and they don't understand… When I was at undergraduate level I was just there to study and to pass you know. (Laughter) I used to think Oh! What's this?.. You know, this… behaviourism of Bandura, some of those things, they are not applicable to our everyday situation. But as time went on the department of psychology managed to come to the level, come down to the level of the people's thinking and the people's situations of concern. Because the community, it's not westernised, for instance they believe in the community traditional doctors or sangomas, whatever, inyangas, such kind of things4. So you can see there is a kind of shift from western thinking to South African perspective. So I think psychology of this campus these days is more relevant to the views of the people because it can be able to tackle and deal with the everyday situation of most of the community around us. (Bakker, 2005, p. 42)

One student compare his experiences during his undergraduate studies overseas with his postgraduate training at Vista University:

> I was thinking overseas you know, OK, I'm following this career, but I remember thinking, this… how will it help me amongst my people? You see because it was pretty westernised... international... I was surprised to find when I came here, that in this course, in this book, there are African perspective chapters... I remember thinking, gosh, this is an achievement, this is a first! (Bakker, 2005, p. 42)

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4 Traditional healers

Figure 4. *Research, narration and art.*

John Hodgkiss, 2 July 2007, From official website of Africa Remix Johannesburg Exhibition at www.africaremixjoburg.com.

It is through authentic narration, as in testimonio, that the voice of the "colonised" is heard. Testimonio lacks a definitive author; instead, we hear a narratorial voice mediated through an interlocutor. Research, as all scientific enterprise, remains narrative. In a world of multiple epistemologies, narrative provides us with an analogy that crosses the barriers between science, religion, culture, common-sense, and ideology. In Lyotard's (1984) terms, it bridges the artificial gap between narrative and scientific knowledge created by modernism. It creates "experience-near", rather than "experience-distant" concepts (Geertz, 1983, p. 57) that are easily translatable into different cultural contexts.

Scientific knowledge entails an alienation from its user (Lyotard, 1984) because it is legitimised by outside claims of experts (grand narratives) whereas narrative knowledge is legitimised through social consensus and practices at the local level. However, the modern narratives that serve as legitimation of scientific knowledge are also cultural products. Whether we do quantitative or qualitative research, locally or in international collaboration, an awareness of our narrative practices are essential. This awareness does not, however, preclude the use of traditional research methodologies or statistics. Numbers, like language, are also symbols and as such are just other stories. We could, however, use statistics for support rather than enlightenment, "the way a drunk uses a lamp-post" (Wynne, Wynne, & Le Roux, 1997), a writer uses different narrative forms, or an artist different media. From a narrative perspective both therapy and research become processes of story re-vision (Parry & Doan, 1994) and re-authoring (White, 1995). "Rather than 'telling it like it is' the challenge for the postmodern and globally minded psychologist is to 'tell it as it may become'" (Gergen, 1992, p. 27).

Following Foucault (cited in Hook et al., 1999), psychologists may be novelists creating fictions:

I am fully aware that I have never written anything other than fictions. For all that, I would not want to say that they were outside the truth. It seems possible to me to make fictions work within truth, to introduce truth-

effects within a fictional discourse, and in some way to make discourse arouse, "fabricate," something which does not yet exist, thus to fiction something. (Hook et al., 1999, n.p.)

Doing research may have to be expanded to embrace Foucault's (1980) assertion that resistant discourses are effective precisely because they put the theoretical unity of certain master discourses on abeyance, in order to, where possible, curtail, divide, overthrow, caricature, theatricalise the influence of such totalitarian theories through "dispersed and discontinuous offensives" (p. 81). One could argue that Foucault also created another master discourse and thereby contradicted his own position. However, artists have been doing something similar for a long time, without necessarily imposing any master discourse. Can we learn from them?

The Presence of the Researcher in Research

Is there is a case to be made for the person of the researcher to enter the global research stage? We cannot expect others to tell themselves and their lives and circumstances to us if we remain hidden. There is no solidarity without personal presence, whether through narrative or other means. Such solidarity, which is essential to a more global psychology, is not easy to achieve though.

To see ourselves as others see us can be eye-opening. To see others as sharing a nature with ourselves is the merest decency. But it is from the far more difficult achievement of seeing ourselves amongst others, as a local example of the forms human life has locally taken, a case among cases, a world among worlds, that the largeness of mind... comes. (Geertz, 1983, p. 16)

Figure 5. *The presence of the researcher in research.*

Hicham Behohoud, 'No 4'. 2003. Photograph from official invitation to Africa Remix Exhibition, Johannesburg, 24 June 2007.

When one assumes a self-reflexive, social constructionist stance, one has to recognize that "what I describe in my research is in no way existent apart from my involvement in it - it is not 'out there'" (Steier, 1991, p. 1). The stories of the participants would have been very different if told to another interviewer. When we examine how we are part of our data, "our research becomes, not a self-centred product, but a reciprocal process. The voices of those with whom we interact, our reciprocators…respondents, informants and subjects, are enhanced rather than lessened" (p. 7). This reminded me of the following comments from a participant:

> The interview enabled me to analyse and synthesise my experience of teaching/learning, to find suitable words to express this knowledge we had created socially through our interaction. This... gave rise to strong positive feelings of having my uniqueness, academic sense of belonging and community, identity, experience, and knowledge meaningfully acknowledged and validated by a fellow academic/learner whose opinions and approach I have come to value through personal experience. (Bakker, 2005, p. 57)

It is notable that a number of events in my life, some already mentioned, contributed significantly to the research. In addition, I would not have known that testimonio existed, had it not been for a colleague, Willem Louw, who circulated an article on testimonio at the time I was conceptualising the study. The idea caught my already primed-for-resistance imagination and thoughts. Had it not been for my place of work or my personal history and social circumstances, I might never have pondered any of these questions. I started wondering if this happens to other researchers. The following words of Marja-Liisa Swantz (Reason & Bradbury, 2001) resonated with my experience: "I do not separate my scientific inquiry from my life. For me it is really a quest for life, to understand life and to create what I call living knowledge – knowledge which is valid for the people with whom I work and for myself" (p. 1).

However, the presence of the self of the researcher has to be qualified. Post-modern thought has deconstructed existing fixed notions of the self as some core/generic "thing", and moved towards a relational, fluid view of the self and related constructs (Gergen, 1992). The "self" and "individual" are now viewed more as performances which our cultures have taught us to enact within certain relational contexts. The 'selves' that are speaking through the testimonio are people who find themselves in 'self-shaping' contexts which shape them towards certain values and attitudes. For example, a colleague recounted the following:

> Within the Vista environment... you had to work with students who were from extremely divergent backgrounds. I mean I work with students, even at postgraduate level, who have problems with accessing technology that we take for granted, electricity, food... transport... Students, who are senior students, have to deal with this on an every-day basis. And one has to deal with it, one has to listen to the students, one has to have patience… Here is also almost an extension of a limited role of say a student or a therapist or a lecturer or a clinic supervisor…Let's say that you're focussing as an

HIV/AIDS counsellor. There are issues there like nutrition, transport, coming to interviews, maintaining contact and follow-up in the community, that you wouldn't really do in terms of your normal... narrow training previously… At this clinic for example we find that many of the clients default in keeping appointments, and that might be for variables that might have very little to do with the actual therapeutic relationship, whereas traditionally that's where you would focus... We need to look at these other variables, and try and intervene as much as we can… I'm supervising one student... at a rape crisis clinic, and I literally sit there with... I've got to keep my mouth from hanging open... I mean they're horrendous cases, they're extremely difficult… they're taken all through the counselling, HIV testing, the boundaries are so fluid...

The testimonio introduces us to a situated self (Bakker, 1999), so that both the personal and the political become part of a larger story/picture, including the place and the people. Is it possible that all of these and more have to be spoken and heard more often for psychology to become truly global?

Conclusion: Positioning Psychology Between the Local and the Global

Psychologists may find inspiration in our sister disciplines (literary theory, anthropology, sociology and others), as well as the arts, when it comes to negotiating the complex and ambiguous relations between the local and the global. If psychology could momentarily turn away from its medical relations and talk to its relations in the Social Sciences, Humanities and Arts, we may find that our colleagues in these disciplines have also struggled with western hegemonies, colonialism, and tricky power/knowledge issues. For example, if we look at contemporary literature and film as metaphor, we find innovative responses to these challenges.

Figure 6. *The English novel and a global psychology.*
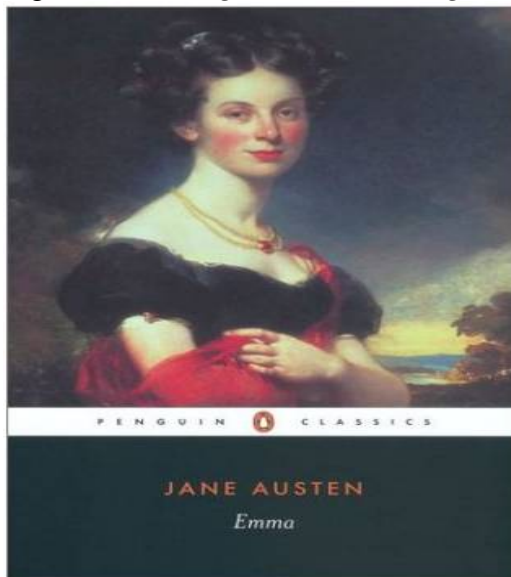

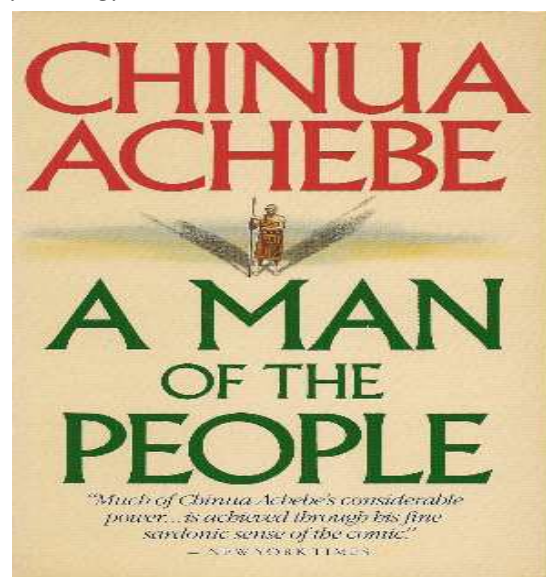Image downloaded from Amazon.com/books   Image downloaded from Amazon.com/books

 Would psychology be able to follow in the footsteps of the English novel, which started off as the centre of a colonial world, Othering the newly colonised world as outside the boundaries of rationality? This fictional form has been re-appropriated by those very Others so that today the English novel talks back at the Empire in many different forms and from all continents. It has, paradoxically, become truly global through being spoken by and paying particular attention to the very local.

 The relationship between "foreign" films and Hollywood also reminds one of the relationship between third world psychologies and centres of power such as the American Psychological Association (APA). Hollywood is the centre of the film industry, as the APA is very much at the centre of psychology. Recently, a local South African film won an academy award as "best foreign language film of the year" in Hollywood. As research and art are not as far apart as is often assumed, one could investigate how this film succeeded, and how it relates to the power centres of the film industry.

Figure 7. *Between the Local and the Global.*

Images downloaded from official Tsotsi website http://www.tsotsi.com/english/index.php Press centre.

 The film Tsotsi is set in a very local setting in a South African township, focussing on central issues in South African society such as crime and AIDS. But its themes are universal so that it is globally distributed and appreciated. Similarly, quality research, away from the Euro-american centre of psychology, may be very local, use local talent, and focus on local issues. Tsotsi and other good films from third world countries use unknown local actors, but draw from and comment on the traditions and techniques of the global world of film, so that in turn the local films enrich filmmaking in general. Tsotsi also has a powerful narrative, told in the vernacular. Similarly, good research tells good stories, and these may be improved if told in the local vernacular, although it would entail developing "subtitles" to build bridges towards an international audience. Often than not films work better if actors are local. The same applies to research. Instead of importing foreign 'stars' to duplicate international research projects

for "cross-cultural validation" purposes, as is often done in South Africa, local researchers and co-researchers could be in a better position to create authentic and informative work. Many films have failed when having a foreign actor try and speak the local language, or having a local actor speak American English, as often happens in lesser South African films. Somehow the more local the film, the better it becomes, and, paradoxically, the more authentic and engaging to foreign as well as local audiences. I wonder if the same holds true for research?

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