

Some basic questions about (a) decolonizing Africa(n)-centred psychology considered

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Abstract

Conceptual disagreement remains rife with regard to African psychology with some scholars mistakenly equating it to, for example, ethnotheorizing and traditional healing, while others confound African psychology with Africanization and racialization. Using writing as inquiry, this article aims to clear up some of the conceptual confusion on African psychology while engaging with the issue of a decolonizing African psychology. Accordingly, questions such as ‘What is the main dispute between Africa(n)-centred psychology and Euro-American-centric psychology in Africa?’; ‘Does Africa(n)-centred psychology not homogenize Africans?’; ‘What can be gained from imbricating decolonizing perspectives and feminist Africa(n)-centred psychology?’; and ‘What would a decolonizing Africa(n)-centred community psychology look like?’ are pertinent in the clarification of the conceptual confusion. Arising from an inventive dialogical and collaborative method, the aim of this article is not only to illuminate some basic misunderstandings on (a) decolonizing African psychology but also to generate further dialogue on how to work towards African psychology as situated decolonizing practice and knowledge.

Keywords

Africa(n)-centred community psychology, Africa(n)-centred psychology, African psychology, Euro-American-centric psychology, feminist Africa(n)-centred psychology

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Introduction

Conceptual disagreement remains rife with regard to African psychology. In their opposition to a specific conservative conception of African psychology, some scholars have mistaken African psychology in toto with, for example, ethnotheorizing, folk traditions, psychological ethnography, African metaphysics, spirituality and transcendentalism, as well as traditional healing (e.g., Makhubela, 2016). Within the debates on African or contextual psychology, some authors have argued for an indigenization and Africanization of psychology (see Holdstock, 1981; also Anonymous, 1986). Others, such as Moll (2002), have contended that it is a myth that there exists a psychology that is particular to a geographical region and rather that there is a universal psychology that concerns itself with the issues of Africa. This is an argument that conflates Euro-American psychology with universal psychology rather than clearly acknowledging that Euro-American psychology is universalized through colonial and meta-colonial endeavours of Europe and North America. Nwoye (2015) has maintained that 'African psychology is grounded on the assumptions of a common African worldview and the Africentric paradigm' (p. 97) and can thus be seen as essentializing sameness among Africans. Others, such as Long (2016), have viewed a lack of class analysis in debates about an African psychology as detrimental to the advancement of the debates. From another perspective, Mkhize (2004) avers that the goals of African psychology overlap with those of critical psychology, specifically with respect to resisting traditional Euro-American-centric psychology and attending to indigenous conceptions of psychology. Mkhize proposes an African (critical) psychology that centres ideologically and politically marginalized voices while interrogating hegemonic currents of power. Indeed, in addition to critical psychologies, various other emancipatory psychological fields and paradigms, such as liberation, feminist, discursive, and community psychologies (see Hook, 2004), seek to challenge facets of Euro-American-centric psychology. Within these fields and paradigms, the works of thinkers such as Frantz Fanon (1967) have become vital resources for imagining psychology, including an Africa(n)-centred psychology, outside of hegemonic and mainstream parameters.

It is our contention that few writers have noted that terminologically African psychology means the same thing as, for example, psychology *in, by, from, or of* Africa or Africans. If any one of these prepositions is interposed between psychology and Africa/ns to define the kind of African psychology to which one refers, three questions become apparent: 'What prepositions are being elided?'; 'Why would there be a necessity for an African psychology because there already is a psychology in Africa?'; and 'What is the relation of African psychology to decolonization?'

Employing a simple-to-follow, question-and-answer style, the main objective of this article is to deal with some of the apparent confusion that pervades debates on African psychology as well as thrash out (a) decolonizing Africa(n)-centred psychology. Taken as imperative at different levels of subjectivity, relationships, community, and the world, decolonization is employed to refer to the undoing of colonialism, including undoing colonial ways of thinking about social structures, knowledge, relationships, and the self. The way the term *decolonizing* is employed in the article is a verb as well as an adjective: we seek to decolonize African psychology as a whole and imagine what a decolonizing Africa psychology might look like. As such, the goal of the article is not just to clarify some persisting misunderstandings around African psychology but also to generate productive debate as to how to decolonize African psychology and to work towards Africa(n)-centred psychology as situated decolonizing practice and knowledge.

A certain innovative characteristic of the article, a move that itself can be regarded as informed by decolonizing thinking, is the collaborative method of writing employed. Each contributor was asked to think of one important question that to them spoke to the subject of decolonization and psychology. Each author then offered a brief written response. The respective contributions were then subjected

to discussion and debate by all of the authors before the article was reworked for submission to peer review. This method has the potential to challenge, disrupt, and open up possibilities both within and beyond academic contexts (Wyatt & Gale, 2014). As Speedy (2012) has argued,

[T]he continued and explicit practice of collaborative writing among social researchers alters the academic spaces they inhabit and the ethical know-how that they come by . . . [T]his different sense of scholarship and scholarly work . . . can begin to rework and expand the social imagination. (p. 349)

In gesturing towards a decolonizing psychology, it is necessary to deconstruct not only what we write but how we write as well.

Whereas the article is a collection of moderated, interactive interventions whose principal objective is to respond to the conceptual confusion around African psychology as well as the possible relationship between decolonization and Africa(n)-centred psychology, given our different sub-disciplinary interests, the article also brings into dialogue thinking on decolonization, African psychology, and other branches or topical areas of psychology, in particular community psychology and feminist psychology.

Is African psychology identical to psychology in Africa?

According to Ratele (2017a), ‘all of psychology done in and for Africa, by and about Africans, by Africans and non-Africans (working on Africa) [is] African psychology’ (p. 1). African psychology, in other words, refers to all of psychology *concerning* Africa or Africans. The word *concerning* is crucial: it stands for any number of the aforementioned prepositions. Depending on the elided term, African psychology can therefore be defined as any, several, or all of the following: psychology *in* Africa, psychology *of* Africa, psychology *for* Africa, psychology *from* Africa, psychology *on* Africans, psychology *by* Africans, and psychology *for* Africans. Each of these points to a divergent understanding of African psychology, indicative of potential or actual dissensus about the history, aim, and future of African psychology. Thus, we note that of course African psychology is, terminologically speaking, the same as psychology in Africa, but not all psychology in Africa centres Africa as, for example, a home for psychological theory-making and Africans as theory-builders. The vital point is this: African psychology (meaning psychology concerning Africa) incorporates Africa(n)-centred psychology but is non-identical to it. Africa(n)-centred psychology situates Africa and Africans at the centre of psychology. Even then, there are still other, ongoing disputes between the contending views on African psychology. The major dispute is, however, between what is called Western- or Euro-American-centric psychology in Africa and Africa(n)-centred psychology.

What is the main dispute between Africa(n)-centred psychology and Euro-American-centric psychology in Africa?

If Ratele’s (2017a) definition of African psychology is weighed up, we are compelled to distinguish between two broad postures, positions, or perspectives to pedagogy, psychotherapy, and research. This analytic distinction does not prohibit constant, dynamic exchange between the two standpoints, nor does it posit that no within-category contestations exist.

The first posture is indicated in, for instance, Pillay’s (2017) question, ‘Why is western psychology innocently labelled “psychology” but African psychology geographically located?’ (p. 135). This question seeks to surface awareness about the domination of Africa and the Global South by psychology from Western Europe and the United States. Western- or Euro-American-centric

psychology *is* psychology. Due to its world domination, it appears to require neither qualification nor reference to a home. Euro-American- or Western-centric psychology is what the majority of African psychologists and students of psychology are likely to bring to mind when they think of psychology, what is taught at universities, employed in professional practice, and published in academic and popular texts. Given its power around the globe, and specifically over African psychologists, this position expresses an *undecolonized* or *neocolonized* African psychology. It would seem that Euro-American-centric psychology views psychology all over the world as fundamentally similar. Under the command of Euro-American psychology precepts, that which psychologists in African countries are supposed to do in their lecture rooms, clinics, therapy consultations, and studies must not be significantly distinctive from what psychologists in Europe and North America do. At best, psychologists in African countries are encouraged to consider *context* in psychotherapeutic practice, research investigation, or teaching. Euro-American-centric psychology assumes that psychology is or ought to be a largely unified and universal body of knowledge and professional practice; histories of wars, imperialism, colonization, political struggles, and values need not come under consideration in this respect. It is very important to underline this: Euro-American psychology is mainstream psychology. It forms the core content and concepts of the methodologies, epistemologies, and ontologies with regard to what is taught in universities, what psychologists draw on in psychotherapy, and what influences research.

The second standpoint is Africa(n)-centric psychology. It began as one among several small intellectual resistance to the domination of Euro-American-centric psychology which largely centred White Western European and North American lives, which was wholly adopted by the majority of psychologists. Indeed, until the 1990s, these psychologists in South Africa (SA) also happened to be mainly of European ancestry, and seeing the imported psychology was largely unopposed to colonialism and apartheid, the prevailing form of psychology was colonial and apartheid psychology. While it was not necessarily referred to as Africa(n)-centric, the motivation for a new psychology was to establish a more indigenous, endogenous, relevant, appropriate, transformed, and/or decolonized discipline and profession (Anonymous, 1986; Cooper, 2013; Dawes, 1986; Long, 2013; Manganyi, 1973; Nicholas & Cooper, 1990; Seedat, Cloete, & Shochet, 1988; Vogelmann, 1987). However, the relationship between a decolonized psychology and an Africa(n)-centric psychology is not straightforward. The rise in popularity of community psychology can be seen as a result of this drive to have a responsive, de-Westernized, contextual, and socio-politically conscious psychology. The quest for an Africa(n)-centric psychology – which is more often indirectly, rather than directly, pursued – is for a psychology that *centres* Africa and Africans rather than treats them as marginal or, at best, one among other variables.

Does Africa(n)-centred psychology not homogenize Africans?

Africa(n)-centred psychology is often seen as essentializing or homogenizing Africans. This is a serious misconception: Africa(n)-centred psychology of the decolonizing kind is not homogenizing – although essentializing views are detectable within the broader body of African psychology (Ratele, 2017a).

Consider here the subject of children from a decolonizing African psychological perspective. It would be an ahistorical, essentialist, and indeed a colonialist study – given that it was colonial and apartheid psychology that treated Blacks as naturally the same and essentially different from Europeans – that would seek to see all children, Black or White, as the same. Instead, what decolonizing Africa(n)-centred psychological studies aim or should aim for is to find similarities even while recognizing children's heterogeneity and differences even as minding their similitude. African psychologists informed by decolonizing thought cannot but recognize that while children

might have a common experience of being children, differences emanating from developmental, social, cultural, environmental, and economic factors matter (see Shields et al., 2005). A decolonizing Africa(n)-centred psychology interested in children cannot but recognize that while there are dissimilar experiences among children, commonalities exist that must not be minimized. Thus, both homogeneous and heterogeneous experiences are not merely recognized but valued in a decolonizing Africa(n)-centred psychology.

Something else needs to be said about homogeneity and heterogeneity. These are situational properties, based on context (Shim et al., 2014). In his famous 1998 'I am an African' speech, then deputy president of SA, Thabo Mbeki, reflected on the issue of the homogeneity and heterogeneity among Africans. While he spoke about differences among Africans, he also referred to shared existence and historical experience of slavery, which contributed to individuals' identity. While, for instance, with regard to SA, Malay slaves were taken from Malaysia, Indian indentured labourers travelled from the sub-continent, Whites came as colonizers, Black people fought to remain free, and the Khoi and the San had been occupying Southern Africa for thousands of years, what now binds them together is that the fact that all are Africans (see Mbeki, 1996). Africans in this view are not defined by background, race, colour, gender, or historical origins, but as those who share in the common experience and destiny of Africa and its people (see Asante, 2009).

Rather than a decolonizing Africa(n)-centred psychology being a homogenizing endeavour, it is Euro-American-centric, colonial, and apartheid psychology in Africa that supported, actively and passively, the dehumanization and oppression of Africans, disregarding their different voices, complexity, and humanity. In contradistinction, Africa(n)-centred psychology as decolonizing praxis aims to undo the historical destruction and oppressive legacies of colonial and apartheid psychology.

And yet, to paraphrase Audre Lorde (1979), the colonizer's psychology cannot be used to decolonize the colonizer's psychology. As such, in contrast to colonial and apartheid Euro-American-centric psychology, Africa(n)-centred psychology as a decolonizing project begins at learning to listen deeply to fully understand African people through their own voices and to undo colonial traumas. In addition, even while giving special care to African people as they have been dehumanized for centuries, Africa(n)-centred psychology as decolonizing praxis has to aim to humanize all people.

Might 'Blackening' psychology decolonize the discipline?

Mainstream psychology as a discipline has a problem with demographics. During apartheid, the majority of psychologists across all registered categories were White, middle-class, English- or Afrikaans-speaking, and based in affluent, urban areas, unlike the majority of the population (Ahmed & Pillay, 2004; Skinner & Louw, 2009). Until the early 1990s, less than 10% of all registered psychologists were Black (Duncan, van Niekerk, & Townsend, 2004). Most traditionally, 'White only' universities refused to allow 'Black', 'coloured', or 'Indian' students into psychology programmes (Stead, 2002). With the end of apartheid, the 'relevance debate' within psychology in SA began to focus on the need to alter the demographic profile of the discipline. However, this has been slow to change, and the demographic profile of psychologists in SA remains racially skewed; the majority of psychologists remain White, middle-class, and English-speaking (Bantjes, Kagee, & Young, 2016; Cooper & Nicholas, 2012). This racial and linguistic homogeneity has serious consequences for the discipline. Among other concerns, as a result of colonial and apartheid psychology, the majority of South Africans cannot access therapy in their home language, which could be seen as a human rights issue, since the medium of therapy is language (Ahmed & Pillay, 2004).

So might 'Blackening' psychology, that is increasing numbers of Black students in the discipline, decolonize and dislodge the permeating 'Whiteness' in practice and research? Although more representative and racially and linguistically diverse discipline is vital, change cannot stop at

race and language matters. The transformation process of higher education in SA has been ‘hollowed out’ to a focus on numbers and changing the demographics of student bodies (although certainly not that of academic staff; Badat, 2016, p. 7). This widening participation of Black people in higher education more generally towards a more diverse group of students is seen as one of the most significant post-apartheid higher education transformation successes (Cloete, 2002). Yet, despite Black students now being in the majority in many South African higher education institutions, these institutions remain steeped in an institutional culture of ‘Whiteness’ (and cisgendered heterosexuality). As Vincent (2015) asserts,

Changes at the level of policy, leadership and demographics have not seemed to coincide with change to an equivalent extent in the way the institutions ‘feel’. Somehow the past with its ways of violence, discrimination, exclusion and inequality, is being reproduced in the present, these other levels of change not withstanding. (p. 25)

These lessons from higher education more broadly highlight that changing demographics, while important, will not necessarily change how psychology ‘feels’. A truly decolonizing Africa(n)-centred psychology requires changes to what is taught and how it is taught, what is researched and how it is researched, what is published and how and where it is published, what projects are funded and who has access to funding, and who has access to therapy and how it is delivered.

What can be gained from imbricating decolonizing perspectives and feminist Africa(n)-centred psychology?

At a symposium titled ‘Spotlight on Violence Against Women’ at the University of Cape Town Law School in August 2017, a debate ensued about whether scholars should be talking about ‘violence against women’ or ‘gender-based violence’. The debate raised questions about inclusion and erasure; what happens to the prolific violence against trans and queer bodies when we talk about ‘violence against women’? The issue of depoliticization was also raised, with some people arguing that the term ‘gender-based violence’ has been an attempt to obscure the focus on the violence enacted on female bodies. Along with raising important issues specific to work on violence, this debate provided an opportunity to reflect on the disjunction between decolonization and feminist perspectives, within and beyond psychology.

The resurgent call for decolonization in and of psychology offers an opportunity to interrogate why terms such as ‘women’, which captures only those who identify as cisgendered and heterosexual, remain so dominant within feminist scholarship in SA. As Kiguwa (2004) has argued, ‘not all feminisms are equally responsive to the particular political and substantive issues facing African[s]’ (p. 279). In thinking about a decolonizing feminist Africa(n)-centred psychology, there is a need to acknowledge that terms such as ‘women’ and ‘men’ are rooted in colonial constructions of gender. Feminist scholars such as Oyèrónkẹ́ Oyěwùmí (1997) and Maria Lugones (2007) have demonstrated the way in which colonialism imposed new structures of gender, which inferiorized females. In this way, feminist perspectives have made a central contribution to understandings of and processes of decolonization. As Schiwy (2007) has argued, ‘[t]he notions of femininity and masculinity are themselves colonial constructs that have pressed more complex notions of gender, sexuality, and desire into a binary’ (p. 271). Central to the colonial project was the suppression of indigenous structures of gender, for example, the ‘Two-Spirit’ identity among indigenous peoples in North America (Hunt & Holmes, 2015). Therefore, by relying uncritically on the discursive construct of ‘women’ in feminist psychology, the re-inscription of colonial ways of being and knowledge continues.

In the South African context, works by feminist psychologists such as Tamara Shefer have demonstrated the ways in which much local scholarship on sexual violence and sexuality more broadly has tended not only to reproduce the binary between ‘men’ and ‘women’ or ‘boys’ and ‘girls’ but also to reify colonial tropes of Black sexuality, particularly the notion of Black men as inherently sexually violent (Shefer, 2018). This work highlights the need to apply decolonizing perspectives to feminist psychological work in African countries to make visible and render problematic the colonial gendered assumptions that underscore much of feminist psychology. Feminist Africa(n)-centred psychological scholarship should seek to examine and deconstruct the ways in which gendered oppressions are embedded within local and global systems of domination. In this way, feminist Africa(n)-centred psychological scholarship can promote understandings of gendered subordination that go beyond universalizing constructions of ‘woman’ (or ‘man’) and are situated within complex and intersecting matrixes of power (Kiguwa, 2004).

In enmeshing decolonizing Africa(n)-centred perspectives and feminist psychology, it is possible not only to produce more situated analyses of gender but also to centre issues of gender and gender inequality within processes of decolonization. For example, homophobic and sexist attacks by male students within the #RhodesMustFall movement made explicit the movement’s ‘patriarchal agenda’ (Malingo, 2016, para. 8). Ratele (2018) highlights the need to conscientize young men, both within universities and beyond, towards profeminist practices and consciousness. This kind of decolonizing feminist Africa(n)-centred psychological work is essential to promote more healthy, harmonious, and just relations among people of all genders.

Is Africa(n)-centred psychology not the same as community psychology?

The question may appear to be unnecessary to some who have been thinking about Africa(n)-centred psychology, specifically those involved in community psychology, primarily because of the manner in which community-centred psychologists position themselves with respect to mainstream psychology. Indeed, at the 1965 *Boston Conference on the Education of Psychologists for Community Mental Health*, held in Swampscott, Massachusetts, community psychology was officially launched in the United States as a proactive, prevention, and strengths-oriented means of making available psychological services to disenfranchised populations (Viola & Glantsman, 2017). However, this conception of community psychology was fundamentally conservative, and ignored the far more radical, and, at times, decolonizing, iterations of community psychology that were taking place around the world, such as in Latin America (see Montero, 1996) and, later, in SA (see Seedat & Lazarus, 2011). For our purposes then, it is important that distinctions are made between what Africa(n)-centred psychology aims to do and how it hopes to achieve its objectives in relation to community psychology in SA.

Community psychology in SA emerged in the 1980s as progressive psychologists felt that mainstream Euro-American-centric psychology was not responding to the political and social needs of the majority of the country’s population suffering under the brutality of the apartheid system (Seedat et al., 1988; Seedat & Lazarus, 2011). Community psychology in SA has entrenched itself as an institutionalized sub-discipline that focuses its attention on societal challenges, including poverty and violence faced by people within and beyond marginalized communities (Fourie, Segalo, & Terre Blanche, 2010; Nkonyama Ka Sigogo & Modipa, 2004).

If African psychology is seen as an umbrella term for all psychological work that is related to Africa (Ratele, 2017b), it transcends the registration categories as defined by the Health Professions Council of South Africa’s (HPCSA, 2011) scope of practice. Two alternative interpretations flow from this. On one hand, African psychology can be approached as encompassing all practice

categories, such as clinical and educational psychology, and all sub-disciplines of psychology, such as community psychology and cognitive psychology. On the other hand, and more preferably, African psychology needs to be understood as a position *within* different branches and areas of psychology. Interpreted in this way, it becomes clear that African psychology, and Africa(n)-centred psychology in particular, is not always community psychology, since the former, when informed by decolonization thinking and practice, troubles how Africa and Africans are hailed into community psychology. It therefore cannot be argued that all community psychology interventions and research undertaken by community psychologists in Africa are to be regarded as Africa(n)-centred psychology, by virtue of community psychology being a sub-discipline of psychology (in Africa). A nuanced discussion of the relationship between community psychology and African psychology is therefore not about whether community psychology in African countries is the same as African psychology, but whether mainstream community psychology as it is constituted at present can be seen as a kind of decolonizing Africa(n)-centred praxis in its approach to communities. Because of its 'official' origins in the United States, community psychology is frequently bound to Euro-American-centric influence, specifically neoliberal capitalist ideologies of the self and society (see Anonymous, 1986). Hence, in the face of neoliberal discourses of the market within psychology, critical approaches in community psychology (which includes decolonizing thinking; see Kagan, Burton, Duckett, Lawthom, & Siddiquee, 2011) need bolstering. What is proposed here is an orientation that may be similar to what Ivey (1986) had in mind when he proposed that 'critical South African psychology requires an indigenous structure and content' (p. 25). However, rather than simply indigenizing psychology, more community psychology practitioners should be urged to position their work with regard to a decolonizing Africa(n)-centred psychology orientation, which 'starts by posing questions about the workings of power and knowledge and what they . . . make possible in relation to Africa and its people as well as within psychology' (Ratele, 2017a, p. 322). That is to say, community psychology is in need of decolonizing African structure and matter to become Africa(n)-centred and decolonizing.

What would a decolonizing Africa(n)-centred community psychology look like?

With many of its theoretical and methodological tenets established through notions of subjugation, mainstream psychology has historically served to embolden Euro-American-centrism and coloniality (see Martín-Baró, 1994). Certainly, oppressive relations of power that survived the era of classic colonialism have informed the foundations of the field in its institutionalized form and generally continue to inform contemporary psychological practices and theories. To take just a few examples, psychology has acted in the service of torture (Wessells, Sveaass, Foster, & Dawes, 2017), sexism (Levine, Kamin, & Levine, 1974), consumer capitalism (Ewen, 1996), and apartheid-era racism (Seedat & Lazarus, 2011). Attempts at decolonizing psychology must thus aim to engage with the unequal and violent power relations between actors within the discipline and, more broadly, in the communities and societies in which psychological practice takes place (as well as those spaces within which it does not but may need to). In this respect, community psychology possesses a particular kind of decolonizing *potential to action*.

The most action-oriented community psychology's values – which are mapped broadly by Nelson and Prilleltensky (2010) – include 'self-determination, participation and social justice' as well as 'accountability to oppressed groups' (p. 35). It is at these actional junctures (which must, of course, be informed by other values of community psychology such as health, support for community structures, and respect for diversity) that the field can begin to promote and encourage self-awareness, articulating intersectional struggles, formulating identities, as well as building

resilience and resistance – all of which can be harnessed towards developing genuine decolonizing praxes that are able to bring community psychology into the orbit of liberation psychology (see Martín-Baró, 1994).

Yet, all over the world, mainstream psychologies, as well as the health and social sciences more generally, are beholden to neoliberal capitalism, which systematically bolsters neocolonialism and meta-colonialism (see Bulhan, 2015). Psychology's adherence to the neoliberal capitalist package can be observed in, for instance, stringent donor requirements, ideologically conservative ethics committees, and tremendous institutional pressure to produce peer-reviewed publications. When read within this neoliberal capitalist agenda, decolonizing praxes are repeatedly rendered unethical, cumbersome, violent, and/or unscientific. Resultantly, institutionalized community psychology, no matter how liberatory or critical in intention or scope, can be an appendage of the very neocolonial capitalist system to which it is fundamentally opposed. This Catch-22 in which most enactments of community psychology are located may, and frequently do, manifest in the discipline's facilitation of complacency, and even compliance, with numerous and violent economic, social, political, and knowledge structures that are formed and shaped by coloniality.

Perhaps, then, community psychology's contribution to a decolonizing project is to allow for a space within which marginalized populations, the locus of an authentic decolonizing engagement, are able to build localized decolonizing praxes that extend beyond the colonially demarcated parameters within which much community psychology is confined. In other words, the decolonizing potential of community psychology – which, it should be noted, has taken to the liberation psychology paradigm far more frequently than other institutionalized fields of psychology – lies in its ability to facilitate the articulation of a liberatory, decolonizing politics, all while reflexively acknowledging that it is, in large part, disciplinarily restrained from fully embodying such politics.

At present, the neoliberal and bureaucratic constitution of much mainstream community psychology prevents it from exemplifying convincingly a decolonized Africa(n)-centred psychology. Added to this, liberation psychology is rarely understood with reference to Africa(n)-centred psychology. Hence, the critical goal for a decolonizing (and therefore a liberatory) Africa(n)-centred community psychology remains to support communities in generating the conditions that allow for the reconfiguration, and the decolonization, of the very structures to which most iterations of Euro-American-centric community psychology are bound.

Conclusion

Returning to the three questions posed in the 'Introduction' section: 'What prepositions are being elided in discussion on African psychology?'; 'Why is there a necessity for an African psychology as there already is a psychology in Africa?'; and 'What is the relation of African psychology to decolonization?' First, the preposition elided always determines the kind of psychology in play. Second, African psychology in the broad sense of psychology concerning Africa does not necessarily centre Africa nor aim decolonize African communities, social identities, and subjectivities. And third, the relation between decolonization is always a process rather than an event, involving unlearning, relearning, rethinking, participation, and working towards self-determination and social justice, and dialogue.

Decolonization means fighting, undoing, and overcoming received colonial ways that have shaped economic, political, and social structures; knowledge practices (which includes psychology and other natural, health and human sciences); interpersonal relationships; and the self. Much of psychology in Africa continues to be largely shaped by colonial ideas or at best dominated by ideas, self, and society from Europe and the United States. Not all psychology in or from Africa privileges the lives and perspectives of Africa or Africans, and not all of African psychology is

decolonizing. A decolonizing psychological study, therapeutic model, or curriculum that centres and aims to liberate Africans is therefore what is termed a decolonizing Africa(n)-centred psychology. Any psychological research study, therapy intervention, or university course that centres the theories or views of Europeans or US Americans must be understood not as psychology-without-a-home but rather as Euro-American-centric psychology. Whereas 'Blackening' African psychology might go some way towards decolonizing psychology in Africa, decolonization entails more than racial and linguistic representation. Numbers are attractive because they are easily quantifiable; however, decolonization must extend beyond counting to something more slippery.

Africa(n)-centred psychology humanizes. It seeks to give voice to all humans, but especially to those whose voices have been dismissed. This includes Africans in the context of Western- or Euro-American-dominated psychology, and Black people in the context of White-centric psychology. By centring Africa and Africans in psychology, it becomes possible to consider meaningfully the ways in which our histories and contemporary realities are constituted by interlocking systems of oppression, including gendered and racial oppression. In this way, a focus on feminist Africa(n)-centred psychological perspectives can contribute to processes of decolonization.

While some scholars might view African psychology as a branch of psychology, and others as extending beyond the borders of psychology as it exists, Africa(n)-centredness is taken here as applicable within all branches and areas of psychology. As such, a decolonizing Africa(n)-centred psychology is one that takes issues of power, encompassing ideological, cultural, intellectual, political, social, economic, and psychological power, as being at the forefront of most of the issues confronting African communities.

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