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Afrikan-Centred Psychology: Illuminating the Human Spirit - Spirit(ness), *Skh Djr*, *Moya*



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Tutankhamun (Tutu Ankoma), gold funerary mask © *Lee Boltin*

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Alternation

Interdisciplinary Journal for the Study of the
Arts and Humanities in
Southern Africa

**Afrikan-Centred Psychology:
Illuminating the Human Spirit -
Spirit(ness), *Skh Djr, Moya***

Editors

Nhlanhla Mkhize
&
Wade W. Nobles

2020

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Durban

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ARTICLES

Afrikan-Centred Psychology:

Illuminating the Human Spirit: Spirit(ness), *Skh Djr*, *Moya*

<i>Nhlanhla Mkhize and Wade W. Nobles</i> Editorial	1
<i>Wade W. Nobles and Nhlanhla Mkhize</i> The Charge and the Challenge of Illuminating the Spirit (<i>Skh Djr</i>): The Question of Paradigm, Episteme and Terminology for Therapy and Treatment	6
<i>Taylor D. Duckett</i> Spirit Talk within the African Epistemological Framework	40
<i>Vera L. Nobles and Roberta M. Federico</i> African Tongues in Our Mouths: Their Role in African-Centered Psychology	50
<i>Julia Simango and Puleng Segalo</i> Re-imagining Psychology: An Africanist Perspective ..	67
<i>Derek Wilson</i> African Cultural Psychology	85
<i>Zethu Cakata</i> Safely Nestled in IsiXhosa is a Psychology of a People	113
<i>Lesiba Baloyi</i> Epistemological Exclusion: The Case of the Master's Degree Programmes in Clinical Psychology in South Africa	130
<i>Huberta Jackson-Lowman</i> Serial Forced Displacements and the Decline of <i>Ubuntu</i> in Afrikan American Communities	153
<i>Cheryl Tawede Grills, Enola G. Aird and Patrick G. Frierson</i> African Psychology and the Global Movement for Freedom from the Lie of Black Inferiority	170
<i>Molebogeng Kalija Makobe-Rabothata</i> The Adoption of <i>Lekgotla</i> in Understanding Positive Experiences of Working in a Transforming Open Distance Learning (ODL) Academic Context	207
<i>Lawford L. Goddard, Daryl M. Rowe, Erica M. McInnis and Chante DeLoach</i> The Role of Proverbs in African-Centred Psychology	224
<i>Patricia Nunley</i> <i>NGOLO</i> : (Re)membering the African American Child as a Normative for Self-Healing Power	244
<i>Mogobe Bernard Ramose</i> Critique of Ramon Grosfoguel's 'The Epistemic Decolonial Turn'	271

BOOK REVIEW

Jabulani Mkhize The Quintessential Frantz Fanon. Review of <i>Frantz Fanon: Alienation and Freedom</i> , edited by Jean Khalfa and Robert J.C. Young (2019)	308
Contributors	315



Editorial: Afrikan-Centred Psychology: Illuminating the Human Spirit – Spirit(ness), *Skh Djr, Moya*

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Introduction

Proponents of the Eurocentric psychological paradigm, which is often touted as universal, albeit in the absence of evidence, deny the existence of a Pan-African metaphysical epistemology and ontology (Martin 2008) that form the foundations of an Afrikan-centred psychology. Colonial conquest did not only lead to the loss of land, livelihoods, and fragmentation of being; it was accompanied by a concerted effort to deny the historical contributions of continental Africans and those in the Diaspora, to world knowledge. This special edition on Afrikan Psychology is aptly titled, ‘Illuminating the Human Spirit’. This is not only in an attempt to return to the source in order to map a way forward, in the Sankofa tradition; it also marks a conscious effort to re-claim and re-insert the wholistic metaphysical epistemology and ontology, which is characteristic of the Afrocentric paradigm, into psychology. In the Afrocentric paradigm, illumination of the Human Spirit, or Spirit-ness, is the quintessential aspect of our being-ness. Given the psychological effect that the ideology of White supremacy and European imperialism, in the form of slavery and colonialism, have had on Africa and her people worldwide, this scientific discourse should have never been possible. The resultant consequence, if not the intent, of enslavement and colonization to create a shattered African consciousness and fractured Black identity wherein African people globally have no value and a distorted sense

of well-being was thought to be irrevocable. However, the psychological effect of colonization and enslavement was (is) not a *fait accompli*. It is important to frame this discussion in its proper historical context as an ongoing contribution to the liberation of the African mind and well-being.

The importance of Black Psychologists from around the world, meeting at the 30th International Congress of Psychologists in Cape Town, South Africa in 2012, reconvening at the ABPsi meeting in New Orleans in 2013, and then again at the 1st International Congress of the Forum of Afrikan Psychology in 2014, cannot be understated. Starting with the Pan African discourse in the Special Issue of the *Journal of Black Psychology* (2013), and continuing to *Alternation's* special edition focusing on *African Indigenous Knowledge Systems (AIKS) in Mental Health, African Literature, and Education* (2016) to *Journal of Black Psychology's Psychology in the Caribbean: Broadening Our Knowledge Base* (2019) through this *Alternation* special Edition, *Afrikan-Centred Psychology: Illuminating the Human Spirit* (2020), these ongoing discussions may very well represent evidence of the indestructible vitality of our collective pre-colonial/enslavement Ancestral mindset that serves as the springboard and moral justification for the collective restoration of the African mind.

Demonstrative of this reality, we have intentionally organized this issue to show the common experience and perspectives shared by both continental and diasporan Pan African psychologists.



This special edition comprises thirteen articles. Wade W. Nobles and Nhlanhla Mkhize's article interrogates the Kmt-Nubia/ Bantu-Kongo grand narrative from which they advance the Science of the Spirit. The Afrocentric paradigm, which poses that all reality is Spirit, is explored. The authors conclude with a call for the development of Pan African textbooks and terminology that reflect this paradigm.

Continuing on the same theme, namely that the essence of all reality is Spirit, and drawing from the spiritual traditions of the BaKongo, Dogon, Akan and Yoruba, Taylor D. Duckett investigates the African-American Christian tradition of speaking in tongues in relation to the invocation of Spirit within indigenous African spiritual systems. She argues that Spirit talk can bypass colonized linguistic systems, thereby facilitating the recognition

of oneself and others. Vera L. Nobles and Roberta M. Federico recognize the importance of honouring the retention of African languages as acts of retention and resistance. They seek to show how the recognition of Ebonics and Bantu Portuguese can serve as important tools for the restoration of wellness for Africans on the continent and the diaspora.

Julia Simango and Puleng Segalo argue that the violence that was unleashed against Africans, in the form of enslavement, genocide, oppression, colonialism and exploitation, remains deeply entrenched in the colonial education system, amongst others. Psychology was used as a tool to justify the dehumanization and oppression of Africans. Their article seeks to draw from African spirituality and African knowledge systems in general, to resist the mental onslaught and other challenges that Africans encounter in the education system and in communities. Derek Wilson discusses the cultural perspective in Psychology, with a focus on the cultural connections between African and African-American people. The discussion explores the alien Western episteme, African episteme and cosmology, African psychological functioning, and cultural psychology for the people of African descent. The relevance of the cultural psychological perspective for the expression of thought and emotion and other behaviors, is highlighted.

The article by Zethu Cakata calls upon us to re-imagine education by interrogating African languages in order to understand the psychological concepts and epistemological realities embedded in them. Two *isiXhosa* concepts, *ukuphalaza imbilini* and *ukuzityanda igila*, are used to illustrate the epistemology that is carried in and through language. Lesiba Baloyi continues this theme, with particular reference to the training of psychologists in South Africa. He calls for the inclusion of African epistemology in the psychology curriculum and the use of African languages in the training of psychologists. Huberta Jackson-Lowman argues that the United States of America's housing policies have been identified as one of the disruptive influences in Black communities, in the same way that colonial violence disconnected African-Americans from their histories, their land, cultures and traditions. She calls for 'The development of cultural standards that prescribe cultural policies which are designed to restore *Ubuntu* in Black communities as a ... palliative for ameliorating the dehumanizing environment created by serial forced displacements'.

Cheryl Tawede Grills, Enola G. Aird and Patrick G. Frierson devote their attention to describing an Afrocentric intervention method that is aimed

at healing the trauma caused by the ‘lie’ of White superiority and Black inferiority. This community-based method, known as the Emotional Emancipation Circle, is described in detail. The Pan African relevance of the methodology is emphasized. Molebogeng Kalija Makobe-Rabothata begins her article by calling into question the existence of an ‘African university’ since colonization. Evidently, she is drawing from the debate that seeks to distinguish ‘universities in Africa’ from ‘African universities’. She uses the African idea of *lekgotla*, an open-ended discourse or dialogue aimed at consensus building, to demonstrate how educational transformation (‘decolonization’) in South African education, can be attained. It is important to note that Afrikan-centred psychology draws from many sources, including the written as well as oral sources. Indeed, orality, the Spoken Word, *Izwi*, is as important as written discourse (if not more). Lawford L. Goddard, Daryl M. Rowe, Erica M. McInnis and Chante DeLoach explore the role of proverbs in Afrikan-centred Psychology. The authors show how proverbs represent people’s orientation towards the world and their ways of dealing with life’s challenges.

Discourses of Black inferiority or deficiency abound in the Euro-centric psychological literature – the Deficit Model. Patricia Nunley explores how these narratives, which constitute ‘Psychic Terrorism’, undermine the normal development of Black children. Using the idea of *Ngolo*, the ‘energy of self-healing and power’, Nunley highlights the need for African-American children to function in wholeness. This incorporates the understanding of oneself as Spirit, and the recognition that being unfolds in three realms: the being, been and will be (future). In the concluding article, Mogobe Bernard Ramose problematizes Grosfuguel’s ‘The Epistemic Decolonial Turn’. Rather than assimilating the idea of the decolonial, Ramose argues, an Afrocentric critical discourse needs to focus on the re-humanization of human relations, in line with the philosophy of *Ubuntu*, which is premised on mutual recognition and equality.

Conclusion

The articles in this special edition do not only signal an advancement in the development of a Pan African Psychology that is based on the idea of Spirit(ness), they also constitute a historic milestone in the cooperation between the Association of Black Psychologists (ABPsi) and the Forum of

Afrikan Psychology (FAP). The articles cover a range of theoretical and conceptual issues and also point towards the urgent need to unearth the psychological concepts that are embedded in African languages. The development of Afrocentric-based psychological interventions, and curriculum development, are highlighted. It is recommended that future editions should focus more on the intervention and methodological considerations in Afrikan-centred Psychology.

Finally, the articles affirm the common philosophical underpinnings of Afrikan-centred Psychology and collectively invite the ‘community intelligence’ to courageously examine the idea of *Skh Djr*, illuminating the Spirit(ness), as the accurate and appropriate classification of the science.

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The Charge and the Challenge of Illuminating the Spirit (*Skh Djr*): The Question of Paradigm, Episteme, and Terminology for Therapy and Treatment

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Abstract

This article engages in a discourse that further interrogates the idea of a Kmt-Nubia/ BaNtu-Kongo grand narrative and from that positioning advances the Science of the Spirit. It explores an African paradigm, episteme and associate critical terminology as useful tools for the structuring of the Science of the Spirit that is inclusive of total reality (the visible and invisible) and conclude with a call for a *Skh Djr* (Pan African Psychology) Textbook for counseling, treatment and therapeutic interventions that are untethered to the general categories and areas found in Euro-American psychology.

Keywords: Spirit (*Skh Djr*), Moya, paradigm, episteme, therapy, treatment, Pan African Psychology

**Icala nenselele yokucacisa umoya (*Skh Djr*):
Umbuzo wendlelakubuka, ukuqinisekisa
ulwazi kanye namatemu ohlelo lokwelashwa
kanye nokwelapha**

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Iqoqa

Leli phepha lidingida uhlaziyongxoxo oluphinde lungenelele olwazini jikelele olulanda nge-Kmt-Nubia/BaNtu-Kongo bese kuthi ngaleyo ndlela luqhubele phambili isayensi yomoya. Luhlwaya indlelakubuka yobu-Afrika, ukuqinisa ulwazi kanye namatemu ahlaziyayo ahambisanayo njengamathuluzi abalulekile okuhlela isayensi yomoya ehlanganisa iqiniso eliphelele (elibonakalayo nelingabonakali) futhi luphetha ngokuhlaba ikhwelo ngeSkh Djr (ubumbano ngesifundongqondo ngobu-Afrika) incwadi yokweluleka, ukwelashwa kanye nezinhlelo zokwelapha ezingenzelwe kuphela izigaba ezijwayelekile kanye nezihloko ezitholakala kusifundonqondo ngeYurophu neMelika.

Amagama asemqoka: Umoya (*Skh Djr*), Indlelakubuka, Ukuqinisa ulwazi, Uhlelo lokwelapha, Ukwelashwa, ubumbano ngesifundongqondo ngobu-Afrika

Introduction

When a small group of Black Psychology professionals and students dramatically broke away from the American Psychological Association (APA), and by association, from the field of Euro-American psychology, that act ushered in a revolutionary search for an appropriate field of study and practice that was designed specifically for people of Black African ancestry. This break was nothing short of a scientific revolution (Clark 1972) that has evolved over time to challenge and uproot the western grand narrative that universalised Euro-American psychology. This disruption of Euro-American psychology's hegemonic hold on psychological thought and practice has challenged Black African Psychologists to seek our own indigenous philosophical grounding, paradigmatic frameworks, theoretical orientations, and therapeutic practices. It should be noted here that, as conventionally used, the idea of indigeneity gives uncritical privilege to a superior European status, which renders the 'indigenous', by comparison, as a less than equal kind. Indigenous, in this sense, however, pertains to 'originating or occurring naturally in a particular place'. Hence, ideas, thoughts, and theories originating or occurring in the West, i.e. Euro-American, are indigenous to the West. Every identifiable grouping of people has its own indigenous ideas, beliefs, and thoughts. None are implicitly superior or inferior to any others. Raising up and holding in high regard and deep respect African indigenous thought and practice is the requisite task for engaging in the ongoing development of an African-centred science of human functioning unfiltered by a Western thought and episteme.

Black Psychology, the Evolution of Terminology and the Importance of Nomenclature, ergo *Skh Djr, Moya*

The evolving perspectives found in Black Psychology, African Psychology, and Pan-African Psychology are coterminous with the different naming of the field, which should be seen or understood as the evolution of an emancipatory process, wherein psychologists of African ancestry are attempting to reclaim the authority to name and define a discipline devoted to the understanding and cultivation of human psychological development, functioning, and healing.

Dr. Jacob Carruthers noted that 'African scholar practitioners must break the chain that links African ideas to European ones and listen to the voice of the Ancestors without European Interpreters Ultimately 'knowing' is the

result of a divine, universal and intergenerational conversation among God, the creator, the cosmos, nature and the creatures of the earth, especially human beings' (Carruthers 1995: 31). During this same time, Asa Hilliard (2008: 24) pointed out that, 'It is time to take charge of our tools, our problem definitions, our priorities, and to change directions. It is time to reach for excellence. We must have a mission to assume greater responsibility and control over our children's socialisation and to push for education for critical consciousness'. This guidance is critical to our charge and challenge of exploring the question of African human functioning.

The task additionally requires revisiting what, in practice, constitutes the idea or notion of a field of study, or scientific discipline. A scientific discipline, by definition, identifies not only its subject matter, but also its intellectual territory (boundaries); a priori assumptions; specific bodies of knowing and knowledge (episteme); internal/external regulatory practice; methods; conventions and standards; instructional technology; and institutional and social groupings.

The unspoken paradox here is that in identifying our field or discipline as Black Psychology or even Pan-African Psychology does nothing to change or correct Euro-American psychology's a priori assumptions about being human, prevailing episteme, regulatory practice(s) or healing technology. At best, it defines our field as an 'ethnic'¹ or 'coloured' adjunct to Euro-American psychology. While Black African peoples' geo-political and social-historical experiences with Blackness functions as a powerfully unifying theme, by qualifying as such, our current intellectual practice does little to rescue African being and thought. 'Blackenisation' or 'Africanisation' of Euro-American psychology (Grills & Rowe 1998) not only does little to reconceptualise and correct Euro-American psychology, it ought not to be our goal.

The adjective, Black or African denotes a qualifier—a determinative or modifier of the phenomenon called psychology. Hence, the classification as Black psychology, African psychology and/ or Pan-African psychology

¹ It is important to note that the origin of the term, 'ethnic' can be traced to ecclesiastical Latin from Greek *ethnikos*, meaning 'heathen', and *ethnos*, meaning 'nation'. In late Middle English, it came to denote a person not of the Christian or Jewish faith. Hence, as an ethnic adjunct to Euro-American psychology, Black psychology would be understood to constitute the psychology of the heathen nations, or those not of the Jewish or Christian faith.

constitutes the discipline as a modified version of Western psychology. Except for the mutations, aberrancies, adoptions, and adjustments resulting from enslavement and colonisation, the human functioning of African people should, in fact, not be thought of as simply modified Western (Euro-American) human functioning. A common response to this dilemma has been the attempt to blend aspects of Western psychological theories and practices that are the least toxic with the emerging developments in African psychology. While this 'hybridisation', in some instances, has proven to be helpful or useful, it could also be seen as a form of 'mulefication' of African psychology. As the breeding of a horse and a donkey results in a mule, so too without critical assessment, do the blending of features found in Western psychology with features of African thought potentially result in ideas, theories and practices that constitute a system of thought that is incapable of reproducing itself. A 'muleified' version of African human functioning which is intellectually impotent, or merely a continuation of Western psychology by default, is unacceptable. In effect, to attach Black or, for that matter, Pan-African to the field of Euro-American psychology, especially when it comes to matters of psychological treatment, only addresses or changes the 'subject' to Black or African people, and possibly their accepted social grouping, but ultimately does little to alter the field or the practice itself.

This termination requires more than just an adjectival shift or switch. The goal of claiming an accurate and appropriate terminology and nomenclature for identifying the science of African human functioning is, in fact, made more difficult due to the legacies of colonialism, enslavement, and Westernisation. For example, the concepts and language of Western psychology prevents us from freely exploring the full (visible and invisible) reality of be(ing) African (whether continental or diasporan). Too often our exploration of African thought and behavior is conceptually incarcerated (Nobles 1976) by the languages, concepts, and ideas we have inherited from our Euro-American psychological education. In a very real way, our education is a continuation of 'philanthropic colonialism', wherein the general posture and attitude of the academy relative to African people views the latter as dependent and needy, where the Euro-American 'mission' and/or burden is to 'save' or 'uplift' the African through their understanding and knowing, without serious consideration of African thought. Our work unknowingly falls victim to a condition defined as cultural antimony, wherein the cultural substance or deep structure (especially its precepts) between two or more cultures stand in

contradistinction to one another. This condition can result in contradiction, conflict, opposition, and incompatibility in their respective meanings of reality. The belief in White Supremacy creates a state of ‘cultural antimony’ in the mindset of white people that creates a pathological need to accept without evidence any and all examples of Black negation and nullification. This condition, in many ways, is evidenced by the ‘incommensurability’ between features, aspects, and manifestations found in African and Euro-American cultures. Due to an unfettered Western education, Black people are taught to accept Black inferiority. Consequently, any idea of Black original thought, especially about human functioning, is seen as incompatible with real thought, psychological knowing and, therefore, unnecessary and unscientific.

Accordingly, our task should be to deeply explore an African paradigm, episteme and associate critical terminology as useful tools for the structuring of the Science of the Spirit for understanding African human functioning and therapeutic practice unfiltered by western thought and episteme.

From Episteme to Paradigm to Narrative

African deep thought and wisdom traditions suggest that the Universe is ‘matter’ in appearance, and ‘spirit’ in reality. The material universe is only the perception of reality, that is, in fact, non-localised, immutable, and eternal spirit. African epistemology, consequently, imprints the natural centrality of the role of the Divine and of the ‘Spirit’ in the acquisition of knowledge (Advice & Pascah Mungwini 2010).

Using indigenous epistemic reflections, cultural appreciations, and apperceptions about reality to inform their knowing framework and intellectual mindset, an African Grand Narrative as the mindset for guiding counselling and treatment would be a constructive process, reflecting deep intrinsic African beliefs as both descriptive and explanatory discourse by which Africans interpret and reinterpret their experiences in order to recognise, record, and make sense of events and experiences, especially wellness and *dis-at-ease*. The power of the grand narrative is that it shapes and influences what we see and accept as normal. The African grand narrative shapes and influences, without European or Western interference, what is understood to be and accepted as normal.

All humans use their own epistemic reflections, cultural appreciations, and apperceptions about reality to inform how they ‘know’ and ‘think’ which, in turn, allows one to further recognise and record events and experiences as well as ‘make sense’ out of reality. Through an African lens, episteme (knowing/ understanding) would concern itself with:

- (1) how reality is defined;
- (2) the nature of reality;
- (3) how truth is determined;
- (4) that which is knowable and can be known; and
- (5) what the relationship is between knowing (process); the known (subject) and the knower (being) – what should/could be done in response to the known.

There are several features or assumptions which distinguish an ‘African paradigm: ’

- (1) the universe is a vital cosmos;
- (2) the ultimate nature of reality is Spirit;
- (3) human beings are organically related to everything in the universe;
- (4) knowledge comes from participation with and experience in the universe (reality); and
- (5) human relatedness is the praxis of our humanity.

The African epistemological method would allow indigenous African treatment and therapy to be guided by participation (equilibrium- balance between knowing, knower and known), relatedness (harmony) and unicity (balance between rationality and intuition; analyses and syntheses; known and unknown, and the visible and invisible).

Dr. Joseph White (1980) charged Black researchers with ‘develop[ing] our own’ African-centered psychology and with advocating for the indigenisation of the discipline, and the development of new models and methodological approaches that build upon the history and culture of African people. Curtis Banks (1992: xx) has suggested in this regard that, ‘Insofar as that reality is the collective experience of African peoples, the ultimate description of the new science of the Spirit will never spring from the mind of any intelligent scientist. Rather, it will spring from the collective wisdom and

The Charge and the Challenge of Illuminating the Spirit (Skh Djr)

sensitivities of the community intelligence of all its members'. Ultimately, the appropriateness of any suggested nomenclatures' i.e. *Sakhu Sheti*², appropriateness, and accuracy will be evidenced by the extent to which it is adopted by the 'community intelligence' of the collective wisdom of those who currently call themselves Black, African, or Pan African psychologists. To stimulate such a wellspring and as an act of self-determination, we wish now to turn to the notions of *Skh* and *Moya*.

Skh: The concept of *Sakhu (Skh)* was introduced as a refinement of the concept of African essence presented in the science of African human functioning (Nobles 2013a). As a system of thought and action, *Skh Djr* examines and utilises the processes that allow for the illumination and liberation of the Spirit. Technically, *Skh Djr* is a term representing the further Africanisation of Black Psychology, or the science of human functioning. It is a filtered (free of western contamination) process of understanding, examining, and explicating the meaning, nature and functioning of being human for African people by conducting a deep, profound, and penetrating search, study, and mastery of the process of 'illuminating' the human Spirit or essence and totality of all human experiences and phenomena. *Skh Djr* requires one to think deeply and profoundly about African meanings and understandings of the nature of being human. Parenthetically, this process can only be accomplished by interrogating the language and logic of traditional African peoples, which, in turn, will allow greater insight into the functioning of contemporary African

² The concepts of *Shushukulu*, *Nkindi*, *Nganga* and *Nkondi* are all congruent with *Sakhu Sheti*. The term *Shushukulu* means 'a being who has eyes in the physical world as well as in the spiritual world, or a knower that sees both sides'. Neither the inside or outside has a secret. *Shushukulu*, in the singular is *Nkindi*. To the question: what is *Nkindi*? The Luba answer '*udi Nkindi shushukulu ngelelu wa mu ngenyi*' meaning an '*Nkindi* is a specialist or a scholar in the art/way of thinking'. The *Nkindi* is a *Shushukulu* in the art or manner of 'making, building, developing, weaving, stretching, extending, expanding, creating and inventing' thoughts or ideas'. The *ciLuba* concept of *Endela* is equally informative. *Endela* is 'one who seeks, researches, probes, inquires deeply about a subject' A *shushukulu*, *nkindi*, and *nganga* are not only qualified to deal with physical issues, but are able to communicate and address issues of the Spirit: they have 'eyes' in both worlds. They are not only wise men/women, they are therapists and healers.

peoples. *Skh Djr* operates from the basic premise that there is an African way of being that reflects an African ‘quality of thought and practice’ (Nobles 2015a), rooted in the cultural image and interest of people of African ancestry (Karenga & Carruthers 1986).

The concept or notion of *Skh Sdi*, in turn, represents the practice (method/ methodology) of ‘*Sakhu*’ (illumination). Consistent with the African adage ‘if it exists, it most assuredly is spirit’, the *Skh Sdi* (*Sakhu* practitioners/ methodologists) would be ‘spirits (humans) who are ‘led’ by Spirit, who ‘read’ spirit(s); who seek help and protection from Spirit and engages in the ‘salvation’ and ‘nurturing’ (healing) of Spirit by performing the *Sakhu* as it should be done’.

Moya: The idea that all reality, visible and invisible, is Spirit, is captured by the Nguni³ concept of *Moya* and the Sotho-Tswana conception of *thuto ya sa moya*, the ever-present, vibrating energy (*amandla*) emanating from the Ultimate (Initial) Source or Being, *UMvelinqangqi*, and which permeates all phenomena. The *Moya* or energy has been in existence since *UMvelinqangqi* ushered be-ing into motion; in fact, the entire universe is comprised of the ceaseless extension of the First Being, hence the Afrocentric idea that be-ing is becoming (Karenga 2006) or *uku-ba* in the language of the Nguni people of Southern Africa. While the word *UMvelinqangqi* is roughly translated as the Divine/God in the standard English language, an etymological analysis of the term points towards a very complex and philosophical understanding of reality in which God is not only the first and final source of being, but is also continuous with the rest of creation. In the word, *UM-veli-ng(q)a-ng(q)i*⁴ the prefix, *um-* points to a process of be-ing or becoming (motion); *-veli* is derived from the verb *-vela*, to emerge; *-ngqa* qualifies the emerging entity (*-Veli*) as being the first one (*-ngqa*, *very first*) to do so; while *-ngqi* indicates that the emerging entity is at the same time the final destination of be-ing (*-ngqi*, final, end). From this as well as other sources is derived the understanding that the telos of be-ing in indigenous African thought is to reach the state of perfection, at which point one is unified with the Source of Being,

³ For the purposes of this article, we refer to Nguni dialects, isiNdebele, isiSwati, isiXhosa and isiZulu in the collective, as they are all variations of a common Bantu grammar.

⁴ Note: to ease pronunciation, the ‘q’ in both ‘ngqa’ and ‘ngqi’ is often omitted, leading to the word being written and pronounced *uUmvelinqangi*.

uMvelingqangqi. A complete exposition of *uMvelingqangqi* is beyond the scope of this article, save to mention that the life journey may have to be repeated many times and involve forms of re-incarnation, before the Godhead is achieved (Bynum 1999). Similarly, the commonly used alternative word for God in isiZulu, *u-Nkulunkulu*, needs to be understood beyond the conception that it points to one's grandparents (*-khulu*) and the grandparents (*-khulu*) before them, *ad infinitum*; which is a partial, though limited explanation. Indeed, the adjective *'-khulu'* means 'great' in the Nguni languages, and the noun is *'iinkulu'* (that which is great or vast). Bantu languages usually denote vastness (greatness) beyond imagination by doubling (multiplying) the word of the entity in question, hence, *i-nkulu-nkulu* when the word refers to objects and *u-Nkulu-nkulu* when the word is personified (i.e., it takes characteristics of Noun Class 1 which is generally reserved for humans). With this logic, one would argue that the word *u-Nkulu-nkulu* (God) denotes, the Ever-expansive One; the Multiplicative One whose vastness is not only continuous with the rest of creation but is beyond imagination.

If one takes the above analysis into account, it is evident that not only does all of creation comprise an extension or multiplication from the single source in whose Spirit or *Moya* we all partake; the final destination of creation is unification with the Divine self. In support of this thesis, Credo Mutwa (2003: 18) writes as follows: 'The Christians have told us that God created the soul, but our understanding in Africa is a little different from this. We believe that the soul is in fact an integral part of God and that our souls came into being when God created Himself [Herself]⁵. We exist because God exists, and our souls are fragments of this Universal Self'. Echoing the twin ideas of consubstantiation and the non-dual nature of reality (di-unital logic) (Dixon 1970) as understood in indigenous African epistemology, Mutwa (1998: 18) goes on to write that the soul or 'The *moya* can be trapped in too small a body, or too weak, or sick. We believe that the *moya* also breaks into smaller globules in a body, so that there is a *moya* of the blood, a *moya* of the liver, of the

⁵ The English language, which distinguishes between the male and the female pronouns, has put a constraint on Mutwa's writing, leading to the use of the male pronoun for the Universal Self he is writing about, when there are no gendered pronouns in Bantu/African languages and the Universal Self (God) is understood to be and depicted as hermaphrodite. This underscores the importance of linguistic analysis in an African episteme.

stomach, and so on. And if the *moya* of that part is sick, then the organ itself is also sick, and is not functioning properly. That is why the soul [*moya*] affects the body in such intimate ways'. It is on this understanding, therefore, that Afrocentric psychology understands life in general as a series of endless transformations from one state of being to another, leading ultimately to the unification with the Godhead, *UMvelingqangqi* the Source of all Life. Put differently, be-ing (in a singular case) is *Moya* (Spirit) and the totality of being is *Moya*.

Skh, along with the ideas of *Moya* can be offered, herein, as the recommended terminology for the 'African Science of the Spirit'.

The Challenge: Illuminating the Spirit

Wellness can only make sense in context of what it means to be (Spirit). The challenge of illuminating the African Spirit and creating treatment interventions, therefore, must begin with an understanding of the meaning of 'being' for African people. Ngubane (1979: 62) argues that the African understanding of the person is a 'protein' evaluation of the human being, which flowed into Nile Valley high culture of the Ancient Kemites, and subsequently created clusters of similar conceptions all over Africa. What is recognised as African culture and civilisation is, in fact, the combined social conventions and inventions emerging from a common African meaning of the person.

Before exploring indigenous African knowledge systems, it may be helpful to revisit Bantu-Kongo genesis beliefs and the underlying logic of *UbuNtu* through African languages and logic as exemplary of African deep thought and philosophy.

Bantu-Kongo: The Bantu-Kongo believe that the heated force of *Kalunga* blew up and down as a huge storm of projectiles, *Limbwandende*, fusing together a huge mass. In the process of cooling, solidification of the fused mass occurs, giving birth to the Earth (Fu-Kiau 2001). In effect, the Bantu believe that all of reality (*Kalunga*) is fundamentally a process of perpetual and mutual sending and receiving of Spirit (energy) in the form of waves and radiations. *Kalunga* or reality is the totality, the completeness of all life. It is an ocean of energy, a force in motion. *Kalunga* is everything, sharing life and becoming life continually after life itself. As the totality or the complete living, *Kalunga* is comprised of both a visible realm (*Ku Nseke*) and

The Charge and the Challenge of Illuminating the Spirit (Skh Djr)

an invisible realm (*Ku Mpemba*). The visible physical world has Spirit (energy) as its most important element or nature. Referred to as *Nkisi* (medicine), the Spirit element of the physical (visible) world has the power to care, cure, heal and guide. The invisible (spiritual) world (*Ku Mpemba*) is comprised of human experience, ancestor experience and the soul-mind experience. The *Ku Mpemba* has Spirit (energy) as its most important element or nature. In effect, if reality (visible and invisible) is, it is Spirit. All that exists are, therefore, different concrete expressions of Spirit. In effect, 'Being' is being Spirit in a reality of Spirit. Fu-Kiau (2001) further clarifies that the human being or *MuNtu* is a 'threefold unfolding' experience in the realms of yet-to live, living, and after living. He further notes that a human being is a living sun (energy), possessing 'knowing and knowable' Spirit (energy) through which Spirit in human form has an enduring relationship with the total perceptible and ponderable universe. The Bantu-Kongo believe that diverse forces and waves of energy that govern life surround humans. This fire-force called *Kalunga* is complete in and of itself and emerges within the emptiness or nothingness and becomes the source of life on earth.

Based in the interrogation of the knowing implications of classical civilizations of Kmt (Egypt) and Nubia, and the ancient beliefs of the Bantu and Kongo people, Nobles (2015b) proposed that an African Grand Narrative be called *Kmt-Nubian – Bantu/ Kongo*. The African Grand Narrative, *Kmt-Nubian – BaNtu/ Kongo*, in turn, understands that all in reality is 'Spirit' or 'Energy' and that a particular process of knowing emerges from African genesis or creation myths, the meaning of being human, and concept of life and death.

UbuNtu: In terms of *UbunNtu*, the construct *Ntu* is thought to be the universal expression of Spirit or force. *Ntu* inseparable from *Umu* is 'Being' itself (Kagame 1989). Conceptually, *Ntu* as a modal point at which Spirit as being assumes concrete form, is reflected in four categories of expression in *BaNtu* philosophy. In effect, there is one essence with four categories of expression. Human beings (*Mu Ntu* or *Muntu*) are an expression of Spirit or force (*Ntu*). Place and Time (*Ha Ntu* or *Hantu*) are equally expressions of Spirit or force (*Ntu*). All the material objects (*Ki Ntu*, *Kintu* or *i-zi Nto*) like mountains, other animals, rivers, and so on, are Spirit expressions (*Ntu*). Joy, beauty, laughter, love, emotions, and so on (*Ku Ntu* or *Kuntu*) are equally Spirit expressions (*Ntu*). 'UbuNtu' is, therefore, Spirit in which Being and beings coalesce. It is the cosmic universal force.

Being human is to be Spirit, energy or power. Being Spirit is to be one who lives and moves within and is inseparable from the ocean of waves/radiations of Spirit (energy or power). A human being is ‘spirit’ who affirms one’s humanity by recognising the humanity of others and on that basis establishes humane relations with them. A human being is ‘spirit’ whose unfolding is a constant and continual inquiry into its own being, experience, knowledge, and truth (Ramose 1991). To be human is to be a Spirit in motion (unfolding). Being human is being a phenomenon of perpetual, constant, and continual unfolding (vibration – sharing and exchanging) of life Spirit. Humans are containers and instruments of Divine Spirit and relationships. A human being is akin to a living sun (unlimited power), possessing a ‘knowing and knowable’ Spirit (energy or power) through which one has an enduring relationship with the total perceptible and ponderable universe. The human being is a three-fold unfolding experience of yet-to-live, living, and after-living Spirit.

‘Spiritness: ’ To capture this understanding, the term ‘Spiritness’ is offered. ‘Spiritness’ was introduced (Nobles 1997) as a construct representing the belief that the complexity of being a person (as immaterial and material) gives one an intrinsic human value, and that the person is, in fact, a process of being, becoming and belonging. ‘Spiritness’ recognises that, as Spirit, beings simultaneously have a metaphysical connection and ethereal extension into and between the supra world of the Deities, the inter-world of other beings, and the inner world of oneself. It is believed that African people experience their ‘Spiritness’ simultaneously as a metaphysical state and an ethereal extension or connection into and between the different realms of reality⁶.

Further Structuring African (*Skh, Moya*) Science Spirit

When the human spirit is well, whole, and healthy, being human is experienced and characterised by confidence, competence and a sense of full possibility and unlimited potentiality (Nobles 2009, unpublished manuscript).

⁶ It is important to note here, parenthetically, that the misunderstanding of African beingness, i.e., as ‘human being’ and not ‘spirit being’ has resulted in the misidentification of African ‘spiritness’ as simply spirituality.

The task of the next millennium for continental and diaspora Black African people is to be authentically African and, in so doing, create time, place, and space on the stage of humanity's future. Ours is to be African by understanding the African Spirit, in order to heal the wounds through African Spirit Science. In fact, our fundamental task, as we enter the next millennium, is to address the dual challenge of our existential problematic by resisting our de-Africanisation (de-culturalisation) while we retain and advance our sense of Africanity (African Spirit) in a non-African or, more correctly, an anti-African environment.

Wellness and Illness: Having presented the indigenous African understanding of the human being and all of creation as Spirit, it is necessary also to discuss the main tenets of wellness and illness from an indigenous African epistemological stance. It is not the absence of disease *per se* that defines wellness or health in the Afrocentric paradigm. Health and wellness are indicated by the connection or equilibrium within the person. In terms of the intrapsychic community of selves comprising the human person (Ogbonnaya 1994); disconnection from other people, the community, the land, the environment (ecology), the ancestors, and ultimately Spirit is what constitutes illness or dis-ease. This compressive understanding of health and illness is commensurate with the view of creation as espoused by the inhabitants of the Nile Valley civilisations and their descendants. According to this view, God created the world by means of a process of re-ordering chaos (imbalance or disorder) into a process of order, balance, harmony, or wholeness, thus ushering order (*uzinzo*) from disorder (*inhlakanhlaka, inxushunxushu*), a process that continues to date in various forms.

There are many forms of disorder or disconnection⁷, all of which potentially lead to illness or dis-ease; some of which have the potential to bring an end to life as we know it. Below is an attempt to capture a few indices of disconnection, albeit in summary form.

⁷ The idea of disconnection differs from the Euro-American psychological idea of 'alienation'. It is more akin to disconnected Spirit, wherein disconnection results in a complex of debilitating, corrosive and malignant beliefs, values and attitudes (confusion, contradictions, conflict, fear, anxiety, insecurity, anger, hostility, anomaly and ignorance). The experience of the forms of disconnection are thought to be represented by the idea of shattered consciousness and fractured identity (see Nobles 2013b).

- **Disconnection from the Self:** The idea that an individual could be in disharmony with the self emanates from the complexity and multiplicity of the person in Ancient Kemetic/ Bantu thought. According to the peoples of the Nile Valley Civilisation, the human person is comprised of multiple components, such as the physical body (*khat, umzimba*) that is liable to decay; the heart (*inhliziyo*), which is the source of good and evil thoughts; an abstract personality or individuality, known as the Ka, which can separate from the body at will and partake in funeral and other offerings. Mutwa refers to this as the person's *-ena* and hence the saying '*Mina*' (*mi +ena*) or *-nna*, meaning, 'me, of this essence'). Based on Mutwa's descriptions of the *-ena*, as well as Budge's (1960) elaborations on the meaning of the *Ba*, it is evident that the two refer to the same aspect of being; namely a Spirit self that can detach itself from the body, and is dependent on the funeral offerings and libations for its continuity or survival. Finally, the *Ba* or *Moya*, is that eternal aspect of the self that is continuous with the Divine Self, and hence, is permanent. Individual disharmony and illness could thus result from the imbalance between the various components (e.g. *Ba, Atmu, Seb*) of the self. For example, a calling to become a healer could result in an imbalance or illness, if the chosen individual is not ready to heed the call, at the cognitive or physical level, resulting in illness (Mutwa). Self-hatred, such as the desire to be and/or act as white, is something that one is not, is another aspect of this internal disequilibrium.
- **Interpersonal Disconnection:** This occurs when one fails to live in harmony with other people and their neighbours (*omakhelwane*). Violation of other human beings, through acts such as violence or rape, results from the failure to see the other human being as an integral aspect of the self (see Nobles 1975), and hence that violence or harm to the other is equivalent to self-harm. This is because all people exist as one in Spirit. Philosophical maxims such as *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* (it is in recognising others as human and acting on those bases, that one becomes fully human) and *motho ubebelwa munwe* (a person is born for the other) *all* point towards human interdependence as an indispensable aspect of be-ing. Racial hatred, gender-based violence, violence against infants and elderly people, all stem from the ignorance of our mutual Spirit-ness, which can only be described as an ignorance most profound.

- **Disconnection from the Family and the Ancestral Lineage:** this may come about as a result of a range of factors, including the failure to honour one's ancestors, while religiously honouring the ancestors of one's oppressors. In indigenous African epistemology, it is understood that the ancestors withdraw their protection from the family if the elders fail to perform appropriate libations. The withdrawal of protection manifests in the form of misfortune or illness (symptoms), which are compounded, until there is an appropriate diagnosis and the problem is addressed.
- **Historical and Linguistic Disconnection:** this refers to the loss of historical memory, which is essential in defining the community as a people with artistic and scientific achievements. It also includes the loss of the right to name oneself and the landscape, and the tendency to belittle African languages in favour of European languages, leading ultimately to linguistic genocide (see Nobles & Federico this issue).
- **Material Disconnection:** this refers to the loss of personal and collective dignity due to poverty, loss, and ultimately, dehumanisation.
- **Epistemological Disconnection:** this refers to disconnection from indigenous knowledge bases, philosophies, and value systems and practices. Just as there is an after-effect (post-harm or trauma) when persons are victimised by crime or assault, there is an unaddressed harm or illness associated with epistemicide and menticide. This is particularly due to the schooling systems' unwillingness to connect with the multiple ecologies of knowledge, instead openly championing Western knowledge systems as being superior to other knowledge systems, albeit in the absence of compelling evidence to this effect.
- **Disconnection from the Land:** this refers to indigenous people's loss of land and displacement, leading to the loss of a livelihood and inability to perform critical self-defining rituals such as the right to bury and continue to honour the deceased⁸. According to the laws of African indigenous

⁸ As recently as 2018, for example, the Ethekwini (Durban) municipality in South Africa was practicing what is called the recycling of graves. In terms of this practice, the Municipality had the right to re-use graves after a 10-year

peoples, no individual or family can interfere with the burial grounds of another family. Mutwa (1998) puts this strongly where he states that a community or people that lose their ancestral burial site/land do not deserve to live. The fact that a practice of recycling graves in Durban was even entertained and put into practice bears testimony to the profundity of the disconnection amongst the African people.

- **Ecological Disconnection:** African knowledge systems propose a holonic (fractalised) universe in which human beings are part and parcel and reflective of their surrounding ecological environment. Mutwa (n.d.) has written as follows in this regard:

When I was initiated for the first time in 1937 into the mysteries and knowledge of Mother Africa, I was ordered by my teacher who was my aunt. She said I should go outside and fill a small clay pot with water. And then she said to me, 'Look into the water – what do you see?' I was caught in a trap because an initiate is not supposed to have an ego. An initiate is not supposed to refer to himself. I said, 'Aunt, I see a person in this water'. She said, 'Who is that person?' I did not dare say it was me. I said, 'It is the person I know who is the son of my mother, the only son'. And she said, 'Yes, you are in this water, and the water is in you. Until you know that, that you and the water are one, you must not even drink the water, you must not even think about it, because you have cut yourself off from it.

The understanding that human beings are one with the rest of creation gives rise to many practices in indigenous African (diasporan and continental) communities. One example is the cleansing of the land where blood was spilled during the war to prevent the re-occurrence of wars and to enable the Spirits of those who fell on that particular spot to be cleansed. This makes it possible for the fallen warriors to continue the journey towards being full Spirit (*Moya*) and to refrain from troubling those who live in the vicinity; it is called *Ukugez*

period post-burial, unless additional rent had been paid. Many African families were traumatised when, upon visiting the graves of their loved ones, they were greeted by newly erected tombs of those unknown to them. The CRL Rights Commission investigations lead to the suspension of this practice.

The Charge and the Challenge of Illuminating the Spirit (Skh Djr)

umkhondo, or the cleansing of the path. Spilling blood on the earth, it is understood, is one of the most profound of violations. Another example is the custom of African-American youths who spontaneously erect makeshift altars on the site (place) where friends or family members were killed or the tradition of ‘jumping over the broom’, as the confirmation of marriage during African enslavement in America. Symbolically, the jumping over the broom together signified that the two individual Spirits were now one Spirit (a single or combined energy vibration), in the social space called marriage. Failure to understand that Spirit (human) beings are connected to the rest of creation, all of which is Spirit, results in environmental pollution and other forms of degradation, irregularities, and dis-eases. Hence, in African thought, disconnection in its various forms comprises an illness or imbalance that calls for specific interventions to take place.

The above discussion points to a complex understanding of wellness and illness/disease that is not limited to physical or psychic phenomena. Rather, health, or wellness comprise a balance between and within the visible (person, family, clan, and physical ecological environment) and the invisible (the Spirit, the realm of the ancestors). Interventions are not geared towards individuals *per se*, but in both realms of the system as a whole.

The Charge: An Outline for a *Skh Djr* Clinical Textbook

There is no reason for you to try to become like white people and there is no basis whatever for their impertinent assumption that they must accept you. The really terrible thing, old buddy, is that you must accept them. And I mean that very seriously. You must accept them and accept them with love. For these innocent people have no other hope. They are, in effect, still trapped in a history which they do not understand and until they understand it, they cannot be released from it. They have had to believe for many years, and for innumerable reasons, that black men are inferior to white men (James Baldwin, 1963. *My Dungeon Shook: A Letter to my Nephew*).

While recognising that Euro-American Psychology textbooks are indeed trapped in their history rather than ‘the universal’, the writing of an

Africancentred *Skh, Moya*, textbook for clinical practice must unashamedly and unapologetically give primacy to African language, logic, terminology, and concepts (see Appendix 1: Critical Terms and Terminology), while providing theoretical guidelines and therapeutic applications and frameworks for healing programmes and services. As a powerful example of the importance of language⁹, note that the false separation between therapist and client (see Nobles *et al.* 2016) is dissolved by using African language and refer to the person being treated as '*Bwana Mboti*', or 'the child of my ancestors' in Kikongo, and the therapist as an *Nganga*, which means one who is capable of activating the process by which the person, family, or community repairs, cures or restores itself to health and well-being. This small change in language dramatically changes the dynamic of the counselling session. The responsibility, dedication and duty of mutually healing family is far greater and more important than the uni-directional working with a client.

⁹ The importance of utilising African language and the ability to find correct meaning of terms and concepts is further hampered by our dependency on translations that were collected and crafted by mostly European missionaries. These translations were and should be suspect. In fact, we could apply the ancient adage, ascribe cultural etymology for methodological consistency '*traduttore, traditor*', meaning 'a translator is a traitor'. We should understand this to mean that, 'treachery is in the translation'. Note, for instance, in the *Dictionary and Grammar of the Kongo Language* (2015), the word *nganga* is translated as 'a contentious fellow, or one who is always raising objections'. An *nganga* cures both physical and spiritual disease and serves as a powerful mediator between the visible world and the realm of Spirit and ancestors. S/he is one capable of activating the process by which the body (persons or community) repairs, cures, or restores itself to health and well-being. The Kikongo word for shrine, *Vela*, is translated to mean heathen. The Yoruba word for a powerful woman is *Iyami*. Yet, it is translated as 'witch'. Parenthetically, it should also be noted that the word witch is derived from the Norwegian *vikja* and the Anglo-Saxon word *witega, wicca, wicce*, (roughly meaning 'to turn aside' and 'to conjure away') later through Christianity developed the meaning of a heathen devil worshipper. The total etymological history of this word is found in Europe, not Africa. Its application to the power of the feminine in Africa is indeed treasonous, and misleading. Treachery and danger is embedded in the translation.

The Charge and the Challenge of Illuminating the Spirit (Skh Djr)

The proposed *Skh, Moya*, clinical textbook needs to both address our intentional act of decolonisation and undertake the affirmation of an African reality through both memory and imagination.

Decolonisation: In terms of decolonisation, the task of freeing our minds can be thought of as scaffolds or layers of mental experiences. These layers separately, together, and in combination with other experience or activities help to remap the mental terrain of a decolonised mind. The experiences associated with or contributing to decolonisation are:

- (1) Critical consciousness, wherein experience(s) can stimulate the reawakening from the amnesia resulting from the hegemonic western grand narrative;
- (2) Re-imagining a world wherein one is given the opportunity to draw upon a different episteme and thereby unleash the knowing of African Spiritness. This experience directly enables alternative and counter-ideological visions and fuels the imagination with alternative possibilities; and
- (3) Reconciling the intersection at which one is tasked with the responsibility to create new understandings of the perceived ‘differences’ as social constructions which help deconstruct and/or eliminate western hegemony of thought and provide the recognition of intentional moments for the coming together of desperate ideas, events, and experiences;
- (4) Intentional disturbances, viz. actions and thoughts occurring when conventional or status quo narrative is challenged, countered and corrected and thereby create ideas, behaviours, experiences, and actions that, in turn, give legitimacy (recognition and respect) to indigenous African ideas, thoughts and beliefs that serve as counter hegemonic mental movement; and
- (5) Structural/foundational shifting, which intentionally shatters the underlying code of imperialism, subjugation, white supremacy and power relations (the material conditions that legitimate inequality, nullification and negation) supportive of them.

Memory and imagination are both fundamental criteria for decolonisation. The process of decolonisation is always blunted by ‘memetic ideations’ wherein the oppressed themselves undermine, deny, or reject the

very values of traditional life and espouse liberation in the language and meanings defined by their oppressors. Within imperial, colonial, and enslavement, beliefs and practices are deeply encoded ideations of African dehumanisation expressed as the null and/or negation. These ideations serve constantly to replicate themselves and reinforce behaviours that sustain the ideation and therein deny or inhibit African people from having ideas of our own that counter this and are capable of creating new ideas and/or rescuing an indigenous African episteme upon which to draw.

African Affirmation: Memory and imagination are also fundamental criteria for African affirmation. In terms of the affirmation of African reality, this proposed textbook should address the ideas of being Spirit and the notions of humanness and Pan African Humanism as defined by African deep thought and wisdom traditions. From African deep thought and wisdom traditions, and as defined in our ancestral memory, we are Spirit beings and not human beings. As Spirit Beings, we are tri-fold unfolding vibrating radiating energy/ Spirit (experience) of yet-to-live, living, and after-living Spirit likened to a living sun, possessing a 'knowing and knowable' Spirit (energy or power), through which one has an enduring relationship with the total perceptible and ponderable universe. In living, we are concentrations of essence manifested for a particular purpose. We are 'Spirit beings' housed in physical containers while having a human experience.

As after-living Spirits, 'We are the Ancestors'¹⁰. In material form, we are molecular concentrations (expressions) of the essence (energy fields) of our ancestors.

The notion of humanness asserts that the whole world is vitalistic (alive) and that this vitality is grounded in a sense of goodness. To the African, the entire universe is vitalistic, as opposed to mechanistic. The sense of vitality is infused in all areas of human activity. This precept suggests that African people have a psychological affinity for stimulus and change; often exhibit an increased behavioural vibrancy, and have a rich and sometimes spontaneous movement repertoire. It reflects the propensity for the energetic, the intense, the stimulating, and the lively. In terms of the educational process, humanness

¹⁰ Ancestors are the 'Dwellers-of-heaven' (Orisa, Lwas, living-dead, ancestors) i.e., they are those in the 'invisible realm' who are the expressions of Spirit/energy as 'different' un-seeable vibrations/ radiations that take expression as living material beings.

The Charge and the Challenge of Illuminating the Spirit (Skh Djr)

requires that educational processes be infused with high energy, vigour, interest, and creativity and be demonstrably linked to the students and the community's well-being and welfare.

Growing out of the cultural groundings of Black African people, the meanings they attach to being human, as well as historical relations, the notion of Pan African Humanness allows for an understanding of African humanity worldwide, along with its intellectual, literary, and artistic production and cultural developments across time and space, in both its historical unfolding and contemporary expression. Congruent with an African narrative and voice, African affirmation privileges the imagination that ought to fuel the investigation of African philosophy, literature, languages, history, politics, aesthetics, spirituality, and science, and encourages the interrogation of African human essence, experience, and expressions, the nature of the beautiful, and the meaning of human existence. It portends the search for the divine and the contextual nature of historical epochs. African affirmation supports and gives license to the use of an African-centered paradigm that privileges the life experiences, history, traditions and episteme of people of Black African ancestry.

Skh, Moya, Counseling, Treatment and Therapeutic*¹¹ *Interventions Textbook

All African communities prior to invasion and colonisation, used their own intrinsic essence (spiritness), epistemic reflections, cultural appreciations, and apperceptions about reality to inform their knowing framework and intellectual mindset. Grounded in African wisdom traditions and deep thought, a proposed *Skh, Moya*, textbook should:

- (1) rescue 'our way' unrefracted by a Euro-American prism;
- (2) re-interrogating the 'regenerating-development stages' of Spirit beings;
and
- (3) address African critical consciousness through our ability to 're-imagine' the world, reconcile our false and created differences, support and encourage the necessity to challenge, counter and correct

¹¹ Treatment and therapeutic interventions should be thought of as techniques and/or tools for the 'restoration of the Spirit'.

dehumanising thoughts, and create ideas, behaviours, experiences and actions that foster the on-going refinement of an African episteme, paradigm, and grand narrative.

The proposed clinical textbook covering African-centred counseling, treatment and therapeutic interventions should at the minimum help the practitioner and patient co-engage in the exploration of what we have defined as critical consciousness; re-imagining the world; reconciling the intersect; intentional disturbance; and structural/foundational shifting. By critical consciousness, the text can stimulate the reawakening from the amnesia resulting from hegemonic western grand narrative. It will also address the paradox whereby indigenous forms of healing are sidelined in mental health and government hospitals on the African continent, this despite the findings that by far the majority of the population relies on traditional healers' services for their health needs.

By re-imagining the world, the text could draw upon a different episteme that directly enables alternative and counter-ideological visions. This process could unleash the knowing of African Spiritness and fuel the imagination with alternative possibilities.

Training with such a clinical text would also guide the practitioner and patient to co-create new understandings (reconciling the intersect) of the perceived 'differences' as social constructions that help deconstruct and/or eliminate western hegemony of thought and provide the recognition of intentional moments for the coming together of desperate ideas, events, and experience.

Finally, the proposed clinical text could present ideas, concepts and theories that intentionally shatter the underlying code of imperialism, subjugation, White Supremacy, and power relations (the material conditions that legitimate inequality, nullification and negation) supportive of them.

As part of crafting such clinical text, with the caution of hybridisation and 'muleification' discussed above, the works of the following treatment and counseling texts should be reviewed, explored, critiqued, and adapted: Fu-Kiau (2001); Rowe and Webb-Msemaji (2004); Kambon (2006); Nobles (2006; 2013a; 2013b; 2015b); Bulhan (1985); Mkhize (2004; 2018); Nwoye (2015); Boyd-Franklin (1989); Parham (2002); Harley and Stansbury (2011); Kutchins and Kirk (1997); Gallardo, Christine and Parham (2012); Phillips (1990); Myers (1998); and Myers and Speight (2013). This is but a sample of the rich number of texts from which this initiative could draw.

Conclusion

Given the critique and correctives suggested in this discussion, it is hoped that a team of continental and diasporan African Black *Skh Shetists*, formerly known as Black Psychologists, will:

(1) inspire the ‘community intelligence’ of the collective wisdom of those who currently call themselves Black, African, or Pan-African psychologists to consider the adoption of *Skh Djaer* as the proper nomenclature for the science of African human functioning;

(2) join together in exploring, defining, and understanding the need to rescue African language and logic associated with the illumination of the Spirit, ergo, *Skh* as a global necessity for the healing and restoration of wellness throughout the Pan-African World; and,

(3) co-invent and co-author clinical texts and/ or multiple text for healing that covers African centred counselling, treatment and therapeutic interventions between the realms (visible and invisible) of reality and over the lifespan areas of Spiritness (human) development and regional dispersion of African people.

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Appendix 1

Critical Terms and Terminology in the Science of Human Functioning

A Preliminary Glossary

Abaphansi – In South African Nguni/ Ngoni (Ndebele, Swati, Xhosa, Zulu) The term refers to the community of the ancestors, those who lived exemplary lives, who have achieved the highest stage of being, namely the unification with the Divine essence, the source of all life. As the moral exemplars who detest wrongdoing, *Abaphansi* remain in regular contact with their families to give them guidance.

Abaphansi Basifulathele – Withdrawal of Ancestral Protection (South African) The term is used to refer to the situation when individuals or families suffer a range of misfortunes as a result of wrongdoing, resulting in the withdrawal of ancestral protection.

Aidogba nínu emí – Spiritual Imbalance, Imbalance in the Spirit (Yoruba)

Alasal Tarey – The process through which one comes to know and understand one's origin, essence and unfolding as a human being in order to serve humanity (Songhoy-senni).

Akom Ko – Without Spirit (KiKongo)

Bwana Mboti – The child of my Ancestors (Kikongo)

Dingo-dingo diandiakina – The healing process of a human being (KiKongo)

Elenini – Spirit defilement (KiKongo)

Enit Ori e Kòpé – He who unable to put his mind together (Yoruba)

Funda dia Ngolo – Package of energy; the individual's self-healing power (KiKongo)

The Charge and the Challenge of Illuminating the Spirit (Skh Djr)

Ihlambo – A ritualistic recemony to cleanse those who were involved in war, or those communities or areas that witnessed the spilling blood during war.

Inhlambuluko – The process of coming clean (from -hlamba, to cleanse). The process may involve individuals, families or communities coming together to tell the truth, thus burying the past in order to move forward.

Jegna – Special people (*Jegnoch* - plural form) who have: 1) been tested in struggle or battle, demonstrated extraordinary and unusual fearlessness, 3) shown determination and courage in protecting our people, land and culture, 4) shown diligence and dedication to our people, 5) produced exceptionally high quality work, and 6) dedicated themselves to the protection, defense, nurturance and development of our young by advancing our people, place and culture. The easiest and foremost interpretation of the *Jegna* is one whose central focus is on the culture and character of one's people. The *Jegnoch* cherish and love their (our) people. (Ethiopian/Amharic)

Kalunga – The totality, everything, sharing life and becoming life continually after life itself. The completeness of all life. It is an ocean of energy, a force in motion. (KiKongo)

Kingongo – A state wherein the inner Divine presence is in harmony (blends) with the self-healing power (NGOLO) as expressed in all forms of being. (KiKongo)

Kizungu Zungu – The defiled or damaged Spirits (individual or collective) are seen as 'tornadoes of the mind' or 'mental chaos'. (KiKongo)

Kugusa Mtima – Deals with the capacity of the collective human will via the 'power' to transcend and transform human consciousness and thereby transcend ordinary existence and experience; unity with the Divine. The 'touching the heart'. (Kikingo)

Lendo Kia Tambukuso – Genetic Power (KiKongo)

Lendo Kiandiakina – Healing Power (KiKongo)

Wade W. Nobles & Nhlanhla Mkhize

Lendo Kia Kukiniakisa – The self-healing power (KiKongo)

Luku – To poison or infect at a personal or community level (KiKongo)

Maafa – A great disaster and misfortune of death and destruction beyond human convention and comprehension. The African *Maafa* is not a single abhorrent event in history. It is an on-going, sophisticated, continuous ‘process’ in the support of world-wide White Supremacy; driven by fear and racial hatred and designed to dehumanize and/or destroy African people. The critical feature of the *Maafa* is ‘the denial of the validity of African people’s humanity’, accompanied by a collective and ever-present total disregard and disrespect for the African and the right of people of African ancestry to exist. The African *Maafa* gives license to the continual perpetuation of a total systematic and organized process of spiritual and physical destruction of African people both individually and collectively. (Kiswahili)

Mayembo ma nitu – Electricity throughout the human body. (Kikongo)

Moya – The ever-present, vibrating energy (*amandla*) emanating from the Ultimate (Initial) Source or Being

Ndoki – ‘Cause’ of a thing, including illness (Kikongo)

Ngolo – Energy of self-healing power (KiKongo)

Ngolo Zandiakina – Self-Healing Potential (Kikongo)

N’kisi – The container, as Spirit force, that holds the hidden power of the mysteries of life (Futu) to take care of itself. Futu (everything that life needs to survive) can have either safe or dangerous ‘medicine’. (Kikongo)

Ngang’a nkisi – The *Ngang’a nkisi* (Healer) is one capable of activating the process by which the body (persons or community) repairs, cures or restore itself to health and well-being. S/he is one who restores the physical, psychic, social and cosmic balance and harmony in and between persons, people (community), nature and the Divine. The *Ngang’a nkisi* (Healer) cures both physical and spiritual diseases. A Nganga serves as a powerful mediator between the visible world and the realm of Spirit and ancestors.

The Charge and the Challenge of Illuminating the Spirit (Skh Djr)

Nsaka Sunsum – Touching the Spirit (Akan)

N’singa dikanda – The biogenetic rope of the communities of the dead (Kikongo)

Nsumununu – When the Spirit of the community and the Spirit of its members become defiled or damaged. (KiKongo)

Ntu – Universal expression of Spirit, force. The modal point at which being (Umu) inseparable as concrete form of *UbuNtu* (Kikongo)

Okan tí O bale – Heart unsettled (Yoruba)

Se Alafia Ni – The state of perfect and total peace (Yoruba)

Sikere Folo – To act without spiritual connection (KiKongo)

Skh (Sakhu) – Illumination, into the soul of the being, that which inspires

Skh Djr – *Skh Djr* examines and utilizes the processes that allow for the illumination and liberation of the Spirit. It is an unfiltered (free of western contamination) process of understanding, examining, and explicating the meaning, nature and functioning of being human for African people by conducting a deep, profound, and penetrating search, study and mastery of the process of ‘illuminating’ the human Spirit or essence and totality of all human experience and phenomena.

Sumuna – violation of self-sacredness. *Sumuna* is caused directly by the breaking of taboos, cultural precepts and ancestral traditions. Community relations that violate the sacred inner self (*the violation of self-sacredness*) result in a state of *Sumuna*. Inter-, intra- and supra-relationships can violate the sacredness of self (KiKongo)

Tunda Milongi – violation of community laws and taboos (KiKongo)

UbuNtu – Spirit in which Being and beings coalesce (Kikongo); the process of becoming *Ntu* or Spirit, as it is manifest one’s interactions with the totality of creation.

Ukugeza Umkhondo – the cleansing of the path (especially the path where there was a violent death due to war or murder). The cleansing is meant to appease the Spirit of the deceased and to prevent the re-occurrence of a similar event.

Ukufulathelwa abaphansi – When the ancestors turn away from their family (remove their protective powers) thus rendering the family vulnerable to illness/ harm and dangers.

Ukufa Kwabantu – Literally, Disease of (African) people (South Africa); an illness that is of socio-cultural or spiritual rather than biomedical origin; illnesses that result from the breakdown in communication between the living and those residing in the Spirit-realm.

Ukuzilungisa – To heal a whole people (KiKongo-Bantu/ Nguni). To remedy oneself; to heal the breakdown between oneself and the realm of the Spirits, to cause oneself to be complete or perfect.

Umsebenzi – A ritual or function that is performed to appease the ancestors; to repair the breakdown between the realms of the visible and invisible.

Umakhelwane – One’s neighbours with whom one lives in harmony.

Yungulu – To burn up

Yurugu – Used by Marimba Ani in her African-centered critique of European thought and behavior (a self-created being born prematurely-- was doomed to perpetually search for the completeness that could never be his. Forever incomplete single-souled (rather than twinned in natural and divine complementarity with the female) impure and incomplete (Dogon). Based on Dogon cosmology. (Kiswahili)

Zola – Love. Love activates ‘Ngolo’, the energy of self-healing power (potential). It is the undeniable desire of one’s Spirit to connect, merge, expand and extend into a greater oneness with another (Spirit). Zola requires that one value and treasure another with caring and affection in order to sustain, promote, nurture and inspire their ‘perfectibility’. Zola (Love) is self and

The Charge and the Challenge of Illuminating the Spirit (Skh Djr)

collective cherishment. It is the essential act of personal and collective preservation and actualization. (Kikongo)

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Spirit Talk within the African Epistemological Framework

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Abstract

The purpose of this essay is to present preliminary research regarding the concept of Spirit Talk as it pertains to the goals of the *Sakhu*. The paper rests upon the premise that the essence of all beings is Spirit. As such, there is a level of spiritual communication (Spirit Talk) that can bypass colonized linguistic systems to aid in one's recognition of themselves and others. Within this article, the relationship of the African American Christian tradition of praying in tongues was investigated in relation to the African understanding and invocation of Spirit within indigenous spiritual systems.

Spiritual frameworks, taken from the BaKongo, Dogon, Akan, and Yoruba, were used to provide context for the notion of Spirit as the primary mode of being. Furthermore, both testimony and scientific research were cited to highlight the uses of Spirit Talk as well as to explain what is happening on a physiological level when an individual is engaged in Spirit Talk. The article closes with the argument that Spirit is both knowing and knowable, absent of memetic infections and epistemological distortions.

Keywords: Spirit, *Sakhu*, memetic infection, epistemology, spirituality, religion, Ifá, Vodun, Christianity

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Iqoqa

Inhloso yaleli phepha ukuveza ucwaningo lokwandulela mayelana neNkulumo enoMoya njengoba inokuhlobana nezinjongo ze*Sakhu*. Iphepha lincike ekutheni umsuka wako konke okuphilayo uMoya. Kanjalo-ke, kukhona izinga lokuxhumana ngomoya (Inkulumo enoMoya) engachezuka ezindleleni zokusetshenziswa kolimi zobukoloni ukwelekelela ukuzazi komuntu kanye nabanye abantu. Kuleli phepha, ubudlelwane benqubo yamaKhrestu babantu baseMelika abadabuka e-Afrika yokuthandaza ngezilimi buphenyiwe ngokuhlobanisa nokuqonda kwase-Afrika kanye nesicelo soMoya phakathi kwezinqubo zomoya zendabuko.

Izinhlaka zomoya, ezithathwe kuBaKongo, abaDogon, aba-Akan, kanye naBaYoruba, kusetshenzisiwe ukuveza isimo somqondo soMoya njengendlela yokuqala yokuphila. Okunye futhi, kokubili ubufakazi kanye nocwaningo lwesayensi kusetshenzisiwe ukuveza ngokugqamile ukusetshenziswa kweNkulumo enoMoya kanye nokuchaza ukuthi kwenzekani ezingeni elisemzimbeni womuntu ngesikhathi umuntu ezibandakanye eNkulumweni enoMoya. Leli phepha liphetha ngomqakuliswano wokuthi uMoya uyikho kokubili, ukwazi kanye nokwazekayo; okungekho yimithelela ekhunjulwayo kanye nokushintshashintsha kwezindlela zokwazi okungeyikho.

Amagama asemqoka: uMoya, i*Sakhu*, umthelela okhunjulwayo, izindlela zokwazi, ukukhonza uMdali, inkolo, i-*Ifá*, i*Vodun*, inkolo yobuKhrestu

Introduction

Within the African consciousness, Spirit can be defined as the primary unit of being and the genesis of our existence. According to African thought, ‘we are spirit beings housed in a physical container having a human experience’ (Nobles 2018: 2). To take this thought a step further, not only are individuals spirit beings, as opposed to human beings as characterised by Western narratives, divinity is inherent. The African consciousness acknowledges the Creator and does not force a separation between the Creator and created. Instead, the relationship between the Creator and the created is one of close fellowship and regular interaction. This contradicts the Western framework as their systems operate under the premise that the Creator is distant and not able to be connected with on a deep, meaningful level.

To further the discussion of beings as Spirit, it is important to note the differences between spirituality and religion. Spirituality refers to ‘The outward expression of one’s understanding of their relation to the Divine, driven by the guiding of a supernatural force either internal or external to themselves’ (Duckett 2018: 3). Conversely, religion is the counterfeit of spirituality. It can be defined as ‘a manmade institution designed to press individuals and societies into a particular school of thought where, in many ways, the doctrine is held in higher esteem than the deity or deities supposed to serve as the focal point, creating a cycle of dependency upon which its adherents are forced to rely for wisdom, guidance, and wellbeing’ (Duckett 2018: 3). Spirituality should not be confused with spiritness (Nobles 2015b). Spirituality is the expression of Spirit; spiritness is the state of being Spirit, the essence of one’s being (Nobles 2015b). The introduction of religion to enslaved Africans, and those subjected to colonialism, created a fracture within the African consciousness, which allowed for the unchecked growth of harmful memetic infections (Nobles 2015a). Spirituality sets individuals and societies free as they are able to follow the divine guidance of a supernatural force. Religion, however, keeps its adherents in bondage as the relationship between the individual and the Divine has been severed or severely altered. With religious systems, one is not expected to be an active participant in obtaining growth, inner healing, peace, and other blessings. Instead, one is expected to be a faithful adherent to the rules and regulations prescribed by the religious system in place, believing everything, and questioning nothing. Religion also promises eternal life, prosperity, and things already available to those who are spiritually connected. Spirituality grounds an individual, while religion binds them.

It is the binding and restricting nature of religion that permits unchecked growth of memetic infections. A memetic infection is defined as ‘The process by which sensorial information structures symbiotically infect the mind or consciousness so as to reinforce and/or propagate the sensoria’ (Nobles 2015a: 55). The main point of infection is creating a cycle of dependency instead of a sankofic relationship as was intended. *Sankofa* is a Ghanaian word from the Akan symbolising the need to return. Its meaning is to go back and get what was left behind or forgotten. Sankofa is a way of being that promotes a circular relationship involving Spirit, the Ancestors, the natural world, the individual, and the community. To have a sankofic relationship means to be actively engaged in remembering the past to retrieve and reclaim the epistemologies and expressions of Spirit that are needed to carry out purpose in the present. When left unresolved, memetic infections spread and become epistemological distortions which are, ‘an interruption of, or interference with, original thought or ways of knowing and producing knowledge that result in marginalisation and the formation or adaptation of false identities’ (Duckett 2018: 2). Within the context of spirituality, memetic infections and epistemological distortions result in the minimisation of Spirit and associated phenomena. Furthermore, religion elevates a particular Divinity, while purposefully seeking to diminish the divinity within each person. Religion teaches its adherents not to recognise that Spirit is in everyone and everything, rendering them unable to recognise themselves and others as having shared humanity.

The concept of Spirit as being is exemplified in indigenous spiritual traditions such as Ifá and Vodun. On March 3, 2019, during divination with a New Orleans based Vodun Mambo (priestess), the Mambo explained the relationship between Spirit and being as follows:

There is no rule book for working with the Lwa or the Orisa like there is in Christianity. The Lwa and Orisa are forces of energy that exist to work with us and take us into a deeper expression of Spirit, beyond the superficial of the Judeo-Christian understanding of Spirit. We are to work with Spirit and incorporate the Lwa and Orisa energy into our lives on a daily basis. We do not exist to be bound by rules and theology.

Based on this interpretation of being, it can be implied that in order for one to walk in their specific destiny, they must work with and engage Spirit on a

Spirit-to-Spirit level that supersedes what is considered within western frameworks as ‘the natural’.

Spirit Talk

In *Ìwùre: Healing Power of Prayer*, the Araba of Osogbo in Nigeria noted that prayer is what is said or communicated with the Divine All (God) wherein one speaks positive words in order to ensure the fulfilment of one’s request or petition. It is a method of communication that is no respecter of spiritual systems as Spirit is able to communicate with those who are receptive regardless of where they are spiritually located. Within Ifá and Vodun, in addition to prayer, Spirit talk may manifest through the practice of divining. Within the Judeo-Christian context, the practice of engaging the prophetic has a similar ontological and epistemological purpose to divination. Having been a participant in the Pentecostal denomination of Christianity for several years before leaving the Church, there has been ample exposure to the prophetic both as a recipient of messages and as a conduit through which messages were given. One such message, given by a Christian minister, ordained as a Prophet, on December 4, 2015, stated, ‘There is a teaching anointing on your life, and there is a craft in your hands’. When seeking out Ifá divination, the revelation regarding destiny was reiterated on March 24, 2019, by the Íyánifá with the following statement, ‘You need to capitalise on the gifts of your artistry’. On October 21, 2019, during an a different Ifá divination with a Babalawo, this same message regarding professional and creative endeavours was reiterated. These complimentary readings across spiritual systems are possible because Spirit transcends societal constructs and does not contradict itself in its desire to be known.

The nature of reality, when discussing it from the African epistemological framework, is that all have a spirit that is both knowing and knowable (Nobles 2015b). From this statement, it can be gathered that if Spirit is knowing and knowable, there must be a language that it employs as its method of communication. This language could be defined as Spirit talk. Spirit is said to vibrate in seven directions, which are: upward (beyond), inward (being – to heal), backward (beginning), rightward (belonging), leftward (becoming), downward (be), and frontward (beholding) (Fu-Kiau 2001). Spirit talk is, at its core, energy that vibrates in accordance with the direction of the spirit. Spirit talk can also be defined as a manifestation of *nommo*. *Nommo* are the ancestral spirits of the Dogon (Mali), and *nommo* intends to bring balance

and harmony. *Nommo* invokes Spirit to create a harmonious dialogue that inspires one to forward action, thus, making it an example of Spirit talk as Spirit moves the words. This concept has been further defined as the power and intention behind the word (Ani 1992). Though *nommo* is related to the word, be it spoken, written, sung, or otherwise, it also transcends the word similarly to how Spirit transcends the mind.

It is appropriate to note that just like the spirit vibrates in different directions, there are different directions and levels of Spirit talk that can be employed. Spirit talk can be expressed in the following directions: human-spirit to human-spirit (ex. person to person), human-spirit to *Egun* (Ancestor), human-spirit to the spirit within the matter and substance of nature (ex. person speaking to the water or crystals), and human-spirit to the Creator/Divine. The four directions that Spirit talk can be employed in, if drawn out, would take on the cruciform shape that is the basis of the *Yowa*, a Kongo cosmogram for the continuity of life (Thompson 1983).

The horizontal line of the *Yowa* denotes the Kalunga (Fu-Kiau 2001), and it divides the living and ancestral realms (Thompson, 1983). The points at each end of the axes of the *Yowa* represent the movement of humanity through life. Moving counterclockwise from the rightmost point, the *Yowa* cosmogram depicts a person's movement from birth to maturity, from maturity to death, from death to Ancestor, and from Ancestor back to birth (Thompson 1983). If the four directions of Spirit talk were similarly positioned, the movement would be from human-spirit to human-spirit, to human-spirit to the Creator/Divine, to human spirit to the natural world, to human-spirit to ancestral spirits, and then back to human-spirit to human-spirit. As stated by Fu-Kiau (2001:17), 'For an African Muntu, the dead are not dead: they are beings living just beyond the wall waiting for their probable return to the community, to the physical world'. With this understanding of the BaKongo view of life, death, and Spirit as it pertains to the *Yowa*, the interconnected nature of being is possible only through the continual communication of human-spirits with the other human-spirits, natural spirits, ancestral spirits, and the Creator/Divine.

Within the African American Christian tradition, Spirit talk can manifest as glossolalia, praying or speaking in tongues. Though some denominations accept tongues as a valid expression of a spiritual experience, others categorise it as demonic, improper, and potentially bordering on blasphemy. Some have made a spectacle of this form of Spirit talk, diminishing it to the level of idle chatter instead of the divine speech (Carruthers 1995) of which it

is a derivative. Furthermore, it can be argued that when appropriately used, Spirit talk that manifests as praying in tongues is the retention of African spirituality that has been syncretized within certain Christian frameworks, as opposed to a tradition that was birthed out of the Judeo-Christian recognition of Pentecost.

A study conducted by the University of Pennsylvania has provided scientific evidence to support Spirit talk as a spiritual exercise that does not involve the functions of the mind with regards to language and active thought. This experiment was conducted by taking brain images of five women while they were singing a worship song and then again while praying in tongues. While praying in tongues, it was noted that the frontal lobe and language processing center were not active, though the part of the mind that controls awareness was active (Carey 2006). This highlights the fact that Spirit can communicate without having to engage the mind, as it is traditionally understood, to do so. This implies that Spirit can communicate in a non-colonised manner, one that is able to bypass the memetic infections that may be present within the mind. The study went further to state that those who prayed in tongues showed no signs of mental illness and that they appeared more emotionally stable and grounded than those who did not engage in this practice (Carey 2006). This conclusion supports the premise that humanity is at its essence Spirit, and therefore when Spirit is given room to speak and acknowledge the Spirit of others, Spirit is kept in balance as it is not being grieved or quenched.

Though most Spirit talk, such as praying in tongues, is directed as being from the human-spirit to the Creator/Divine, it is possible to have Spirit talk active on a human-spirit to human-spirit (person to person) level. Some have labelled this action discernment, namely the ability to sense in the spirit that which is not readily available in natural language. Within the course, Africana Studies 705: Seminar in Africana Studies at San Francisco State University, taught by Dr. Wade Nobles, students were tasked with uncovering hidden episteme. An epistemic reflection titled, *Vibratory Energy: Praying in Tongues* was presented for discussion. The premise behind the research conducted was to discern the impact that engaging in Spirit talk by the water would have on the water and the student. To conduct this analysis, the student chose to invoke Spirit through the use of the Djembe and praying in tongues while in the presence of the San Pablo Bay in Pinole, California. Having been trained in a religious tradition that acknowledged Spirit talk but not the

interpretation of it, she sought to test if the concept of a knowing and knowable Spirit was applicable to the practice of praying in tongues. While invoking Spirit, the student took an audio recording to divine an English interpretation of Spirit talk that she could apply to her own life. When presenting the research and findings, the audio clip was played to allow those in attendance to hear the changes in the water as well as the Spirit talk that manifested as praying in tongues. After listening to the audio recording, one of the attendees to the reflection remarked, 'Though I did not understand the words that you were saying, I understood you'. Upon first encounter, Spirit talk has no English or 'natural' language protocol. As highlighted by Bettina Judd in *Glossolalia: Lucille Clifton's Creative Technologies of Becoming*, tongues should be understood as 'a form of knowledge that refuses comprehension and is whole unto itself' (Judd 2019:147). It comes from Spirit and is therefore processed and understood by Spirit.

When tracing the African lineage of praying in tongues, it is important to note that the majority of Africans were taken from the Bantu region of Africa. Within the spiritual practices that people from this region carried with them, there would be prayers to invoke specific deities or impact the energy of the natural world in some form. During these ceremonies, a worshipper may be mounted by the deity that they sought an audience with and had performed ritual to invoke. From there, the language of their prayers would change from the known to the unknown realm of Spirit Talk. This parallels the African American description of what happens while praying in tongues, because it is often described as being overtaken by the Holy Spirit, and the person serving as the medium has their language switched from the known to the unknown as it pertains to what is considered natural language. Furthermore, there are often other spiritual elements present, particularly drums, that help set and inevitably shift the atmosphere to one conducive to receive the deity being invoked. The use of other spiritual elements within ritual and worship, further demonstrates the viability of Spirit talk as it pertains to communication between human-spirits and the spirit of the drum as well as natural/ elemental spirits.

Conclusion

There is a strong connection between the knower, the knowing, and the known, and the experiences of those who utilise Spirit talk regularly through praying in tongues or corresponding acts of worship within other spiritual systems. This

process ties into the goal of the *Sakhu*, which is defined as the illumination of the human spirit (Nobles 2018). The *Irt hr skh* is proposed as a way of engaging in a deep, profound and penetrating search, study, understanding, and mastery of the process of illuminating the human spirit and reality (Nobles 2018). Spirit talk is a means through which to do this, because Spirit is knowing (able to communicate) and knowable (able to be understood) by the individual, as well as others. The knower is thus positioned to recover or access what was once unknown through bypassing the mind in favour of direct communication with Spirit. Spirit talk allows one to come away with new knowledge or knowing about themselves, others, or the world around them.

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Spirit Talk within the African Epistemological Framework

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African Tongues in Our Mouths: Their Role in African-Centred Psychology

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Abstract

This paper discusses the importance of language in the development of a Pan African Black Psychology. The article demonstrates how recognizing and honouring the ‘African Tongues in our Mouths’ (Ebonics and BaNtu Portuguese) are both acts of retention and resistance to dehumanization and are essential and valuable to the restoration of healing and wellness for African (continental and diaspora) people and practitioners.

Keywords: Linguistic, African Psychology, African Diaspora, Pan African Psychology

Izilimi zase-Afrika Emilonyeni Yethu: Iqhaza Lazo Kusifundongqondo Ngengxilabu-Afrika

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Iqoqa

Leli phepha lixoxa ngokubaluleka kwezilimi ekwakhiweni kobumbano lwama-Afrika ansundu esifundongqondo. Iphepha likhombisa ukuthi ukubhekelela kanye nokuhlonipha izilimi zase-Afrika emilonyeni yethu (ama-*Ebonics* kanye nabantu abangamaPutukezi) kokubili kuba kanjani yizindlela zokugcina kanye nokulwa nokwehliswa isithunzi; kanti kubalulekile futhi kunosizo ekubuyiseni ukwelapha kanye nempilo yabantu base-Afrika (abazinze e-Afrika nabahlala phesheya kwezilwandle) kanye nabasebenzi bolimi.

Amagama asemqoka: ucwaningozilimi, isifundongqondo ngobu-Afrika, abantu base-Afrika abahlala phesheya kwezilwandle, ubumbano lwesifundongqondo nge-Afrika



Figure 1: Escrava Anastacia, circa the 1740s.

We open this discussion with the sketch of Escrava Anastacia who was enslaved around the 1740s by the Portuguese. Her mother was a BaNtu woman, who arrived in Brazil with a group of noble Africans, who came from Kongo to be enslaved in Brazil, and who helped to organise many collective escapes (Teixeira Neto 1988). The story told about Anastacia is that she was a very beautiful woman, who always aroused the attention of white men, and the envy of white women. However, by her real ascendancy, she always had a noble and haughty stance, rejecting any kind of relationship. She was a BaNtu woman, who stood up to her Portuguese enslavers in Salvador da Bahia, Brazil. Of course, the quest for liberty is paramount in her story. Anastacia resisted and protested the loss of her freedom. To this day, her Spirit is sanctified and

worshiped in Umbanda (Afro-Brazilian religion) for her generosity and miraculous cures.

The enslavers, on the other hand, considered those captured to be less than human and responded to them in inhumane ways. Karash (2000) in his account of the life of the Black people enslaved in Rio de Janeiro in the nineteenth century, mentions the ill-treatment and physical punishment that was imputed upon these people.

Some threats were more terrible than a slug to control slaves. You could threaten them with lashes in the public square or the dreaded dungeon; abandonment in a dungeon; a visit to the tamer of 'refractory slaves', who specialized [sic] in more exotic tortures; imprisonment with iron in the legs, mask of iron or trunk; various forms of humiliation and public torture; castration, dismemberment, hanging; sale is from the city or Africa; and finally murders (Karash 2000: 174).

Anastacia's resistance to that situation of harassment caused her to be tortured, beaten, raped, and forced to wear a muzzle-like facemask that prevented her from expressing her disapproval towards what was happening to her and fellow captives. Kilomba (2010) describes the iron mask as an instrument of torture that can be taken as a symbol of the colonisers/enslavers' policies, denoting sadistic strategies for conquest and domination and their 'brutal regimes' of silencing the so-called 'Other'. Who can speak? What happens when we talk? What can we talk about, and in which language?

A most important consideration is that to be human is to have language. For the enslavers to rationalise their actions, they had to see wealth and greed rather than humanity. It was Escrava Anastacia and millions more who, in the eyes of their captors, became less than human, and were treated as chattel. Language defines us as being fully human. In being forced to wear a muzzle-like mask to mute her voice, Anastacia was prevented from expressing her indignation and fury about what was happening to her and others. This brutality is an indication of the enslavers' intent to have complete power and control over her language, her personhood, and her humanity. The vulgar and savage muzzling of Anastacia in 1794 in Brazil and the Soweto high school students protesting against the Afrikaans Medium Decree of 1974, that required the introduction of Afrikaans as the medium of instruction in local schools, resulted in the murder of children in imposing language dominance.

These are but two examples evidencing centuries' old struggle to rescue our language as an act of freeing our humanity.

I The Importance of Being and Language

This paper discusses the importance of language in the development of a Pan African Black Psychology. An unaddressed problem in the advancement of a Pan African Psychology is the failure to understand and incorporate the retention of African language features as a critical component of Pan African Psychology. In utilising a comparative analyses of both Ebonics and BaNtu Portuguese, as examples of African tongues in our mouths, the article demonstrates how recognising and honouring the retention of African language features in the diaspora are both acts of retention and resistance to dehumanisation. Language retention is essential and valuable to the restoration of healing and wellness for African (continental and diaspora) people and practitioners. It serves as resistance and retention against the imposed western dehumanisation.

In 1996, the unrecognised language of African Americans was also assaulted. Even though professional linguistic associations or societies (Linguistic Society of America 1996) have recognised the scientific and human advantages to linguistic diversity and that Ebonics should be recognised as such, many scholars carrying the western grand narrative repeatedly indict and/or deny the legitimacy of Ebonics as retentive of an African linguistic system. Some have gone as far as to classify Ebonics as 'language nonsense' and a 'cockamamie' approach to language instruction. It is argued that Ebonics as 'bad' language or 'street' language must be eradicated and not sanctioned by any instructional programme. Unlike other bilingual initiatives (Ebonics is) the last thing children should be taught (Davis 1996). In the experience of Africans in Brazil, authors such as Lélia Gonzales (1988) can be cited, who argue that the African linguistic influence in Portuguese spoken in Brazil is an act of political resistance.

Cakata (2018) rightly points to the critical importance of language in expressing one's identity and one's world. She notes that the colonial attempt to transform the African mind was deliberate and intentional. In quoting Professor Saule, she shows that the colonial 'linguaging' of the word for ancestors from *iminyanya* into *izinyanya* (the prefix, *izi*, being reserved for the noun class

that denotes objects or things), was a deliberate attempt to shift our ancestors' humanness to 'thingness'. Indeed, Frantz Fanon delineated the concept of 'thingification' of the African being over a half century ago (Fanon [1952] 1967).

The human ability to communicate is the foundation of all human activities. Additionally, the ability to speak and think allow humans to define relationships, roles, and responsibilities. Moreover, language is a direct reflection of a people's cosmology and system of episteme. In the quest for global hegemony, the western world has oppressed African peoples on the continent and in the diaspora.

The denial of the African to exercise and enjoy linguistic freedom where this has taken place has been one of the most salient and costly forms of African dehumanisation. The language of the oppressor (linguistic hegemony) is used to devalue, dehumanise, and confuse, while at the same time causing the oppressed to lose confidence in retaining their indigenous linguistic and cultural values, while promoting ideas that empower the oppressors and their cultural artefacts.

II The Quest for Global Hegemony

The western world has oppressed African peoples on the continent and in the diaspora through the attempt to have complete power and control over 'language'. When our ancestors were brought to the new world absent of freedom, in chains, they did not arrive absent of thought and belief about their identity. They came with a language and a system of beliefs (logic) about what it meant to be human (W. Nobles 2016). The language of the oppressor (linguistic hegemony) is used to dehumanise, devalue, and confuse to promote ideas that empower the oppressors and their cultural artifacts while causing the oppressed to lose confidence in their own linguistic and cultural values and sense of humanity.

What is the intention of language imposition? Fundamentally, the strategy is to 'strip the people of their possessions as well as their sovereignty' (V. Nobles 2015: 131). Furthermore, the imposition of a foreign or alien language as well as the denigration or nullification of a people's indigenous language has the direct effect of dehumanising them and/or causing them a feeling of debasement, which also strips them of their sense of agency, authenticity, and fundamental cultural possessions.

III African Tongues in our Mouths: Ebonics and BaNtu Portuguese

Ebonics is a creole language that was created by the enslaved Africans, who came primarily from the areas of the Niger-Bantu-Kongo. Robert Williams coined the term Ebonics to capture and classify the African tongues of the enslaved descendants of African origin (Williams 1975). Ebonics for African American people has served as an act of resistance to hegemony and dehumanisation. Ebonics is a term developed by consensus among several African American psychologists and ethno-linguists as an all-encompassing, non-pejorative label for the linguistic and paralinguistic features that on a continuum represent the language and communicative components of West African Niger Kongo language family. The term was coined from joining two words: the ancient Kemetic word, *ebony*, which is a tree with wood that is black in colour, and has come to also denote Blackness, and phonics, from the Greek *fonetikos*, meaning sounds. Technically, Ebonics represents the resilience of the Niger Kongo language family and a New World continuation of African linguistic systems (V. Nobles 1998).

Ebonics addresses the common linguistic and paralinguistic features that represent the communicative competence of language speakers from West Africa, the Caribbean, and the United States. To understand Ebonics as a form of cultural retention, one needs to see the direct forms of retention of the Niger-Kongo-Bantu linguistic system. Ebonics is governed by precisely the same way as languages found in the Niger-Kongo-Bantu family of languages. Ebonics has retained the most common syllabic pattern of Niger-Kongo-Bantu languages, which is consonant-vowel, consonant-vowel (CVCV or CVC).

The experience of Africans in Brazil has also been marked by physical and symbolic violence, along with Africans elsewhere in the diaspora. Brazil hosted the great ports, where Africans came from the continent before they were dispersed throughout the American continent. The country is considered the nation with the largest population of African descent in the diaspora, second only in number to that of Nigeria on the Continent. Brazil was the country that received the most African people and the last country in the Americas to abolish slavery in 1888. At the time of Brazil's independence from Portugal, more than two-thirds of the Brazilian population was black and mestizo, and the government planned the 'whitening' of the population, by encouraging the arrival of Europeans (especially Germans and Italians) to increase the propor-

tion of white people in the country. They donated land to European colonial settlement, but there was no reparation for the Africans already being exploited in Brazil. A century after the end of slavery the lands of the communities of resistance of the fugitive Africans, the Kilombos, were regulated as areas of protection in the Federal Constitution of 1988. However, the official titling of the Kilombos only came to be concretely realised in 2002. The agrarian problem is one of the reasons for the emergence of the first favelas in Brazil in the post-abolition period, at the end of the nineteenth century (Campos 2005). This information illustrates how much there has been and still there is an effort to annihilate the existence of the African people, not recognising their contributions, trying to erase their memory, ignoring the need for reparations for the very grave historical errors, and invisibilising the BaNtu linguistic contribution to the way that the Portuguese language is spoken in Brazil.

Some authors explain that there was no creation of a Creole language in Brazil for several reasons:

The proportion between the population of African and white origin, which favored [sic] a greater access to the target language [Portuguese] than that observed in typical situations of creolization [sic]; the absence of social and family life among the populations of slaves, caused by the subhuman conditions of their exploitation, by the high mortality rate, and by the successive displacements; the use of African languages as an instrument for the interaction of segregated and fugitive slaves; the encouragement of proficiency in Portuguese; racial miscegenation.

Unlike the case of Ebonics, where racial segregation allowed blacks to maintain their way of speaking, the BaNtu Portuguese experience was not restricted to Black people, but extended to the entire Brazilian population. Africans changed the language of the Europeans, and the African presence in Brazil provided a way of speaking the Portuguese language, very different from the Portuguese spoken in Portugal (Castro 2016; Bagno 2016).

When it comes to computers, the keyboard settings offer Portuguese (pt) and Brazilian Portuguese (pt-br). Given the wealth of contributions and history of Africans in this place, we chose to put the BaNtu people in their rightful place and to name the Portuguese spoken in Brazil as BaNtu Portuguese. Because we understand that one of the European strategies of

annihilation of Africans in Brazil is to name their contributions as ‘popular’ or ‘Brazilian’, as a way of not saying that the owners of these voices and many other contributions considered as icons of national identity, like *samba*, *feijoada*, and *capoeira*, are people of African descent.

According to Gonzales (1988),

Thanks to growing contact with Black cultural manifestations from other countries of the American continent, I have had the opportunity to observe certain similarities that, as far as the speeches are concerned, remind us of our country. It is true that the Black presence in the Caribbean region (here understood not only as Insular America but including the Atlantic coast of Central America and the north of South America) has modified Spanish, English and French spoken in the region That is, what I call ‘Black’ and is nothing more than the mark of Africanization [sic] of Portuguese spoken in Brazil The tonal and rhythmic character of the African languages brought to the New World, besides the absence of certain consonants (such as *l* or *r*, for example), point to an unexplored aspect of Black influence in the historical-cultural formation of the continent as a whole Even more evident similarities are evident if our gaze turns to the songs, the dances, the belief systems, etc. Needless to say, all this is covered up by the ideological veil of whitening, it is repressed by Eurocentric classifications of the type ‘popular culture’, ‘national folklore’, etc., which minimize [sic] the importance of the Black contribution (Gonzales 1988: 70).

The impact of the speakers of African origin on the formation of Brazilian Portuguese was simply denied, or reduced to lists of words of African origin introduced in our language. The majority of the Africans received, spoke languages of the group BaNtu, in particular, Kimbundu, Umbundu, and Kikongo. And the lexical contribution of these languages to Portuguese BaNtu is enormous. For example, the BaNtu Portuguese calls the younger son of the *caçula*, while European Portuguese calls him *benjamin*.

BaNtu Portuguese has in common with Kimbundu a system of seven oral vowels (a é ê i ô ó u) and a similar syllabic structure: CVCV . This is why popular Portuguese, BaNtu Portuguese, does not usually close a syllable with a consonant, and the pronunciation of the word ‘*falar*’ becomes ‘*falá*’ and

‘*correr*’, becomes ‘*corrê*’. Another aspect of the BaNtu pronunciation is the breakup of consonantal encounters by the insertion of a vowel, and the Africanisation of the pronunciation of the words *flor* to *fulô*, *salvar* for *saravá*, for example.

Also, some authors argue that the palatalised pronunciations of / d / e / t / in front of / i /, widely diffused in the Brazilian territory – [dʒia] (day), [ʃia] (aunt) l- may be the result of African influence as well.

In Kimbundu, unlike European languages, the plural is not marked by suffixes, but by prefixes: Nzambi – Ginzambi (God – Gods); Kota – Makota (older, older); for example. Bagno (2016) argues that Kimbundo speakers, having to learn Portuguese, have identified elements similar to their prefixes in articles and other determinants of names, so that they did not match names using push-ups. This would have resulted concordances such as: *as casa, os menino*, where the final letter *s* is suppressed. In a very similar way, also in verbal conjugation, Kimbundo uses prefixes and not terminations. Each verbal person has his/her prefix. In the irregular learning of Portuguese, the speakers of Kimbundo would have identified their verbal prefixes in Portuguese personal pronouns, which explains the conjugation paradigm with the obligatory presence of the pronoun-subject and the absence of flexural marks of person (with the exception of the first) in so many varieties of Brazilian Portuguese: *Eu falo / tu fala / ele fala / nós fala / vocês fala / eles fala*. These are some of the demonstrations of the practical effect of the BaNtu heritage in our mouths.

IV Retention and Resistance: Preservation of Authenticity

If language is the bearer of specific epistemological paradigms, then the retention of key languages is essential to uncover our way of knowing and our humanity.

Explore, for instance, the greeting, *khotso*, meaning a wish for peace for the person, family, and community. The isiZulu term *ukufa kwabantu* (human death) refers to more than diseases of people. It also includes spirit-related illnesses or spirit damage found amongst the ancestors (in the invisible realm, the macro-cosmos), as well as amongst the people in the visible realm, the micro-cosmos. The Yoruba word *Se Alafia* means I am in Peace, I am well.

Decolonization requires rescuing the deeper meanings of language. This explains how, in religions of African matrices practiced in Brazil, such as

Umbanda and Candomblé of the Angola nation, many prayers and songs are in BaNtu languages, so that they do not lose the essence of the sacredness of words.

For example, the word *Wohotesen* (wo-ho-te-sen) in the Twi language has a deeper meaning than ‘how are you?’ The underlying meaning in this example is, ‘I lower myself before you’, or ‘I bow down before your essence’. For the BaKongo, the word *Kingongo* means Spirit wellbeing, a state that exists when the community’s ‘inner divine presence’ is in harmony with the inner divine presence of all that is. The word *Kizila* means annoyance and refers to taboos and food and behavioural prohibitions, which if not respected, will cause discomfort to the individual.

Resistance to Being De-Africanised

What is most often overlooked is that these retentions of an African language structure as represented by Ebonics and BaNtu Portuguese are examples of our resistance to being de-Africanised. This may be better understood if I speak to the relationship between language and the logic of *being*. Language is a representation of *being*. The African meaning of being is that we are a Spirit (Spirit Beings housed in a physical container having a human experience). We are vibratory radiating energy and our language reflects our Spirit in its vibrancy and creativity (Fu-Kiau: 2003).

We are vibratory energy and our language as a sound is vibratory energy. Our language is, itself, alive. A very powerful example of this is found in the notion of spoken medicine. In Kikongo, the expression *Nkisi Mia Mova* means Spoken Medicine, the logic of which is that speaking constitutes a form of medicine. Sounds can activate particular cellular vibrations. That’s what spoken medicine does. You speak the word to someone and the word activates particular vibratory molecular changes. An example of the African experience in Brazil, which illustrates what we are saying about the power of this ‘magnetisation’ of words, is the Jongo Circle. Jongo is an Afro-Brazilian cultural manifestation BaNtu of origin of the Southeast region and is considered an ancestor of Samba. A person who sings and recites verses is accompanied by clapping and repeated by the other participants. These verses narrate something that is happening in the circle, and the next person who wants to position himself to sing the verses must respond to the demand of the previous person. Often, these verses are metaphorical and pose challenges that must be

answered as a result of promoting incantations in the person who failed to respond.

That which gives a person identity, no matter where s/he is born is culture. The total communication framework: words, actions, postures, gestures, tones of voice, facial expression, the way he handles time, space, and materials, and the way he works, plays, makes love, and defends himself (Hall 1977). We can cite as other examples the way people organise their families; the proverbs taught through metaphors; the way they might act in certain situations.

Languageing Our Being into Existence

As resistant acts of decolonisation and re-Africanisation, we must, as Cakata (2018) asserts, use our language to speak our being into existence and thereby re-humanise ourselves. ‘Languageing our being into existence’ is fundamental to our episteme, and is extremely important. Everyone would agree that language is one way that humans encode their experiences to transmit it to their descendants and peers. It must also be recognised that we use language to transmit stories, myths, legends, proverbial sayings, personal histories, collective group histories, instructions, and other forms of information that are necessary for survival. Essentially, through language, humans manage to live in and shape the world in their image and interests.

An example of ‘languageing our being into existence’ can be found in the use of metaphoric discourse. The use of metaphor is a direct outgrowth of African American response to oppression and dehumanisation in racist white America and African American reinterpretations of the African worldview. The invention of the Black metaphor was a cultural necessity (Nobles 2015). In this regard, the language used is continually and constantly challenged to make an accurate interpretation, discover hidden meanings that can call forth one’s humanity. Metaphoric discourse serves to advance and/or assert personhood (e.g., *the blacker the berry, the sweeter the juice*); clarify circumstances (e.g., *all eyes closed ain’t sleep*); and establish situational control and illumination (e.g., *the pot calling the kettle black*). There are numerous examples of attitudes, behaviours, and beliefs as a metaphoric discourse that ought to be seen as acts of resistance and retention of Africa in our mouths.

For over four decades African American scholars have recognised the linguistic marriage between African American speech and BaNtu Kongo

languages. As early as 1929, Lorenzo Turner recognised that African languages strongly influenced Gullah (the language of enslaved African on the South Carolina Islands). For the next 20 years, he made trips to the Gullah region in coastal South Carolina and Georgia, interviewing Gullahs (often in isolated locations) and making detailed notes on their use of language. He also traveled to several locations in Africa, specifically Sierra Leone, to learn about the development of Creole languages, as well as to Louisiana and Brazil, to study Creole and Portuguese, respectively. He published his classic work *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect* in 1949, documenting the origin, development, and structure of Gullah, which was strongly influenced by African languages. He showed the continuity of African language and culture across the diaspora. Additionally, Holloway and Winifred Vas provide a detailed compilation of 'Africanisms' (1949) that illustrate folklore, place names, foods, aesthetics, religion, loan, and loan words retained from the BaNtu Kongo.

The BaNtu Portuguese also has words that were retained as a form of linguistic resistance and nullified the use of the original word originating from European Portuguese. Castro (2016) provides some examples:

they are lexical marks that bear cultural elements shared by the whole of Brazilian society and that go through recreation (samba, capoeira, forró, lundu, maculelê), musical instruments (berimbau, cuíca, xquerê, agogô, timbau), culinary (mocotó, moqueca, angu, mungunzá, canjica), religion (candomblé, macumba, umbanda), poetry (os tutus dos acalantos, o tindolelê from cicles songs), diseases (caxumba, tunga), of the flora (dendê, maxixe, jiló, andu, moranga), of the fauna (camundongo, minhoca, caçote, marimbondo), habits (cochilo, muamba, catimba), ornaments (miçanga, balangandã), clothes (tanga, sunga, canga), housing (cafofo, moquiço), family (caçula, babá), human body (bunda, corcunda, banguela, capenga), manufactured objects (caçamba, tipóia, moringa), manifestations of affection (xodó, dengo, cafuné), insults (sacana, xibungo, lelé), power relations (bamba, capanga), do trade (quitanda, bufunfa, muamba, maracutaia) [all sic].

It is in this regard that we wish to address our African tongues in our mouths from both the USA and Brazil.

V. The Role of the Tongue in our Mouths for Healing and Pan-African Psychological Therapy

The human ability to communicate is the foundation of all human activities. The ability to speak and think allows humans to define relationships, roles, and responsibilities. It allows families to preserve their histories, ancestry, and ancestral memories. Language is the tool for transmitting people's cosmology, philosophy, and episteme.

We have argued in this article, from the analysis of the case of Ebonics and the BaNtu Portuguese, that the therapeutic process from a Pan-African perspective is also a form of spoken medicine that promotes care and healing. Although other therapeutic resources can be used in addition to words, they have a very special meaning, and it was not by chance that the colonial process sought in every way to erase linguistic diversity and to homogenise culture through language. The language of a people is related to its logic and consequently its psychic organisation for problem-solving (Nobles 2016). Defining a Pan-African psychological therapy, then, takes place by rescuing the forgotten languages and our ancestral logics in which these are imbricated.

Languages today are being killed and linguistic diversity is disappearing at a much faster pace than ever before in human history, and relatively much faster than biodiversity (Skutnabb-Kangas 2000).

The connection of ancient nations can be best accomplished by language relatedness, and when any language is destroyed, we lose our ability to trace the lineage of nations. Given the inextricable connection between language and culture, it should be clear that if you find the same language in distant places in time or location, one can be certain that the inhabitants of these different places are the same people or are historically related.

As noted, Ebonics and BaNtu Portuguese have been used to preserve many West African traditions, words, and concepts such as hospitality, culinary treats and gumbo, yams, and okra, and some lexical items (including those foods items) that represent the Bantu-speaking heritage in the United States (Hollaway & Vass). Ebonics is also evidence that we are the same people and that there is much resonance amongst us. Linguistically speaking, there is a Pan-African world.

Future Considerations

Clearly the retentions of African language features are essential components of Pan-African Psychology. In the quest for African authenticity and the need to decolonise the African Mind, it is useful to note that, a common culture is reflective of a common mind. Our humanity is often lost when one fails to see the unity in diversity. Unity in diversity is misunderstood when the emphasis is in the difference (disorder) and not the commonality (order). Our humanity is, strangely enough, masked by the apparent complexity in the simplicity of our BaNtu Portuguese and Ebonics language systems.

The apparent anomaly caused by enslavement and colonisation found in BaNtu Portuguese and Ebonics did not eradicate the African language rule structure, and thereby can serve as keys to our decolonisation. The charge of Pan-African Psychology should be to challenge the western narrative and rescue our humanity through African language and culture.

In the article, *Sakhu Sheti, reclaiming African Centered Psychology Focus on Afro-Brazil: Theory and Practice*, Nobles (2009) notes that slavery and colonisation in all its forms and functions were fundamental attempts to dehumanise African people through a process of de-Africanisation and de-spiritualisation. He further suggests that the mental liberation of African people worldwide is directly dependent on our ability to assist in the re-conceptualisation and reconstruction of African reality independently of Euro-centric thought and western hegemonic, white supremacist conceptualisations. Without question, language, specifically, Ebonics and BaNtu Portuguese are essential to the restoration of healing and wellness for African (continental and diaspora) peoples. Our task is to recognise and honor the 'African tongues in our mouths' (Ebonics and BaNtu Portuguese) as both acts of retention and resistance to dehumanisation and essential and valuable to the restoration of healing and wellness for African people and practitioners.

Post-script on Justice, Power and Love

One of the greatest problems of history is that the concept of love and power have usually been contrasted as opposites. What is needed is a realization [sic] that power without love is reckless and abusive, and that love without power is sentimental and anemic. Power (at its best) is love implementing the demands of justice and

Justice (at its best) is power correcting everything that stands against love (Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.).

In recognising and honouring the ‘African Tongues in our Mouths’, so too should justice, power and love be defined by and through our language and culture.

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Re-imagining Psychology: An Africanist Perspective

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Abstract

African nations suffered enslavement, genocide, oppression, colonialism and exploitation. The suffering that African people endured as a result of this affected various aspects of their lives such as their knowledge systems, how they relate to the environment, their spirituality, their history and their overall sense of being. This multidimensional violence was entrenched through the colonial education system, among other things. The university as an institution functions as a site for such violence. At universities, disciplines such as psychology have been used to pathologise people and have contributed to black people being seen as ‘less than’ human. Psychological and intellectual attacks on black people from disciplines such as psychology have played a part in constructing a narrative about African thought and intellect through the use of psychological research that demeaned, undermined and marginalised African ways of living and thinking. In this paper, we argue that for psychological healing to take place, we need to draw from African spirituality, in particular, and African knowledge systems, in general. We draw from a number of Africanist scholars to situate our work, and focus on works of scholars who have been contemplating ways in which African knowledge can assist in dealing with challenges that black people are confronted with at universities and in their communities.

Keywords: Afrocentricity, African spirituality, political self, Africanist, *bophelo*.

Ukubheka Isifundongqondo Isibili: Indlelakubuka YomAfrika

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Iqoqa

Izizwe zase-Afrika zahlukunyezwa wubugqila, ukubulalana, ingcindezelo, ukuqonela kanye nokuxhashazwa. Ukuhlukumezeka abantu base-Afrika ababuzwa njengomphumela walokhu kwaba nomthelela ezinhlakeni ezahlukene zezimpilo zabo okubalwa kuko izindlela zokwazi, indlela yokuhlobana nemvelo, inkolo yabo, umlando wabo kanye nempilo yabo yonke nje jikelele. Lolu dlame olunhlangothizingi lwagxiliswa kakhulu kusetshenziswa indlela yemfundo yobukoloni, phakathi kwezinye izinto. Inyuvesi njengesikhungo isebenza njengenkundla yalolu dlame. Emanyuvesi, iminyango efana neyesifundongqondo isetshenziwe ukuguqula abantu bazibone bengaphili ngendlela efanele yaphinde yaba nomthelela ekutheni abantu abamnyama babonakale bengabantu ‘abangaphansi’ kwabanye. Ukuhlaselwa kwesimo somqondo kanye nesokuhlakanipha kubantu abamnyama eminyangweni efana neyesifundongqondo sekudlale indima ekwakheni ingxoxo ngomcabango kanye nobuhlakani ngendlela yase-Afrika kusetshenziswa ucwaningo lwesifundongqondo olwehlisa, lwabukela phansi, futhi lwabandlulula izindlela zama-Afrika zokuphila kanye nokucabanga. Kuleli phepha, siqakulisa ukuthi ukuze kwenzeke ukwelulama kwesimo sokucabanga, sidinga ukuthatha enkolweni yase-Afrika, ikakhulukazi, kanye nasezindleleni zokwazi zase-Afrika, jikelele. Sithathela ezifundisweni eziningi ezingama-Afrika ukuzikisa umsebenzi wethu, futhi sigxile emisebenzini yezipfundiswa esezizibukile izindlela ukuthi ulwazi lwase-Afrika lungelekelela kanjani ukubhekana nalezi zingqinamba abantu abamnyama ababhekana nazo emanyuvesi kanye nasemiphakathini yabo.

Amagama Asemqoka: indlela yokwenza yase-Afrika, inkolo yase-Afrika, ubuwena ngokwezepolitiki, ubu-Afrika, *ibophelo*.

The Dark History of Psychology: Psychology and Colonialism

The expansion of European rule in Africa and other parts of the world brought unspeakable pain and underdevelopment in respect of multiple aspects of African functioning. Colonisation was, and still is, responsible for the oppression of Africans through their subjugation in the form of slavery, genocide, oppression, marginalisation, as well as social and political oppression. The system of colonisation functions with imperialism, which emphasises the domination and superiority of Europeans over Africans and other non-Europeans. This system of imperialism and colonisation is important to consider when we speak of psychology, or rather the psychological functioning of Africans. Whether Africans were subjugated through economic exploitation, political oppression or slavery, all these forms of oppression disrupted their psychological functioning.

When white settlers arrived in South Africa, they were preoccupied with African people's way of being in relation to their behaviours and ways of living (Dubow 1995: 197). The introduction of Christian missionaries in the 1800s was marked by an attack on African epistemologies and ontologies, and a preoccupation with the behaviour of Africans with a view to converting them to Christianity. Disciplines such as psychology and anthropology continued to further expand on what missionary Christian education had accomplished. The description of what Christianity meant as an epistemology and an ontology touches on the very nature of behaviour and psychology. It is therefore critical to know the genesis of religion and culture, and the influence they have on how we come to know and understand psychologies or psychology (Nwoye 2017: 335). These aspects of history and how things came to be are critical for us to engage with if we are to reimagine what psychology is and what its role is in Africa.

Psychology as a discipline in an African context has exhibited three stages, which show the ways in which the discipline and its practices mimic colonisation encounters and acts of colonisation. Firstly, psychology in Africa came as a continuation of European and American psychology (Nsamenang 2007: 2). This arrival of the discipline enforced the subjugation of psychological knowledge of black people by undermining African knowledge

systems through its use of Western theories to understand black people. In addition, white psychologists continued to use research that was being conducted on marginalised groups such as black Americans and native Americans to expand their understanding of marginalised groups in other parts of the world (Dubow 1995: 202). This was an important stage in building up a colonial mentality and maintaining the superiority of white people. What this meant for the colonial system was that there was an increased emphasis on the legitimisation and adoption of Western epistemologies (e.g. Christianity) in Africa. This was the beginning of the transference of behaviours or psychologies that symbolised colonial existence.

Secondly, psychology in Africa, like any Euro-Western system and knowledge, was preoccupied with African thoughts, behaviours, and personalities. This was followed by a fixation of scientists in Europe and America with supporting colonisation and establishing hierarchies of races/being. The eugenics movement popularised racist research, which normalised the brutal inquiry into African bodies and minds to suit white supremacist, capitalistic and imperial agendas. Its core aim was to push the notion of Western civilisation and to ensure that black bodies are in line with this ideal. (Dubow 1995: 121). This was followed by Darwinism/social Darwinism (1859), where the phrase *survival of the fittest* became popular. This phrase suggested that the colonisation of non-Europeans was necessary since black people could not survive by themselves, or govern themselves. Following social Darwinism, psychological scholarship (especially in Africa) was mostly centred on studying and understanding black people's personalities, cognitive abilities, intelligence and physical abilities. However, its main aim was to prove that whites are superior to blacks. This was achieved mainly because an European epistemology and ontology about being and existence was used. The continued silencing of African knowledge and psychologies by Western scholars made it easy for them to obtain results that suited their psychological and cognitive hypotheses. Not only did psychological scholarship silence African knowledge and psychologies, it assumed that Africans are blank slates who do not have a psychological knowing.

Psychologists such as Simon Biesheuvel, Jan Smuts, Ernst Gideon Malherbe, and Raymond William Wilcocks conducted demeaning studies on black people on the basis of their theories and concluded that they were savages, mired in childlike stages of development, unintelligent, and so forth (Fick 1929: 914; Dubow 1995: 215). The implications of such results were

critical to the colonial project and served to impose the advancement of colonisation and assertions that Africans have inferior mental ability. This would ultimately mean that Western psychologies would be the yardstick used to engage behaviour in an assumed universal way in which theories are used/applied blindly, since they are deemed relevant, regardless of geographical position, history, culture, or cosmology. What is important to note from the above is that when we reimagine the practice of psychology or attempt to decolonise it, we need to do so with an understanding of the past and a knowing of how things came to be the way they are in the present. This extends to current psychological and social positions in which black people find themselves, and how we understand them.

Lastly, for psychology as a discipline to cement its place in the political landscape and to have relevance for the colonial/apartheid era, it became active in developing policies that would govern black bodies and black people's intellectual capabilities, physical movement, and knowledge (such as through education and the healthcare system). In the early 1900s, mental testing research became popular in the colonies, and this research contributed to the development of segregation laws and policies on education, occupations, and land. Intelligence test research in psychology (e.g. the Binet-Simon scale for measuring intelligence and Spearman's *g* and *s* factors) played a significant role in the development of many oppressive laws and policies. In addition, the studies followed a comparative route, where in South Africa, black (natives), coloured, Indian, poor white and white were respectively compared (Fick 1929: 905; Biesheuvel 1943: 17). Most of the studies claimed that natives had poorer intellectual abilities than other races. In other studies, poor intelligence extended to behavioural issues, and it was argued that native agency was poor (Dubow 1995: 239). The researchers who conducted these studies claimed that they were scientific and that all factors that may have disadvantaged the natives had been considered. The studies were consequently deemed valid and scientific. Fick (1929: 908), for example, claimed that he had included children who were a bit older to account for the fact that natives' educational background was poor and that he had included poor whites from government schools to make it seem like both populations were on the same footing when it came to the intelligence testing. Later, Porteus concluded that natives were only able to complete schooling up to secondary education level (Dubow 1995: 222). Regardless of the claims that these studies were scientific and valid, it has been argued that, methodologically, the studies were flawed and biased

(Dubow 1995: 244). This is in line with Du Bois's assertion that white people had a tendency to portray black people as a 'problem', rather than as human beings (Rabaka 2015: 17).

Intelligence studies enforced the policing of black bodies and black people's health and knowledge as codified in law. The creation of an inferior education system such as Bantu education and the introduction of occupations defined as 'kaffir' work (i.e. vocational work) were some of the consequences of racial intelligence studies. In addition, institutions such as the Department of Native Affairs, the Department of Interior Union of South Africa, and the National Institute for Personnel Research, to name a few, hired psychologists who mainly conducted research that focused on natives' inabilities and studies aimed at saving the white race. Consequently, the discipline of psychology was an active participant in the colonial system, the remnants of which can still be felt in the present in many respects. Many psychology textbooks still use and rely on theories that demonise black experiences and that position black people as people who engage in risky behaviour, as helpless, as lacking agency, and as highly dependent. How can we theorise about lives using foreign theories that were developed elsewhere, especially theories that uphold Western ways of being and position African ways of being as inferior or abnormal? An education system that alienates people from themselves can never be useful in helping people to understand and better their circumstances.

In his reflection on Western education, Kofi Busia notes:

I became painfully aware of my isolation. What does being educated mean? I understood my community far less than boys my age who never had formal education

<https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/features/Dr-Kofi-Dompere-On-Nkrumah-s-Scientific-Thinking-13-352260>).

Busia's reflection speaks to the importance of knowing one's history and the lived realities of one's people since they form part of one's identity. Euro-Western psychology has denied many people an opportunity to engage with who they are through an education system that never allowed space for African ways of being. Busia's reflection is echoed by the following statement by Ghanaian freedom fighter Kobina Sekyi (cited in Asante 2011: 97):

We cannot expect to get into the way of continuous development while we are following a system of education which depends on the borrowing of an alien physiology, psychology and sociology, a system of education which is based on eschewing by us of the social institutions of our ancestors on the ground merely that our ancestors were uncivilised for just as a condition of health in the individual is health in the society in which he is born, so a condition of self-respect in the individual is reverence for the institutions of his social grouping.

Becoming Strangers to Ourselves: How Psychological Theories Negate our Being

Colonisation and its conditions coincided with the development of multiple theories and ideologies towards understanding African existence. The theorisation took different approaches due to the multiple functionality of colonisation. African scholars in different parts of the world such as Molefi Asante, Steve Biko, bell hooks, Frantz Fanon, Wade Nobles, and others, wrote on topics related to psychology, colonisation of the mind, the reclaiming of an African being and spirituality, and the dynamics of living through and surviving oppression. The conceptualisation of these discussions formed part of a quest to understand how black people perceived and lived through oppression. There was a need to understand and to construct what was considered 'African' and 'Black' in the face of oppression. A number of scholars such as Stephen Bantu Biko, Hussein Abdilahi Bulhan, and Wade W. Nobles noted that psychological warfare was important in the establishment and maintenance of the colonial system. Africans had to respond to the system in a way that allowed them to survive both physically and psychologically, since this 'war' was happening across multiple dimensions. Reinvention and self-sustenance took place on different platforms that were aimed at showing resistance and survival. African self-sustenance included reigniting African spirituality, fusing African ways of being with Western ways of being (e.g. as a way of preserving African ways, they had to be adapted, as can be seen in African forms of Christianity), and recreating knowledge for survival. Living in a colonial system meant that Africans had to find new ways of coping with both the physical and psychological violence of colonial rule and preserving some aspects of their knowledge systems. In discussing African ways of being,

we have to be cognisant that African bodies and minds have been politicised, and attempts at living and surviving are a response to various systems of oppression.

When people live under oppressive and dehumanising circumstances, they find ways to survive and to cope. Black bodies have been politicised over time and respond in varying ways to challenges that they persistently confront in their daily lives. In a way, people develop multiple selves that they display at various moments in their daily experiences. We have what we would like to call the *political self*: this is the self in relation to the colonial system. Africanists such as W.E.B. Du Bois, Frantz Fanon and the South American scholar, Paulo Freire (to name a few), have documented that our encounters of living through the colonial system start with the colonialists themselves (whites). The point of departure for the oppressed is striving for humanity, or humanisation. However, their humanity is denied by injustice, exploitation, oppression and violence at the hand of the oppressor. Freire (1970: 44) maintains that the oppressed always yearn for freedom and to recover their humanity. The search for humanity translates to the behaviour/psyche of black people in relation to surviving and being in the world that is opposed to their humanity. Seeking humanity could mean assimilating into the system of oppression, navigating acceptance in the world of the oppressed and the oppressor, and resisting the oppressive system. All these alternatives are quite taxing on one's mental and psychological well-being. Thus, seeking freedom and liberation involves psychological warfare and mind games from the oppressive system. Physical (visible) oppression has always been regarded as important; however, psychological oppression is equally (if not more) important if one is to understand the depth of the suffering of marginalised people as a result of colonisation.

In his book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paulo Freire (1970: 45) speaks about the encounters between the oppressor and the oppressed in the search for humanity and liberation. He explains how the oppressed adopt the oppressor's identity, which is individualistic in nature since the oppressed do not have consciousness of themselves. He further maintains that the behaviour of the oppressed is always prescribed by the oppressor and follows the guidelines of the oppressor (Freire 1970: 46). This speaks to the inferiorisation of Africans' being in the world and their epistemologies, but also their assimilation into a system that might reward them for acting according to the oppressor's way of being. At this point, they might be required to abandon their

African ways of being. However, this is not the case. Freire (1970: 48) explains that the oppressed suffer from duality, meaning that as much as the oppressed seek to assimilate to the system, they also want to retain some aspects of themselves. Du Bois (1903: 03), in his 'The Souls of Black Folk', refers to this as double consciousness, which entails that Negroes (black people/ people of African origin) look at themselves through the eyes of others and measure their souls by the images of others' world. Du Bois's (1903: 03) concept of having two souls explains the need to be African and a world citizen at the same time, inhabiting and drawing from the various world systems. Moreover, Frantz Fanon highlights how living in duality/ in double consciousness could lead to cognitive dissonance, where people's beliefs and reality do not correspond, making it difficult for them to accept the evidence of reality (Fanon 1986: 149; Bulhan 1985: 68).

What we can gather from the above is the psychological manifestation of oppression. In a system that perpetuates oppression, the oppressor's reality and behaviour are imposed on the oppressed. Consequently, as we have indicated earlier, African ways of being become silenced. This cultural imposition, with its pseudo-consent from black people, results in colonial mentalities or psychologies. The guidelines and prescription of behaviour that Freire speaks about, in addition to the imposition of culture by the discipline of psychology, further add to the oppression of African being, epistemology, and cosmology. It is therefore important to understand the discourses of colonial activities and systems and how they manifest in people's lives (especially the lives of the oppressed), thus demonstrating how important and pertinent it is for psychology as a discipline to understand the makings of postcolonial individuals (Okazaki, David & Abelmann 2008: 93).

Unpacking the history of psychology, the colonial strivings of psychology and colonial mentalities is crucial in the process of learning and teaching psychology. hooks (2010: 3) and Freire (1973: ix) express two important tenets that psychologists may find beneficial if they are serious about (relevant) psychology education. They argue that education should be a practice for freedom (hooks 2010: 3) and that education should be used for critical consciousness (Freire 1973: ix). For people to gain critical consciousness, they need to problematise natural, cultural, and historical reality and develop theories that are rooted in historical struggles. However, the perpetual dominance of Euro-Western forms of being makes it difficult for alternative ways of knowing to come to the forefront.

From a Psychology of Naïve Consciousness to a Psychology of Critical Consciousness

Euro-Western knowledge systems make advocating for critical consciousness difficult. The Euro-Western education model that South Africa insists on following leaves little room for African ways of knowing to thrive. The politics of post-apartheid South Africa have seen a move from segregation to integration, and from right-wing education to liberal education where Africans/ Black South Africans are just accommodated or included in a larger education system that oppressed them. There seems to be convenient ignorance of and a failure to see and acknowledge the role that education plays in the formation of a citizen and how he/she will respond to the world. If we are to imagine a shift in how we relate to and engage with our communities, then our theories and methodological underpinnings need to change. This is where a move towards decolonisation and Africanisation becomes very critical since it will assist with the process of reimagining what education is and the role it plays in society.

The discipline of psychology in South Africa continues to silence African cosmologies. The discipline suffers from what Freire (1973: 41) refers to as naïve consciousness, where the focus is on the symptoms of psychological challenges people are confronted with instead of looking broadly at possible influencing factors. The teaching of psychology continues to ignore the context in which psychology is practised, thereby promoting assumptions about people's lived realities. While we acknowledge the attempt that is being made to be 'relevant' as far as the teaching of psychology is concerned, we argue that this move is slow and universities continue to produce psychologists who are removed/distant from their communities. This disconnection from people's lived experiences is what Bulhan (1985: 68) refers to as experimental solipsism, which speaks to the ways in which theories of philosophical psychology are based on how white, middle-class males experience the world.

There has been an increase (though not nearly enough) in the number of African scholars who choose to follow the route of critical consciousness in their teaching and practice of psychology. This implies that a shift is possible. We acknowledge the hurdles that many will have to cross in attempting to disrupt systems that have been put in place over time and the challenges that may accompany such attempts. However, for psychology to truly serve people, it has to be rooted in the contexts in which it is taught and practised. There is a

need to move towards a liberatory approach where multiple forms of being and knowing are acknowledged as legitimate.

Reclaiming our Humanity: Negritude, Afrocentricity and Black Consciousness

Since the master's tool will never dismantle the master's house (Lorde 1984: 132), to reimagine or decolonise psychology, our approaches should be rooted in perspectives that centre the humanity of all. It cannot be ignored that for a long time, Blackness and being black in the world was never core psychological focus. To this end, we call for the need to engage Black studies with a particular focus on Negritude, Afrocentricity, and Black consciousness. Black studies serves a theoretical hub for social and political movements, such as the Civil Right movements, Black power movements, Black Consciousness, and Black Arts movements (Colon 2008). Black Studies aims to bring together theory, academia and praxis needed for individual and collective transformation within Black communities (Colon 2008). Taking into consideration the current challenges faced by our communities, it is important to understand these from a holistic perspective at both the micro and the macro level, where historical, social, cultural, and structural issues are taken into consideration. Black communities have and continue to struggle with multiple injustices and inequalities that render many of them perpetually poverty stricken, struggling with family disintegration as people (mostly men) seek employment far from their families, and unequal access to opportunities. It therefore becomes pertinent to practice a psychology that acknowledges these intersecting challenges. To this end, Afrocentricity, Negritude, and Black consciousness, might offer us tools that assist in responding to challenges faced by black communities.

The Negritude movement and Afrocentricity offer us the vocabulary to understand the conditions of Africans all over the world, especially the impact of slavery and colonisation on the mind and consciousness/psyche of Africans (Nobles 2013). These Africanist movements provide a psychological view that have the African people's lives, histories, and experiences at the centre of understanding what well-being means and how it could look like, without pathologising. The Negritude movement was developed in the 1930s as a rejection or a critique of Western colonisation, its philosophy and its marginalisation of African people and their philosophies. It highlights the importance of accepting one's Blackness and the history and cultures of black

people (Rabaka 2015: 4). The movement further advocates the importance of Black pride and self-consciousness, especially in the presence of whiteness and its philosophies (Rabaka 2015: 4). Instilling pride and self-consciousness is critical within an education system since it helps people to understand who they are and how they are connected to others. Du Bois (1903: 5) and Fanon (1986: 16) have highlighted in their works the difficulty of being Black in a world replete with white supremacy. Fanon and Du Bois' work, not only assist us in understanding the psychology of the oppressed, it encourages us to engage with interdisciplinarity in psychology. For example, scholars such as Aimé Césaire and Léopold Sédar Senghor in the Negritude movement make use of multiple texts and sources such as poetry, music, philosophy archives, folklore to address issues of Blackness (McKittrick 2016). If psychology, then insist on disciplining thought, and not engaging at an interdisciplinary level, it is bound to continue addressing blackness through a colonial lens and further perpetuate anti-blackness (McKittrick 2016).

In addition to the aforementioned, we draw from the Black consciousness movement, which theorises the ways in which colonialism and the South African apartheid regime affected the psyche of Black people. Steve Biko (1976) defines Black consciousness as an inward-looking process that aims at restoring the life of Blacks, and fill it with dignity and pride giving Blacks a positive outlook. Biko (1976) further describes Black consciousness as the attitude of the mind and a way of life. Biko's description of what Black consciousness entails closely reads the suffering experienced by Black people and offers possibilities of what Black love could offer. For Biko (1976), Black consciousness is about decolonisation of the mind, where Black people learn to love themselves and create spaces that affirm their humanity. Black Consciousness also advocates for the new sense of self, which could be the removal of beliefs, perceptions, and experiences that negatively affect the state of mind of Blacks people. Biko's (1976) conception of Black consciousness is presented in his writing as a process of attaining agency, awakening, awareness of deeper structural elements oppression, and their impact on the mind, and a foundation for emancipation.

Black or oppressed groups continue to be dislocated psychologically and culturally and, in many ways, they understand themselves through the eyes of the oppressor. Using an Afrocentric approach as a way to understand ourselves and the world would mean that we need to start considering the importance of the psychological and cultural location of Blacks/Africans in a

given historical moment (Asante 2007: 40). According to Locke (1925: 4), to assert a new sense of ourselves would require an Afrocentric perspective in psychology and an assertion of how Black people can exist or fight the cognitive dissonance they continue to face. This expression of the double consciousness, we argue, could be suppressed by the agency that Afrocentric theories advocate. This agency is self-consciousness and it provides Black people with psychological and cultural resources within the context of their history (Asante 2007: 42). One of the ways in which such consciousness could happen is through the acknowledgement of the role that spirituality plays in how people make sense of the world and their understanding of well-being. It is to the role of African spirituality that we now turn.

Psychology and African Spirituality

In the domain of ‘science’ the logic of exclusion speaks to deficient democracy in the construction of knowledge. The systematic and sustained exclusion of other sites of knowledge and peoples renders the knowledge acquired and elevated to the status of ‘science’ unrepresentative Democratising knowledge and science means the practical recognition of the *sangoma, ngaka, chiremba* or *nyanga* as authentic doctors in their own right, doing so in terms of their healing paradigm second to none (Ramosé 2016: 68).

Mkhize (2004) argues that many societies in Africa still draw heavily on their traditional beliefs and cultural heritage and that it is therefore pertinent to take these into consideration when we teach and practise psychology. As a society we have lost harmony with ourselves, the environment and other natural beings. In some ways, this is linked to an education system that fails to highlight the interconnectedness of life. In the previous section, we highlighted the historical underpinning of the discipline of psychology and how it was used to dehumanise black people. Psychology is preoccupied with human behaviour and it looks at human behaviour in compartments where the various sub-disciplines (e.g. cognitive, behavioural, social, community, developmental and environmental) almost often function independently. This compartmentalisation contributes to the categorisation of human beings (and their behaviour).

We need to practise a liberatory psychology that encourages relatedness and that emphasises the importance of the collective and not the individual. Additionally, we need a psychology that highlights the importance of the spiritual aspect of our being. African psychology offers this possibility. African psychology does not pathologise; instead, it calls for a holistic understanding of our being. One of the ways to do this is to acknowledge the critical role played by spirituality. Nobles, Baloyi and Sodi (2016: 39) argue that,

with the centrality or essentiality of spirit, the African process of knowing and comprehension may be better understood as the interplay of radiations, vibrations, fields, planes, waves, and points of energy between and among the realms of reality.

Knowing and being are not linear, but they are circular, and go back and forth, highlighting the complexity of life and existence.

Human beings are in constant connection with one another. The idea of relatedness becomes critical since it points to the interdependence of existence. We call for a psychology that is centred on African knowing and an African cosmology and worldview. This would also include African languages. The Euro-Western form of education, in general, and psychology, in particular, has put African languages on the periphery and, by so doing, has marginalised many of the crucial ways in which people understand the world. African languages carry a wealth of wisdom and guidance on how to understand one another and the world around us. For example, the notion of ‘life’, as discussed by Nobles *et al.* (2016), offers a glimpse of the importance of language in practising psychology. In Sesotho, the word for ‘life’ is *bophelo*. *Bophelo* means both life and health. If people do not have *bophelo*, it may mean they are not well and that there is some imbalance in them, or it may mean they are dead. Not having life (*ho se be le bophelo*) can be understood on a multidimensional level (i.e. from a physical, psychological, spiritual and existential perspective), which speaks to the complexity of human functioning and the understanding of human functioning from an African (Sesotho) perspective. Nobles *et al.* (2016: 47) argue as follows:

Black behavior [sic] is most clearly understood by Black people as extensions of a spiritual core. An assumption of a spiritual core implies the existence of an irreducible element in man [or woman] which has

a divine origin, an eternal fate and a moral function.

People's behaviour can therefore not be separated from the spiritual part of themselves. Refusing to consciously acknowledge this connection implies denying an aspect of people's existence. Therefore, when we think about psychological well-being, we should note that,

restoration or healing must involve the experience of being human; the expression of being human, and the essence of being human itself (Nobles *et al.* 2016: 47).

This would reveal itself in how we engage with one another, fulfil the roles entrusted to us and acknowledge that well-being is a holistic experience and not a compartmental one.

By Way of Conclusion: Towards a Psychology that Breathes Life

Our training and education in Western thought, particularly Euro-American psychology, has made it difficult for us to contemplate traditional African thought as scientific and our traditional spiritual and knowledge systems as nothing more than untested religious beliefs and/or quaint native folk practices (Nobles & Cooper 2013: 347).

The aim of this paper was to provide a brief historical excavation that highlights the role colonialism has played in the establishment of psychology and the way it is practised in South Africa. We engaged the problematic ways in which psychological theories were used to render black people as inferior and less intelligent. Hiding behind 'scientific proof', Western scholars developed theories that undermined people's histories, ways of being in the world, and relations with one another and the world. We deem it critical for the discipline of psychology to engage in self-reflection and to confront its dark genesis to be able to look at possibilities for psychologies that contribute towards the betterment of people's lives. One of the possibilities we propose is that of drawing from an Afrocentric approach, where theories of the South, in general, and knowledge from Africa, in particular, are offered a substantive

home in institutions of higher learning. Furthermore, we call for a type of psychology that is centred on African spirituality. This would mean understanding well-being from a holistic perspective where the individual is understood in relation to others – the living, the yet to be born, and those who came before – as well as the world around a person. This kind of psychology is one that affirms people’s being and acknowledges their complexities without imposing irrelevant labels, categories, and diagnoses of their behaviour. We issue herewith a call for a psychology of life.

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African Cultural Psychology

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Abstract

Existing African and African American scholarship have attempted to account for the cultural aspects of psychological functioning. Traditionally mainstream psychology has harbored an individualist ideology where positive functioning is seen purely at the individual level. However, few theories postulate how cultural psychology junctures culture and psyche, cultural connections between African and African American people. Groups display of cultural psyche reference their experience of intra- and inter-personal realities that are bounded through culture. Research on the psychology of African and African American people grounded in cultural realities may assist in conceptual clarity for defining psychological health from a cultural perspective. This *cultural perspective* represents the collective symbolic representations of behavior and ways of perceiving that also serves to guide values that define the meaning of healthy psychological functioning. This discussion centers around four areas of importance: (a) alien Western episteme; (b) African episteme and cosmology; (c) African psychological functioning; and (d) cultural psychology for those of African descent. Our goal here is to provide an African cultural psychological view of these realities as expressed via mechanisms that determine affect, thought, emotion, and behaviors to prescribed cultural context. Such processes are culturally organized, defining positive mental health and well-being in accordance to a group's culture (Wilson 2012; Wilson & Williams 2013).

Keywords: African Psychology, cultural psychology, African episteme, African cosmology, psychological functioning

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Iqoqa

Imfundo ekhona yase-Afrika kanye neyamaMamelika okudabuka e-Afrika seyizame ukuchaza ubunjalo bamasiko bokusebenza kwesayikholoji. Isayikholoji eyejwayelekile neyeningi seyifihle ukucabanga okuzimele lapho ukusebenza okuyikona kubonakala kuphela ezingeni elizimele. Kodwa-ke, izinjulalwazi ezimbalwa ziveza ukuthi isayikholoji yamasiko ihlela kanjani ngezigaba isiko nomqondo, ukuhlobana kwamasiko phakathi kwama-Afrika kanye namaMelika okudabuka e-Afrika. Amaqembu aveza umqondo wamasiko abeka ukubona kwawo amaqiniso aphakathi nanomkhawulo wawo aboshelwe esikweni. Ucwangingo kwisayikholoji yama-Afrika kanye neyamaMelika okudabuka e-Afrika, olugxile emaqinisweni amasiko lungelekelela ekucaciseni imicabango ukuchaza impilo ngokwesayikholoji ngendlelakubuka ngokwamasiko. Le ndlelakubuka ngokwamasiko imele iqoqo lemifanekiso ebonakalayo lezindlela zokuziphatha nezindlela zokubuka nezisiza ukukhomba okungamagugu okunikeza incazelo ukusebenza kwesayikholoji okunempilo. Le ngxoxo ingxila ezingxenyeni ezine ezibalulekile: (a) indlela yokufika yolwazi yaseNtshonalanga; (b) indlela yolwazi yase-Afrika kanye neyendabuko; (c) ukusebenza kwesayikholoji yase-Afrika; kanye (d) nesayikholoji yamasiko yalabo bokudabuka e-Afrika. Inhloso yethu lapha ukuveza umbono wesayikholoji yamasiko ase-Afrika wala maqiniso njengoba kuvezwe amathuluzi aphelele ukunyakaza, ukucabanga, umuzwa, kanye nendlela yokuziphatha esimweni samasiko esigunyaziwe. Lezi zinqubo zihlelwe ngokwesiko, ukuchaza impilo eyiyo yengqondo kanye nokuphatheka kahle njengokwenqubo yesiko yalelo qembu (Wilson 2012; Wilson & Williams 2013).

Amagama asemqoka: isayikholoji yase-Afrika, isayikholoji yesiko, indlela yolwazi yase-Afrika, indlela yokubuka izinto ngendabuko yase-Afrika, ukusebenza kwesayikholoji

Introduction

Conventional mainstream psychology has harboured an individualist ideology, where positive functioning is observed purely at the individual level. Kraepelin first proposed the development of comparative psychiatry as a constituent of culture (Sam & Moreira 2012). The long-standing challenge between cultural psychology and mental health remains in the search for rich variation in cultural context and search for universality. Two well-known methods to examine the cultural context of mental health are the etic and emic approaches. The etic approach involves applying the universality of Western theoretical constructs onto different cultural populations; whereas, the emic approach allows for in-depth exploration of mental health theory within specific cultural-context. There is increased appreciation for the cultural effects on mental health (i.e., personality and self-hood) in relation to rules, adaptation, meaning of life, and variations in assessment (Cheung 2009; McAdams & Pals 2006). The concept of personality and selfhood have been consistently defined from a western European viewpoint (Wissing 2013).

Persons who personify individualism attribute behaviour to traits (Cheung, Van de Vijver & Leong 2011). For example, within the standard Western perspective, the concepts of personality formation and self are derived from a guise of internal understanding of individual existence (Belgrave & Allison, 2010). However, for persons of collectivistic cultures, personality and self are determined by an interdependent existence (Belgrave & Allison 2010; Guerry 1975; Stack 1974; Martin & Martin 1978; Nobles 2015) and use more situational descriptions in order to explain behaviour based on contextual conditions (Cheung, van de Vijver & Leong 2011). However, rich debate has occurred regarding homogeneous personality vs. heterogeneous personality, while it remains difficult to capture diverse constructs of individuality and collectivity (Chen, Meindl & Hunt 1997).

Divergence in human characteristics is often authenticated by assumptions that originate from a Western, European conception of the world (Jones & Campbell 2011). This cultural-deprivation model perspective assumes that Black people are confirmed only to the degree they are considered the same as white (Jones & Campbell 2011). This paper is designed to highlight how culture, found in the works of Black psychologists, is interwoven, and essential to defining psychological functioning for African and African Americans. Specifically, the psychological adaptation inquiry

from a cultural psychology perspective will reflect authentic African-centric psychological processes, where psychological differences due to different cultural origins evolve along different pathways. While Blacks have been dehumanised worldwide, their adjustment to and emancipation from oppression requires the operation and progression of an African cultural psychological explanation rooted in African cultural thought and philosophy.

While it is not the attempt of this article to examine parallels between those of African descent and those of European descent, nor claims to make universal assumptions about African and African American culture to the world, this discussion highlights and illuminates the psychological processes and resources of a positioned human being discernible to a group of people that are culturally, psychologically, socially, and politically significant in the world. In other words, it is imperative that constructing an African centred theory authenticating correct and normal behaviour must ‘incorporate mutually verifying constructs about the nature of human beingness and human functioning’ (Piper-Mandy & Rowe 2010). Accordingly, any analysis, theory, constructs or concepts must adequately reclaim our African cultural ways of being and expression (Rowe & Webb-Msemaji 2004). For example, research by Salami, Walker and Beach (2017) demonstrated differences in the precursor to depression as fundamentally different between Blacks and Whites. African Americans, due to their cultural disposition, reflected cognitive vulnerability of helplessness, while Euro-Americans were more of a hopelessness cognitive vulnerability, demonstrating different cultural disposition (Salami, Walker & Beach 2017). These different portrayals correspond to different cultural experiences, reflecting an authentic psychic energy to living in a racially stigmatised reality and culture.

What follows is an introduction of summary operational ethics of cultural psychology, thereafter next brief explanation regarding absolutist and relativism, where all human behaviour is argued to be culturally patterned, where after, the operative assumptions of African-centered psychology are revealed. Lastly, a core description of a cultural psychology for people of African descent will be introduced.

Assumptions about Culture and Cultural Psychology informing Mental Health

Cross-cultural researchers (Hofstede 2011; Kagitcibasi 1994; King & Nobles

1997; Triandis 1996; Schooler 1996; Compton 2005; Li & Fuan 2007; Nobles, Goddard & Gilbert 2009) generally agree on the on conceptualisation of mental health and concur that a cultural element to functioning exists. Several cultural models demonstrate how different psychologies are apparent. For instance, Hofstede's (2011) introduced six cultural dimensions, Triandis' (1996) ideocentrism vs. allocentrism, Markus & Kitayama's (1991) interdependent vs. independent self, and King and Nobles' (1997) cultural agency and cultural agent (Culturecology Model) have all garnered much-needed attention. In fact, prior examinations explored the unitary dimension and its multi-linear typology within individualism and a collectivist construct. Triandis (1995) suggests a perpendicular axis typology, defining four types of individualism-collectivism (I-C). A horizontal individualism (HI) domain views individuals as equivalent, but autonomous of one another, self-governing and self-promotional, assertive, and unique. Second, vertical individualism (VI) imitates an autonomous/diverse self-construal (persons who see themselves as not the same, but self-determining). In the same way, horizontal collectivism (HC) imitates a mutually dependent/same self-construal, while vertical collectivism (VC) imitates a mutually supporting/different self-construal (Triandis 1995). While the work of Triandis and his colleagues are well-accepted (Schooler 1996; Compton 2005; Li & Fuan 2007) this model will be reexamined from an African-centered cultureecological perspective to elucidate the formation of correct mental health functioning.

This study has an empirical focus. Indeed, it should also be noted that the application of an African episteme and cosmology to the understanding of African and African American psychological processes is most appropriate given that the African American experience, though unrecognised and in many quarters falsely denied, is essentially African (Nobles 2006; Kambon 1998a; Akbar 1994; Cuadill 1973). Researchers Woods, Kings, Hanna & Murray (2012: 72) captured Nobles' understanding that,

... [n]o one has yet to demonstrate or substantiate how African American people are not fundamentally African. At best, social commentary, not scientific fact, has simply declared that African Americans somehow magically stopped being African due to crossing the Atlantic and living for a long time in America, even though that stay has been for the most part isolated, rejected and segregated from mainstream society.

Nonetheless, what is illustrated is that the very same literature also suggests that these groups may demonstrate unique and amalgamated characteristics from their genetic culture of origin as well (Belgrave & Allison 2010).

African Episteme and Cosmology

Three theoretical positions for the investigation of culture persist. The first is the absolutist position, where culture does not inform the expression or meaning for human performance. The use of standardised constructs and measurement tools without recourse to an alternative indigenous view reflects this understanding. This ethnocentric approach and its inherent assumptions are only logically possible from within the worldview from which it emanates (Sam & Moreira 2012). For instance, in this excerpt Vincent Guerry's (1975: 29) *Life with the Baoulè*, we see how Western thought permeates his interaction with someone of an African way of being:

Meeting a Baoulè with a little boy, I asked him 'Is he your son?' He says yes, he is. But I want to be sure, so I narrow down my question: 'Is he your real son? From your own body?' No. So I explain to him that this means he is not his own son. He replies 'He is not my bodily son, but he is my real son'. At this point I am lost. He insists that the boy is his real son, even though not physically. To me, 'real son' and 'adoptive son' are contradictory ideas, separated by a strict boundary of fact. Whereas to the Baoulè they are overlapping, and can both be simultaneously true.

The psychology of Blacks continues to be collapsed within or studied as an aspect of Western psychology. Theoretical constructs of race developed from Western conceptual frameworks, often displacing African and African American psychological health and well-being. The US Census Bureau sees race as a matter of a person's self-identification (Belgrave & Allison 2010). Literature refers to the identity of racial formation as connecting with a group or combined identity with a foundation on an individual's observation that he/she has similar experiences with others (Yip, Seaton & Sellers 2006). To date, no accord has been established to form a concept or idea of racial or Black identity for African Americans (Jones & Campbell 2011; Marks,

Settles, Cooke, Morgan & Sellers 2004). The Census Bureau defines Black or African American as: ‘A person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa’ (p. 97). The discussion of race in context demonstrates connections between African and African Americans free of cultural context. However, the purpose of this communicative discourse is to articulate how *culture* can play a significant positive role for human psychological functioning unique to those of African descent. Wilson and Williams (2016: 6) states,

since all groups display characteristics of affect, emotion, and thought as expressed values and behaviors [sic] to prescribed cultural context, defining positive psychological functioning and well-being should be in accordance with a group’s culture.

The second position is that of the relativist perspective, where all human behaviours are culturally patterned. The attempt here is to gain clarity of human functioning on the terms of indigenous patterns of behaviour. One benefit is the explanation of human phenomena from within the cultural context of the individual. A relativist position provides the opportunity to collect an abundance of data that extrapolates the foundation and manifestation of culture-bound positive psychological functioning. However, the reality of Africans has been shaped by centuries of engagement with Europeans through the colonisation period, illicit slave trade and the rise of capitalism (Nobles 2015). These Africans were shipped to the Americas. The ‘African American’ is one of geopolitical consequences of this, which include displaced group lineage, lack of cultural acknowledgement, social status in the US, and historical structural endemic discriminatory patterns and widely held practices in unfavourable judicial and social policies (Woods, King, Hannah & Murray 2012; Alexander 2010; King, Moody, Thompson & Bennett 1983). As a result, the ideas and beliefs (ideations) of African people were virtually ignored (Nobles 2015). Nobles add that ‘The psychological effect of European imperialism has never been fully understood’ (Nobles 2015: 51).

This discourse is of special interest for how indigenous psychologies can add to cultural psychology for a more adequate study of psychological functioning. The key theoretical link between positive psychological functioning and racial-cultural content should be of interest to theoreticians, practitioners, and culture psychologists alike, for a holistic method of inquiry. The

theoretical contributions in the study of Black extended family (Martin & Martin 1978), personhood (Pense 2009), mental health (Azibo 1996), and culture (Valsiner 2009; Matsumoto 2006; Nobles 1985) may advance our understanding of the psychological health status of Africans and African Americans (racially) and Africans residing in the diaspora (Wilson & Williams 2013). While more research is being conducted, little has been discussed in selected journals, *Culture and Psychology*, regarding how the instrument of culture impacts and defines psychology for those of African descent.

Lastly, the third position, universalist, hypothesises that concept of ‘psychic unity’ as ‘early stage-based models of human development tended to privilege psychological universalism [in their dissemination of ideal processes]’ (Hammock 2008: 226), and that culture influences its development and display. Panse (2006) articulates that the common bond among all human beings through which people exist occurs through our discovery of common human qualities. This is the combination of relativist and absolutist positions. Some authors (Sam & Moreira 2012) contend that the most comprehensive approach to understanding mental health functioning is to incorporate universalist, absolutist, and relativist perspectives. Kambon and Bowen (2014: 89) succinctly state,

The primary developmental emphasis of these models has focused on psychologically transitioning from an Anti-Black to *Non-Black* – racially neutral or Universal – Human identity. Other constructs like Individualism/Individual Human Identity (achieving an Individual identity independent of race and culture) have been emphasized [sic] and are generally thrust toward the need to transcend racial identity to achieve an optimal individual-personal human identity within the framework of European/European American cultural reality.

While the African American environment separates them from their place of origin, they represent a multidimensional ethnic group identity appropriated from vestiges and symbols of African culture (Wilson & Williams 2013). The mental health of a person is essential to their identity and wellbeing. To articulate the African American cultural identity/reality the field of psychology and mental health practitioners must not be in a state of constant reaction to Western theoretical models, but must employ more autochthonous psychology (Wilson & Williams 2013). According to noted Black psycholo-

gists (Nobles 2006; and 2015; Hilliard 2001; Akbar 1994; Kambon 1998a; 1998b; Wilson 1995; Wright 1984) black psychological phenomena exist. For instance, experts (Nobles 2015) in Black/African psychological research have declared that consciousness and personality are difficult to unravel and that the character of the mind includes both immaterial and material collective experience. This intergenerational setting of being reflects thoughts of reincarnation and collective consciousness. Cognisance, all things considered, mirrors the intrapsychic limit with regards to insight and divine understanding, which means epistemically moving beyond simply considering, feeling, and mindfulness. It must consider a divine presence/spirit (Nobles 2015). Thus, African people reincarnate consciousness generationally, regardless of locale. This interchange comprises both macro (e.g. McAdams 2006) and micro-social conscious (e.g. Bamberg 2004) approach to deal with the examination of mental working/ emotional wellness/ mental health.

Defining African and African diasporas psychological health has been the work of the professional organisation, The Association of Black psychologists, who for over fifty years has been defining and refining Black reality (Williams 2008; Neville Tynes & Utsey 2009; Belgrave & Allison 2010; Piper-Mandy & Rowe 2010; Nobles 2012). Early works and writings of conventional psychology, for the most part, described African Americans and Black culture in the pejorative in all spheres of American intellectual and cultural study (Martin & Martin 1978). Some of the most influential works of E. Franklin Frazier (1939), Gunnar Myrdal (1945), Horace Cayton and St. Clair Drake (1945), up to the seminal work of Daniel Partick Moynihan's report on the Black family, reveal the antipathy of mainstream culture's attempt to pathologise this segment of the population (Martin & Martin 1978). Scholars have attempted to deconstruct the cultural-deprivation hypothesis and began to articulate more accurate and comprehensive explanations by examining strengths of the Black family life experience (Robert Hill 1972; Robert Staples 1971; Nobles 1985; White 2004). Early works by Orlando Taylor (1971), Joseph Holloway (1990), Joyce Ladner (1971) and Melville Herskovits (1958) acknowledge the cultural retention found in Black life were attributed to 'African survivalism'. In other words, the critics contend that significant features of African culture were evident in the New World within patterns of black life (Belgrave & Allison 2010). For example, Wilson and Williams (2013) capture such features as extended family, sense of family, concern about kin and non-kin individuals as symbolic representation for

collective personhood. There is a need to theoretically ground and empirically investigate autochthonous psychological functioning perspective. Discussions on the context of personality and selfhood informing healthy experiences appear in works by African-centered psychologists (Nobles 2006; Hobfoll *et al.* 2002; Kambon 1998b; Azibo 1998; Myers & Haggins 1998; Adeola & Perry 1997; Akbar 1994) who have declared, for example, that the psychology for people of African American ancestry has roots in African philosophy and psychology. African (Black) psychology has been defined by Kambon (1998a: 242) as:

... as a system of knowledge (philosophy, definitions, concepts, models, procedures, and practice) concerning the nature of the social universe from the perspective of African cosmology. Black psychology is nothing more or less than the uncovering, articulation, operationalization [sic], and application of the principles of the African reality structure relative to psychological phenomena.

The unpredictable connection among culture and psychological well-being remains an imperative theme of dialogue. There cannot be emotional well-being without culture. Culture is a component and inherent part of mental health functioning. The meaning of wellbeing relies upon the way of being and thinking, and may shift in time and place (Sam & Moreira 2012). To not acknowledge this uncovers a nearsighted ethnocentric perspective of the statement of positive emotional wellness. This underscores the significance of articulating and characterising African psychological wellness from various perspective introductions.

Defining Psychological Functioning

The productive use of autochthonous psychologies in the field of cultural psychology has been informative. Being acquainted with other societal values and their indigenous concepts may yield expanded understanding about culture's impact on psychology (Valsiner 2009). However, the challenge remains with the science of psychology and its historical roots orientated towards the West (Valsiner 2009). From the Euro-social psychological perspective, ethnocentrism limits our understanding of other psychologies in the world. For instance, mental working can be seen as the state in which

mental processes are self-protecting, in accordance with universal principles. In this regard, the World Health Organization defines mental health as, ‘as a state of well-being in which the individual realises his or her own abilities, can cope with normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community’ (WHO 2007). Azibo (1996: 76 - 177) on the other hand, describes mental health as,

... the achievement in the psychological and behavioral [sic] spheres of life of a functioning that (a) is in harmony with and (b) embraces the natural order ... [and is] that psychological and behavioral [sic] functioning that is in accord with the basic nature of the original human nature and its attendant cosmology and survival thrust.

It has been noted that different cultures are said to exhibit common characteristics of communal and collectivist well-being. Cultures that are looked upon as ‘representing’ a communalistic theme regardless of their diversities (in ancestry, place, and religious worship), include nations of diasporic Africans, Asians, Latinos, and Indians (Choi & Han 2009; Triandis 1995). For instance, according to Susrut Indian conceptualisation health is a state of spiritual, physical and mental well-being (Valsiner 2009; Durghanand Sinha 1996). For the analysis of selfhood, mental and social well-being for Chinese traditionalists reflects a Confucian philosophy of collectivism (Choi & Han 2009). Guerry (1975: 29), examines Baoulè’s universe to state, ‘their thirst for unity, the desire for cohesion, seems to be the deepest aspiration of the Baoulè: to stick closely as possible to one another, be the other a deity, the universe, or the clan’. With reference to Akan culture Gyekye (n.d.) states,

Because the human individual is not self-sufficient, he would necessarily require the assistance, goodwill and the relationships of others in order to satisfy his basic needs ... the well-being of man depends upon his fellow man – *obi yiye firi obi*.

For African Americans, Stack (1974) has called attention to that Black family connection techniques are a common social-cultural network. Essentially, in Martin and Martin’s (1978) study of extended family, sound mental working is the effect of encountering healthy emotional and moral support during complacent times and gives people a feeling of identity, roots, and emotional stability of belonging.

The challenge is what we can glean from indigenous episteme that will help us understand those of African descent, while valuing the intricacy of the continental, diasporic, and American experience (Belgrave & Allison 2010). This nescience continues to hinder our development in expanding these other psychologies and capturing from their historical traditions potential towards a healthier perspective that may be more holistic for our way of being in the world (Hanks 2009). Borrowing from these histories of proven philosophies it is reasonable, according to the ontological processes discussed, to assume that psychological functioning is determined through our discovery of common human qualities. Panse (2006) believes that the common bond that makes us human beings occurs through the guise and rules of culture.

Culture and Psychology: The Discussion

The term *culture* has been used in a variety of ways in various disciplines. As Valsiner (2009: 5f) suggests, the term culture is,

being sculpted in a variety of versions ... such as the dialogical self, social representation processes, semiotic mediation, symbolic action, and actuation theories – have all been co-participants in this new advancement of ideas.

Although many scholars have defined culture to explain various aspects of human thought, behaviour and practices, this multidimensional construct remains abstract in application and explanation when defining psychological functioning between different groups of people (Organista, Marin & Chun 2010; Valsiner 2009; Matsumoto 2006). It has been a widely held view that,

the cultural psychology of African Americans involves the evolution of African patterns of thought, feeling and behavior [sic] and their utilization [sic] as adaptive mechanisms in a context of racism and oppression (Jones & Campbell 2011: 1).

Culture is a vast structure of practices, thoughts, states of mind, values, propensities, convictions, traditions, dialect, customs, services and practices exceptional to a specific gathering of individuals, which gives them a general plan for living and examples for deciphering reality (Nobles 2015). Culture

and psychology attempt to provide a heterogeneous view of culture that allows different perspectives to be presented. However, discourse in culture and psychology has been limited, and continues to hinder our understanding of cultural psychology (Valsiner 2009), particularly from African and African American perspectives.

Different Cultural Psychology: Defining our Mental Health

Conventional psychology is entrenched in Western ideology. For example, traditional psychology's concept of personhood (self or identity) explains the European identity from the interest of European *Utamawazo* (worldview) (Ani 1994); self-interest, competition, and separateness (Johnson 2003; Karp & Masolo 2000) yielding to the polarisation between matter and spirit (Sawyer 2004). Wu and Keysar (2007) suggest that individuals with this more individualised self-construct are more likely to represent European cultural *utamawazo*, or worldview. Individuals who ascribe to a Eurocentric *utamawazo* demonstrate personhood as valuing material external worth, a sense of distinction, and uniqueness (Myers & Haggins 1998).

According to theorists (Nobles 2006; Hobfoll *et al.* 2002; Kambon 1998a; Azibo 1998; Myers & Haggins 1998; Adeola & Perry 1997; Akbar 1994), African Americans ascribe to an African *utamawazo* (Ani 1994). The African *utamawazo* is characterised as sacred, emotional, and communal (Mattis, Hearn & Jagers 2002). Inherent within these discussions is the emphasis on the ontological understanding of communion and connection with others, due to identity, physical location, and spiritual divine order (Adams & Salter 2007).

Collectivism, as characterised by reliance, closeness to family, or family uprightness and friendliness, may reflect mutual aid systems in black families. During slavery, Africans had to depend heavily on mutual cooperation in order to survive (Belgrave & Allison 2010). During this period, Africans had to work their crops in order to eat; make their clothes, share room and board, care for enslaved children who were separated from their own parents, develop codes of conduct, which insured their security, care for their own sick, and even bury their own dead (Martin & Martin 1978). This value orientation of the group reflects their *asili*, or ontological, cosmological and epistemological ideas of existence (Karp & Masolo 2000; Ani 1994) more than non-African *utamawazo*, that includes a tendency to promote the idea of the survival of only the fittest.

This episteme has its origin in Kemetic cosmology (Grills 2004; Kambon 1998a; Azibo 1996; Akbar 1994; Nobles 1985). It is within this African philosophical system that consciousness is structured through the seven principles of *Ma'at* truth, justice, balance, harmony, order, proprietary/reciprocity, and righteousness or self-governed way of life (Williams 1987). This suggests that an individual's worth is inherent in the individual's being (internal) as opposed to an individual's material goods (external) (Sawyer 2004). The awareness of one's internal energy and external world can be captured in the similar views of various African philosophies and/or communities. The Akan of West Africa believe the principle of two: *okra* and *sunsum*, immaterial/spiritual and *honam*, material/physical; the Yoruba speak of the *ara* (body) that can be handled, sensed, damaged and dissolved subsequent to death and the *emi* (spirit) is the divine element that links the person directly with god. The Mende person is seen as the *ngafa* or spirit source. The amaZulu of South Africa believe in the 'UQOBO,' as the origin of living consciousness. Epistemologically, this conscious understanding incorporates both the seen and the unseen.

The metaphysical understanding of the African individual is communal (Gyekye n.d.). Grills (2004: 181) states, 'In the African world there is no "I" without the "We"' (p. 181). The metaphysic and the status of person-hood in the African social order (Gyekye n.d.) follows the idiom 'I am because you are and since you are, therefore, I am' (Mbiti 1969) as opposed to Western formation of reality by the European philosopher Descartes, who maintained 'I think, therefore, I am' as the basis of personhood/identity (Johnson 2003). The philosophical proposition of Western man locates personhood based on the ideas of Descartes and Locke (Guerry 1975). The African concept of personhood in Western Bantu society sees individuals by their communing with others justifying their status as human beings (*Muntu*) (Janz 2004).

However, culture has been regulated as an independent variable, often marginalised due to limitations of time and place. The marginalised status of culture to the understanding of mental health and psychological functioning results from an etic approach of mainstream psychology. One assumption of this approach is the existence of 'psychic unity' of human experience such that the expression of individualism-collectivism constructs is common across cultures (Sam & Moreira 2012). Recent investigation has revealed cultural variation and multiple cultural domains within individualism-collectivism construct (Li & Aksoy 2007).

The examination of mental health in accordance with laws of social relations provides an important background for examining mental illness. While the scholarship within sociological perspective offers little insight into mental illness, it can serve as a significant construct from which to assess the trajectory of mental illness within the context of culture. While theories in sociological research discuss the direct implications of sociocultural connections to a people's way of functioning, stronger connections are required in order to define their mental health implications, grounded in a specific *cultural* reality, and may assist in conceptualising mental health and illness from a sociological perspective. This treatise focuses on the relevance of mental health constructs from a collectivist-individualist continuum, where there is a need to transpose the current individualistic paradigm onto a broader cultural paradigm of mental health and mental illness.

There are a number of theorists and practitioners who have begun to incorporate African-centered approaches into the articulation of personality (Kambon & Bowen 2014) and mental health (Azibo 1996). One substantial contribution to cultural mental health from Black psychology is the Azibo Nosology. As a part of his theory in diagnosing personality function on an order-disorder continuum, this system of diagnosis places at its centre an African understanding of personality as a function of inheritance, social ecology, and the interplay between the two. This view emerged out of relevant theories on mental health and illness. The 'Culturecology Model' (King & Nobles 1995; Nobles, Goddard & Gilbert 2009) asserts mental illness to be defined by cultural agents operating within a cultural worldview. In this work, cultural agency is the choreographed display of behaviour in accordance with what is socially conforming or morally contravening in one's interactions with the world. *Culturecology* recognises the interaction between people and their environment (be this hostile, or harmonious), as well as the ontogeny and phylogenetic survival thrust; it establishes what is normal and natural for the cultural organism.

The Culturecology Model, introduced by Lewis King and Wade Nobles (1997), suggests that the person comes with an ontological cultural DNA with facilities, ideas, values, life practices, and expectations defined by pre-scripted recurrent tales of history and survival. This will to survive on which mental health is premised emanates for those of African descent out of an orientation towards self-extension (Kambon & Bowen 2014; Kambon 1998a, 1998b) in which person and environment cannot be understood in

absence of their cultural psyche. King and Nobles (1997; Nobles, Goddard & Gilbert 2009) interject that the Culturecology Model identifies that

- (1) ‘the nature of the person’ and ‘the nature of the environment’ are inextricably connected;
- (2) both the environment and human beings are cultural phenomena; and
- (3) the ‘cultural grounding’ and meaning of each (person and environment) must be culturally understood in order to fully understand the interactive relationship between persons and mental health.

Imagine, if you will, that health is divided into quadrants (see Figures 1 and 2) formed by the intersection of the person (as cultural agent) and the environment (the imposing cultural agency).

Figure 1.

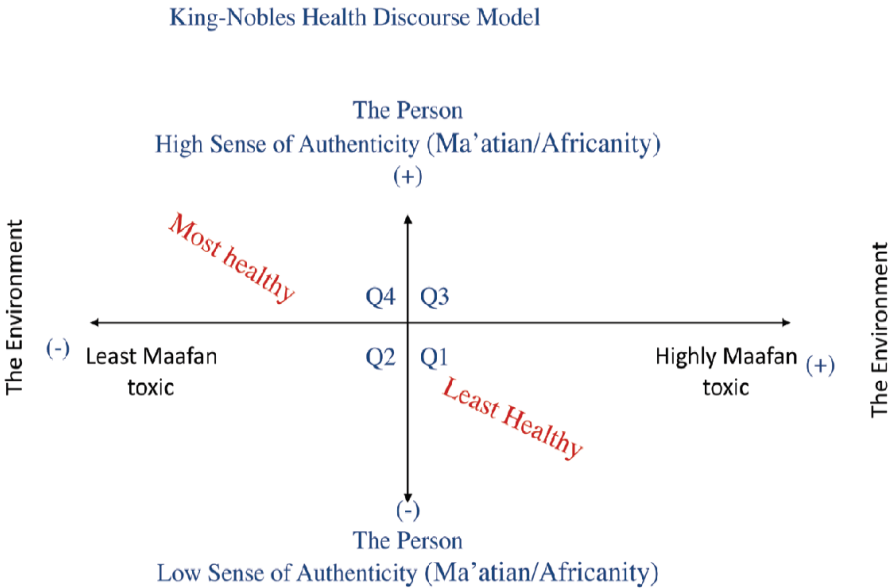
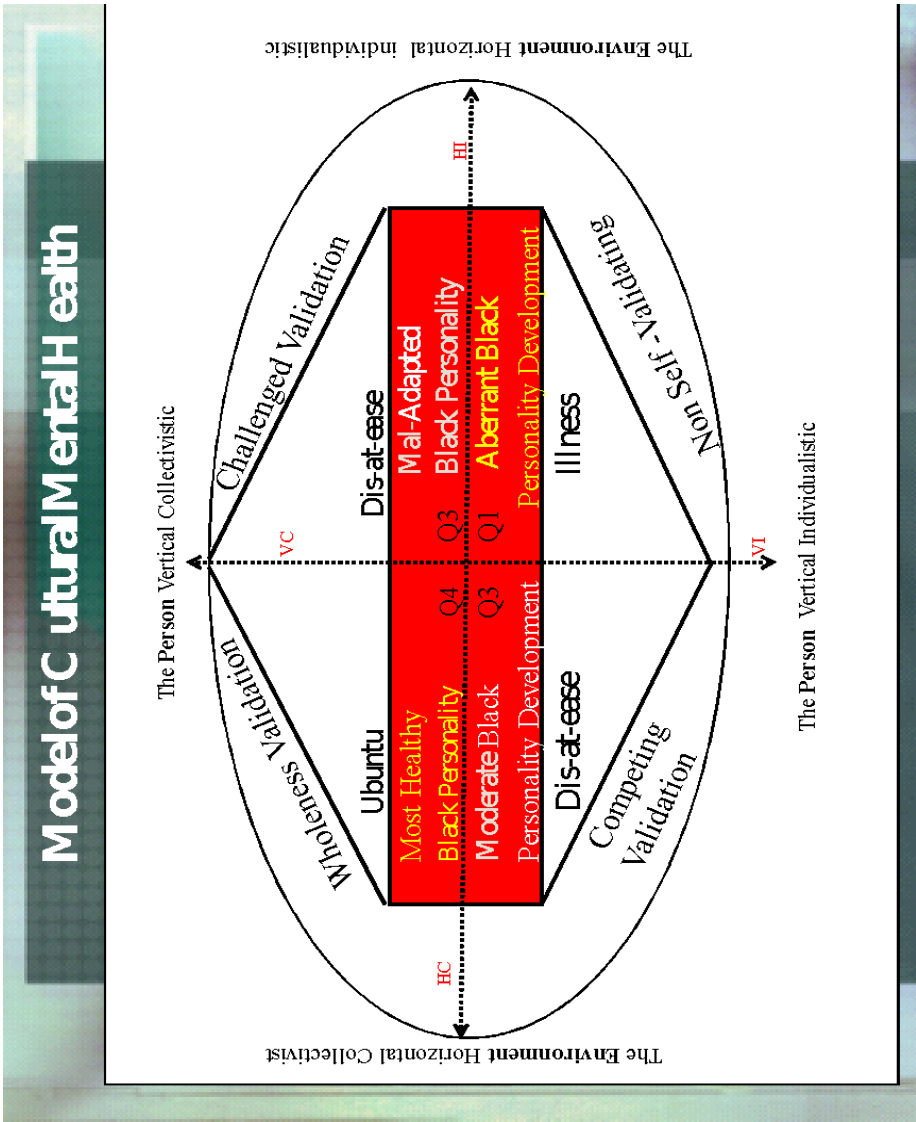


Figure 2.
Model of Cultural Mental Health



Cultural dimensions examined in early studies by Baldwin and Hopkins (1990) that revealed cultural differences in worldviews, with African American college students endorsing African *utamawazo* and white college students endorsing Eurocentric *utamawazo*. Similarly, Rubin and Belgrave (1999) examined time orientation and revealed that European American college students were more likely to use mathematical time orientation when arriving at events, whereas African American college students utilised relative time orientation when attending events. It has been argued that one can be a collectivist on one occasion, and be an individualist on another. This sort of code switching allows individuals who are collectivist, to exist in a predominantly individualistic environment (Gelfand & Dyer 2000). The same may not be true in reverse when individualists exist in a collectivist culture. This would explain, for example, white Africans in South Africa maintaining their individualistic values, traditions and ethos, while existing in a dominant collectivist culture.

Similarly, Jagers and Mock (1995) found that children of African ancestry demonstrate communalistic or collectivist attitude, and less competitive, individualistic attitudes when compared to their European counterparts. Further study by Kernahan, Bettencourt and Dorr (2000) revealed differential relationships for allocentrism (collectivism) and individualism between African American and European American students, respectively. While research (Salami, Walker & Beach 2017) has clearly demonstrated that worldview differences exist, with African Americans adhering to more African psychic energy and cultural disposition, contemporary social scientists continue to marginalise these results by argumentatively focusing on diversity that exist within African people and their cultures and simply give in to the so-called complexity of what the African American culture has become (Nobles 2006). Nevertheless, a different cultural psyche persists and has been exposed in conscious perspective taking and cognitive thought patterns.

Sinha and Tripathi (1994) identified individualistic tendencies in Japan, a culture typically recognised as a collectivist society. In a recent study, East-Asian Canadians differed in positive attribution towards self when interacting with the use of Asian language as they demonstrated both positive and negative affect than when using Western language demonstrating inverse relationship with more negative affect (Perunovic, Heller & Rafaeli 2007). However, research examining affective states as influenced by cultural expression has yielded implications contradictory to culturally normative

expectations (Ashton-James, Maddux, Galinsky & Chartraud 2009). Asians and Westerners who experienced positive affect expressed values and behaviours that were less consistent than their prescribed cultural interdependent and independent self-construal (Ashton-James, Maddux, Galinsky & Chartraud 2009). These empirical findings support the multidimensional nature of both the individual–collective construct (Triandis 2001), and reveal potential challenges to one's mental health (King & Nobles 1995).

This difference in cultural perspective-taking has also been captured in neural psychological research, which has demonstrated core neural psychological functioning that differed between subgroups existing within the same society. Recent study (Van Bavel, Packer & Cunningham 2008) examining neural substrates and group biases revealed amygdala activity among African Americans tends to reflect increased processing for in-group members, whereas amygdala activity among whites reflects increased processing of negative stereotypes toward African Americans. That is, self-categorisation ignited greater neural activity for African Americans, whereas out-group response increased neural activity for whites. This may suggest that psychological and cognitive mechanisms are motivated by social, cultural context and innate neural activity and its impact on behaviour. This provides empirical evidence for sentiments towards Mexicans, Muslims and Black populations in the US.

The research cited in this study indicates a psychocultural functioning of dimensions and reflects innateness or *visceral cultural traits* related to racial identity. The research also demonstrates geographical, historical, sociological, political, biographical, and generational change and is influenced by processes of socialisation, internalisation, and accommodation that should be considered in the investigation of psychological functioning. Connecting persons of African descent to their cultural roots may influence their psychological health (Adeola & Perry 1997).

Conclusion and Suggested New Directions

From past research, people from an autonomous social reality may not have what it takes to decipher someone else's activity when contrasted with people from a reliant social point of view (Wu & Keysar 2007; Perunovic Heller & Rafaeli 2007; Ashton-James, Maddux, Galinsky & Chartraud 2009). Herein lies the need to consider an epistemological shift that is counterintuitive to

western orthodoxy. Social scientists of African descent may be more responsive to cultural contexts than to out-group cultural contexts. Previously mentioned research has captured different neuronal activity, in brain localisation with different cognitive perceptual performances attributable to associated cultural content and context (Van Bavel, Packer & Cunningham 2008). This certainly calls for a culturally differentiated understanding of human behaviour and psychological functioning, which may serve as identifying vital markers in distinguishing a more accurate account of mental activity and behaviour. Adequately locating culture as an intricate and innate function of psychic energy allows scholars and researchers to infer how *inter*-individual variance may be less of importance than *intra*-individual variability (Perunovic, Heller & Rafaeli 2007).

Mainstream psychology has not infused cultural components into its field. Identifying positive processes and outcomes from within a specific cultural worldview can expand our understanding of what is lacking and aid in the process of building upon what is in place for future intervention and prevention efforts. Additionally, this may lend support to the need for inclusion of other philosophical and psychological practices/theories as universal to all human beings. This author will offer a theoretical framework to be discussed in a second treatise on cultural psychology and mental health to serve two important intellectual functions:

- (1) it will unite different perspectives and scholarship of similar themes within the field; and
- (2) introduce the concept of *ubuntu* as a model of mental health.

This endeavour will articulate how African episteme and cosmology lay the framework for universal conceptual models within cultural psychology and expound on the psychological nature of humanness, *ubuntu*, as defined by people of African descent, while applying subjective ideals of cultural structured thought patterns to well-being and psychological functioning. Thereby, it is recommended that adoption and utilisation of formal definitions of cultural psychology be used. The incorporation of an African centered psychology may lend understanding to the dynamic manifestation of culture in the psychological analysis and application of theories. African centred psychology instills the understanding of thought and action as related to everything in the universe and a key aspect to mental health (Nobles 2006).

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Derek Wilson

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Safely Nestled in isiXhosa is a Psychology of a People

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Abstract

Being called to re-imagine education provides everyone whose ways of knowing have been invisibilised an opportunity to be deliberate in crafting an education where they are not merely performers of knowledges that were scripted in other lands. Psychology as a way of understanding human mind and behavior should mean that every society had ways of understanding and speaking about human behavior and language was central to that task. In this paper I aim to look at how the speakers of IsiXhosa language understood and conceptualized human behavior and how that could benefit the bigger task of not only learning in indigenous languages but also from them. IsiXhosa concepts of *ukuphalaza imbilini* and *ukuzityanda igila* are used to demonstrate how language transmits its own epistemology.

Keywords: Metaphoric language, Indigenous knowledges, IsiXhosa, Psychology, Ethics, Science of Human Functioning

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Iqoqa

Ukubizwa ukuthi ubheke imfundo isibili, kunikeza bonke abantu abazindlela zabo zokwazi esezisatshalalisiwe ithuba lokuthi baqaphelise kahle ukuqamba imfundo, lapho bengabona nje abalingisi bolwazi oluthathwelwe kweminye imihlaba. Isayikholoji, njengendlela yokuqonda umqondo womuntu kanye nendlela yokuzophatha, kumele isho ukuthi yonke imiphakathi beyinezindlela zokuqonda nokukhuluma ngendlela yokuziphatha kwabantu futhi ulimi belungumgogodla kulowo msebenzi. Kuleli phepha, ngihlose ukubuka ukuthi abantu abakhuluma ulimi lwesiXhosa bebekuqonda futhi bebekucabanga kanjani ukuziphatha kwabantu, nokuthi lokho kungaba namthelela muni emsebenzini omkhulu wokufunda ngezilimi zendabuko kanye nokufunda kuzo. Izisho zesiXhosa ezithi *ukuphalaza imbilini* kanye *nokuzityanda igila* zisetshenziswa ukuveza ukuthi ulimi luziveza kanjani izindlela zokwazi.

Amagama asemqoka: ulimi lokungathekisa, ulwazi lwendabuko, isiXhosa, isayikholoji, inqubonhle, Isayensi Yokusebenza Komuntu

Introduction

The resurfacing demands that call on higher education to redefine its role, intentions and ethos, compel everyone involved in pedagogy in South Africa to cast a critical gaze on the knowledge they disseminate. In my endeavors to question what I have come to understand as Psychology and its application I arrived at the realisation that language is an anchor of all epistemologies. My intention with this paper is therefore to demonstrate how my home language of isiXhosa has always communicated an understanding of human behaviour. This I have done by drawing from figurative language and ordinary people's understanding of the concept of emotional wellness. Furthermore, in order for this knowledge to find accurate expression, I decided to perform an epistemic disruption, which prevented me from gazing upon African knowledge with a western lens. This follows Mignolo's (2011) expression of assuming a distance from imperial categorisation of knowledge as either superior or inferior, and the treatment of language according to such divisive categories. In this paper, I thus disrupt the western epistemic rules which dictate the structure of knowledge dissemination. This is done by not only presenting an African epistemology, but also doing so in a manner that is in line with African ways of engaging in speech (either written or spoken). This relates more to the way in which I begin (with ethics) and end (with a conversation), the discussion that relies on spiritual invocation, rather than logical flow as we know it.

This discussion regarding isiXhosa safely harbouring the psychology of a people was presented at the 24th Psychology Society of South Africa conference in September 2018¹. The conference was held at a venue named 'Emperor's Palace' in Johannesburg, South Africa, and that evoked in me the issue of ethical considerations in a society that is still reeling from colonialism. The article, therefore, first draws from isiXhosa idioms to address some ethical concerns, not just about the conference venue, but also about western education in general, and psychology in particular. Secondly, still drawing from isiXhosa idioms, it will be argued that long before colonial invasions, psychology has always been and continues to be a part of African communities. Parentheti-

¹ While initially addressed to a specific South African audience in the South African context, it is believed that this message would be relevant to any people who have experienced colonialism and threats of language erosion leading to epistemicide.

cally, due to the hegemonic domination of western education, the term representing the science of human functioning i.e., Psychology, universally refers to Euro-American psychology. The scope of this article, unfortunately, will not allow for a full discussion of the problem of the accurate nomenclature for isiXhosa human functioning. Nevertheless, what receives due consideration will demonstrate how language communicates its knowledge, and particularly how isiXhosa transmits its knowledge of human functioning.

What of the Ethics of this Land?

Addressing ethical issues before delving into discussion about the science of human function of the speakers of isiXhosa is deliberate. It responds to the question of the place of a human being in the both teaching and research. When the speakers of IsiXhosa language say *irhamncwa ligquma kowalo umngxuma* (a beast roars in its own den), they mean a person is only superior in his or her own territory. This is an ethical statement which forces me to pose two questions:

- 1) From which den is this beast called western psychology that brought us to the conference?
- 2) Why is it roaring in this territory?

Mignolo (2011) cautions us to be suspicious of knowledge that pretends to be universal, and which promises to be capable of responding to everyone's reality. It is a caution that has caused me to question the ethics of western education, a system that has dominated the African landscape for centuries. In specific regards to western psychology in Africa, Nobles (2015a) asserts that to simply bring western psychology to Africa is to be complicit in the mental brainwashing and psychic terrorism of Africa, and the adoption of the very tool and theories that have been used to demean, defame, debilitate, and damage African people. To not remember that psychology is part of an imposed education system would be a serious error. Lebakeng, Phalane and Dalindjebo (2006) lament the foundation of western education in Africa, bent as it is on epistemicide², and argue that its existence can be neither politically

² The term epistemicide refers to the phenomena where the dominant (Western) conceptions of knowing are asserted as the only source of knowledge and

nor ethically justified. Those of us who participate in this imposed education system are, therefore, complicit in the breach of the ethics of the people of the South African land. As illustrated by Wa Thiong'o (1986), through brutal measures, western education system was enforced, and insisted on 'educating' everyone, and dismissed all whose ways of knowing were not of western origin. By participating in this system, we have legitimised an injustice which began by forcing African children into a western schooling system for which they did not volunteer themselves. By taking the young from an early age and putting them through their schooling system, the coloniser knew that they would eventually produce a generation that perceives the brutality of western education as a norm. I form a part of those who were raised by that generation forced to rely on western education for its livelihood – a generation that was made to forget that our landscape provided food for thought, body, and spirit. This is a profoundly ethical issue, and as stated by Waziyatawin (2005), the United Nations Convention on the prevention and punishment of the crime of genocide declared this practice genocidal where it can be found to be transferring African children from their cultures into a western culture.

What is most violent about this education system is its claim that it can impart to the indigenous people of South Africa skills that could improve their lived conditions. However, since its imposition, the indigenous people have far from benefitted from its promises. As shown by Lebakeng, Phalane and Dalindjebo (2006), the higher education institutional cultures in South Africa have not changed to respond to the socio-political demands of the land. The psychology profession, of which I am a part, has not fundamentally responded to the question of how to meet the need for healing of the land, or healing from various forms of oppression attendant to colonialism. The disconnect between the education and the society it promises to help is evident in the destitution that the majority of African people continue to experience.

In his numerous works, Ramose (2002a; 2002b) urges us to remember that a scholarship without memory will not succeed in fighting against colonialism. Paradoxically, Euro-American psychology has formidable scholarship on memory, however, remembers nothing about its own story and contributions to the dehumanisation of Africans in South Africa and elsewhere.

knowing resulting in the killing of indigenous knowing and the murder of all other culturally congruent, indigenous knowledge. For a further discussion of epistemicide, see Dei (2000).

It has theories of debriefing and reflection, but it does not reflect or debrief about being the very discipline that engineered one of the most heinous crimes against humanity in the guise of colonial-apartheid (see Rich 1990) for an account of race science and white supremacy attributable to this period). It is silent on its deliberate role to distort African knowledge in order to facilitate the dehumanisation of African people. Euro-American psychology in South Africa was instrumental in the entrenchment of colonial-apartheid policies; nevertheless, its curriculum does not explicitly reflect on that history. A science of human functioning should be seen as a healing field of study. It is imbued with the tears of the society and promises to mend the brokenness of our humanity. However, in South Africa, Euro-American psychology has disregarded the healing ethics of this land. Ethics that have always whispered: ‘*You do not heal people whose lineage you do not know!*’

This profession arrogantly insists on teaching our people; *yet*, it knows nothing about how our spirit should be handled. African cultures in South Africa discourage teaching people whose backgrounds you refuse to know and of which you are dismissive. As illustrated by Biko (2004), western education has been dismissive of African epistemologies. The schooling system has ensured that African children would have a distorted view of their knowledges and fed them a glorified version of western cultures. As Biko (2004) states, African children left school feeling ashamed of their backgrounds.

The ethics of African communities have always whispered that *ikramncwa ligquma kowalo umngxuma-*, that is, you are only superior in your own territory. Notwithstanding this wisdom, this profession has imposed the superiority of its world of origin on the African thereby, demonstrating that its supposed ethics are in point of fact void of requisite humility.

It is only ethical to remind the reader that our African ancestors died fighting against the so-called superiority of western education. For it to have legitimacy, the Europeans had to kill them and pit the survivors against one another in what they labelled *iqaba* versus *igqoboka* (the illiterate vs. the converted). As made evident in Opland, Kuse and Maseko (2015), the survivors were turned into mutual foes, dividing communities into two camps (*viz.* those who were for and those who were against western education). All this happened because one group was fighting for their ethical right to educate their young, because they knew that the only legitimate form of education begins with self-knowledge. Western education took from families the honour of making their children what they came to be.

As indicated in the introduction, the choice of the conference venue by the organisers was ethically troubling. Ethics certainly constitute a fundamental expectation from a discipline that claims to be concerned with people's emotions and state of mind. I believe the choice of the venue disregarded the fact that many such venues in South Africa ignite certain memories to those who continue to suffer colonial trauma. It is difficult to ignore that the conference venue is a product of colonial land grabs and was built by the bleeding hands of enslaved African forebears. It should be taken into consideration that the spirit of some of us attendees could be unsettled in such spaces, because they are built on the very site of incidence – what amaXhosa call *indawo yoxhwayelo*, a spot of pillage of the blood, sweat, tears and the flesh of our forebears. This is why some people choose to burn *impepho* (incense) when they get to such spaces to cleanse the air, to plead for calm, and acknowledge that human beings fell in order for such buildings to rise. The continued exploitation of black bodies in establishments such as Emperor's Palace (where black workers are to this day unjustly remunerated) must trouble those of us who are entrusted with the pain of this society.

An education that teaches us to live alongside appalling socio-economic conditions is void of *ubuntu* (humaneness). *Ubuntu bethu* (our humaness) speaks of *inkomo yenqoma* (an isiXhosa principle of lending a milking cow to a neighbour who cannot make ends meet so as to help to rebuild the dignity of the homestead), which provides the lesson that poverty does not live alongside opulence. The South African Psychology profession should be troubled by what it took for buildings such as Emperor's Palace to rise and what it takes to keep them standing: Our blood, Our tears, and the sweat our bodies produced from the strain of the yoke as black people!

A Psychology Nestled in isiXhosa

As shown above, the forceful introduction of western education was a brutal violation of the spirit, personhood, and the ethics of African people. It disregarded that the people of the land had an understanding of human functioning that worked hand in hand with their spirituality, their physical health, and the workings of the cosmos. If the definition of psychology is a way of understanding the human mind and behaviour, then we should agree that every society has its own psychology to help understand the mind and

behaviour of its people. We cannot accept that it is only western psychology that is capable of doing that. This finds accurate expression in Myers (1987) who argues that all people have a culture, which explains their way of life and existence in the world.

In the same manner that western psychology is embedded in the value system of its individualist culture, African psychology too has embeddedness in its own cultural value system. It is easily accessed through the languages of its people. Language serves a purpose of communicating its knowledge that means everybody who has a language knows something, i.e. come from a people with knowledges. So, if the language of our work is English, then the knowledge being communicated is, as it were, of the English world. Similarly, the demand for the full utilisation of African languages is to house and to communicate the knowledge of African people. This is something the coloniser understood too well as shown in the words of the colonising missionary J. L. Dohne in 1857:

In the study of languages in general, and of barbarian language in particular, two objects are to be aimed at — a philosophical and a practical. The philosophical object is the attainment of an insight into the character of a people, by means of an accurate acquaintance with the form into which its thoughts are moulded — and which is invariably the true expression of the national spirit. As regards savages this is in an especial degree the fact. The investigation of the language discloses the secrets of national character, otherwise impenetrable, and reveals the origin of customs long since forgotten. The spirit of the nation is exhibited to our minds in the living words which have conveyed its ideas for ages, as clearly as its physical appearance is presented to our eyes. Thus the national language is the only safe exponent of the national character. The immediate practical object, as far as barbarous tribes are concerned, is that a literature should be created for the propagation of Christian truth and the extension of civilisation.

The missionaries were very clear and methodical about their colonising mission. They studied African languages to get into the depths of African epistemologies (the national character and spirit, as they put it). This enabled them to gain an insight into the ways of African people and was

necessary for the imposition of Christianity and western cultures, dubbed self-referentially to the exclusion of all else, as ‘civilisation’. Without their epistemologies, African people ceased to exist as themselves. They were forced to manifest their world using – that is, in and through – the imposed knowledges of the coloniser.

Their understanding of what it means to be human was *intercepted* by a colonial understanding. They were left without their ways of making sense of their human behaviour. As clearly articulated by Nelvis Qekema (an elder from whom I sought advice about pursuing this project on indigenous languages and psychology in February 2018):

... in the process of doing psychology, which is different from having it. In the process of doing it, you academics, practitioners, professors, scholars, you ended up messing up. You centralised it. But we all know culture is culture, you can't destroy it. It does not matter what you do to those human beings. For you to destroy it you have to terminate that race. But even when you do that we can trace it from their language, from their history. But even if you chase it out of urban areas it will refuse, it will retreat and find refuge in rural areas. Even if you take it out of the educated in the rural areas. It will run, it will take refuge among the illiterate in the rural areas. It will still be there.

Here, Qekema is echoing Biko's (2004) assertion that colonialism tried to wipe the African slate clean of its knowledge, but as Qekema states they simply could not succeed. Universities introduced their own understanding of psychology because they would not respect the psychology that was already available. In spite of all that, African epistemologies presented a resistance that could not be conquered. They found refuge in the language whose meaning has been embodied in the elderly. The creativity of the elderly has ensured knowledge preservation and dissemination through metaphoric language. The importance of metaphoric language is emphasised by Maseko (2017) and Nobles (1996), who advocate for the treatment of figurative language as a crucial site of knowledge. Figurative language is among the tools for preservation and dissemination of a people's ways of knowing. In the context of this paper, examples of metaphoric language are useful in depicting how African people conceptualise wellbeing and how they respond to factors that

threaten it. This paper uses two idioms and one proverb from isiXhosa language to demonstrate the manner in which some aspects of emotional wellness are conceptualised by the speakers of this language. The idioms are *ukuphalaza imbilini* and *ukuzityanda igila*. I wish to clarify that this paper's particular focus on the isiXhosa language is not an exclusion of but a call to other oppressed groups of people in South Africa (who are the various indigenous nations, including the San people, and those who were classified as Coloureds during the Apartheid era, who may not identify as indigenous, as well as people of Asian descent) to dig into their languages and allow us to learn what these languages communicate about their humanity.

Following Asante's (2009) counsel, which urges African scholars to center African thought in order to understand their realities as they experience them (in his theory of Afrocentricity), and Biko's (2004) concept of inward looking, I argue that *isintu* has provided us with tools for epistemic self-reliance. *Isintu* is a cultural inscription of *ubuntu*, which dictates the way in which *ubuntu* should be practiced (Dladla 2018). It is a well upon which figurative language draws, thus making figurative language a communication of *isintu*. Both Asante (2009) and Biko (2004) urge African scholars to embark on an epistemic project that demonstrate that Africans too have knowledge, which exists as a tool to manifest their realities.

The usage of metaphoric wisdom to communicate an isiXhosa disposition of human behaviour therefore follows an understanding that African knowledges have a lot to offer spaces of learning. Idioms and proverbs are some of the tools with which behaviour comes under gaze. They are derived from an ancestral template of analysing life using an understanding of nature and its creatures. Metaphoric language belongs to a community of ancestors, to the living who add on the existing know-ledge of the ancestors, and the future, who will receive knowledge and continue to embolden it to respond better to the structure of the world in which they will be living. Idioms and proverbs are a spontaneous way of meaning making. They rely on a wise, creative and abstract usage of words. It is important to always bear in mind that African ways of knowing follow their own pedagogic principles of application. It should also be said that metaphors have various uses, thus do not follow a singular template of analysis. In this paper, I use metaphors that communicate a place of emotional counsel among the isiXhosa-speaking South Africans, and how that points to an existence of techniques to deal with issues of emotional wellbeing among Africans more broadly.

Ukuphalaza imbilini and ukuzityanda igila

The figurative concept of *ukuphalaza imbilini* translates as the pouring out of one's soul. It communicates the manner in which isiXhosa speakers deal with emotional distress and well-being. *Imbilini* is derived from the word *umbilini* that refers to the internal size of an object. It is a combination of two words, *bila* (which means to boil or to bubble) and *ini*, which refers to the inside. *Ukuphalaza imbilini*, therefore, means to empty that which has occupied the inside. This means there is something weighing a person down, and it can be resolved by *ukuyiphalaza* (letting it out). The word *umbilini* is only explored in its literal form to demonstrate the literal roots of the concept of *imbilini*. This should not be confused with the concept of *umbilini* which refers to an emotional state of uneasiness that psychologists, such as Professor Nhlanhla Mkhize, discuss at length. This idiom (*ukuphalaza*) communicates the same message as its counterpart *ukuzityanda igila* that similarly encourages opening up about one's internal state of being. Literally, *ukutyanda* means to cut open (also used when referring to a surgical procedure), while *igila* is a gizzard. This, therefore, literally translates to cutting open one's gizzard. It is an act of pouring out one's inner most feelings. These idioms demonstrate that opening up about one's inner state is something encouraged in African communities.

This opening up is something that isiXhosa speakers perform within their families and communities. It is only when a matter is too complex for the grasp of the families that the knowers would be consulted. This shows that language performed a healing function. It allowed people to lay their emotional burdens bare to family/neighbours and/or communities. *Ukuphalaza imbilini* or *ukuzityanda igila* was among first things you do in the morning. Neighbours woke up to greet those around them with a sole aim of enquiring about their health. *Nivukile?* (Have you woken up?) *Niphilile?* (Are you well?) *Ninjani?* (How are you?) *Ukubuza impilo* (enquiring about a person's wellbeing) and allowing a person *ukuba aphalaze imbilini* (to open up about feelings) was given its due place in rural communities. It was also daily work. Therefore, it did not allow people to bottle up feelings over time.

The structural organisation of communities also gave people time and space to open up. Walking to the river, the fields or the forest served more than an industrious function; they also allowed people an opportunity to open up about their emotions. Such an organisation revolved around group work, where

people needed one other to complete a task. Therefore, that meant there was always someone around to provide a space for opening up. This brings back Qekema's earlier assertion that Africans have a psychology of their own. Families and communities offered space – *sokuphalaza imbilini* or *ukuzityanda igila* – where you could speak your inner self to the people whom you trust. This allows a person an opportunity to share the emotional burden for the weight to be lighter. On certain occasions, they would know before you even open up that something is not right, because your inner state (*imbilini yakho*) is never hidden from your lineage. This stands in stark contrast to Western psychology's practice of psychology which encourages an objective posture between the client and the professional. This posture requires that the professional assumes an emotional distance from the client. This shows that western and African practices of psychology are ontological distinct. The indigenous African and Western understanding of human behaviour draw upon distinctly different ways of knowing and existing in the world. The imposition of western healing in the form the current practice of psychology therefore forces African people out of their sensibilities.

The idioms discussed above are complemented by other metaphoric expressions such as *usana olungakhaliyo lufel'embelekweni*. This proverb can be loosely translated as 'a baby which does not cry dies in its blanket'. This communicates a similar message to the above idioms in that it discourages the concealing of troubling feelings. This goes some way towards showing that amaXhosa theorised at length about the importance of dealing with one's emotions and placed a lot of value on the expression of emotional discomfort. From the person's first moments of life, one is expected to cry out when something is making them feel uneasy.

'Us black people are psychologists ourselves' (Scientists of Human Functioning)

Even with colonial disruptions that aimed at erasing African ways of being, Africans still draw lessons from the old practices, where families are perceived to be sites of wellbeing. A friend of mine, Boniswa Kani³ was generous enough

³ It is with her permission that I am using her real name. I believe that assigning a pseudonym would have gone against everything I have argued for in this paper as pseudonyms invisibilises ordinary African people's contributions in

to let me use a story she narrated on her Facebook page about the manner in which her mother dealt with the news of her pregnancy. She became pregnant at an age where she was expected to pursue higher education. Upon breaking the news to her mother, she and her mother travelled to her maternal aunt's house, which was about twenty kilometres away from their home. This is where she was reprimanded, told how ill- advised she was, and was reminded about her future and made to confront her mistake. They spent the night, and the following morning travelled to her second *makazi* (maternal aunt) whose approach was softer, more nurturing, and understanding. She gave advice on how to handle certain aspects of the pregnancy. She left feeling better about herself and came to accept her mistake.

What is most intriguing about this story was the decision by Boniswa's mother to involve both her sisters. This does not only demonstrate the application of the concepts discussed above but also speaks to notions of personhood. African cultures are generally known as collective cultures, but it is the varying individual personalities that make the collective functional. The contrasting approaches of the two sisters were necessary to help both the mother and Boniswa process the news of her pregnancy. This is the role the mother's siblings play among amaXhosa. They are treated as your direct mothers, and when there is a problem, it is tackled by all your mothers collectively. *Oomakazi* (maternal aunts) communicated the ambivalent feelings the mother herself embodied. The disappointment and anger expressed by the first sister and acceptance and love communicated by the second encompass the contrasting emotions Boniswa's mother could have been going through at once. This communicates a message of *ukubambisana*, or carrying the load together. Aunts and uncles are known for their responsibilities toward their siblings and their families. At this point, it is important to caution the reader that Boniswa's story⁴ is used to demonstrate how the two idioms discussed in the previous section find application, and how family members could be useful sites of emotional health. The aim is to show how families pass

knowledge production. The act of assigning a pseudonym favours western ethos of knowledge production, where a person's real name appears only when they have contributed as authors in scholarly texts.

⁴ I chose to use a story where I was not directly involved as a researcher, with ready formulated questions. Through personal observations, I have realised that people share a lot of useful knowledge when unprompted.

counsel. It excludes other cultural aspects involved when a couple falls pregnant out of wedlock.

It is from these everyday unprompted narratives that one is able to gain an understanding of how African communities navigate issues of emotional wellbeing. Important to note is the fact that this is not a top-down approach where only adults utilise other family members as the resource to bring children into line. Parents, as well, do benefit from the counsel the family and community provide. When amaXhosa say '*inkomo ayincanci etholeni*' (a cow does not nurse from its calf), they are speaking against parasitical relations that adults would have with their children, where children cannot be expected to perform parental duties while their parents are still capable. It holds parents accountable to their duties. As Motsei (2017) states, it is very much within the ethos of African cultures to allow children to speak out against elders when necessary. This is borne out of the belief that a human being enters the world as an evolved soul, with lessons to impart. This is captured in the Setswana proverb *phala e e semang phalana lesilo* (elders should also take counsel from the young), but as Motsei (2017) explains, the young need to be guided on how to align the contrasting energies of confrontational youth and the sacred knowing of the soul. This shows that families and communities are responsible for upholding the principles of mutual wellbeing. This is well captured in the words of Mrs. Jobodwana, lecturer at the University of South Africa, who spoke at a social gathering I attended in July 2018: '*Us black people are psychologists ourselves because we know our children better*'. She was expressing disdain at what she called 'former whites only schools' obsession with referring black children to psychologists'. This speaks to what I alluded to earlier, namely that western education only validates its own practices, and often treats people as incapable of providing solutions to their problems. As shown above, a science of human functioning, so-called Psychology in African communities, is something that is commonly practiced. This charge by Mrs. Jobodwana is to a system which considers itself qualified, but is regarded as unqualified by the people it is supposedly designed to help. It is a push back that has always been there (see Nobles 2015b).

I end this discussion rather abruptly with a memory of a conversation I had with my grandmother during the first year of my university studies. The concept of abrupt endings in either written or spoken ways of communication is something not opposed by the speakers of isiXhosa, because speech is never complete (as evident in speech ending expressions such *ndisatshaya*, meaning

'I am pausing', and *amazwi awagqitywa* alluding to the notion of incompleteness of speech). I end with this memory because my grandmother demanded we (her and I) have the last word. The essence of this paper was to communicate the role of language in ensuring the resilience of African epistemologies and the continuous rejection of the imposed western education by many African people because of the contradictions it presents. I remember communicating my own misgivings with *umakhulu* (my grandmother) when I was a first year university student. *Umakhulu* had asked me, '*ufundela ukubayintoni MamTipha*' (what are you studying to become) and my response was '*andiyazi makhulu*' (I do not know, grandmother). She thought I was being cheeky, but I believe that was my spirit communicating its truth. Today I say to her, '*Makhulu, I still do not know!*' That is, I do not know why I am giving other people's children an education which teaches them how not to be themselves.

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Epistemological Exclusion: The Case of the Master's Degree Programmes in Clinical Psychology in South Africa

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Abstract

The demise of apartheid in 1994 in South Africa did not transform the history and practice of epistemological exclusion in the psychology curricula in general and the training programmes of the Master's degree in Clinical Psychology in particular. The continued exclusion of African people's ways of being, knowing and doing from psychology curricula and Clinical Psychology training programmes reflects the unequal knowledge representation in favour of those of the dominant Euro-American minority. This situation does not advance the development of a culture-sensitive and an inclusive pedagogy and practice in psychology. This paper argues for epistemological parity and representativity of indigenous African 'psychology' discourses and Western discourses on psychology in the psychology curricula in South African universities. The inclusion of indigenous cultural traditions, value systems and languages in the psychology curricula is both an ethical and intellectual imperative. This paper adopts a philosophical approach, and then presents three case scenarios reflecting challenges in psychotherapy, assessment and research to advance the argument for deconstructive and reconstructive challenges in the quest for epistemological parity and representation in the psychology curriculum.

Keywords: epistemology, clinical psychology, African psychology, transformation, decolonization

Ukusilela Kwezindlelalwazi: Udaba Lwezinhlelo Zokufunda Iziqo ZeMastazi Kwezokwelapha Ngeso Lempilo Kwezesifundongqondo ENingizimu Afrika

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Iqoqa

Ukuqedwa kobandlululo ngonyaka we-1994 eNingizimu Afrika akuzange kuguqule umlando nezenzo zokukhishwa kwamakharikhulamu ezindlelalwazi jikelele nakuzinhlelo zokuqeqesha iziqo zeMastazi, ikakhulukazi kwezokwelapha ngeso lempilo. Ukuqhubeka nokubekwa eceleni kwezindlela zabantu abangama-Afrika zobubona, ukwazi nokwenza amakharikhulamu esifundongqondo nakuzinhlelo zokuqeqesha zesifundongqondo sokwelapha ngeso lempilo kuveza ukungalingani kokwethulwa kolwazi okuvuna labo abaqonelayo kulabo abayingcosana abangama-Euro-American. Lesi simo asiqhubeli phambili ukuthuthukiswa kwesiko elinozwelo nendlelakufunda embandakanyayo nanezenzo kusifundongqondo. Leli phepha liqagulisana nenkulumo yezindlelalwazi nokumeleleka 'kwezesifundongqondo' sabomdabu base-Afrika kumataniswa nenkulumo yaseNtshonalanga kumakharikhulamu esifundongqondo emanyuvesi omdabu eNingizimu Afrika. Ukumbandakanywa kwezinkambiso zesiko lwezomdabu, izihlelo ezingamagugu nolimi kukharikhulamu yesifundongqondo kuyikho kokubili okuyimpoqo enqubonhle nobuhlakani. Leli phepha lisebenzisa indlela yenjulabuchopho, bese lethula kokuthathu okuwumfanekiso oveza izinselelo zokwelapha ngokwengqondo, ukuhlola nangocwaningo okuqhubeza ukuqagulisana kwezinselelo zokudiliza nezokwakha kabusha ekuthungatheni ukumataniswa kwendlelakwenza nokwethulwa kwekharikhulamu yesifundongqondo.

Amagama asemqoka: izindlelalwazi, ukwelapha ngeso lempilo kwezesifundongqondo, isifundongqondo ngokwase-Afrika, uguquko, ukulwisana nokuqonelwa

Ku tshikeleriwa ka mativelo ya xintu eka nongonoko wa tidyondzo ta mastasi ya vutshunguri bya miehleketo eAfrika Dzonga

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Xitshuriwa

Ku hela ka mfumo wa xihlawuhlawu hi lembe ra 1994 eAfrika Dzonga a swi cincangi matimu na ntolovelo wo khirha eka nxaxameto wa tidyondzo ta ntivo mianakanyo hi ku angarhela na minongonoko yo dyondzisa hi rixaladza eka ‘Master’s Degree’ ya Vutshunguri bya ntivo miehleketo. Ku yisiwa emahlweni ka ku khirhiwa ka tindlela ta ku hanya ta vanhu va Vantima, ku komba vutivi na maendlelo ya minongonoko yo dyondzisa yo huma eka tidyondzo ta ntivo miehleketo na Vutshunguri bya ntivo miehleketo swi kombisa vuyimeri bya vutivi byo ka byi ga ringani lebyi tsakelaka ntlawa lowuntsongo wa matimba wa ‘Euro-American’. Xiyimo lexi a xi yisi emahlweni van’wana ma kulelo ya ndhavuko wo twisa ku vava na ntivo vudyondzisi wo katsakanya no titolovela eka ntivo miehleketo. Papila leri ri burisana hi ku ringana ka ntivo mianakanyo na ku yimela ku burisana ka mafundza ka ntivo miehleketo ya Vantima xidzi va Afrika na ku hambana ka ntivo miehleketo ya Valungu va le ndzhandzheni wa malwandle eka tidyondzo ta ntivo miehleketo etiyunivhesiti ta Africa Dzonga. Ku katsakanyiwa ka mahanyelo ya mindhavuko ya Vantima xidzi, nkoka wa maendlelo na tindzimi eka tidyondzo ta miehleketo hinkwaswo i mahanyelo ya ndzeriso wa miehleketo. Papila leri ri teka ndlela ya ntivo-vuhleketi, kutani ri tlhela ri kombisa matshamelo manharhu ya timhaka leti ti nga se humelelaka leti kombisaka ntlhonthlo eka vutshunguri bya mavabyi ya nhloko, ku kambela no lavisisa ku yisa emahlweni mbhurisano wo onha ku endlela ku kuma swo karhi na ku lulamisa mintlhonthlo eku lavisiseni ka ku ringana ka ntivo mianakanyo na vuyimeri eka kharikhulamu ya ntivo mianakanyo.

Maritu-nkulu: tindlela ta ku tiva, vutshunguri bya miehleketo, ntivo-miehleketo wa xintu, mapfhumba yo hluvukisa, ku herisiwa ka xikoloni xamiehleketo

Epistemological Exclusion: The Case of the Master's Degree Programmes in Clinical Psychology in South Africa

The demise of apartheid in 1994 did not transform the exclusivist education paradigm in general, and the professional psychology training pedagogy and content in particular, in South African universities. Despite the different views regarding the transformation¹ agenda that has dominated the South African higher education landscape since the new democratic dispensation (Le Grange 2004; Mkhize & Ndimande-Hlongwa 2014; Segalo & Cakata 2017) the author's view is that psychology as a field of study, research and practice has not been sufficiently transformed to address the diverse, epistemological, methodological, cultural and linguistic challenges embodied in its multi-cultural landscape. The argument here is that curriculum redesign in

¹ The concept 'transformation' is used with reservations. First, it is unduly silent on the philosophical distinction between form and substance. The problem with this silence is that it permits only – and perhaps inadvertently – attention to form, while leaving the substance intact. Given the same substance different forms from time to time is not, strictly speaking, a trans-formation; a going beyond the form. It is, instead, re-formation, potentially akin to the leitmotif of the *super reformanda*, that is, the 'always reforming'. The second point of reservation is the concept that stands in sharp contrast to 'transformation'. It is trans-substantiation, that is, going beyond original substance by infusing it with content that effectively changes its quality. Epistemologically, this substance may not be understood only in material terms. It may, metaphorically be understood as cultural ways of knowing and doing. From this perspective, a cross-fertilisation of cultural values is the pathway to the 'transformation of values' in a manner that yields qualitatively different values. Accordingly, my preference is for trans-substantiation. I therefore use transformation in this essay under protest. (See Marcuse H. 1964. *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*. California: Marxist Internet Archive.)

psychology ought to respond to these challenges in order to be truly pluriversal. African indigenous ways of knowing and doing continue to be seen as mere beliefs and superstitions (Anselm & John 2015; Dei 2011). This tendency of relegating indigenous belief systems to the level of mere myth and superstition is therefore challenged (Denzin, Lincoln & Smith 2008; Owusu-Ansah & Mji 2013). The author's argument is that the continuing exclusion of indigenous epistemologies, cultural practices, and experiences from the psychology curriculum is ethically unjustifiable as well as being pedagogically unsustainable (Freire 2003; Baloyi & Ramose 2016).

Properly construed, an indigenous education system should reflect the local philosophies, methodologies, cultural experiences, and languages of the people amongst whom such an education system is embedded (Mkhize & Ndimande-Hlongwa 2014; Mpofo 2002; Nwoye 2015a; Okere, Njoku & Devisch 2005; Smith 2012). Similarly, psychology as a field of study, research, and healing practice will reflect African cultural heritage, and the understanding of psychology as a 'science' will have found its locality in the social context (Magid 2011; Smith 2012). This means that education systems, and by implication, psychology, will become the true depositories and conduits of local cultural experiences and knowledge systems of peoples in differing contexts.

The historically skewed reality depicted above therefore necessitates the radical transformation of the conceptual frameworks and language policies within the education system (Dei 2012a; Dei 2012b; Mkhize & Ndimande-Hlongwa 2014) in order to reflect the cultural experiences of the indigenous African majority. Currently, there is a glaring absence of indigenous epistemological frameworks, methodologies and languages in the training of research and professional psychologists in South African universities (Mkhize, Dumisa & Chitindingu 2014; Pillay, Ahmed & Bawa 2013). The epistemological exclusion experienced in psychology violates the Republic of South Africa Constitution of 1996, article 2, sections 30 and 31 (1) a and b, which provide for the assertion of language and cultural rights and practices. The aim of this paper is to demonstrate that the current epistemological injustice in psychology is ethically unsustainable and thus calls for rectification.

The Current State of Psychology

The psychology and clinical psychology training programmes, as they currently stand, are far from reflecting African thought and value systems. The

thousands of books on psychology that are found in most African and South African libraries reflect foreign theories, knowledge systems, and treatment modalities. The content of psychology contained in most psychology literature is such that it advances epistemicide. Dei (2011) defines epistemicide and linguicide as a deliberate attempt to exterminate indigenous knowledge systems, cultures, and languages. This is because the African epistemological paradigm, cultural experiences, and traditions are seen as unscientific, mythical, or mere superstitions in academe (Baloyi & Makobe-Rabothata 2014; Anselm & John 2015). This claim is disputed because it is based on supremacist thinking, which positions Euro–Western ways of knowing as more valid and scientific than other ways of knowing. Psychology as we know it today within academic institutions is a branch of science emanating from the West (Mkhize 2004). If psychology is indeed representative, it should then reflect, as the mirror would, all realities irrespective of the origin, race and epistemological paradigm of the people concerned. For psychology to claim to be universal and objective, while denying other realities equal recognition and legitimacy, is contradictory to the very concepts of objectivity and universality.

Significantly, it is a previously colonised people’s indigenous knowledge systems and traditions that are excluded from the education and psychology curriculum (Nwoye 2015a; and Nwoye 2018). This means that psychology in its current form represents a racialised field and practice, because of its willful exclusivity. It is of critical importance to investigate why it is that psychology, having an inquiry and treatment method that results in a ‘therapeutic effect’, continues to be blind to the fact that ‘therapeutic effects’ can be achieved through other forms of ‘therapeutic methods’ which are culturally and locally relevant, such as those of Africans. If we, for example, take a look at psychology textbooks like Becvar and Becvar (2009), *Family Therapy: A systemic integration*, 7th edition, and Bernstein, Penner, Clarke-Steward and Roy (2006) titled *Psychology*, 7th edition, there is little focus in these books on indigenous cultures and experiences. The exclusion of African ways of being, knowing, and doing from the dominant Western conceived psychology curricula through prescribed text books, articles and other sources is epistemologically and ethically problematic, because Western psychology cannot claim universal applicability in African contexts. The pedagogic foundation on which the current psychology curriculum is based is thus highly questionable. Below is the current structural design and state of clinical psychology training in South Africa.

The Current Structure of Clinical Psychology Training Programmes

The Master's degree in Clinical Psychology is a Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) directed professional qualification. Registered psychologists are expected to have clinical competencies, which enable them to work with people who present with problems of a clinical nature in varied contexts. The Masters in Clinical Psychology is one of several Masters' degree programmes in the discipline of psychology offered by South African universities. During the Clinical Psychology training period, and after qualifying as clinical psychologists, these professionals register in different categories and at different levels (for example, student, intern and clinical psychologist) with the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) which is a statutory standard and ethics-generating and professional body. While the Professional Board of Psychology, which falls under the HPCSA, is responsible for the different categories of psychology, the focus of this paper will be limited to the Masters in Clinical Psychology training programmes.

South African universities that offer Masters Clinical Psychology training base their curricula on broad professional competency areas and standards determined by the Professional Board of Psychology. These core courses include Assessment and Diagnostics, Psychopathology, and Psychotherapy conceptualised from different Euro-American theoretical perspectives, (Kottler & Swart 2004), Neuropsychology, Community Psychology, Research Methodology, and the DSM IV Classification Manual. The theoretical orientation, focus and content of Clinical Psychology training programmes varies from institution to institution (Pillay, Ahmed & Bawa 2013). The responsibility of the Professional Board of Psychology is to regulate the professional competencies and ethical conduct of students and psychologists so as to ensure that clients are treated professionally and ethically by the practitioners serving them. African psychology and indigenous languages are glaringly absent from the core offerings mentioned above. This despite the HPCSA's call for professional training programmes to ensure that psychological services provided to clients and communities are culturally appropriate (Mkhize, Dumisa & Chitindingu 2014).

Universities are responsible for the development and presentation of the course content, while hospitals and other institutions provide accredited sites for clinical training and practice. The Professional Board of Psychology

verifies the competency of persons who qualify as clinical psychologists through regular visits to accredited clinical practice sites, and by examining these professionals through Board examinations, before they can be granted a licence to practise as independent practitioners. The already qualified and registered psychologists are periodically audited by the HPCSA to ensure compliance with the Continuing Professional Development requirement. These generic courses are premised on the colonial philosophical thought and value system refined through time. These are still presented to students and applied to local communities as if they have universal applicability (Baloyi & Ramose 2016; Matoane 2012; Nobles 2006). The point to be emphasised here is that African epistemological conceptions of reality *are* different from the Western understanding of the world. Understanding, recognising and accepting this fact will assist universities and the Professional Board of Psychology to comprehend the African approach to knowledge and then restructure and re-design the Clinical Psychology curricula accordingly. This does not in any way suggest that the contribution made by Western psychology should be denied.

According to Mkhize, Dumisa and Chitindingu (2014:134), in its attempt to transform the profession of psychology, the HPCSA also ‘Requires psychologists to ensure that culturally appropriate services are provided to clients’. It is however not clear what ‘culturally appropriate services’ entail and how the knowledge about these services and their applicability to local indigenous communities should be included in the curricula since little to no culturally appropriate material is provided. This exclusion will be discussed below.

Epistemological Exclusion

The epistemological injustice embodied in these professional Clinical Psychology training programmes involves the conspicuous absence of anything African. Although African trainees and students are in the majority, foreign theorisations and treatment modalities are emphasised in their training. This despite the fact that these trainees will after completion live among and work with indigenous African communities (Mpofu 2002). Moreover, African languages are yet to be used in the teaching of African epistemology with methodologies and treatment modalities appropriate to it. It is on this basis that the author argues that the Professional Board of Psychology ought to make

African psychology and indigenous languages mandatory for psychology students and professional psychologists' certification to practice in South Africa (Pillay & Kramers 2003). Cultural competency and language proficiency are human rights issues, which require urgent inclusion in professional training programmes such as Clinical Psychology training.

Clinical Psychology Training and the Cultural Context

Clinical Psychologists in South Africa work within diverse cultural contexts and these require cultural competence and understanding of indigenous languages and worldviews. Mkhize and Ndimande-Hlongwa (2014: 11) argue that:

In view of the fact that language is a major vehicle of communication and inter-subjective understanding, the transformation of the humanities and social sciences cannot be achieved without paying attention to language.

Consequently, it is important that clinical psychologists (in South Africa in particular and Africa in general) understand the epistemology, culture, experiences and languages of the indigenous communities, if they are to assist their clients effectively. It is inconceivable that clinical psychologists working with the black majority in South Africa can effectively assist clients without, for example, understanding the significance and role of the living-dead (ancestors); the performance of rituals; and *ubuntu*, its meaning and manifestations. Educational transformation and curriculum re-design in particular should include these fundamentals. In this way, curriculum transformation will reflect the identity of African universities, and *not* universities in Africa as epitomised by the current Western conceived theories and treatment modalities in psychology.

The examples below illustrate why the inclusion of African epistemological paradigms, worldviews, and languages in the psychology curricula are necessary. These are not speculative examples. They are scenarios drawn from real discussions and teacher-student pedagogical experiences, and they extend to conversations on general experiences with clinical psychologists. These conversations occur outside the classroom context.

Case 1

Tintswalo, a 35-year-old xiTsonga speaking man is an IT executive at a multinational company. He consulted a white psychologist for couples therapy due to marital problems. His wife apparently relied heavily on her grandmother and aunt for advice regarding her marital problems. According to Tintswalo, the problem was not that his wife consulted the grandmother and aunt, but rather that she was not listening to their advice. After exploring the issues and dynamics of the marriage with him, Tintswalo indicated to the psychologist that he would have to call their respective uncles, who negotiated his lobola,² for a meeting to resolve their problems. He even suggested that these elders should maybe perform a ritual to appease their ancestors as a possible solution to their misunderstanding. Upon hearing the proposed intervention from his client the psychologist remarked: ‘Tintswalo you are very educated and financially independent to be able to handle your problems. Why are you people so dependent on other people’s views to make decisions? You need to think for yourself and your wife’s future and stop asking your relatives to interfere in your affairs. Your ancestors are dead and have no influence on what is happening between you and your wife’s marital problems.

In the above case, the psychologist completely misunderstood, misrepresented, and disrespected Tintswalo’s worldview and cultural background. He did not seem to understand the role and influence of elders and ancestors in traditional African families and communities. He dismissed the substantive communal undergirding of Tintswalo’s culture, and imposed his own cultural values upon the therapeutic process. The interdependence, coexistence, spiritual, and communal ways of conceiving and understanding people’s problems and relatedness eluded the psychologist completely. He does not challenge the fundamental cultural assumptions underlying his provision of mental health services (Abe, Grills, Ghavami, Xiong, Davis & Johnson 2018). Predictably, going forward the psychologist is likely to ‘misdiagnose’ the

² In African cultures, *uku-lobola* can be seen as a social-cultural-spiritual symbol that has spiritual links (connecting and appeasing the ancestors) in uniting two families. The symbolic meaning of *uku-lobola* goes beyond the mere payment of money or cows. In practical terms, it constitutes the introduction of the groom and bride groom into each other’s ancestral family network (see for example Khumalo 1997).

problem, ineffectively conceptualise the issues facing his client, and is unlikely to avoid crafting an intervention that will be inadequate to his client's worldview and culture.

The Imperative to Transform Clinical Psychology Training Programmes

It is commendable that the Professional Board of Psychology and Psychological Society of South Africa have since the 1990s embarked on the process of transforming the field of psychology. In the author's observation and experience, what has been 'transformed' is the quantitative composition of the teaching staff to fit the Affirmative Action and Equity Legislative requirements. The content and meaning of what is being taught and its relevance and applicability to African communities has received very little attention. Granted, more black lecturers and learners are gradually being brought into the higher education system, and Clinical Psychology training programmes to address the legacy of policies that excluded the African majority from the educational landscape. However, the training, pedagogy, theories and methodologies which these lecturers teach remain rooted in Euro-American epistemology and value systems.

On this basis, the black lecturers, unless they are critical of the epistemological paradigms, then objectively become the mouthpiece and transmission belts of the Euro-American knowledge and value systems. The African epistemological paradigm is not yet recognised as a legitimate paradigm of 'psychology' (Wilson & Williams 2013). Whenever African experiences, practices, and worldviews are used in textbooks and articles, it is usually done to justify the universal applicability and authenticity of these foreign theories, conventions, and interventions on indigenous communities. In trying to understand Africans, psychologists [in South Africa and Africa] continue to use conceptual categories and theories developed in the West (Grills 2002; Obasi 2002; Parham 2002). Researchers such as Kottler and Swart (2004) and Macleod (2004) have drawn attention to the calls for appropriate models and curriculum re-design to be consonant with South African and African needs in the field of psychology in general and professional psychology in particular. Despite these calls, there have been minor positive epistemological shifts within the psychology curriculum (Nwoye 2018) and little funded research in this area. Part of the reason for this

is the continuing open or subtle resistance to the ethical imperative to realise epistemological equality in practice. A routine but no less standardised subtle resistance is the claim that it is necessary to preserve scientific standards. Often, this claim is silent in the face of raising the question about whose standards?

Case 2

Nandi, is a 22-year-old female honours student in one of the previously white universities. She was called by her family to her rural village in Limpopo Province to attend a family ritual. The family slaughtered a goat and she assisted her uncle to hang its skin on the fence to dry. On Monday in class a professor introduced the Rorschach Ink Block Test (projective test consisting of ten cards), and individually asked students to state what they were seeing on the cards. When it was Nandi's turn, she looked at Card 4 and exclaimed: 'Wow, Prof., this looks like a skin of a slaughtered goat'. Several students confirmed Nandi's observation. Shocked by her response, the professor stopped teaching and requested to see Nandi privately. He suggested to Nandi that she had to see a clinical psychologist as a matter of urgency, because she displays repressed suicidal ideation, gross aggressive tendencies, and claimed that she was a danger to herself and others.

The above case illustrates that the professor does not understand and/or is not interested in the meaning Nandi associated with the picture on the card. Nandi's worldview and the cultural experiences which are key to understanding her response are totally disregarded. The 'diagnosis' given to Nandi is grossly inaccurate, misrepresentative of her actual real experience and worldview, and can thus have far-reaching consequences on her wellbeing.

The cultural issues emanating from the case above indicate that Clinical Psychology training programmes whose curricula do not include African conceptions of reality are most likely to result in psychologists who 'mis-diagnose' and misconstrue clients' problems in therapy. The result of this imposition of Euro-American epistemological paradigms is the cultural alienation and killing of indigenous people's ways of knowing and doing (Dei 2011). The exclusion of African perspectives, reality and existence from the psychology curriculum constitutes an epistemological injustice. The two cases will predictably evoke indignation on the part of those far-removed from the

everyday life of indigenous Africans. They might even be construed as offensive. These possible reactions neither annul nor diminish the everyday reality of the indigenous Africans. They are best understood as an invitation to continue questioning the reality of epistemological exclusion in psychology and all other scientific disciplines. They are an invitation to become engaged in the struggle for epistemic justice.

Higher Education and Indigenous ‘Psychology’

Consistent with Motha’s (2009) argument that the recognition of indigenous law as law is a condition of any genuine approach to post-colonial justice, the recognition of indigenous or African-centered ‘psychology’ as authentic psychology should become the basis of a genuine post-colonial reconstruction and curriculum re-design. The definition and meaning of what African ‘psychology’ is to Africans should be based on African epistemology, ontology, culture, experience, and languages (Mkhize 2004). Nobles (2006) and Owusu-Ansah & Mji (2013) argue that an understanding of a people’s worldview, history and cultural context are extremely important, because it is via their explication and their intrinsic implications that one clarifies the relevance of the content and cultural context.

Dussel (1985) and Freire (2003) support this emancipatory dimension, which they see as ‘liberation praxis’, and argue that this has to be determined by the marginalised, oppressed, and dispossessed. It is a truism that the ‘liberation praxis’ in psychology required in South Africa cannot be considered inclusive and relevant psychology, unless it is defined by Africans themselves, based on African cultural experiences and knowledge systems that both broadly and intimately characterise South African society (Owusu-Ansah & Mji 2013).

Defining African Psychology

According to Grills (2006: 172), African-centered psychology is a ‘psychology which is concerned with African psychological experiences from an African perspective which reflects an African orientation to the meaning of life, the world and relationships with others and oneself’. Nwoye (2015a: 104) defines African psychology as the ‘systematic and informed study of the complexities of human mental life, culture and experiences in the pre-and post-colonial

African world'. These definitions clearly indicate that, in understanding African experiences, African worldviews and traditions should be the reference point (Anselm & John 2015). These positions are consistent with other discussions that argue that research and praxis in psychology should be grounded in culture and context. The Ecological Validity Model (Bernal, Bonilla & Bellido 1995), for instance, identifies eight dimensions (e.g. language, persons, metaphors, content, concepts, goals, methods, and context) that should guide the development of culturally anchored treatment modalities that are relevant for different ethno-cultural groups.

Indigenous Epistemologies and Methodologies in Psychology

In all the Master's clinical training programmes at South African universities, African students are expected to master a foreign psychology that is conceptualised in terms of Western experiences and cultures. The relevance and authenticity of the epistemology they work from, therefore, becomes highly questionable when applied to traditional African communities for at least two reasons. First, the few number of African lecturers teaching and students selected in Clinical Psychology training programmes, especially in the previously white universities, and the dominance of a foreign epistemology and course content reflect unjust racist and epistemological exclusion (Dei 2011). This is unethical conduct in psychology in general, and, it must be underscored, in the training of clinical psychologists, in particular, especially if the disciplines wishes to be culturally inclusive.

The case below illustrates the inconsistencies that occur when foreign theorisations and methodologies are applied to the experiences of indigenous communities.

Case 3

Musa is a 26-year-old student in a Master's in Clinical Psychology training programme. He is a member of the local djembe drumming group in a township. Musa is interested in investigating the psychological healing benefits of djembe drumming on this group of drummers. He, however, does not know what methodology and research design he should use in his investigation. He approaches a black lecturer who is Western-trained to supervise him. The lecturer suggests to him to observe the drummers, video-tape and interview

them after the performance, and then transcribe their narratives following a set schedule in their prescribed research methodology book. A conflict ensues between them, because the lecturer insists on traditional qualitative methodology with prescribed steps. Having read several articles and books on indigenous research methodologies, Musa decides to explore the possibility of adopting performance as his method, reasoning that it is consistent with his African epistemological paradigm. Their differences in approach are not resolved, and Musa submits his research protocol to the University Research Committee. His protocol is failed on the basis that his research methodology does not comply with 'established' and 'prescribed' scientific universally acceptable methodologies.

The above case indicates the tension and differences that exist between Euro-American and indigenous research methodologies (Smith 2012). In most cases, the methodology that is conceived from the grand narrative epistemological paradigm is adopted, irrespective of whether it addresses the research question or not.

There is no question about the authenticity and intellectual viability of African indigenous research methodologies (Okere & Nkwocha 2003) and languages in facilitating therapy and understanding people's experiences, ways of knowing and doing (Mkhize, Dumisa & Chitindingu 2014). The call for the recognition and inclusion of the linguistic, theoretical, and epistemological perspectives of the indigenous experiences and cultures in the curriculum (Kincheloe & Steinberg 2008) is likely to create what Motha (2009) calls 'the naming of a historical wound' that many psychology training programme directors and institutions of higher education in South Africa are afraid to undertake.

Epistemological Racism in Clinical Psychology Programmes

Western psychology is a reflection of a particular epistemological paradigm and worldview. It cannot, therefore, be divorced from the political and historical reality, whose open aim was to eradicate indigenous epistemologies. Against this background, curriculum and epistemological racism is not a random phenomenon, and it is certainly not only a South African problem. It is still prevalent in academic contexts in countries such as India, Sri Lanka, Australia, New Zealand, Canada (Motha 2009) and the United States of

America, to name merely a short list. It represents institutionally structured racism that people of colour are exposed to in the form of everyday racist discourse. It has become the subject of significant discussion within movements such as the Forum of African Psychology in South Africa, and the Association of Black Psychologists in the United States to promote an 'African indigenous psychology' (Kim, Yang & Hwang 2006), which challenges the claim of universal validity touted in Western psychology (Chakkarath 2012).

The argument in this paper is that the continuation of epistemological exclusion and racism in Clinical Psychology training contexts is unjustified, unambiguously harmful, and perpetuates oppression. Lyons, Bike, Johnson and Bethea (2012) argue that research in traditional Western psychology deemed people of African descent to be intellectually deficient and unable to even grasp psychology. The racism and oppression contained in this view were disregarded whenever the Westerner conducted inquiries into the psychology of people of African descent. It is therefore only fit and proper that psychology take up the challenge of the deracialisation of Clinical Psychology training in general, and particularly in a deeply polarised South African society.

Literature on the 'fees must fall' phenomenon continues to proliferate. It is varied. Some authors focus on the relationship between poverty and the ethical imperative to abolish fees altogether, or to make special concessions to the poor. Others focus on the question whether or not 'fees must fall' includes 'the destruction of property'. Yet another group of commentators and writes prefer to focus upon the affordability of a fees-free higher education. Few, however, have directly and expressly devoted special attention to the psychology underlying the fees must fall movement. The core question of psychology with regard to the 'fees must fall' movement is, I argue: what are the historical and social factors conducive and contributory to a psychological mind-set espousing 'fees must fall'? Since this espousal is situated in a racial-historical-social context, it is pertinent to identify the social background and position of both the proponents as well as the opponents of the 'fees must fall' movement. The thesis of relative deprivation is relevant to the identification. Instead of an elaborate explanation of this well-known thesis, I consider if best to employ the metaphor of 'psychology' from the standpoint of an 'empty stomach', and psychology from the position of a 'full stomach'. The former is the identification of the structurally and systemically impoverished indigenous peoples conquered in the unjust wars of colonisation. The latter designates the colonial conqueror and its posterity.

Reflections

From the exposition above, the need for an African conception of ‘psychology’ based on African philosophy, methodologies, traditions and languages is critical. Educators and trainers should, however, sensitively consider how the development, design, and implementation of such a Clinical Psychology transformative curriculum agenda should be carried out to avoid the possibility of conversely marginalising the voices and epistemologies of white minority groups. In this regard, the need for legitimate dialogical and pluriversal conversations in which there is willingness to listen to others’ expressions and points of view becomes very significant, no matter how ‘ill-informed’ (Waghid 2004). To this effect, an inclusive-on-equal-basis epistemological conversational space is both necessary and imperative for psychology to become representative, relevant and legitimate in South Africa. In the more than two decades of training, clinical psychologists, clinical case supervision, and serving as an external examiner (for dissertations and psychotherapy examinations) for several South African universities, the author has observed how students, interns and clinical psychologists/lecturers struggle to conceptualise patients’ problems from an African cultural point of view. The result of this has been the imposition of irrelevant Western conceived treatment modalities on patients or adopting research designs, which are alien and at odds with local experiences. It is against this background that the author has developed and taught an African psychology course for Masters Clinical Psychology training at two South African universities.

The marginalisation of African epistemology highlighted by its exclusion from the mainstream psychology curricula in South Africa must be corrected. The rectification may be in the form of academic collaboration aimed at making the study of African psychology and languages a matter of course in South African universities. Dei (2012a: 113) refers to these collaborations as ‘the recognition of interdependence of scholarship, politics and activism’. It is my submission that this transformation and deracialisation process cannot be adequately conceived unless the dominant paradigm of psychology is deconstructed and reconstructed. The growing body of literature calling for the inclusion of indigenous knowledge systems in psychology curricula is a positive step in the right direction (Nwoye 2018; Denzin, Lincoln & Smith 2008; Chakkarath 2005). However, true conceptual decolonisation programmes (Kazeem 2012) and epistemological inclusion will only begin to

be achieved when the curriculum of Psychology reflects the culture and experiences of indigenous Africans in their own space.

Conclusion

Credit must be given to the Professional Board of Psychology's recognition of the need for cultural competency and sensitivity on the part of professional psychologists working with indigenous communities in South Africa. There is, however, greater need for the Professional Board of Psychology to seriously consider prescribing an African Psychology module/course and a regionally relevant African language (depending on the region where the university is located) as pre-requisite in Psychology in general, and South African universities (Mkhize & Ndimande-Hlongwa 2014) and the Masters in Clinical Psychology training programmes in particular.

The view taken in this paper is that African indigenous worldviews, methodologies, therapeutic/healing modalities, cultural experiences, traditions and languages continue to be marginalised in psychology and the Clinical Psychology curriculum of almost all South African universities. The low intake levels of African students in previously white universities continues to maintain racial imbalances in their Masters Clinical Psychology training programmes. The process of transforming and deracialising the current clinical training discourse should start with the inclusion of local cultural experiences and African languages in the psychology curricula, premised on the philosophy of *ubuntu*, as well as the eradication of the dominance of the Western epistemological paradigm. There can be no social justice without epistemic justice in Africa and the world, because the very act of study is in itself a matter of ethics (Ramose 2016).

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Serial Forced Displacements and the Decline of *Ubuntu* in Afrikan American Communities

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Abstract

Serial forced displacement, the ‘repetitive, coercive upheaval of groups’, is examined as a key feature of the ongoing Maafa or Afrikan Holocaust and explored as a primary source of the disruption of *Ubuntu* in Black communities in the United States. According to Fullilove (2016), disconnecting people from their land, their culture, history, traditions, values, and relationships creates ‘root shock’ which undermines natural tendencies to exhibit respect, compassion, caring, cooperation, and support of one’s fellow human beings, or what South Afrikan people refer to as ‘*Ubuntu*.’ African philosophy suggests that *Ubuntu* is a common moral position passed down over generations by Afrikan people. Its presence has been noted in segregated Black communities, which is illustrative of the retention of *Ubuntu* amongst Afrikan Americans. American housing policies at the federal, state, and local levels, along with private development initiatives that have led to gentrification of many Black neighbourhoods, are identified as the main culprits in the diminishment of *Ubuntu* through the uprooting and destruction of numerous thriving Black communities. It is suggested that these housing policies are the most recent examples of serial forced displacement and are at the root of much of the community disorganization, health disparities, violence, and family instability observed in many low-income Black neighbourhoods. The development of cultural standards that prescribe cultural policies which are designed to restore *Ubuntu* in Black communities is recommended as a palliative for ameliorating the dehumanizing environment created by serial forced displacements.

Amagama asemqoka: serial forced displacement, root shock, *Ubuntu*, gentrification, U.S. housing policies, cultural policy, Maafa

Uchungechunge Lokususwa Ngodli Nokwehla Kobuntu Emiphakathini Yama-Afrika AseMelika

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Iqoqa

Uchungechunge lokususwa ngodli, ‘ukususwa kwamaqoqo abantu ngobuphithiphithi nendluzula’, kuhlolwa njengento engqangi yokuqhubeka kwe-Maafa noma ukucekelwa phansi komhlaba okungokwase-Afrika futhi kubhekisiswa njengomthombo ongqangi wokuphazanyiswa kobuntu emiphakathini yabamnyama eMelika. NgokukaFullilove (2016), ukuhlukanisa abantu nezwe labo, amasiko abo, umlando, indlelakuphila, amagugu, nobudlelwano kwenza ‘ukwethuka okuwumnyombo’ okudicilela phansi imikhuba ngokwemvelo yokukhombisa inhlonipho, uzwelo, ukunakelela, ukusebenzisana, nokuxhaswa kwabanye abantu, noma lokhu abantu baseNingizimu Afrika abakubiza ngokuthi, ‘Ubuntu.’ Injulabuchopho yase-Afrika ihlongoza ukuthi Ubuntu buyinto eyindlelakuziphatha ejwayelekile esuselwa ekudlulisweni kusizukulwane ukuya kwesinye ngabantu abangama-Afrika. Ukuba khona kwalokho kuye kwanakwa yimiphakathi yabamnyama ebihlukahlukanisiwe, okuvezwa ukulondolozwa kobuntu phakathi kwama-Afrika aseMelika. Izinqubomgomo zaseMelika zezezindlu okungokwenhlangano yamazwe, umbuso, namazinga ezindawo ezisemakhaya, okuhambisana nemizamo yokuthuthuka kwangasese okuholelele ekuqiniseni kwabesilisa okwenziwa ezindaweni eziningi zabaMnyama, lokhu kuhlonzwa njengabenzi bokubi okungqangi ekushabalaleni kobuntu ngokukhuculula nokubhidliza izinto eziningi zemiphakathi yabamnyama abazizamelayo. Kuhlongozwa ukuthi lezi zinqubomgomo zezezindlu ziyizibonelo ezisanda kwenzeka zochungechunge lokususwa ngodli futhi kuwumnyombo omkhulu wokungahleleki kwemiphakathi, ukungalingani ngokwezempilo, udlame, nokungazinzi kwemindeni okunakwa emiphakathini yabamnyama eminingi enemalingeniso encane. Ukuthuthuka kwamazingaqophelo esiko okunquma

izinqubomgomo zesiko ezenzelwe ukuvuselela ubuntu emiphakathini yabamnyama kuyisincomo esiwukudambisa sivuselele isimo esithunabezekile esakhiwe uchungechunge lokususwa ngodli.

Amagama asemqoka: uchungechunge lokususwa ngodli, ukwethuka okuwumnyombo, ubuntu, ukuthuthukisa kabusha, izinqubomgomo zezezindlu zase-U.S., inqubomgomo yesiko, iMaafa

Introduction

The removal of indigenous peoples from their native lands is one of the most insidious, conspicuous, and pernicious expressions of cultural hegemony. It is akin to uprooting trees that have been standing and flourishing for centuries on their native soil and never transplanting them—a certain death. According to Mindy Fullilove (2016), these actions comprise a phenomenon called ‘root shock’. Root shock is a catastrophic disruption of the connection people have with their land, nations, neighbourhoods, and homes (Fullilove 2016). The experience of root shock can be likened to a volcanic eruption, which sends shock waves throughout the emotional ecosystem. Because the entire planet and all of its occupants are woven together into one complex net or emotional ecosystem, ultimately the impact of root shock extends far beyond the proximal victims. Its effects reverberate physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually, culturally, and generationally at the individual and collective levels for the proximal group, while also affecting those at a distance. It is a cultural trauma that leaves an indelible mark on the dislocated people.

The disconnection of indigenous people from their native lands is a fundamental feature of the Maafa (Ani aka Dona Richards 1989). The Maafa, a term developed by Ani (1989) to describe the Afrikan Holocaust, began with the removal of Afrikan people from the continent of Afrika and their enslavement. Grills (2004) states that the enslavement of Afrikan people by Europeans disrupted the cultural link between continental Afrikans and their brothers and sisters, who were dispersed throughout the world. The Maafa continues through the persistent, unrelenting denial of the humanity of Afrikan people (Grills 2004), which assumes ever more variegated forms, ensuring that Afrikan people remain disenfranchised and oppressed wherever they are located.

This article focuses on the dimension of the Maafa that Fullilove has termed ‘root shock’, which manifests in the form of serial forced displacements

(Fullilove & Wallace 2011). It links current gentrification activities in the United States to the long history of serial forced displacement by Europeans and discusses the impact of the housing and related policies that have institutionalised these disruptions for Afrikan Americans at the individual and collective levels. The philosophy of *ubuntu* is utilised as the standard of healthy Black/Afrikan functioning. The development of cultural standards and policies grounded in *ubuntu* philosophy are offered as a strategy for reclaiming our authentic identities and ways of functioning.

Serial Forced Displacement: A Persistent Maafic Reality

For Afrikan people, and indeed for indigenous cultures, connection to the land, to the environment, to the village, to our elders, and to our ancestors is sacred and integral to our identity, our relationships, our history and culture, and our day-to-day functioning. The disruption of these connections is traumatising. As stated in one Afrikan proverb, ‘cut your chains and you are free; cut your roots and you die’. The increase in interpersonal and structural violence in many Afrikan American neighbourhoods is one of the consequences of the ‘repetitive, coercive upheaval of groups’ (Fullilove & Wallace 2011: 381).

Ani (1994:249) discusses the expansionistic mandate inherent in European cultures, which entreats them to conquer everything that they find. She suggests that what are actually aggressive tendencies is represented as ‘progressive energy’. This rationale has fuelled gentrification activities across the United States, constituting the latest attack on Afrikan American neighbourhoods and families, disassembling them like pieces of a useless and uninteresting puzzle.

From a historical perspective, serial forced displacements have been a defining characteristic of the Maafa since its inception. Beginning with the removal of Afrikan people from the continent—separating us from our families, our villages, our land, our culture; forbidding us to speak in our native tongue or use our authentic names—this practice has been as consistent as sunrise and sunset. The institution of American enslavement reinforced this practice with the auctioning of enslaved Afrikans, separating us from our families and those that we loved, without compunction. The parade of events that followed the end of chattel slavery did little to provide the stability and security that Afrikan Americans required to establish the roots needed for our long-term survival and thriving. Martin Luther King, Jr. (1968:105) cites

Henrietta Buckmaster, who said ‘With Appomattox (one of the last battles of the Civil War), four million black people in the South owned their skins and nothing more’. King Jr. (1968: 105) goes on to say:

Thrown off the plantations, penniless, homeless, still largely in the territory of their enemies and in the grip of fear, bewilderment and aimlessness, hundreds of thousands became wanderers.

Epigenetic research (Pember 2017) would certainly predict that the magnitude of the trauma evoked by the enslavement of Afrikan people, the lack of a plan or any support following the end of chattel slavery, and the physical and psychic terrorism (Nobles 2018) that Afrikan Americans experienced subsequently would, undoubtedly, create genetic changes that would affect us for generations. Yet, many stable Afrikan American communities emerged and institutions were built that included schools, colleges, hospitals, banks, businesses, recreational facilities, as well as religious institutions (Fullilove 2016). However, the efforts of our former enslavers to maintain the chains of our enslavement could not be throttled. As a result Black codes persisted, which restricted our freedom of movement; sharecropping, often exploitative, replaced outright slavery (Equal Justice Initiative 2015); convict leasing initiated the criminalisation of Black men (Blackmon 2008); terrorism by groups like the Ku Klux Klan destroyed our homes and businesses, and drove Black families out of their communities (Jaspin 2007); lynchings were frequent reminders that we had no rights that whites were bound to respect (Equal Justice Initiative 2015); and of course, discrimination in employment ensured that many Afrikan Americans would be constantly scuttling about in search of safe spaces to raise our children and support our families (Vance 2001) .

Fullilove and Wallace (2011) delineate the destructive effects that serial forced displacements have produced for Afrikan Americans, our families, and communities. Disparities in the area of health, including the exacerbation of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, excess rates of obesity and obesity-related diseases, as well as other stress-related disorders; the loosening of social networks; the fragmentation of families; the loss of legitimate employment; and the crime and violence that have become endemic in our neighbourhoods are some of these debilitating and interrelated conditions. These outcomes have been facilitated by federal, state, and local government

policies that discriminate against the poor, people of Afrikan ancestry, and Latinx populations. The disregard and disrespect for the humanity of Afrikan people is so deeply entrenched that every effort to address the injustices has only resulted in superficial gains, if any, leaving the lives of significant masses of Afrikan Americans rooted in poverty, chaos, and ill health. Ani (1994) argues that European culture exemplifies a quality that she calls the ‘rhetorical ethic.’ In this context, Ani explains, every act has a concealed political motive typically disguised in altruistic rhetoric. It must be acknowledged that in some cases, no efforts to conceal salacious motives were made, because the idea that Afrikan people are inferior is so deeply embedded in the consciousness of European Americans that any differential treatment toward Afrikan people could be justified on this basis. An examination of the development of housing policies in the United States and related policies in other sectors reveals a pattern of overt discriminatory practices that have deeply affected the viability of Afrikan American neighbourhoods, families, and people.

The Governmental Attack on Black Neighbourhoods and Families

As if synchronised to produce a strategically prioritised outcome, U.S. housing policies accompanied by other governmental policies have systematically contributed to the dismantling of Afrikan American neighbourhoods and communities in places such as Pittsburgh’s Hill District, New York’s Harlem, Chicago’s South Side, San Francisco’s Fillmore District, South Central Los Angeles (McGee 2007), and countless other cities. Fullilove and Wallace (2011) highlight some of the housing policies that have contributed to the demise of black neighbourhoods and families. Beginning with segregation, which emerged gradually over a period of 150 years, and eventually was supported by redlining in 1937, this federal government designed policy discouraged investment in areas characterised as risky, and defined as having a large presence of old buildings and non-whites (Fullilove & Wallace 2011). The Federal Housing Act of 1949, entitled Urban Renewal, and referred to as ‘Negro Removal’ in the black community, authorised the government seizure of land declared ‘blighted’. Fullilove (2016) challenges this characterisation of many of the properties that were seized and used for the purposes of constructing universities, cultural centres, and public housing. Approximately 75% of the 2500 urban renewal projects implemented and the one million

people displaced as a result of this policy were Afrikan Americans and other people of colour (Fullilove & Wallace 2011). Black businesses and institutions were undermined—retail stores, pharmacies, hospitals, banks, funeral homes, restaurants, to name a few (Fullilove 2016). Black jazz communities, once an integral part of black communities, were rendered homeless, and the once strong connection, that existed between jazz as an art form and the black community, destroyed. Fullilove (2016: 12) states:

When the mazeway, the external system of protection, is damaged, the person will go into root shock the victim of root shock requires the support and direction of emergency workers who can erect shelter, provide food, and ensure safety until the victim has stabilized [sic] and can begin to take over these functions again.

Of course, none of the solutions that Fullilove offered were implemented. Instead, policies like planned shrinkage were enacted. Through the implementation of this treacherous policy, many Afrikan Americans were relocated into areas targeted for disinvestment. These areas witnessed the withdrawal of crucial public and private resources. One such case occurred in New York City and involved the closing of selected fire departments, which led to the burning of black/Latinx neighbourhoods (Fullilove & Wallace 2011).

Consciously and unconsciously, the U.S. federal government and local governments as well, have colluded in the destruction of black neighbourhoods and families with ongoing attacks launched through neglectful, predatory, and discriminatory housing policies. Other factors such as deindustrialisation and the loss of the manufacturing sector in the U.S., the crack-cocaine epidemic and the draconian policies that emerged from it, leading to the over-incarceration of Afrikan Americans, and particularly black men, have augmented the crisis (Fullilove & Wallace 2011). Hope VI, developed in 1992, was supposedly created to renovate public housing by establishing mixed-income housing; however, it, too, has contributed to the uprooting of the poor who are often removed from their neighbourhoods and clustered in distant areas of concentrated poverty. Against this backdrop, the forces of gentryfication, though not directly driven by public policy, have been stridently operating in cities across the United States.

Gentrification: A Case of Persistent Serial Forced Displacement

The acquisition of civil rights for Afrikan Americans, ironically, ushered in moves by whites to return to the cities that they had abandoned earlier (McGee 2007). This movement has been called ‘gentrification,’ a euphemistic way of describing the removal of one group of people considered ‘less desirable’ and their replacement by another group of people considered ‘more desirable’. In reality, it is a sanitised form of ethnic cleansing, or as Afrikan Americans refer to it, ‘The New Negro Removal’ and the latest example of serial forced displacement. The systematic evacuation of Afrikan Americans from the inner city and the reclamation of these spaces, primarily by upper-income whites, is occurring across the nation. While this latest form of serial forced dislocation is typically driven by private developers, they rely on the cooperation of local policy makers who are sympathetic and may, in fact, benefit directly or indirectly from their activities. Cities across the country such as Washington, D.C., Seattle, Washington, Oakland, California and numerous other areas are observing the disappearance of Afrikan Americans from the inner city.

Many complex factors have coalesced to produce these outcomes including pro-gentry policies, the mortgage foreclosure crisis which severely affected home ownership by Afrikan Americans and Latinx populations (Fullilove & Wallace 2011); discrimination in mortgage lending, extreme hikes in the value of properties accompanied by higher property taxes for people on fixed incomes (McGee 2017); and historical discrimination against Afrikan Americans contributing to significant wealth disparities for black families (Vance 2001). It is not the intent of this article to provide an analysis of the social, political, and economic factors that are supporting gentrification, but rather to position this latest example of serial forced displacement in the ongoing trek of the Maafa and to describe its impact on the viability of Afrikan American families and neighbourhoods.

Certainly, ‘gentrification’ represents a massive assault on Black neighbourhoods that cannot be separated from the history of disinvestment in poor, urban, and often predominantly black communities. Disinvestment is frequently followed by investment and development focused on bringing in upper-income, predominantly white residents and businesses. The devaluation of Black spaces by labelling these places as ‘blighted’ is a part of the rhetorical ethic that supports the bait and switch that occurs, enabling the land grab. In

reality, there is masked acknowledgment of the value of the land that the poor and Afrikan Americans often occupy in urban areas, typically close to the center of town.

As displayed at the beginning of the Maafa, the removal of people from the places that they call home reflects a deep sense of disregard for the importance of the attachment of all living beings to their group and to the environment. The spiritual and emotional ties that develop between human beings and between human beings and the natural world are deeply rooted, profound, and sacred. Ogbonnaya (1994) discusses the significance of these bonds in his ‘community of selves’ model of identity. In his model he identifies the ‘totem self’, one of many selves that make up who we are. The totem self can be described as the interdependent relationship that exists between human beings and with their environment. Many Afrikan ethnic groups recognise this relationship through the establishment of a totem or symbol that identifies them, often a particular animal that embodies qualities that the group aspires to display (Mugovera 2017). A particular totem may reveal the commitment of the group to the preservation of some aspect of its ecosystem that sustains them; thus, taboos may be associated with how the animal or plant is treated. The totem identifies those with whom one is connected or belongs and the responsibilities that the group must perform in their interactions with each other and the natural world (Mugovera 2017). The use of totems as a way of identifying one’s lineage, connections, and responsibilities has been watered down in the United States, and typically only suggests one’s membership in a particular group, rather than their ancestral ties and commitments to the natural world.

Over time, the cumulative effects of serial forced displacements have been the increased detachment between people of Afrikan ancestry and between Afrikan people and the natural world, and a growing sense of vulnerability to the dictates of individuality and competitiveness imposed on us by Western cultural values. Serial forced displacement is an integral component of the historical trauma suffered by Afrikan people. As our bonds with each other are destroyed and we are moved about like pawns on a chess board, we become strangers to each other with no sense of responsibility or commitment to the well-being of other members of our group or to the group as a whole. The combination of lifespan trauma emerging from recent displacements and historical trauma can be linked to, feelings of detachment and alienation, often accompanied by depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress

disorder and suicidal behaviour (Brave Heart 1998). Recent increases in suicide amongst Afrikan American children between 5-12 years of age, now exceeding the rates of whites (Nutt 2018), may be one of the sequelae of serial forced displacements. To be sure, many of our neighbourhoods have become danger zones, where children are often unprotected and there is a blatant absence of any appreciation of our ancestors and the presence of elders.

Inherent in the term ‘gentrification’ is the belief in the inferiority of the people who are being replaced. The inferiorisation process that Europeans have regularly imposed on others serves to rationalise their quest for the spaces that Afrikan people occupy and the resources that we possess. It also serves to minimise the potential threat that whites often perceive in their black counterparts by constantly disrupting our efforts to make political and economic progress. Historically, Afrikan Americans’ efforts to claim spaces in which we demonstrate agency and self-determination have been disrupted by terrorism (Black Wall Street and Rosewood are but two well-known examples) (One United Bank 2017), and more recently, by public policy violence. Even in the midst of segregation, the emotional connection to the spaces that we occupied, the development of social networks, businesses, organisations, and institutions provided cultural containers that sustained us. Serial forced displacement ensures that Afrikan Americans cannot develop political and economic clout or maintain commitment to the education of their children, and thereby, exercise the steps to gain power and parity in the United States.

The Demise of *Ubuntu* in the Black Community

Over generations, serial forced displacements have significantly deteriorated the display of *ubuntu* in Afrikan American communities. Mangena (2016), describes *hunhu/ ubuntu* as a moral-ethical philosophy that emerged in Southern Africa amongst the Bantu-speaking peoples. It is a common moral position (CMP) that is so deeply ingrained in the people that it requires no formal document explicating the rules that should guide one’s behaviour and actions. Its essence is reflected in the proverb that translates into English loosely as, ‘a person is a person among other persons’, and in Mbiti’s seminal pronouncement, ‘I am because we are, since we are therefore I am’ (Mangena 2016). Both of these statements emphasise the importance of our connectedness as the ideal state of human functioning. The philosophy of *hunhu/ubuntu* prioritises the group or collective over the individual and the

necessity of a dialogical relationship between the Creator/God, the ancestors, and the living. It promotes caring, sharing, and compassion in relationships with others. The ethics that it espouses derive from a consensual and spiritual relationship that essentialises communication between the spirit world and the world of the living.

Ubuntu as a CMP facilitates the ability to trust each other, depend upon each other, and cooperate with each other. It is the ultimate manifestation of what in Western psychology is referred to as a 'sense of community' (Kloos, Hill, Thomas, Wandersman, Elias & Dalton 2012); however, its significance transcends Western definitions of this phenomenon. It stresses the need for respect for human life and dignity, contributing to the well-being of others, and being benevolent and hospitable, in order to ensure the sustenance of the community and all of its members (Munyaka & Motlhabi 2009). It facilitates the development of viable economic systems (Wilson 1993) and other critical institutions. In the absence of mutual trust, where suspiciousness of each other prevails, we can neither create successful businesses nor engage in other productive enterprises that contribute to our survival and progress (Vance 2001). Because Afrikan Americans were denied access to the benefits of white businesses and institutions or failed to receive the same degree of respect and privilege granted to whites when allowed to do so, it became a necessity that we establish our own businesses and other institutions to address our needs. The success of our businesses and other institutions relied on the presence of *ubuntu*. Black Wall Street, with its booming economy, represents one of the most viable examples of the operation of *ubuntu* in black communities (One United Bank 2017).

Prior to the enactment of Fair Housing Act of 1968, most black people in the United States lived in segregated neighbourhoods. When talking about those neighbourhoods, even though they were cut off from the white community, elders who grew up there exude a sense of pride and nostalgia about the way they were protected, looked out for, and supported by their neighbours. Fullilove (2016) discusses the sense of kindness that existed in these neighbourhoods. There existed among the blacks who lived there an expectation that they should and would take care of each other. They tolerated the less desirable aspects of their neighbourhoods and sought to protect the children from falling victim to these forces, whenever possible, or to buffer them, when they could not be protected. It was as if the philosophy of *ubuntu* was embedded in the unconscious of these Afrikan Americans. The kindness,

which was expected and taken-for-granted in the ghettos in which Afrikan Americans were forced to live, dissipated with urban renewal (Fullilove 2016). The attention of Afrikan American families now became occupied by their own personal survival needs in the foreign places to which they were dispersed, and the negative behaviours that always existed in their communities were no longer counterbalanced by the presence of organisations and people committed to kindness. Consequently, the forces of crime and violence have prevailed, where once a communal consciousness that provided checks and balances existed.

Munyaka and Motlhabi (2009) describe similar diminishment of the sense of *ubuntu* as a result of colonisation, apartheid, and urbanisation in South Africa. In regard to these conditions, Mofokeng (as cited in Munyaka & Motlhabi 2009) states that the disconnection of Afrikan people from their land undermined their sense of respect and creativity and fostered alienation from their culture along with ‘exploitation and political domination’, and the enslavement of Afrikan people. As mentioned earlier, these experiences result in root shock and illustrate how *ubuntu* has been systematically disrupted in Afrika through serial forced displacements. The imposition of policies of migratory labour and forced removals seriously damaged the family structure and the traditional educational system through which the principles of *ubuntu* were transmitted.

The deterioration in the commitment to the unstated philosophy of *ubuntu* amongst Afrikan Americans was not only a result of urban renewal, but also of integration (Vance 2001). Afrikan Americans saw the Fair Housing Act as an opportunity to escape from the ghettos to which they had been historically confined, and many leaped at the opportunity to buy into ‘more desirable’ white communities leaving their less economically resourced brothers and sisters in the ghettos. Thus, another division was created amongst Afrikan Americans based upon class. The movement of the more well-off Afrikan Americans into predominantly white neighbourhoods would precipitate white flight, and additionally, the unintentional consequence of a loss of cultural continuity exemplified by the unconscious expression of *ubuntu*. Separated from their poorer brothers and sisters, although many Afrikan Americans would strive to extend their support to their less fortunate brothers and sisters, their lack of proximity to them would take a toll on both groups.

The diminishment of cultural continuity was not only the result of the physical separation between poor and ‘middle-class’ Afrikan Americans, but,

more importantly, a lack of appreciation of the importance of our culture and the internalised sense of inferiority that many Afrikan Americans have about their Afrikan history and identity. More accurately, the lack of knowledge about our history, the promulgation of lies, distortions, and inaccuracies about our history, and our invisibility in history books have contributed to the disconnection between Afrikan Americans and continental Afrikans, who both view each other through the eyes of our oppressors. In his book, *The Falsification of Afrikan Consciousness*, Amos Wilson (1993:39) states, ‘History is what creates a shared identity in a people. It is based on that shared identity that they act collectively’. With the passage of *Brown v Board of Education* in 1954, and the gradual desegregation of the public schools, Afrikan Americans have progressively lost control over the education of our children. Most Afrikan American children are now being taught by white teachers who lack knowledge of the history and culture of Afrikan Americans and many of the schools in the black community have been closed for a variety of reasons. The disintegration of black neighbourhoods and the miseducation of our children in the public schools ensure that future generations will lack a shared identity and the capacity to act collectively and in our best interests.

Restoring *Ubuntu* in Black Communities

The forces that have led to the diminishment of *ubuntu* in black communities are complex. Undeniably, the dismal state of many black neighbourhoods in the United States may be attributed to the very intentional efforts of our federal, state, and local governments to guarantee that our communities remain marginalised, disempowered, disorganised, and chaotic. A conscious, collective, and informed, cooperative effort on the part of black leadership across several generations will be required to restore the sense of *ubuntu* that once existed in our neighbourhoods. As Wilson (1993: 13) has indicated, this effort must begin with the correct study of our history. He states:

We must be instructed by history and should transform history into concrete reality, into planning and development, into the construction of power and the ability to ensure our survival as a people.

Simply teaching black history and regularly celebrating Black History Month will not achieve the goal of restoring *ubuntu*, if the teaching of black history is

not undertaken purposefully with the aim of ‘regaining power’ and debunking the myth of black inferiority.

Ubuntu as a way of life was once fully integrated into all aspects of being and living for Southern African cultures. The Maafa, as a persistent reality in the lives of Afrikan people on the continent, as well as throughout the Afrikan diaspora, has disrupted the commitment to *ubuntu* amongst Afrikan people, particularly in the United States, but also in the places of its origin. An intentional process is required to re-establish it as our modal way of operating. I propose the development of cultural standards grounded in the values and principles of *ubuntu*, and accompanied by cultural policies that articulate the behaviours that are expected of every member of our community, as a step toward the reinstitution of *ubuntu* in Afrikan American communities (Jackson-Lowman & Haile 2016; 2014). In his essay on intellectual maroons, Uhuru Hotep (2008: 6) asserts that ‘the words/ concepts/ beliefs/ values/ images that we allow into our mental space and then use for self-definition and self-referral will either liberate us or enslave us’. By developing cultural standards, we reassert our sense of agency through the creation of social norms that foster our health, our respect for and responsibility to each other, and promote cooperation, and trust, which are essential for us to achieve liberation. The delineation of cultural standards that reflect the values and principles of *ubuntu*, and cultural policies which describe the roles, responsibilities, and obligations of Afrikan people to each other, is proposed as a liberatory catalyst that can confront the Maafic effects of serial forced displacements and therefore, lead to the ending of cultural oppression. In much the same way that the myth of black inferiority and the values of individualism, materialism, and competitiveness have been promulgated in every institution in the United States, we must begin to use all forms of media, our social, political, and religious organisations/institutions, Historically, black colleges and universities, and the businesses that we continue to own and control to promote the values and principles of *ubuntu* and hold each other accountable for their implementation.

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African Psychology and the Global Movement for Freedom from the Lie of Black Inferiority

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Abstract

This paper examines the role of African Psychology in healing the trauma caused by the ‘lie’ of White superiority and Black inferiority, the root cause of the devaluing of Black lives and the underdevelopment of Black communities around the world. It introduces the global grassroots movement for emotional emancipation, led by Community Healing Network, in collaboration with the Association of Black Psychologists, which is mobilizing Africans on the Continent and throughout the Diaspora to heal from, and extinguish, the lie. It describes the movement’s leading strategy: the Emotional Emancipation Circle, a self-help support group process, informed by the principles of African psychology, designed to help Africans and people of African ancestry escape the European narrative, driven by the lie of Black inferiority, and create a renewed African narrative, defined by the truth of Black humanity. The paper focuses on the central role of African Psychology in defining and developing the Emotional Emancipation Circle model and argues for African Psychology as the appropriate disciplinary grounding for complete liberation from the lie.

Keywords: African Psychology, internalized racism, racial trauma and healing

Isayikholoji Yama-Afrika Kanye Nomzabalazo Wenkululeko Emhlabeni Jikelele Emangeni Okubukelwa Phansi Kwabansundu

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Iqoqa

Leli phepha lihlola iqhaza lesayikholoji yama-Afrika ekwelapheni ukuhlukumezeka okuyimbangela ‘yamanga’ okubamkhulu kwabamhlophe nokubukeleka phansi kwabansundu, umsuka wokubukelwa phansi kwempilo yabansundu, kanye nokungathuthuki kwemiphakathi yabansundu emhlabeni jikelele. Lethula umsuka womzabalazo wenkululeko ngokomoya emhlabeni jikelele, uholwa umbimbi lomphakathi owelaphayo, ubambisene nososeshini wabasebenzi besayikholoji abansundu, ngenhloso yokugqugquzela ama-Afrika ezwekazi lase-Afrika nalawo asakazeke umhlaba wonke ukuthi alulame nokuthi aphunyuke kudlawu lwamanga. Lichaza itulo eliqavile lomzabalazo: Isiyingi senkululeko ngokomoya, ukwesekwa ngokosizo lokuzisiza, okuzinze emigomeni yesayikholoji yama-Afrika, eyakhelwe ukusiza ama-Afrika nalabo bokudabuka e-Afrika ukuze bakhululeke kumampunge ondlebezikhany’ilanga, ayimfundisoze yokuthi abansundu bayisizwe esiphansi, nokusungula imfundiso entsha ngama-Afrika, echaza ngobuntu bama-Afrika. Leli phepha ligxile eqhazeni elibalulekile elidlalwa yisayikholoji yama-Afrika ekuvezeni nasekuthuthukiseni isiyingi senkululeko ngokomoya futhi ibeka ngokubaluleka kwesayikholoji yama-Afrika njengesifundo okuyisona esingaletha inkululeko engcindezelweni yamanga.

Amagama asemqoka: isayikholoji yama-Afrika, ukwamukela ubandlululo,

Introduction

Wherever African people find themselves in the world today, on the Continent and in the Diaspora, their safety, health, prosperity, and well-being are compromised. They are devalued – and, all too often, they devalue themselves.

How deeply can Black self-loathing run? In Nigeria, some 77 percent of women reportedly use skin bleaching products (Brown 2019). In Ghana, pregnant women are taking pills to whiten their unborn babies' skin (Eweniyi 2018). In Africa as a whole, authorities are seeing a 'massive trend of increased use of skin bleaching, particularly in teenagers and young adults' (TheJournal.ie 2018). In the Dominican Republic, a recent poll indicates that 46% of the population show signs of internalised racism (*Dominican Today* 2018).

How thoroughly has the image of Black people as 'less than' human taken hold in the global imagination? In the United Kingdom, two days after the birth of the son of Prince Harry and the Duchess of Sussex, Meghan Markle, a BBC broadcaster tweeted an image and caption portraying the baby as a chimp (Fox 2019). In India, Africans are often seen as demons (Prabhu 2017). In the United States, the first president of African ancestry was regularly caricatured as a monkey (Nittle 2020).

How costly are these images to freedom and life itself? In Canada, Black people in Toronto are 20 times more likely than white people to be fatally shot by the police (Love 2019). In Portugal, Black people are ten times more likely than white people to be incarcerated (Henriques 2017). More Black people are jailed in England and Wales proportionally than in the United States (Ramesh 2010). In the United States, doing almost anything while Black can be dangerous, and even deadly (Belton 2017).

Africa and everything African have been devalued for more than 600 years. In order to justify the enslavement of Africans and the exploitation of Africa, Europeans developed a hierarchy of humanity with 'white' people at the top and 'Black' people at the bottom, and all too often, outside of the human family. They devised the ideology of white superiority and its correlate, the ideology of Black inferiority, which drives the European narrative that has come to permeate every institution of global society and the global mind.

For more than six centuries, the children of Africa have been living their lives according to a narrative written for them by Europeans to serve their interests. At the heart of the European narrative is the lie of white superiority and Black inferiority.

This paper examines the role of African psychology in the development of the global movement for freedom from the European narrative driven by the lie and the creation of a renewed African narrative defined by the truth of Black humanity. It sketches a picture of the traumatic effects for Black people living under the European narrative. It describes the growing global grassroots movement for emotional emancipation being led by Community Healing Network, in collaboration with the Association of Black Psychologists. And it explores the movement's principal strategy, Emotional Emancipation (EE) Circles, a community-centered approach designed: 1) to help heal the harm inflicted on the people of Africa by the lie; and 2) to clear the way for them to free themselves from it once and for all.

Life under the European Narrative

Africa, the birthplace of humanity and the wealthiest Continent in the world, has a rich history and culture. It is the home of ancient civilisations which, in the words of the scholar Henry Louis Gates, 'in their day, were just as splendid and glorious as any on the face of the earth' (Gates n.d.).

But Africa's rich history was disrupted by European invasion and violence. To enrich itself and build the extraordinary wealth of the Western world, Europe colonised Africa, erased Africa's history, and replaced that history with the lie of white superiority and Black inferiority. This lie was first told in writing in the 1400s by the Portuguese and then by other Europeans to justify the enslavement of African people and the economic exploitation of Africa (Kendi 2017). According to the lie, everything Black is inferior – Black skin, Black hair, Black culture, Black values, Black religion, Black families, and Black philosophy. For more than six centuries, nearly every institution of the Western world has – explicitly and/or implicitly – reinforced the message that everything that comes out of Africa, including its people, is to be devalued. The lie is at the root of current conditions on the African Continent, where many economies and educational systems continue to be dominated by outside interests and are still shaped by post-colonial strategies (Paul *et al.* 2017; Zeleza 1997).

The lie is the underlying reason why all across the African Diaspora, according to the United Nations, the descendants of the victims of enslavement, are today among the 'poorest and most marginalised groups', who 'have limited access to quality education, health services, housing and social

security, ... and all too often experience discrimination in their access to justice, and face alarmingly high rates of police violence, together with racial profiling' ('International Decade for People of African Descent', n.d., para. 3 - 4).

Enslavement is as old as humanity itself. The Greeks and Romans enslaved people. For over two centuries, North Africans enslaved an estimated one million white Christians.

But the enslavement of Africans was markedly different. The transatlantic trafficking in human beings rested on the marking of an entire Continent and its people as inferior, even subhuman. To justify their version of enslavement, Europeans relied on a system of racial classification that led to depopulation, forced relocation, terror, and the dehumanisation of persons of African ancestry (Grills, Aird & Rowe 2016). The result was the systematic denigration of Africa – its lands, peoples, culture, philosophies, spirituality, languages, history, and overall contributions to human development (Mazrui 1986).

The earliest recorded seeds of justification for this crime against humanity were planted in Portugal in the 1400s by Prince Henry in his effort to defend the enslavement of 927 Africans (Kendi 2017). In the United States, the lie was used to justify the enslavement of Africans, 'in an era when the dominant political philosophy was equality, civil rights, democracy, justice, and freedom for all human beings' (Smedley & Smedley, 2005, p. 19). Several authors have noted that 'the only way Christians could justify slavery was to demote Africans to nonhuman status' (Smedley & Smedley 2005: 19; Haller 1971; Smedley 2018). Theologians developed a complicated theory of obedience to justify the authority and power of white people over Black people (Aird 2008).

In fact, Christianity served to increase the cruelty meted out upon enslaved Africans. As Frederick Douglass observed, his enslaver found religious support for his brutality in the Bible, '[making] him more cruel and hateful in all ways' (Douglass 2005:66).

The massive human trafficking of Africans disrupted the normal patterns of cultural, social, and industrial development on the African Continent. By most estimates, from 1482 to 1888, between fifteen to fifty million people were uprooted as a result of Europe's actions (Asante & Abarry 1996). Millions more were dislocated.

Among the European nations that trafficked in African human beings were the Portuguese, Dutch, French, and English. From 1500 to 1750, the

largest employers in Holland and Portugal were companies engaged in trafficking (Kendi 2017). From the long, forced marches from the interior to the coast, detention camp diseases, the horrific Middle Passage (where upwards of one third of the people perished) to the brutal ‘seasoning’ of enslaved people in the Caribbean, where the dehumanisation efforts intensified – African human beings were turned into chattel (Beckles 1989). People of African ancestry across this Diaspora became, in effect, multigenerational captives.

All people of African ancestry born over the course of last 600 years have entered into a world that profoundly devalues their lives. They have been marked as ugly, unlovable, incompetent, dumb, worthless, useless, evil, and animal-like. African people were forced to contend with a level of physical and emotional terror and brutality that words cannot describe, and a caste system was created, defining a hierarchy in which ‘white’ people ranked the highest and ‘Black’ people the lowest – and many times, outside of the circle of humanity. The resulting ideology objectified, commodified, and dehumanised African people and came to permeate nearly every global institution and the global mind.

The profoundly negative stereotypes that cast African people as ‘less than’ are the product of that lie. These stereotypes have adversely shaped the world’s perceptions of African people and, far too often, their perceptions of themselves. Those stereotypes have persisted, and the advantages conferred by ‘whiteness’ and the disadvantages imposed by ‘Blackness’ have been multiplying over the course of more than six centuries.

The lie became embedded in societal systems and practices through a set of fundamental legal precepts. The presumption of inferiority, relegation to the status of property, powerlessness and dependence, insistence on white racial purity, restriction of freedoms for those who are supposedly free, the degradation of the African family, the demeaning of African culture and religion, denial of education, and the use of public and private violence as instruments of domination and control were among the basic premises of the jurisprudence of enslavement in the United States (Higginbotham 1996).

Similar precepts guided the systems that enslaved African people in the Caribbean, Central and South America, as well as the systems of colonialism across the African Continent. These precepts continue to adversely affect Black people in Africa and across the Diaspora today (Higginbotham 1996; Ackah 2017).

The Effects of the Lie

Cultural Trauma and Cultural Imperialism

Cultural trauma refers to the ‘dramatic loss of identity and meaning, a tear in the social fabric affecting a group of people that has achieved some degree of cohesion’ (Eyerman 2001:2). At its core, it is a collective experience of major disruption and a social crisis of meaning and identity. Cultural trauma is the result of a direct assault on the integrity of African cultural values, principles, practices, and identity supplanting African standards of ethics, philosophy, psychology, civic engagement, aesthetics and spirituality in favour of European standards. It is a pervasive assault that uses multiple vehicles, including literature, scholarship, television, newspapers, radio, and social media to establish and maintain its authority.

Cultural trauma is a collective process that creates collective memories that provide the individual with a cognitive map to orient present behaviour (Eyerman 2001). Unlike psychological trauma, direct experience and experience by all members of the group is not required and the culturally traumatic events can be near or far, contemporaneous, or in the distant past. Regardless of the spatial or temporal distance, the traumatic experience can be equally profound and challenging. Cultural trauma ignites what Alexander *et al.* (2001) refer to as a trauma process in which its victims are forced to grapple with making sense of assaults to their humanity, the pain they inflict, and perplexing attributions of responsibility.

Cultural imperialism is forced acculturation that promotes, imposes, or forces the culture of one society on another society or group of people. This forced acculturation can take a variety of forms, including attitudes, policies, social norms, and military action, all in the service of reinforcing control and cultural hegemony. Education and media systems serve as its prime instruments. For example, many countries outside of Europe have been set up with replicas of the education and media systems in Britain, France, or the United States, carrying their Eurocentric values.

Both cultural trauma and cultural imperialism create a climate of alienation that has a profound effect on the Black personality and beliefs about things African. Diop (1989) observed the profound inability among many people of African ancestry to believe that Africa contributed anything of worth to human civilisation. This is the consequence of the grand narrative of white superiority and Black inferiority that socialises Africans to the story of

Europe's and America's 'glorious' achievements, with only passing references to a few unfortunate hiccups along the way, including the enslavement of African people, colonialism, apartheid, Jim Crow, lynching, the mass incarceration of Black people at rates that rival enslavement, etc.

Colonial education pulls the colonised away from their structures of indigenous learning and meaning, and draws them toward the structures of the colonisers (Fanon 1963). The colonial and post-colonial education system, as an ideological state apparatus (Althusser 2006), operates as an instrument of mental control. In Africa and across its Diaspora, colonial and post-colonial educational systems teach the colonisers' worldview and a Westernised framing of African history and culture. As Julius Nyerere observed,

When we were at school, we were taught to sing the songs of the Europeans. How many of us were taught the songs of the Wanyamwezi or of the Wahehe? Many of us have learnt to dance the rumba, or the cha cha, to rock and roll and to twist and even to dance the waltz and foxtrot. But how many of us can dance, or have even heard of the gombe sugu, the mangala, nyang umumi, kiduo, or lele mama (Malambugi, Finn, & Shorter, MAFr. n.d.).

On the Continent, colonial and post-colonial education was designed to create a class of people who are African by ancestry, but Eurocentric in worldview, opinions, and values. The consequence of this cultural imperialism includes 'identity deformation, misrecognition, loss of self-esteem, and individual and social doubt in self-efficacy' (Abdi 2010: 12). A hybrid identity emerges that diminishes African history and customs. In effect, colonial education,

annihilate[s] a people's belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves. It makes them see their past as one wasteland of non-achievement and it makes them want to distance themselves from that wasteland. It makes them want to identify with that which is furthest removed from themselves (wa Thiong'o 1986: 3).

While some Black people may not believe the lie, they may have little psychic energy to withstand or counter it. Like the hamster in a wheel,

significant energy is expended but the creature goes nowhere. The weight of the lie consumes all effort and energy in the service of the oppressor's interests, leaving few physical or psychic reserves for critical consciousness and liberation. Essentially 'space, time, energy, mobility, bonding, and identity are compromised' (Chester Pierce as cited in Bulhan 1985:124).

Adverse Psychological and Physical Effects

The adverse psychological effects of centuries of dehumanising oppression cannot be underestimated. Whether they yearn to be free or accept the privileged status bestowed upon them by the lie, Black minds have been colonised (Wa Thiong'o 1986).

To know myself in the oppressor's terms is to be continually at the risk of using a racist formulation as a way of understanding self – of unintentionally objectifying oneself in terms of these racist values (hook *et al.* 2004: 97).

The dynamics of dehumanisation can be seen today in the world's negative perceptions of Black people in the form of implicit and explicit bias; all too often, Black people's negative perceptions of themselves maintained in fractious relationships; and struggles to maintain optimal emotional and physical health.

The lie has dominated the world's consciousness for more than six centuries. It cannot be legislated away. Legislation has not addressed the fact that in this racialised world, more than lands and resources and human bodies were appropriated. Culture and history were appropriated, which meant that the means and resources for establishing and cultivating identity were also appropriated. A deadly mindset was established to normalise and rationalise inequities and racial violence, often citing intellectual, moral, and other incapacities among people of African ancestry as justifications for discriminatory practices. This mindset led almost all people to see disparities between the wealth of Europe and the United States and poverty levels in Africa and the African Diaspora, as the natural and normal order of affairs brought on by the ineptitude and deficiencies of Black people (Kendi 2017). The inequalities faced by the African Diaspora are considered *their* fault; *they* are blamed.

Ponterotto *et al.* (2006) identified five psychological consequences of exposure to the lie and the mechanism of racism:

- 1) **alienation** (resulting from adopting the cultural and racial reality of Whiteness);
- 2) **internalised racism** (the process of accepting the racial stereotypes of the oppressor);
- 3) **race-related trauma** (psychic trauma resulting from exposure to multiple forms of racial stress);
- 4) **race-related fatigue** (mental fatigue resulting from the exposure and vigilance associated with microaggressions, etc.); and
- 5) **racial mistrust** (defensive reactions of mistrust toward whites in response to repeated discrimination).

The lie can affect Black people's perceptions of themselves (Jones 2000; Sellers, Copeland-Linder, Martin & Lewis 2006) and it can undermine one's sense of quality of life (Utsey *et al.* 2002). One's income and education serve no protective function against these negative effects (Hudson *et al.* 2012). Psychologically, the racial stress caused by the lie can lead to feelings of anger, anxiety, paranoia, helplessness, hopelessness, frustration, resentment, fear, lowered self-esteem, and lower levels of psychological functioning (Fisher, Wallace & Fenton 2000; Jencks & Phillips 2011; Sellers & Shelton 2003). Physically, the racial stress caused by the lie can have negative effects on the body including changes in immune, neuroendocrine, hypothalamic–pituitary–adrenal (HPA) axis, and cardiovascular system functioning, diabetes, age-associated diseases, breast cancer, and mortality (Jackson *et al.* 2010; Utsey, Chae, Brown & Kelly 2002; Silverstein 2013; Springer Science+Business Media 2011).

The lie profoundly affects Black children. Exposed to the lie and racial discrimination, Black children can be more vulnerable to stereotype-threat processes, which can undermine their emotional and physical well-being and their academic successes (Chavous, Rivas-Drake, Smalls, Griffin & Cogburn 2008; Neblett, Philip, Cogburn & Sellers 2006; Neblett, Smalls, Ford, Nguyễn, & Sellers 2009; Smalls, White, Chavous & Sellers 2007; Stevenson & Arrington 2009; Wong, Eccles & Sameroff 2003).

Toward a Renewed Life under a New African Narrative: Healing the Wound: An African Psychology Approach

Both African-centred and Black psychology recognise the damaging impact of colonialism, chattel slavery, structural racism, and the lie of white superiority and Black inferiority on the African mind and consciousness. African psychology takes us one step further in its recognition and validation of indigenous African conceptualisations and approaches to psychology (Grills, Nobles & Hill 2018). It operates from the basic premise that there is an African way of being that reflects an African ‘quality of thought and practice’ (Nobles 2015: 405), rooted in the cultural image and interest of people of African ancestry (Karenga & Carruthers 1986). As such, African psychology offers the best path to answering fundamental questions such as: ‘who am I?’, ‘am I healthy and well?’, and ‘am I in alignment with my reason for being?’ (Grills, Nobles & Hill 2018).

African psychology also proceeds from the idea of an African metaculture and African identity, which extends beyond the demarcations of national cultures and Diasporan locality. In this African metaculture, there is both unity and diversity in the Pan-African global village (Ebede-Ndi 2016; Adelowo 2015).

Unity is found in the centrality of spirituality, a belief in life after death, veneration of the ancestors, communal orientation, and notions of family and community that are not centered [sic] solely around the nuclear family, and are principles found across African cultural contexts. Variations in the surface level details found in the expression and manifestation of these principles reveal the diversity within the metaculture (Grills, Nobles & Hill 2018: 802).

African psychology incorporates notions of energy (within and between persons) and vibration, and how they may influence mood, thought, and interaction. It examines cross-generational influences on behaviour and psychological functioning, including ancestral/spiritual influences. Its healing strategies include the community as client as well as the individual. Affect and emotion are understood not solely as individual processes, but are also reflective of the principle of consubstantiation wherein individual experiences are linked to the experience and energy of those around the person. It expands

and deepens what constitutes healing praxis to include the curative properties of collective praxis contained within ceremonies, rituals, songs, dance, and prayers.

As a theory and science of human behaviour, African psychology is best suited to provide the psychological foundation for a community-centred, global movement for freedom from the lie of white superiority and Black inferiority.

The Global Movement for Emotional Emancipation: A Community-Centered Approach to Psychological Liberation

Makota Valdina, the African-Brazilian educator and religious leader, has urged people of the African Diaspora to recognise that they are ‘not the descendants of slaves, but of human beings who were enslaved’ (Araujo 2005). Marcus Garvey impressed upon people of African ancestry the need for emancipation from ‘mental slavery’. Carter G. Woodson urged Black people to recognise and correct their ‘mis-education’ (Woodson 1933). Steve Biko (1967) observed that ‘the most potent weapon of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed’. Martin Luther King Jr. (1967) declared that ‘The Negro will only be free when he reaches down to the inner depths of his own being and signs with the pen and ink of assertive manhood his own emancipation proclamation’. Maya Angelou counseled Black people to take the time ‘to heal from the lies they’ve been told, and the ones they’ve told themselves’ (M. Angelou, personal communication, 2008). Inspired and guided by these and other calls from elders and ancestors over the generations, Community Healing Network (CHN) was launched in 2006 in New Haven, Connecticut, in the United States, to build a global grassroots movement for emotional emancipation to mobilise African people on the Continent and throughout its Diaspora to do the long-overdue work of freeing themselves and their children from the lie of white superiority and Black inferiority.

CHN’s mission is to mobilise Black people to heal from the trauma caused by centuries of anti-Black racism, free themselves from toxic stereotypes, and reclaim their dignity and humanity as people of African ancestry. CHN’s objectives are:

1. to focus squarely on – and raise awareness about – the root cause of anti-Black racism: the lie of white superiority and Black inferiority that

pervades societies around the world and continues to harm Black people;

2. to put the issue of emotional emancipation – freedom from the lie – at the top of the global African agenda;
3. to develop and share initiatives to promote the emotional emancipation, healing, wellness, and empowerment of African people on the Continent and in its Diaspora; and
4. to build a global online community to connect, support, and empower local leaders to act as catalysts for emotional emancipation in neighborhoods across the African world.

CHN's Primary Ally: The Association of Black Psychologists

In 2011, CHN reached out to the Association of Black Psychologists (ABPsi) to ask for its help in making sure that CHN's Emotional Emancipation (EE) Circles process was developed in ways that were psychologically sound, culturally grounded, evidence informed, and community defined. CHN also asked for ABPsi's help in building the global movement for emotional emancipation. The result has been a very productive collaboration through which ABPsi has become CHN's primary ally in all of its work.

Basic Premises of the Movement

Baldwin rightly stated, 'People are trapped in history and history is trapped in them' (Baldwin 1955: 146). The movement for emotional emancipation is mobilising Black people to plot and successfully execute their escape from the European narrative. The fundamental premises of the movement are:

1. Africans on the Continent and in its Diaspora are trapped in the European version of history;
2. In order to escape the narrative imposed on them by Europeans and create a narrative of their own making, people of African ancestry must go through a process of emotional repair; and
3. African cultural principles and values, and the insights of African psychology hold the keys to the emotional repair that will empower them to escape the trap of the European narrative.

This approach, grounded in African psychology is aimed at fostering the creation of flourishing Black communities by clearing away the central barrier to Black flourishing, namely the lie of white superiority and Black inferiority, and by helping to build a new culture of emotional emancipation, healing, wellness, and empowerment across the African Diaspora. It is both a form of prevention and intervention. It is community-centred. It understands the energy and power of the collective and is therefore focused on group, not individual experiences. It situates and celebrates human behaviour and functioning within an African psychology conceptualisation. And it subscribes to the idea of an African metaculture and African identity in which the demarcations of national cultures and Diasporan locality are recognised, but also transcended.

Initiatives of the Movement

The movement's key initiatives include:

1. the annual celebration of **Community Healing Days**, on the third weekend of every October, which was inspired and supported by the late Dr. Maya Angelou, to encourage Black communities to put 'time for healing' at the top of their agendas;
2. **Emotional Emancipation Circles** (EE Circles), self-help support groups that are nurturing and liberating spaces in which participants come together to gain eye-opening historical insights, to learn essential culturally grounded keys for psychological liberation and behavioural change, and to practice concrete emotional wellness skills to recognise and reduce racial stress and trauma;
3. the **Community Healing Institute**, designed to bring together mental health professionals to help CHN develop, share, teach, and train others in its healing strategies;
4. the **Defy the Lie of Black Inferiority and Embrace the Truth of Black Humanity pledge campaign** to mobilise people of African ancestry to make personal commitments to emotional emancipation;
5. the **Valuing Black Lives Global Emotional Emancipation Summit**, which has brought together hundreds of activists from across the

African Diaspora in an unprecedented initiative to develop a common global healing response to the common global challenges posed by the lie; and

6. **the 2018-2020 Global Truth Campaign and Tour**, which was designed to make 2019, the 400th anniversary of the first recorded forced arrival of Africans in the United States, a pivotal year for Black people to declare their independence from the lie, to walk into the year 2020 with a more perfect vision of themselves – focused on the truth of their humanity; and
7. **CHNConnect**, which has begun to link all of the movement’s constituencies across the globe together to support them on their journey toward emotional emancipation by providing an online space for learning, training, and collaboration.

Emotional Emancipation Circles: The Primary Movement-Building Strategy

According to Armah (1979: 81),

Healing is [...] the work of inspiration, not manipulation. If we healers are to do the work of helping to bring our people together again, we need to know such work is the work of the community. The work of healers is the work for inspirers working long and steadily, in a group that grows over the generations, till there are inspirers, healers wherever our people are scattered, able to bring us together again.

A Global Network of Healers

The aim of the movement for emotional emancipation is to create a global network of healers who are, as Armah has suggested, everywhere people of African ancestry are scattered, and who are equipped to provide healing spaces and tools to help liberate the African mind and spirit, to bring Africa and her Diaspora back together again.

More than 1,000 local leaders have been trained to facilitate EE Circles, and seeds for EE Circles have been planted in more than 50 cities in the United States and around the world, including New Haven, Connecticut; Ferguson, Missouri; Brooklyn, New York; Port-au-Prince, Haiti; Baltimore,

Maryland; Los Angeles, California; Havana, Cuba; Kingston, Jamaica; Johannesburg, South Africa; and London, Birmingham, and Manchester in the United Kingdom.

The EE Circles

EE Circles are a self-help healing strategy that is resonating with Black people across the Diaspora. In initial evaluations, participants in EE Circles report significant improvements in multiple indicators of well-being and have described the EE Circle experience as ‘life-changing’ and ‘transformative’.

The following comments are typical of the feedback received from over 150 structured interviews:

‘EE Circles are the most significant, tangible, and scalable development supporting the mental health of Black people in decades’. – **Dr. Annelle Primm, Psychiatrist, and Convener, All Healers Mental Health Alliance**

‘The EE Circle process is a model for healing for Black people that responds directly to the many inquiries I have received’. – **Baba Leonard G. Dunston, Convener, Black Family Summit/Institute for the Black World 21st Century; President Emeritus, National Association of Black Social Workers**

‘EE Circles should become the first line of defence for wellness for Afrikans living while Black. Thank you so much for developing EE Circles and long may they continue’. – **Dr. Erica McInnis, Psychologist, Nubia Wellness and Healing, Manchester, United Kingdom**

‘EE Circles are culturally relevant. They were created by Black people, for Black people, and are exactly what we need. EE Circles are a ‘community defined evidence practice,’ in other words, they are a healing circle that the Black community says works’. – **Dr. Kristee Haggins, Psychologist, Safe Black Space, Sacramento, California**

‘EE Circles are transformative catalysts for reclaiming our human dignity as people of African ancestry’. – **Dr. Ram Bhagat, Founding Member, Virginia Emotional Emancipation Circle Conductor**

The movement for emotional emancipation and EE Circles is grounded in African cultural wisdom. It establishes the roadmap for how

people are to live principled lives. They include values such as solidarity, cooperation, mutual helpfulness, interdependence, and reciprocal obligation, individual initiative and responsibility, social morality (a type of morality that is preoccupied with human or social welfare), moral virtues including good character, conduct, and behaviour, pursuit of knowledge and wisdom, and a willingness to learn, significance of family, love, kindness, compassion, generosity, peace, patience, obedience and respect, justice, gratefulness, generosity and beneficence, self-control, and harmony and of course, spirituality (Gyekye 1996).

EE Circles are a psychologically sound, evidence informed, culturally grounded, community-defined practice through which Black people are working to deepen their understanding of the impact of historical forces on their self-images, relationships, and emotional and physical health, to detoxify their minds and spirits, and to learn essential emotional wellness skills to help them be at their best as individuals and as a community.

EE Circles are designed to promote:

- an increase in critical consciousness;
- a repertoire of skills to understand racism and the lie, and manage racial stress;
- increased cognitive and physical self-awareness, and emotional intelligence (awareness of self and others);
- an increased sense of compassion for self and others who are experiencing racial stress;
- improved communication and interpersonal skills;
- self-care – emotional and physical;
- knowledge and understanding of African cultural principles and values;
- greater access to historical facts about Black people to correct the mis-education fostered by the lie; and
- greater discernment about who and when to trust and when not to trust.

The EE Circles can be used to address a wide range of personal and community challenges in Black communities, including:

- by individuals, to reduce racial stress and promote emotional and physical well-being;

- by parents, to provide cultural and racial socialisation to their children to protect and to promote resilience;
- by teachers, to increase school bonding and academic performance;
- by community-based organisations, to address youth violence and gang involvement;
- by health institutions, to help people of African ancestry who have histories of trauma and cardiovascular risks;
- by child welfare agencies, to provide positive youth development engagement for children of African ancestry in foster care;
- by juvenile and adult incarceration populations, to support self-awareness and personal growth for successful re-entry;
- by after-school programmes, to support positive youth development and youth civic engagement; and
- by universities, to improve retention and matriculation of college students of African ancestry.

Core EE Circle Values

The EE Circles espouse the core African value of *ubuntu*, which refers to a general quality of character, attitude, and behaviour (Shutte 1995). The isiXhosa (Bantu-Nguni) expression, *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*, states the principle that ‘a person is a person through persons’. We are born human beings, but we must grow into persons and personhood. In the context of the lie, the African community takes back the authority to define the African person as person (Menkiti 1979), clear of the delusions created by the lie.

EE Circles are also grounded in the Akan principle of Sankofa, that is, that in order to move forward, we must go back and fetch (learn from and apply) the cultural wisdom of our ancestors. Through the process of Sankofa – the movement for emotional emancipation provides a framework for doing the work of retrieving the cultural past, reckoning with the African holocausts of enslavement and colonialism, and defining, at the personal and collective levels, what should be carried forward and what must be left behind. This simple process exposes many facets of the lie of Black inferiority including the fundamental lie that nothing good came out of Africa.

The EE Circles subscribe to the concept epitomised in the isiZulu greeting ‘*sawubona*’, which translates to, ‘I see you’. *Sawubona* invokes the principle of mutual responsibility. In saying *sawubona*, or *siya wubona* (we see

you/we see your family), one is saying ‘our eyes meet, ancestrally and spiritually’. Seeing is a dialogue establishing you as a witness to the existence and condition of the other, who also is a witness to your presence. Seeing empowers and instructs us to investigate our mutual potential and connection. *Sawubona* is a deep form of witnessing and presence, where seeing is also feeling and connecting, and healing.

The EE Circles are built upon the foundation of African Philosophy that among other things, teaches that:

- 1) Who we are is intimately tied to the quality of our relationships with the Divine and with each other;
- 2) Our value as human beings is directly connected to the fact that we are extensions of a Divine or Life Force. This is the metaphysical foundation and framework for what it means to be a person and a community. ‘The essence of being is ‘participation’ in which humans are always interlocked with one another’ (Shutte 1995: 55).
- 3) There are levels of reality. For example, according to the Akan there are three levels of reality: *nea wohu* (that which you can see); *nea wonhu* (that which you do not see or sense with the normal senses); and *nea etra adwene* (the unperceivable – that which transcends thought such as a full comprehension of the Supreme Being.) These levels of reality have corresponding levels of human consciousness that can be accessed by all people. Some may call this mere intuition or the foresight found in dreams.
- 4) The most important thing in life is not accomplishments or things but the quality of our relationships with others, our character and ethics, and our sense of responsibility for others.
- 5) Our intellect is best manifested not through what we know but in the practice of wisdom. The seat of intelligence is not in our brains engaging in the skillful use of analysis and logic, but the extent to which we are able to connect our intellect with our hearts and rise beyond intelligence to wisdom (the quality of having experience, knowledge coupled with deep understanding, and good judgment; the quality of being wise).
- 6) *Ubuntu* communalism is more important than individualism or mere collectivism (an aggregated sum of individuals in which the society inevitably places the emphasis on the individual, on his/her original

activity and needs).

- 7) The character of *ubuntu* is embodied in a set of values or strengths of character including: patience, hospitality, loyalty, respect, sociability, endurance, empathy, health.
- 8) The task of personhood as we grow older is to become more fully connected to others in a web of healthy relationships.
- 9) Ultimately, the self and the community are united in a web of reciprocity –which could be thought of as centrifugal selfhood from an African philosophical perspective.

These African philosophical principles underscored the need for the EE Circles to promote healing in a communal context, inspired the design of seven keys to emotional emancipation, and provided a way to understand and repair the disruption to the African rhythm of life caused by enslavement, colonialism, cultural imperialism, and oppression.

EE Circles promote critical consciousness; expose implicit biases and internalized racism; explain and heal the personal and collective wounds of racial trauma; offer a healthy counter-narrative to the lie; and foster resilience.

Critical Consciousness is the antidote to the lie. The EE Circles create spaces through which Black people can develop an acute level of awareness that radicalises consciousness. This is essential because

the more radical the person is, the more fully he or she enters into reality so that, knowing it better, he or she can transform it. This individual is not afraid to confront, to listen, to see the world unveiled (Freire 1970: 21).

EE Circles create the space and provide the strategies for Black people to see and boldly confront the lie in order to neutralise its negative effects. Historical knowledge, political consciousness, self-awareness, and self-reflection grounded in an African point of view open the way to a firm sense of identity and Black consciousness. They increase the capacity to detect and resist oppression and the deadly mindset of white supremacy.

The EE Circles are designed to promote a level of critical consciousness that leads to the ability to see reality beyond the lie, to see the contradictions in the way systems and societies operate, to see one's position within that context, to recognise signs that the lie has been internalised and to

see the pathway to emotional and psychological liberation (Freire 1970; Biko 1978; Fanon 1963). This critical consciousness empowers the individual and the collective. It radicalises consciousness, which empowers personal emancipation and fuels collective action to transform the very sources of oppression, but in ways that do not oppress other people because one cannot be liberated while another is oppressed.

Implicit Bias has been defined as an attitude or stereotype that influences perceptions, actions, and decisions. With respect to race, it often involves subtle judgments that can be automatic and unconscious and drive behaviour (Staats *et al.* 2015). These biases are regularly reinforced by messages in the mass and social media, the education system, and other institutions within a society. Implicit biases have far-reaching and long-standing adverse effects (e.g., white politicians act in less responsive ways to Black constituents (Mullainathan 2015), or medical professionals deliver substandard health care (Opam 2016; Johnson *et al.* 2017; Hoffman *et al.* 2016; DeAngelis 2019).

Internalised Racism is the heartbreaking and painful practice of turning the negative racial beliefs, attitudes, practices, and oppression inflicted by white supremacist thought in upon one's self, family, and people. Internalised racism is what Biko (1978) referred to as the subjective aspect of Black oppression that must be eradicated in the process of promoting Black consciousness. Freedom from internalised racism is an antidote to the lie in the sense that it increases skills in detection, resistance, and protection of self and community well-being from the deadly mindset of white supremacy.

Trauma resulting from the lie assumes many forms including historical, cultural, and individual. Individual trauma can result from exposure to an overwhelming amount of racial stress that exceeds one's ability to cope. Historical trauma is the legacy of numerous traumatic events inflicted on a group of people who share a specific group identity or affiliation – ethnicity, nationality, and religious affiliation that is experienced over generations and includes the psychological and social responses to these events (Brave Heart & DeBruyn 1998; Evans-Campbell 2008). Cultural trauma is a collective experience of major disruption to the social and cultural foundation of a group that can lead to 'a dramatic loss of identity and meaning' (Eyerman 2001:2).

Central to redressing individual, historical, and cultural racial trauma is the reconstitution of the group's collective identity. And like Eyerman (2001), this must be a collective representation process of the past and present.

In other words, people of African ancestry must ‘collectively’ define for themselves: who they are, where they came from, and the substance of their past and present. For this ‘re’ presentation to be truthful and affirming, they, the victims of the trauma, must have control over its construction, articulation, and dissemination and they must do this together. The EE Circles provide a space for the reconstitution of African peoples’ collective identity, a re-visioning of the historical present and the creation of a different, more accurate, collective memory to aid in healing from individual, historical, and cultural trauma.

Healthy Counter-Narratives are necessary in the face of repeated exposure to the negative messages contained in the lie. While Black people have positive counter-messages that can create affirming memories and mental models (what a mother, father, grandparents, community say about being lovable, gifted, talented and full of possibilities etc.), they are vulnerable to constant assaults the magnitude and frequency of which threaten their positive and protective impact. A collectively reinforced healthy counter narrative can change negative schemas and self-images. Through activities, discussion, and exposure to a variety of sources of information, EE Circle participants learn how to become stronger ‘psychological freedom fighters’, ‘truth to power speakers’, ‘tenacious and principled’ and ‘fearless liberators’.

Resilience refers to the processes that individuals, families and communities use to cope, adapt and take advantage of assets when facing significant acute or chronic stress, or the compounding effect of both together (Luthar *et al.* 2000; Ungar 2011). Resilience is not about toughness, grit, or merely bouncing back from stress. It is not about how people endure, but about how they recharge (Achor & Gielan 2016). And it is not and never should be understood as the ability to adapt to the *status quo* (Van der Platt 2016). It is about having a variety of ways to replenish (e.g. a positive support system with reliable and nurturing connections to others, spirituality, exercise, healthy diet, hope, regulation of emotions, clear values and ethical code, commitment to something larger than one’s self, etc.). It is about adopting an attitude that self-care is not-self-indulgence but rather self-preservation, which is an act of political warfare (Lorde 1988). It is about a dynamic, reciprocal relationship between the individual and the nested ecologies (supportive and/ or harmful) within which she/ he lives (Van der Platt 2016). The EE Circles emphasise self-care and resilience through specific wellness tools (Ndefo 2017) and through an intentional recognition, transmission, and use of life affirming cultural tools and principles (e.g. *ubuntu*, *sankofa*, spirituality, respect for

elders and their wisdom), handed down to the people of the African Diaspora across generations.

The Centrality of African Psychology

Historical forces that repeat certain narratives and themes have a powerful influence on consciousness, imagination, aspirations, identity, and behaviour. African psychology provides a Diasporan-African historical lens and has a key role to play in plotting an escape out of the European narrative into full liberation, and an authentic identity unencumbered by the lie of white superiority and Black inferiority. This means applying a historical lens to our theories, research and praxis so as to address the multigenerational effects of the lie that shape how Black people, and others, see Black people. From that perspective, African people, wherever they are in the world, can develop a more accurate understanding of the African human spirit, behaviour, the stress/resilience cycle, and what an emancipated African psyche looks like.

There is an African proverb, ‘until the lion has a historian, the hunter will always be the hero’. If African people probe deeply the full meaning of this proverb, they cannot help but realise an essential lesson from African psychology – namely that they must engage the politics of consciousness. African psychology must apply its efforts toward addressing: 1) the psychological implications of the unmitigated assaults to the humanity and psychospiritual integrity of the Diasporan African family; and 2) how this history, framed as a ‘socially constructed’ enterprise, sustains and reinforces the consequences of the assault. People of African ancestry cannot rely on the tools and curriculum of the oppressor. For example, the U.S. history curriculum does not promote critical thinking about how the U.S. ‘constructs racialized [sic] identities and the role this plays in the political, economic, social, and cultural contexts of US history’ (Anderson & Metzger 2011: 393) and western psychology’s cognitive behaviour therapy will not help them think their way out of the grip of the oppressive lie.

African psychology also has a role to play in examining the Diasporan African community’s resistance across generations. In spite of the lie, the African community has survived, resisted, excelled, and maintained various degrees of cultural continuity. How do we identify, understand and build upon those cultural and constitutional strengths? If African psychology does not develop substantive research, theory, and practice about these phenomena, then

it runs the risk of offering: ‘answers that don’t answer, explanations that don’t explain, and conclusions that don’t conclude’ (Fred Hampton 1971).

The EE Circle Contextual Model

The EE Circle builds on Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) social ecological theory to facilitate a process of awareness that deepens understanding of the multiple levels within which the lie operates. What became the EE Circle contextual model (see Figure 1), however was nuanced and deepened by African Psychology’s bio-psycho-socio-spiritual framework (Grills, Nobles & Hill 2018).

Social ecological theory argues that any true understanding of human behaviour must take into account the entire ecological system within which human development occurs. Bronfenbrenner’s model contains five interrelated subsystems. The most proximal level to the person is the *microsystem* (i.e. dyad relations with family, peers, etc. in the family, school, neighborhood, etc.) followed by the *mesosystem* (which moves beyond the dyad and connects the dyad to other systems within which the family child, parent lives). Immediately beyond these subsystems and nested within the surrounding, broader *macrosystem* (consisting of laws, customs, cultural values, ideologies that characterize the society or social group) lies the *exosystem* (i.e. the social system consisting of community resources, social networks, local politics, industry, etc.). Finally, affecting all of these is the *chronosystem* which takes into consideration the powerful force of time. Human behaviour is embedded within historical contexts and history can exert a powerful influence on all other levels in the ecosystem.

The EE Circle contextual model required an expansion of Bronfenbrenner’s social ecological model to be consistent with African Psychology, which recognises the presence of an essential psycho-spiritual system (i.e. the spiritual forces and processes that permeate all aspects of human behaviour as well as the various levels of the ecosystem) (Grills 2004). Factors far beyond the decisions and constitution of the individual weigh heavily upon life chances, quality of life, and well-being. Conscious critical analysis of these forces is a central component of the EE Circle change process, which contends that personal well-being can only exist in the context of community well-being, and community well-being is affected by forces within and beyond the immediate community, across time, and beyond the mundane world.

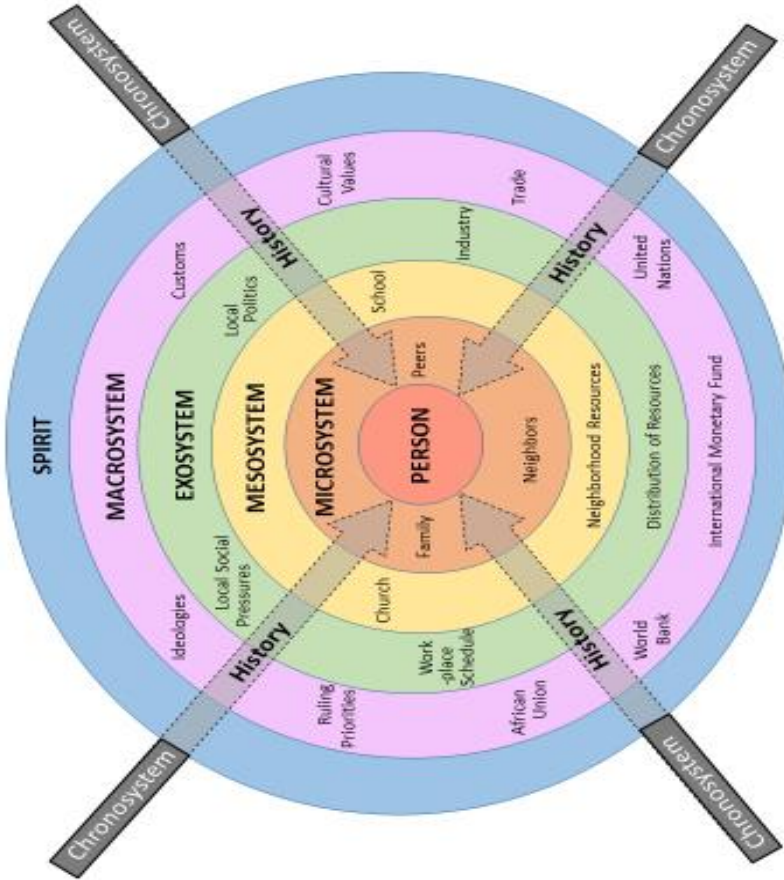


Figure 1: EEC Social Ecological Model. Adapted from Bronfenbrenner, U. 1979. *The ecology of human development*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Factors operating at more distal levels of the ecosystem (spirit, macro, exo, meso or micro) matter. The EE Circle model moves beyond the Western-centric lens, calls attention to these levels distal to the individual, and encourages a focus on the intersections and interactions among personal and communal processes, historical forces, and the other levels of the ecosystem. In addition, if lasting change is to occur, the work of person-level emotional emancipation cannot be understood or practiced as a solely individual process. It is a communal process of change that must happen in a communal context. This is a necessary, and heretofore neglected step, in the liberation of the African Diaspora – a step that is grounded in principles of African psychology.

Foundational to the EE Circle change process, therefore, is personal and community level change inspired by critical consciousness, connection to community, strengthened reconnection to cultural principles and values, and tools to reduce the harmful effects of racial trauma and stress. A range of potential outcomes emerges. EE Circles can ultimately lead to:

- increased knowledge and understanding of racism, racial stress/trauma, the lie and how it operates across space and time;
- increased sense of community, connection, compassion, empathy, reciprocity, and responsibility for one another (addressing relational needs);
- increased awareness of and application of cultural heritage and principles;
- increased sense of positive ethnic/racial identity and Pan-African solidarity;
- increased civic engagement, community social capital, and empowerment in the service of eradicating the lie and its social and personal consequences;
- increased general well-being and resilience;
- greater spiritual attunement (seeing serendipity and intuition as signs of spiritual connection and growth);
- stronger, more harmonious and respectful community relations and community safety nets (youth and family centered activities and supports, community activism, community rituals to support wellness and development; decreased community and family violence);
- decreased alienation and psychic suffering;

- decreased internalised racism and adherence to the lie;
- decreased symptoms of racial stress, depression, anxiety and self-doubt; and
- changes specific to special populations (e.g., for parents, the formerly incarcerated, children in the child welfare system, youth, substance abusers, etc.).

Conclusion

Ending the Struggle

It is common during anniversaries of momentous events in Black history for leaders to declare that ‘we have come a long way, but we still have a long way to go’. This is similar to the Pan-Africanist rallying cry ‘A Luta Continua’ (‘The Struggle Continues’). Both refrains suggest that the struggle for the liberation of Africans on the Continent and throughout the Diaspora will be ongoing, perhaps even perpetual.

The global grassroots movement for emotional emancipation is focused on finally ending a crucial aspect of the struggle – by mobilising people across the African world to remove the most potent and longest lasting barrier to complete freedom for people of African ancestry: the lie of white superiority and Black inferiority.

The lie is the most powerful weapon ever formed against African people. Until it is extinguished, Africa and its children will continue to be devalued. The movement for emotional emancipation is therefore intent on imposing deadlines upon itself.

In October 2018, the movement’s leaders launched the 2018-2020 Global Truth Campaign and Tour to create a sense of urgency about the need for healing from the damage caused by the lie and to share the resources of the Emotional Emancipation Circle process.

In an *Appeal to Africans on the Continent and in the Diaspora* (Community Healing Network 2019), the leaders called ‘on Black people and organizations [sic] everywhere to put the issue of emancipation from the lie at the top of the global African agenda’. The *Appeal* declared that: ‘All around the world, there are powerful and beautiful signs of an African re-awakening. But Black lives will never be truly valued until we, the children of Africa, liberate ourselves from the lie’.

The aim of the Truth Tour was to urge Africans wherever they may be to make 2019 the year in which they declare their freedom from the lie so that ‘they can walk boldly into the year 2020 with a more perfect vision of themselves – a vision focused on the truth’. In early 2020, the leaders issued another call: to make 2020-2030 the Decade to Defy the Lie of White Superiority and Black Inferiority and Embrace the Truth of Black Humanity.

In all of this, African psychology is playing a crucial role. A rich understanding of who they are and of African values and principles is fundamental to mobilising African people to free themselves from the lie. African Psychology provides an essential grounding for strategies designed to support the mental health and well-being of African people. It emphasises the importance of community-centred interventions and collective wellness as a pathway to the liberation of the African mind and spirit. It helps African people recognise the underlying African metaculture that exists among them across the African Diaspora, transcending the boundaries of geography, language, and class and providing a foundation for African-centred healing and wellness.

African psychology holds the keys to escaping the European narrative driven by the lie of white superiority and Black inferiority, and to creating a renewed African narrative grounded in the truth of Black humanity.

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The Adoption of *Lekgotla* in Understanding Positive Experiences of Working in a Transforming Open Distance Learning (ODL) Academic Context

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Abstract

The continuing dominance of the Western epistemological paradigms in universities in Africa highlights a double-edged problem. One aspect is the question: is there really an ‘African university’ since colonization? Another is: given the prevalent cultural diversity in Africa, which concepts are relevant to safeguard the diversity and, at the same time promote transformation in Open Distance Learning (ODL) in the South African academic context? *Lekgotla* is proposed as an answer to the second question. Its adoption will generate positive experiences through the telling of multiple diverse stories from different and, even contending epistemologies at times. In the practical application of *Lekgotla*, one follows an open-ended consultative approach oriented towards consensus that facilitates collaboration. The core argument then is that *Lekgotla* as theory and practice is best suited to advance transformation in the age of ‘decolonization’ in South Africa.

Keywords: *Lekgotla*, positive experiences, academia, transformation, open distance learning, decolonization

Ukuvunywa kwe*Lekgotla* Ekuqondeni Lokho Okuhle Okudlulwe Kukho Kokusebenza Endaweni Enoguquko i-*Open Distance Learning* (ODL) Kwezemfundo

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Iqoqa

Ukuqhubeka kokuqonela kwamapharadaymu aseNtshonalanga okubuka iminyombo yolwazi emanyuvesi ase-Afrika kuqhakambisa inkinga ehlangothi zimbili. Umbuzo wokuqala uthi: ngabe ikhona ngempela ‘inyuvesi yase-Afrika’ kusukela esikhathini sokuqonelwa? Omunye uthi: njengoba kukhona ukwehlukana ngokwamasiko e-Afrika, yikuphi okusemqoka ukuvikela ukwehlukahlukana kube futhi kukhuthaza uguquko ku-*Open Distance Learning* (ODL) emkhakheni wezemfundo ephakeme eNingizimu Afrika? I*Lekgotla* ihlongozwa njengempendulo yalo mbuzo wesibili. Ukwamukelwa kwayo kuyoletsa ulwazi olwengeziwe ngokuxoxwa kwezindaba eziningi ezahlukene ngisho nezineminyombo ephikisanayo kwenye inkathi. Uma sekwenziwa i*Lekgotla*, umuntu ulandela indlela yokuxhumana evulelekile ebheke ekuvumelaneni ukuze kube khona ukusebenza ngokubambisana. Okuyiyona mpikiswano ukuthi i*Lekgotla* njengenjulalwazi nokwenziwayo ifanelekile ukuphucula uguquko ngesikhathi ‘sokuqedwa kokuqonela’ eNingizimu Afrika.

Amagama asemqoka: i*Lekgotla*, okwedlulwe kukho okuhle, ezemfundo ephakeme, uguquko, i-*open distance learning*, ukuqonela

Go amogela tšhomišo ya Lekgotla kwešišong ya maitemogelo a mabotse a go šoma lefelong-thuto leo le fetogago la thuto ya go ithuta o le kgole ya bohle (ODL)

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Kakaretšo

Tšwelopele ya go rena ga mekgwa ya go kwešiša tsebo, go dumela, le go kwešiša tlhago ya tsebo yeo e le go ya bodikela (Western epistemological paradigms) mo diyunibesithing tša Afrika e bontšha bothata bja magalemabedi. Kokwane ya pele ke potšišo ya gore: Mola bokoloni bo fihlago e ka ba ka nnete go na le seo se bitšwago ‘yunibesithi ya Afrika’? Ye ngwe ke gore: ge go lebeletšwe phatlalalo ya phapano ya ditšo mo Afrika, ke dikgopolo dife tša maleba tšeo di ka šomišwago go šireletša phapano ye, ebile tša hlatloša phetogogo mokgwa wa dithuto wa go ithuta o le kgole (Open Distance Learning [ODL]) tikolong ya tša thuto ka Afrika Borwa? Lekgotla le šišinywa bjalo ka karabo go potšišo ya bobedi. Kamogelo ya lona e tla tšweletša maitemogelo a maleba ka go anega dikanegelo tše ntši tša go fapana go tšwa dikgopolong tša go fapana le tša go dumelelana nakong tše dingwe. Phethagatšong ya tirišo ya Lekgotla go latelwa mokgwa wa therišano wa go abelana dikgopolo ntle le magomo, gore go fihlelelwe tumelelano yeo e tla nolofatšago tirišano. Ge go le bjalo, kgang ye bohlokwa ke gore Lekgotla bjalo ka teori le mokgwa wa tirišo ke selo sa maleba go tšweletša phetogo mo nakong ya ‘go tloša bokoloni’ ka Afrika Borwa.

Mantšo a bohlokwa: Lekgotla, maitemogelo a maleba, tikologo ya tša thuto, phetogo, mokgwa wa dithuto wa go ithuta o le kgole, go tloša bokoloni

Personal Reflection

This article is a revised version of part of my PhD thesis in Consulting Psychology entitled: Positive Experiences of Working in Academia: Reflections on a Higher Learning Institution. The thesis explores positive experiences of working in academia in the context of an Open Distance Learning (ODL) higher education institution. What motivated me to write the thesis was my encounter with a senior white female academic, Prof. Cameron,¹ who came across as thriving in academia despite the fact that the academic environment is characterised by internal factors (establishing and managing high quality teaching and learning experiences for students) and external factors (globalisation, decolonisation, transformation and, increased application of advanced information technology in all aspects of higher education, and policy changes) that frequently result in stressors and burnout among academics. The reason for concentrating on academics was that they are regarded as significant stakeholders, who contribute to the core business of higher learning institutions (Pienaar & Bester 2012). They conduct their work of teaching and learning, research, academic citizenship and community engagement in these institutions (Makhanya 2007).

In addition, as a registered Research Psychologist with the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA), and as part of my scope of practice, it is expected of me to contribute towards the development of measuring or assessment tools. In South Africa currently, assessment tools or psychometric development have been identified as untransformed (Foxcoft 2004). My contribution then is the argument that Lekgotla should serve as a key concept in the advancement of the transformation of the curriculum in institutions of higher learning.

Background and Introduction

During the execution of the research, I adopted the humanistic framework and positive psychology paradigm. As a result, the research emphasised integrated positive experiences of working in academia. This was done by taking into account the impact of personal characteristics and environmental factors that contribute towards positive experiences of working in academia. Positive

¹ This is a pseudonym.

experiences were therefore understood by concentrating on Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi's (2000) subjective level constructs. Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) characterised comprehensive positive experiences as capturing the following constructs: from the past, subjective well-being (Diener 2000); in the present, optimal experience (Massimini & Delle Fave 2000) and happiness (Myers 2000; R. M. Ryan & Deci 2000); as well as, in the future, optimism (Peterson 2000). In addition to these constructs, the self-determination theory of motivation (S. E. Taylor *et al.* 2000) and psychosocial characteristics (Salovey *et al.* 2000) were applied to describe positive experiences.

Furthermore, the empirical research process was conducted within the interpretative paradigm by applying a qualitative methodology, where participants shared their personal positive experiences through an in-depth face-to-face interviewing process. In order to understand our new approach better, meta-reflections at the theoretical, empirical and pragmatic levels were followed in order to guide the process. This is because, amongst other aspects, positive psychology is perceived to originate within a positivistic paradigm. According to Baloyi (2008), science, as we study and understand it today, is a product of the European evolution of ideas as well as practices and cannot therefore claim to be a universal representative of all knowledge systems. For example, western science is not necessarily consistent with the existential experiences of the indigenous peoples of Africa. It is, in fact, regarded as substantively out of synchrony with local cultural knowledge (Okere, Njoku & Devisch 2005). By adopting positive psychology, we are therefore limiting ourselves to positive science and excluding the expression of other positive experiences as expressed by diverse academics in an African university.

The Application of Positive Experiences from a Positivistic Approach as Problematic

The implication of the definition and application of positive psychology above as a field that originated from a Western cultural experience must be redefined when applied, for example, in an indigenous context. For example, within the South African indigenous context, when an individual is happy and satisfied at work, positive experiences are expressed through benefiting community members. This implies that positive experiences would have been located within a communal context. It seems that the application and conceptualisation

of positive in this study is, therefore, problematic. This is because in an African university, there coexist academics of different cultural backgrounds, whose experiences could be seen as sometimes contradicting each other and at other times complementing each other. Ramose (personal communication, 16 May 2018) regarded this co-existence of diverse academics as requiring a different conceptualisation and understanding of positive experiences. By failing to adopt an approach that accommodates all academics, one that is biased towards particular cultural experiences, we are regarding positive experiences as equal for all academics that exist in an African university. However, people are not the same, which suggests that the conceptualisation of positive experiences needs to be context- or situation-specific. Such a conceptualisation would be in line with what Portnoi (2003) referred to as the new academic workforce that was introduced under the Employment Equity Act (EEA). The Act also introduced different characteristics and new interaction dynamics among employees and the employer. The Act provides for the preferential employment of groups and persons, who were denied opportunities in the oppressive segregationist past. These are black people, people with disability, and women.

Given the concerns raised and discussed above, it is important to question the suitability and the measuring or relevance of the original assessment tools so as to understand the positive experiences of working in academia. This is because a paradigm that looks at measurement follows a scientific process in the form of a quantitative approach. Quantitative approaches follow a prescriptive natural science model and the measurement of the phenomena under investigation is emphasised to establish objective knowledge (Babbie & Mouton 2010). Babbie and Mouton (2010) further pointed out that, in quantitative approaches, variables are central in describing and analysing human behaviour. Variables are related to the concept of measurement in the sense that, for one to measure, one must be able to discern through identifying variables. In addition, the views and values of the people involved are independent of the research process. The aim of the researcher in quantitative approach is to be as objective as possible so as not to influence the research process.

The adoption and application of such an approach would not capture the essence of the meaning of positive experiences of working in academia because it predetermines and generalises results, and, therefore, poses the threat of misrepresenting positive experiences of working in academia by not

acknowledging otherness. The issue of context therefore becomes crucial in describing experiences, because, if we deny or limit the diverse experiences of the participants, we consign the measuring instrument to irrelevance. This implies that we will be promoting sameness and equality, rather than the co-existence of other experiences.

It is therefore appropriate to take into consideration the context represented in the study by firstly acknowledging that the institution in which it was conducted is regarded as an African university that consists of diverse academics from different parts of Africa. The point here is that we deal with the person first by considering their context, which includes their cultural context. Okere (2005) has argued that, in understanding every human activity, there must be more than one way, in fact many ways, of doing it, with each human group or culture structuring and colouring its own knowledge according to the specificities of its own environment.

Decolonization of Psychology

In the views of Okere (2005), Mignolo (2011), Ramose (2002b; 2002a) and Nwoye (2015), not all aspects of a Eurocentric worldview, psychology and epistemology are relevant for solving the challenges of our current world. To be able to understand the positive experiences of working in academia differently, it is necessary to change our paradigm so that we are able to understand otherness. Mignolo (2011) emphasises that it is through the process of de-linking that we are able to achieve epistemic disobedience. According to Mignolo (2011), epistemic disobedience implies different ways of breaking away from colonial domination. This study, therefore, proposes the adoption of a different framework for understanding positive experiences of working in academia through the adoption and application of an alternative perspective. Such an alternative perspective can be facilitated through embracing a decolonised methodology (Smith 2012). In the view of Smith (2012), decolonised methodologies respond to traditional positivist approaches by attempting to recover, re-cognise, re-create and research back by utilising our own indigenous ontological constructs. The traditional measuring tool approach, conceived as it is from a Western scientific perspective, therefore needs to be deconstructed. Such reconstructions and deconstructions need to be approached in a dialogical engagement so as to include the multicultural views of academics in an African university. It is within this given context that

this research proposes the adoption of *Lekgotla* as an indigenous African concept and intervention practice to understand positive experiences of working in academia. Higgs and Keevy (2009), Mudimbe (1988) and Hountondji (1985) regarded an intellectual product as African if it was produced or promoted by Africans.

Contextualising *Lekgotla*

Once I realised that the Western measuring tool was incongruent with what I was doing, I started exploring a more relevant African indigenous approach that could be applied to understanding positive experiences of working in academia. Universities in South Africa are struggling with how to decolonise curricula. This is because there is no reference of decolonised material in textbooks. One reason for this is that, for a long time, South Africa was subject to a cultural boycott by the international community. The effect of this was to weaken academic and scientific interaction. Libraries in South Africa experienced difficulty in obtaining texts, especially those focused on the epistemologies of Africans like Kwame Nkrumah's *Consciencism* (1970), Ali Mazrui's *Political Values and the Educated Class in Africa* (1979), Julius Nyerere's *Ujamaa* (1968), and Ngugi wa Thiongo's *Decolonizing the Mind* (1986). The situation changed when the cultural boycott was lifted at the introduction of the new political dispensation in 1994. It is at this time that the theme of 'transformation' became pervasive, demanding application in the economic, political and social spheres. Literature from outside South Africa poured like a flood into the country. 'Decolonisation' was part of this literature. By and large, the contemporary discourse on 'decoloniality' overlooks these African precedents. The result is discontinuity in history on the one hand, and the tendency to adopt apparently new concepts uncritically. Ramose's essay in this current issue of *Alternation*, namely 'A Critique of Grosfoguel's 'Epistemic Decolonial Turn' addresses these questions directly. In the light of this critique, the adoption of the African indigenous concept of *Lekgotla* is both timely, and pertinent.

Lekgotla, as an indigenous South African intervention or method, struck me as relevant in understanding positive experience of working in academia. There is a considerable body of literature that focuses on *Lekgotla*, also known as *Indaba*, as an intervention that is used in the business or private sector. Within the academic environment, I identified Healy's (2011) transformative

dialogical approach and the model of palaver as described by Bujo (1998) as related concepts to the original use of *Lekgotla*. As a result, Healy's (2011) transformative dialogical approach and the model of palaver (Bujo 1998) will be adopted as frameworks for contextualising *Lekgotla*.

The reason for contextualising *Lekgotla* with reference to Healy's transformative dialogue is that, at an international level, the process of transformative dialogue is related to *Lekgotla*. It has been further identified that, at an African continental level, Bujo's practice of palaver (from Congo), is similar to *Lekgotla*. From these two sites of knowledge, it becomes clear that the model of *Lekgotla* is not limited to an African context. Due to its dynamic nature it can be placed into dialogue with other indigenous practices from other parts of the world.

Transformative Dialogue

Healy (2011: 295) argues for 'the need to expand the operative conception of deliberation in a more inclusive, egalitarian and, indeed, dialogical direction through the transformative dialogue'. He conceptualised the transformative dialogue as an in-depth expansion of Young's (2000) communicative proposal that goes beyond doing justice to the diversity and difference of the deliberative model (Healy 2011). He emphasised that dealing with difference requires openly engaging with it, by moving above its acceptance in dialogical reciprocity. Genuine dialogical engagement, according to Simpson (2001), implies an equal respectful, accountable and understanding of another. This dialogical interaction is regarded as open and different from the traditional way of understanding the self in relation with others, and therefore teaches us new ways of thinking, doing and being. This implies that participants in dialogue need to be willing to learn from, and be confronted by the other.

At the core of Healy's (2011) dialectical learning is the assumption of confirmation of comparable validity and dialogical equality. This means that all participants' inputs are equally important, irrespective of their status, according to their own expressions, to enable learning to take place between all who participate. Furthermore, this means that, when dealing with diverse participants, the intention ought to be to promote transformative learning by respecting and protecting difference while simultaneously capitalising on similarities.

At the centre of dialogical commitment is the expectation of learning from each other and therefore exposing oneself to the process of transforming as opposed to the need for consensus as in the standard model. Healy's (2011) argument about consensus, as applied in the standard model, is that it promotes sameness and therefore nullifies differences through its adoption of an argumentative approach. This is because classic argumentation is regarded as emphasising the most dominant argument, which is not reflective of diversity.

The Model of Palaver in Africa

Within the African context, Bujo's (1998) model of palaver is deemed relevant to provide a basis for understanding positive experiences of working in academia. This model can be seen as complementing Healy's (2011) concept of transformational dialogue. Like Healy, Bujo (1998) emphasised the communal approach of engaging with socio-political issues, where all participants are treated as equal partners.

The model of palaver is practiced in Congo as an efficient institutionalisation of communicative action to decide about matters that involve community members (Bujo 1998: 41). According to Bujo, '[t]his model takes the interests of the individual into consideration in such a way that it can successfully function at the micro-ethical level'. The palaver does not include a council of elders, whose main task is to advise the chief or king. According to Bujo (1998), the palaver uses competence and experience as criteria for selecting members. This implies involving wise men whose daily life experiences are similar to the rest of those people involved. Through having similar life experiences, the argument on the table will be concerned with the stakeholders' existential interest. No-one is excluded from the discourse of palaver, because participants are all members of the community. According to Bujo (1998:36), the 'process of finding solutions does not manoeuvre or trick or force people but discusses issues by sharing of experiences, taking into consideration history of the community clan and interests of the living and the living dead'. Since this whole procedure is communal in its approach, it must be carried on until a consensus is reached, and therefore it could be viewed as time consuming.

Bujo (1998) further recommended the palaver as an ideal model for developing a community of communication. He was of the view that the

palaver model can be applied to all areas of life because it shows that norms can be and have to be found in a communal manner that is free of domination.

Like Healy, Bujo (1998) regarded the deliberative model as not relevant for effective communication action. It is for this reason that the palaver model accuses the ethics of discourse propounded, for example, by Habermas in his theory of communicative discourse, as being excessively elite-oriented. This is because the discourse is the privilege afforded those who are able to argue, wherein only the ability to argue reasonably counts. By virtue of this, those members of the community who cannot argue are eliminated, who are therefore not included as part of the discourse.

Academic *Lekgotla*: Towards the Development of a Deconstructed Intervention Framework of Understanding Positive Experiences of Working in a Transforming Academic Context

My initial approach in this section was to look at academic literature in defining and describing what *Lekgotla* is, but I decided to take a different approach by setting the context of academic *Lekgotla* through conversations. The process of adopting academic *Lekgotla* to understand positive experiences of working in academia would follow a conversational methodology. Through conversations, the purpose and objectives of *Lekgotla* would be elaborated by one of the participating academic members (explaining why participants are here and what will happen). When compared to traditional interviews, conversations are perceived to be sensitive, fluid, and not concrete (Kovach 2010). They are regarded as averting the imposition of barriers. The conversational approach would also afford participants an opportunity to be treated as humans before they are regarded as research participants. According to Masemola (Personal communication, August, 09 2018), '*Taba ga e fetse ke motho, e fetsa ke rena. Ga se nna, ga se wena, ke rena ka moka, re ema ka lona*' (In a conversation it is not the individual alone that unilaterally makes a decision to conclude but it is the consensus reached by the group). This is the overall spirit of *Ubuntu* that Ramose (2002a) refers to. As part of the closure, the researcher and the participants would converse and reflect on the discussion, thanking and acknowledging everybody involved.

Smith (2012: 37) is of the view that,

The problem with academic writing is that it is a form of selecting, arranging and presenting knowledge. It privileges sets of texts, views about the history of an idea, what issues count as significant, and by engaging in the same process uncritically, we too can render indigenous writers invisible or unimportant while reinforcing the validity of other writers.

Like most indigenous concepts and practices, the origin of *Lekgotla* is recorded through the indigenous oral tradition. Gyekye (1997:221) defines tradition as ‘any cultural product that was created or pursued by past generations and that, having been accepted or preserved, in whole or in part, by successive generations, has been maintained to the present’. *Lekgotla* tradition is orally transmitted and is widespread in actual day-to-day life. To attain a formal grasp of *Lekgotla*, I spoke to five knowledge bearers from Ga-Masemola Village in Limpopo Province, who regard the practice of *Lekgotla* as part of their tradition; as well as to a Unisa academic specialising in indigenous knowledge systems more specifically the Batswana cultural practices, poetry and literature.

From the descriptions provided by the different participants, it becomes clear that the context of *Lekgotla* varies according to the diverse cultural groups of South Africa and according to different interests of the community. *Lekgotla* does not adopt an individual understanding. It is collaborative and consultative. *Lekgotla* is generally derived from the process of *wholeness* and respect, and it is guided by the principle of *Ubuntu*. According to Ramose (2002a), *Ubuntu* implies treating fellow members as human beings, taking a humane, respectful and polite attitude towards them. The following common themes were identified as capturing the essence of what *Lekgotla* is from the different sources or conversational partners:

- a) Flexible and not rigid. It is worth mentioning that *Lekgotla* is not a rigid process. It is a flexible approach that is process-driven. It consists of a group of people that have the interests of the community members at heart. The formation or participants of *Lekgotla* will therefore differ according to the topic under discussion. Members of a specific *Lekgotla* are deemed to have knowledge of what is being discussed.

- b) The general aim of *Lekgotla* is to discuss in totality specific issues through conversing and eventually reaching a consensus. This is done through an acknowledgement of the full participation of everyone involved. The virtue of consensus here is that it opens the door for every participant to own the collective decision and act upon it.
- c) In a *Lekgotla*, all members are regarded as equal partners. All members are therefore expected to participate irrespective of their status. The focus is on the discussion of the matter at hand and not who is making a contribution.
- d) Collective decision making and the solution at the end is not from one individual. It must come from the buy-in of all members, usually through the use of phrases such as *Ke laka leo* (I second or I echo your sentiments), which implies that the speaker also agrees with what is being said by other speakers.

The Adoption of *Lekgotla* in Understanding Positive Experiences of Working in a Transforming Open Distance Learning (ODL) Academic Context

In this section, I discuss the process of how *Lekgotla* could be used to understand the positive experiences of working in academia. Traditionally, psychological assessments are used (typically by a management team) for decision-making protocols such as recruitment, placement, promotion, training, and career-path training within different work contexts, and they are recognised for this kind of use by the HPCSA (Van de Vijver & Rothmann 2004). The decision-making structure is hierarchical. As such, it has great potential to undermine the principles of the equality of all human beings as human beings. Contrary to this, the adoption of academic *Lekgotla* does not promote and serve the interests of management only because, by its nature, it includes everybody and it assumes an equality approach. Everybody enters the communication process as equal partners, and everybody's input is valued. Through the adoption of academic *Lekgotla*, participants would be able to understand themselves better, learn from each other, and, therefore, will be provided with a space to reflect and share their unique personal experiences of working in academia.

In addition, the adoption of *Lekgotla* in an ODL higher learning institution implies the practice of decolonisation. Smith (2012) describes the process of decolonisation as offering an alternative to colonialism since it exists as a different, oppositional way of knowing. Authors such as Baloyi (2008), E. Fourie and Terre Blanche (2018), Ramose (2004) Higgs (2010b) and Mignolo (2009) have also written about decolonisation as a necessity in current higher learning institutions that could bring curriculum transformation.

In support of Smith's adoption of decolonisation, Okere *et al.* (2005: 1) emphasised the view that 'all knowledge is first of all local knowledge'. This implies that we first learn what we know from our own immediate systems such as, for example, our culture, before we can learn from other different cultures. *Lekgotla*, as a South African indigenous intervention/method, seems to provide the possibility of at least one non-Western methodology that researchers in South Africa and other cultural contexts can employ to ensure their research does not continue the traditions of epistemological exclusion and injustice that plague current research. *Lekgotla* therefore seems to address the issue of curriculum transformation which is of real significance in higher education.

Conclusion

The reason *Lekgotla* was adopted in this research was to intervene differently in understanding positive experiences of working in a transforming academic context in a way that is likely to be more authentic and less impositional. *Lekgotla* as an African concept is therefore regarded as relevant to safeguarding diversity and to promoting transformation in ODL in South African academic context.

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The Role of Proverbs in African-Centred Psychology

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Abstract

African-Centred Psychology is grounded in the philosophical foundations and wisdom traditions of African societies. The African penchant for using proverbs is a direct manifestation of analogic thinking (a way of identifying relationships or similarities among experiences). Proverbs make explicit the purpose of one's existence, the natural order of things and the way we should relate to each other. As such they represent a people's general disposition toward the world. Proverbs also represent strategies for dealing with life situations. In this paper the authors discuss the nature of African-Centred/Black Psychology, the way in which proverbs have served as a foundation for a more authentic African Psychology as well as the critical role that proverbs play both in the theoretical sphere and in the therapeutic process.

Keywords: Proverbs, Proverbial knowing, African-Centred/ African-Centered Psychology, African Philosophy, Analogical thinking, Analogical abstraction, Clinical intervention

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Iqoqa

Isayikholoji egxile kokwase-Afrika isekelwe ezinzulwini zefilosofi kanye nobuhlakani bezinqubo zemiphakathi yase-Afrika. Uthando lwama-Afrika lokusebenzisa izaga luyindlela eqondile yokucabanga ngokuqhathanisa izinto (indlela yokuhlonza ubudlelwano noma ukufana phakathi kwezinto ezenzekile). Izaga zicacisa ngokusobala inhloso yokuba khona komuntu, ukuhleleka kwezinto ngokwemvelo kanye nendlela okumele sixhumane ngayo. Zimele ubunjalo bomuntu uma ebuka umhlaba. Izaga zibuye zimele amasu okubhekana nezimo zempilo. Kuleli phepha ababhali bakhuluma ngobunjalo besayikholoji egxile kokwase-Afrika/isayikholoji yabamnyama, indlela izaga ezelekelele ngayo ukuba yisisekelo sesayikholoji yase-Afrika engenakuphikiswa kanye neqhaza elisemqoka elibanjwa izaga kwezenjulalwazi kanye nohlelo lwezokwelapha.

Amagama asemqoka: izaga, ulwazi lwezaga, isayikholoji egxile kokwase-Afrika, ifilosofi yase-Afrika, ukucabanga ngokuqhathanisa, izingabunjalo lokubhekana nokwengqondo ngokuqhathanisa, ukungenelela kwezokwelapha

Introduction

The Association of Black Psychologists (ABPsi) was born in 1968 when students and professionals walked out of the American Psychological Association (APA) convention in San Francisco. This act of defiance was reflective of the social, cultural, and political vortex of the civil rights and Black power movements occurring in the United States. The ABPsi defined its mission as the liberation of the African mind, the empowerment of the African character, and the enlivenment and illumination of the African spirit. Although claiming its own independent existence, there was no formal theory, concept, or idea of Black psychology in 1968. Over the 50 years of its existence Black Psychologists have created the discipline of African-Centred/ Black Psychology.

African-Centred/ Black Psychology

While western psychology is purported to be the study of human behaviour and mental processes, Holdstock (2000: 6) argues that this definition is short-sighted because it fails to consider the extent to which psychology ‘is embedded in the ideologies of the Western world’. Psychology, then, can best be understood as a Western abstraction, a construct invented in the West to characterise the study of the various ways – the decision rules, interpersonal styles, theories of causation, expressive behaviour, perceptual capacities, reaction times, and information-processing – persons meet their daily needs for survival (Holdstock 2000). Black psychologists’ initial critique of western psychology centred on the denial and neglect of culture in its formulation and suggested that the psychology connoted when using the term is both biased, and incomplete for addressing the majority of humans (Bulhan 1985; Nobles 1986; Guthrie 1998; Kambon 1998; Parham, White & Ajamu 2000).

As part of the critique of Western psychology, early Black psychologists were often in disagreement about what constituted Black psychology, what is the nature of Black psychology, what should be the paradigm/grounding for Black psychology. According to White (1970: 45), ‘It is vitally important that we develop, out of the authentic experience of Black people in this country, an accurate workable theory of black psychology’. Later, Nobles (2004: 66) expanded on this definition by adding cultural perspectives and African philosophical principles to the experiential

perspective: ‘African (Black) Psychology is rooted in the nature of black culture which is based on particular indigenous African philosophical assumptions’. He further suggested that ‘the task of black psychology is to offer an understanding of a behavioral [sic] definition of African Philosophy and to document what, if any modification, it has undergone during particular experiential periods’ (Nobles 2004: 70).

Traditional African Psychology has been defined as ‘a place – a view, a perspective, a way of observing’ – seeing humans as spirit, resilient and capable of restoration (Akbar 2003, p. ix); as a framework for understanding the nature of human beingness grounded in collective African cultural principles (Nobles 1986); and, as a combination of dynamic knowledge and ancestral experience (Grills 2004). It includes practices and processes, is grounded in observation and practical experience, and is passed down from generation to generation, either orally or through symbols. Therefore, African Psychology should include: 1) a theory of human beingness; 2) a set of practices and processes aimed at connections; and 3) a system for determining and facilitating human functioning.

Earlier, Nobles (1986: 109) had argued that the efforts to articulate African Psychology are still in flux. As such,

‘the work we do is constantly changing and we continue to inform our efforts by the need to transform psychology’ [Current efforts] ... should not be taken as an example of ‘the African (Black) Psychology, at least not in the sense of the complete or developed African (Black) Psychology. Most of the work of Black psychologists should be seen as African (Black) Psychology becoming’ (Nobles 1986: p110).

It is not complete.

In an effort to create a common framework for the understanding of Black psychology, the Association of Black Psychologists accepted the following as the official definition of Black psychology:

Black/ African centered psychology [sic] is a dynamic manifestation of unifying African principles, values. It is the self-conscious ‘centering’ of psychological analyses and applications in African realities, cultures, and epistemologies. African centered psychology [sic], as a system of thought and action, examines the processes that

allow for the illumination and liberation of the Spirit. Relying on the principles of harmony within the universe as a natural order of existence, African centered psychology [sic] recognizes [sic]: the Spirit that permeates everything that is; the notion that everything in the universe is interconnected; the value that the collective is the most salient element of existence; and the idea that communal self-knowledge is the key to mental health. African Psychology is ultimately concerned with understanding the systems of meaning of human Beingness, the features of human functioning, and the restoration of normal/ natural order to human development. As such, it is used to resolve personal and social problems and to promote optimal functioning (Rowe 1995: 10).

Philosophical Foundations

According to Nobles (1998: 190),

African centeredness represents a concept which categorizes [sic] a ‘*quality of thought and practice*’ which is rooted in the cultural image and interest of people of African ancestry and which represents and reflects the life experiences, history and traditions of people of African ancestry as the center [sic] of analyses.

Nobles’ definition is critical because it shifts the debate from merely conceptual issues to the meanings and methods of African-Centred Psychology, since it places emphasis on the *quality* of thought and practice (Rowe & Webb-Msemaji 2004). As such, psychology centred in African thought and practice reflects African people’s intimate knowledge of their subjective human experiences as they interact with the world – nature, the cosmos, geographical location, others and one’s self.

Rowe and Webb-Msemaji (2004) further suggest that the term *African-Centred* best reflects how to encapsulate the various efforts for discussing the psychology of persons of African ancestry at this point in history. By ‘centred’, they suggest that the current level of understanding is not sufficiently informed to have formal distinctive boundaries for what explicitly constitute African cultural thought and practices, and that scholars examining these issues should intentionally *locate* their theories, methods and practices

within the ever-deepening investigation into and reclamation of African cultural ways. They suggest four criteria for assessing parameters of African-Centred Psychology, as follows: 1) utilises African cultural patterns and styles for understanding human behaviour; 2) reflects the various ways African peoples have sought to understand, articulate and project themselves to themselves, others and the world; 3) emphasises values that are more dynamic, circular, collective and situational, assumptions that are more integrative or 'diunital', and methods that are more symbolic, affective and metaphorical; and, 4) relies on African sources, i.e., oral literature (proverbs, songs, tales/stories), praise songs and moral teachings, spiritual system 'scripts', prayers, and the dynamic interdependence of community, nature and spirit.

In terms of African philosophical principles, Africans believed that everything is spirit or force. This is best captured in the proverb '*whatever is spirit*'. African philosophical foundation understands that everything is imbued with spirit and that elements in the universe are different manifestations of the same spirit. According to Akbar (1976: 175),

African people throughout the world have a worldview that is conceived as a universal oneness. There is an interconnection of all things that compose the Universe.

The African cosmological understanding of the universe as essentially the same led to the formulation of the ontological principle of consubstantiation (Nobles 1986). As such, the natural order of relations within the universe was one of harmony and interdependence. According to Kamalu (1990), the African philosophical system conceived of the world as being ordered according to the principles of the co-existence and interaction of opposites on all levels of understanding. Africans understood their beingness in relation to others; as Mbiti (1969) stated, 'I am because we are and because we are, therefore I am'. This concept of unity undergirds the African moral and ethical codes of conduct that are based on the concept of collective moral responsibility. That is, we are each responsible for our actions, but collective moral responsibility indicates that our actions have consequences for the entire community consisting of the living, the dead and the yet-to-be born (Mbiti 1969; Kamalu 1990).

Thus, there is a clear link between the articulation of African-Centred Psychology and reliance upon African sources, of which proverbs are a critical aspect. As Nobles (2004) had suggested, African-Centred psychology must

address the oral tradition in terms of the way in which beliefs and traditions are handed down from one generation to the next. As a result, we contend that an additional domain of African Psychology can be discerned through a descriptive analysis of moral language; the sanctions used to enforce morality; and a review of proverbs, tales and myths, which refer to the moral beliefs of the peoples. The examination of traditional African and diasporan African proverbs as a framework for depicting the psychology of Africans in Africa, the United States, and throughout the diaspora is critical (Grills & Rowe 1998).

Proverbial Knowing

Opoku and Mbiti (1997: xviii) suggest that proverbs,

are encapsulations of the accumulated wisdom and experiences of past generations ... and they constitute an authentic mirror of the mind and philosophy of the ... people.

They continue by suggesting that proverbs enrich conversation, demonstrate good education and wisdom, and have significance only within the particular contexts of their use. According to Opoku & Mbiti (1997), proverbs are deeply rooted in this [African] culture and almost everyone who grows up in a village, becomes a living carrier of proverbs. They are interwoven in local languages. At the same time, they constitute a sub-language of their own; the language of proverbs is a whole way of seeing the world, a way of speaking with other people, a way of feeling the atmosphere in society in which they live. Knappert (1989: 2) has stated, 'proverbs are short expressions of wit, containing the wisdom of past generations in condensed form'. They express the essence of African wisdom. He further suggests, 'many proverbs are simple and clear in meaning and can be universally applied' (Knappert 1989: 3). According to Mayers (1976: 198) 'proverbs involve implicit generalizations or observations presented in connection with particular events'. She goes on to distinguish between two types of proverbs based on the form in which they are expressed, where she notes,

The form includes a specific observation, implying a general truth which bears on a particular event. An alternative form is a general observation referring to a specific event (Mayers 1976: 198).

African proverbs have poetic, didactic and aesthetic qualities such that what is emphasised depends on the speaker's intent and the capacity of the hearer to grasp the speaker's thought system (Monye 1996). Implied in Monye's insights are powerful considerations for grounding our understanding of African-Centred Psychology in proverbs. Dzobo (1992: 94f) describes proverbs as 'normally short and pithy sayings ... very popular devices used to state metaphorically certain general truths about life'. A Yoruba proverb states: 'A proverb is a horse which can carry one swiftly to the discovery of ideas'. This proverb demonstrates the overall function of proverbs, that is, to apprehend the essence of human relationships, situations, happenings, and behavioural patterns of people.

Dzobo (1992) notes that as elsewhere, in Africa, proverbs are highly effective for facilitating communication, and that the proper use of proverbs signifies maturity, wisdom, education and cultural insight. Furthermore, he suggests that proverbs have multiple uses and meanings, as follows: 1) as observations on human behaviour – to provide insight into the nature of human beingness or personhood; 2) to convey values – to reflect values that promote health and well-being, from the moral, spiritual, humanistic, economic, and intellectual to the material; and 3) as guides for conduct – as bases for determining the unacceptability of certain forms of behaviour, towards promoting sustainable interpersonal relations.

Examples of proverbs to provide insight into the nature of human beingness/ personhood, include: *it is usually the insect in your cloth that bites you* – the idea is that sometimes it is the people to whom one is closest – relatives or friends – who will most inflict hurt; *it is the coward who says, 'They are insulting us'* – the suggestion here is that only cowards are afraid to defend their own honour and leave it to others to stand up for them. Thus, proverbs that are centred in personhood development focus on improving the character of the person. For example, for young people, the proverb '*some of us are born great, some born to be great*' promotes positive aspirations for young people. Examples of proverbs used to convey values are: '*there is no wealth where there are no children*'; '*it is one's deeds that are counted, not one's years*'; and, '*goodness sells itself, badness walks around*'. The point of the first proverb is self-evident; the second suggests that one's life's work is the measure of one's life; and finally, the last proverb indicates that the value of a thing is in the inherent power that it has to satisfy human needs. Thus, these

proverbs teach strategies for improving the mind, body and spirit, and it is this power that attracts people to it.

Piper-Mandy and Rowe (2010) argue that personhood theory is the study of the journey (development) of the known, knowing, and knowable human spirit, since a person is a known, knowable, and knowing spirit, from an African worldview. Furthermore,

since personhood is defined in terms of knowing, learning theory for African people must be the study of the development and processes of the knowing that defines spirit journey (Piper-Mandy & Rowe 2010: 14).

While a fuller discussion of personhood theory is beyond the scope of this paper, it is important to point out that, for the African, personhood is represented by the collective being, what Nobles (1976b) called the ‘extended self’. In this sense, proverbs can distil the way in which this ‘extended self’ becomes inculcated into the person, and allows them to function within the community from a collective perspective.

Lastly, examples of proverbs that can be used as guides for conduct include: ‘*if you visit the country of frogs and you find them squatting, you must squat too even though you may find it inconvenient*’ – emphasising both the need for adaptation and adjustment in life, as well as the requirement to respect the rules of the peoples whom you visit; ‘*you do not use the left hand to point the way to your father’s village*’, where for most Africans, the use of the left hand is disrespectful, thus this proverb emphasises the need to admire and appreciate what you have in life; and, ‘*once you have made up your mind to cross a river by walking through it, you do not mind getting your stomach wet*’, emphasising maintaining resolve in decisions, no matter the consequences. Similarly, we have ‘*when spider webs unite, they can tie up a lion, a man alone cannot push a dhow into the sea*’ indicating the power of cooperation and unity, ‘*the strong person builds a path for the weak one to walk on*’, reflecting the need for personal responsibility for the welfare and well-being of others and the community. These proverbs teach strategies to maintain good relationships e.g. ‘*you must hear and be deaf, blind but not see*’ (teaching discretion, and at times, the imperative not to embarrass another in public).

Proverbs make explicit the purpose of one’s existence, the natural order of things, and the way we should relate to each other. As such they

represent a people's general disposition toward the world. Proverbs also represent strategies for dealing with life situations (Mayers 1976). Nussbaum (1998) had suggested that proverbs could be considered the distilled genius of oral cultures. As such they can identify and dignify a culture, bringing life into wisdom and wisdom into life.

Nwoga (1975) indicated that three levels of meanings can be discerned in proverbs: literal meanings, philosophical meanings, and contextual meanings. Nwoga emphasises that proverbs must always be examined both for *what* they say, and how *they* say it. The *what* and *how* situates the proverb such that it can always be relevant and meaningful across situations, contexts, and persons. Gyekye (1995) provided a more limited role for proverbs by contending that proverbs are fundamentally experiential, such that they can only really be grasped within the situational contexts or experiences under which they arose. Our framing of the value of African/ African American proverbs is that they represent a way of understanding African human behaviour within its broad context, as grounded, historic, interdependent, ongoing events.

According to Knappert (1989: 7),

the purpose of the proverb is not a fixed function in every recurrent identical situation ... they are flexible parts of human understanding of this world, ready to be adapted and applied to suit a particular, unique situation.

Mayers (1976: 198) has stated that 'proverbs also represent strategies for dealing with life situations'. As such they are a critical and vital tool to be used in the therapeutic process by Black psychologists trained in the discipline of Black psychology.

We contend that key features of African Psychology can be determined through an exploration of the moral teachings embedded within the analogical process of proverbs – the decision rules, interpersonal styles, theories of causation, expressive behaviour, and perceptual capacities – handed down from generation to generation, which serve as essential sources of insight into how both historic and contemporary African subjective realities are captured in time and space and across spirit.

Analogical thinking is a thought process that utilises a reference system as an aid to conceptualisation and focuses on the identification of

relationships and/ or similarities among experiences or phenomena. Thus, animal life is analogous to plant life; thinking is analogous to living. According to Mayers (1976: 197),

analogies can be identified among all experiences. Analogies identify and reinforce connections toward the objective of integrating all phenomena in an interdependent scheme (synthesis).

By doing so, analogies reveal the ‘synthetic’ and ‘synergistic capacity’ of all phenomena. The analogical process provides thinking with an ever-moving and ever-flowing quality, as well as the ability to produce a greater effect than the sum of the individual thoughts (ideas) connected by either inductive or deductive linkages. Mayers (1976: 197) further suggests that,

proverbs reflect the use of analogy as both content and process ... [T]he content is the specific message, the process is the reasoning system which relates a general observation to a specific event (deductive reasoning) or a specific event referring to a general truth (inductive reasoning).

This conceptual system she calls ‘analogical abstraction’, a sophisticated system of logical deductive/inductive reasoning that is not based on abstract generalisations, but rests on the application of the generalisation to a specific situation or the application of the specific event to the general truth. ‘Analogical abstraction is both a mechanism for and an illustration of intuitive synthesis’, according to Mayers (1976: 199). Analogical thinking provides the African with a mode of analysis that is grounded in their lived experiences and their philosophical foundations.

Analogical thinking, as discussed above, is also similar to figurative speech, which has served as a useful clinical tool to guide clinicians’ conceptualisations of presenting problems and subsequent interventions (Varra, Drossel & Hayes 2008); with adages, allegories, analogies, metaphors, maxims, and similes found across various therapeutic interventions (Blenkiron 2005). Proverbs reflect both analogical thinking and figurative speech, contextual metaphors that stress the nested, historical, and ongoing nature of human action, while focusing on a historically situated, purposive action context (Verra *et al.* 2008).

Problem-solving and Clinical Interventions

Proverbs often communicate problem-solving strategies such as used by the clever spider Ananse or Brer (Br'er) Rabbit. This can be an informal and subliminal way of teaching children and young people strategies for navigating the system of white supremacy. In therapy, these stories with proverbs attached can be called upon to help the client find their own solutions. In terms of proverbs, the most common one used in problem solving is '*what goes around, comes around*'. As a general statement applied to a specific situation the client has to determine (i.e., remember) what action could lead to a situation that would require understanding this particular proverb. In relation to health and well-being the proverbs, '*he who conceals his disease will never be cured*', and '*many people suffer most, the suffering they fear*', speak to the need for the client to be open to the healer in order for change to occur.

Proverbs have always been used by African (Black) people. For the most part, African (Black) people used proverbs to specifically reinforce the installation of certain values, attitudes, and ethics in our children, or to deal with general life situations. As a tool in the healing process, proverbs can be used to reveal the underlying principles that govern behaviour. The proverb makes explicit the purpose of one's existence, the natural order of things, and the appropriate behaviours that promote health and well-being. The healing process for people of African ancestry is necessarily complex, and has not been well addressed by Western models of psychology. While there has been increased attention to 'multicultural' models of treatment, there is need for further explication of an African-Centred model that more fully addresses the lived experience of African peoples. Addressing therapeutic implications for African-Centred psychologists, Rowe and Webb-Msemaji (2004: 713) noted,

[The] well-being of the community must be seen as being dependent on the health of its members, since illness and recovery are affected by an imbalance in social relations, the restoration of harmony, reduction of worry, and creation of order in the group constitute health. Disorder, then, has moral, social and psychological components that must be added to the diagnosis and analysis of human problems. Health and illness are not isolated phenomena; they include spiritual, physical, social, and psychological processes.

Black psychologists have been both socialised as well as trained in Western psychology. The prevailing mode of healing is ‘talk therapy’, in which the person engages in dialogue with the therapist and through this process of engagement, somehow healing takes place. As a healing modality, talk therapy in and of itself does not represent a meaningful process for people of African ancestry. Connectivity is the basis of all human relations. One has to be connected to other in order for meaningful interaction to take place. In traditional Western psychology, the goal is predominantly to remain disconnected with the person. In his critique of Western science, Akbar (1984) implies that the desire to remain objective and detached leads to a disconnect between the knower and the object that could be considered empty perceptual space. In the African-Centred paradigm, the knower and the object are interconnected in an intimate relationship. There is no empty perceptual space between the two. In the process of healing the knower (the healer) and the client (the other), both change simultaneously. While the healer is helping to change the patient, the interaction between the healer and the patient leads the healer to change at the same time. The therapeutic process is a relational situation, where the therapist has to establish a meaningful relationship with the person and it is this relationship, that includes the significance of proverbs in the vernacular, that represents the healing methodology.

Proverbs are critical in this healing methodology, as they ground both parties in the traditional African philosophical foundations and wisdom-truths. It gives the healer and the one who seeks illumination of their spirit via therapy a common language often rooted in Black vernacular language (V. Nobles 1996). It allows expression of concepts and experiences common to black folk (those colonised), rarely reflected in the language of their oppressors (the colonisers). The task of healing for people of African ancestry is to speak the truth of our traditional cultural principles and wisdom-truths in present day contexts. According to Nobles, Baloyi, and Sodi (2016: 47), ‘restoration or healing must involve the experience of being human; the expression of being human, and the essence of being human itself’.

Proverbial knowing as speech (i.e., talk) provides the cultural foundation and wisdom-truths for understanding African behavioural practices and the gateway to the illumination and enlivenment of the African spirit. Proverbial knowledge serves as an effective tool in the engagement process in that it provides insight into the spirit of the client; serves as a tool for instigation for reflective analysis by the client; acts as a mechanism for inspiring the spirit

of the client to seek and produce its authentic self in the healing process. Healing for the African is achieved through inspiration of the spirit to activate its own self-healing potential and produce wellness. This healing methodology is different from traditional ‘talk therapy’ in Western psychology that seeks to ‘manipulate’ the client to some resolution of a presenting problem without altering the basis of their beingness.

For example, during assessment in therapy, adding the use of cards with proverbs written on them, relevant to the client’s particular Afrikan culture (such as ‘*Things mama used to say*’ cards by Lorlett Hudson) can facilitate the healer finding out what is important to the one seeking further healing (the client). This is because the proverb(s) they choose in such an activity may indicate what is important to them. This can be useful particularly for traumatised clients who early in therapy may find it difficult to put their experiences into words, but can point to a card with a proverb which sums up their feelings. Likewise, Adinkra Symbols (symbols with meanings from Akan and Ashanti people of Old Kingdoms in Ghana and neighbouring regions in West Africa) have a proverb attached and can be used in therapy to explore the self and aid exploration. Furthermore, the transfer of proverbs across the diaspora to islands such as Jamaica (West Indies) is revealed when the concept of Ananse is found both in Jamaican proverbs and the Adinkra symbol of Ananse Ntontan (symbolising wisdom from the clever spider Ananse of African folktales).

McInnis (2018) in therapy with an adolescent black girl of African-Jamaican heritage, who was unsure of the meaning of the word ‘resilience’ offered the proverb ‘*rain a fall but dutty tough*’ (meaning that although it rains, if the ground is tough, the water will not get through). The young person instantly knew the meaning conveyed by the proverb (as indicated by her body language) and went on to list many examples of resilience relevant to her and family members. Furthermore, she allowed the healer to know a need for resilience was common within her family, which could later be explored in therapy and be built upon as a strength.

Proverbs contain sayings and indeed teachings about human experiences, events, and/or methods of dealing with daily endeavours. Thus, proverbs can be utilised in therapy to transcend superficial meaning of daily life occurrences by providing a context and shared cultural meaning of an experience. This heightened level of understanding can be carried across future life experiences, dilemmas, and relations.

Because proverbs are by nature ambiguous and numerous in their interpretation (Lieber 1984), this allows for the personalisation and examination of multiple analogic interpretations that can initiate personal change (Whaley 1993). Thus, while paradox has been noted in proverbs, there is subjective meaning in every experience. Proverbs then provide an opportunity for therapists to process and elicit heightened understanding of cultural truths and guiding principles of behaviour. Crucially, they may provide the one in search of healing a language to express their experiences, which the African therapist is likely to understand (or have tools to explore). Therapists can also use proverbs to make behavioural observations, convey observed inner conflicts, or cloak anxiety-laden communication in a more abstract manner (Nguyen, Foulks, & Carlin 1991). Thus, in the use of proverbs in the counselling process, therapists/healers must be willing to be more direct and clear about insights instead of being tentative and ambiguous as is often taught in Western models of psychology (Rowe & Webb-Msemaji 2004). Moreover, proverbs teach moral imperatives. While traditional Western models of thought promote objective positivism, the utilisation of proverbs allows a unique opportunity for African-Centred healers to educate ‘clients’ about indigenous teachings, which may have been lost or distorted in the assimilation process, while restoring health. To this end, Whaley (1993: 131) notes that proverbs’ potential efficacy as an agent of change lies in its ‘undisputed validity as a means of influence’.

African proverbs call forth the imperishable power of the ancestors who live on eternally through the generations. To know and speak our story is to preserve the motion of the ancestors, a rhythm essential to the life force. Proverbs therefore provide us with insight into the structure of the universe, if we know how to see, to hear, to smell – to know. But, just as importantly, African proverbs provide us a framework for living – in the fullest sense of the Word – in body and Spirit. African proverbs are distinctive– they are the source, spirit and manifestation of an African-Centred or Black Psychology. African Psychology has been developed through proverbs; it is not a de-contextualised and de-spiritualised artificial system of knowing. The system is simple elegance in its design, usefulness, and applicability. Our position is that our proverbs are the manifestation of such a system. Thus, African proverbs are both the symbols and forms; are real and magical; exoteric and esoteric; they are both substance and essence. African proverbs are thus, the unique creation of people for whom Spirit is Real!

Conclusion

Proverbs represent part of the tool-kit, the knowledge base, and skill set, the range of resources that the Black psychologist trained in African-Centred psychology brings to the therapeutic process. Through a process of establishing a healing relationship with the client the healer can use proverbs to engage in a dynamic, rhythmic and wholistic experience that produces healing through the remembering of the authentic way, the way it was when people of African ancestry had mastery of their own thoughts and actions. The form and content of the proverb enable the healer to take the client on an interactive journey of self-discovery grounded in the connectedness with others with the ultimate goal of re-centring the person positively in the community. Positive re-centring implies a sense of confidence, a belief that whatever the task they are capable of doing it; a sense of competence, a belief that they can do something; a sense of consciousness, an awareness of who and whose they are; a feeling of commitment, being connected to something greater than themselves; and a contributor, a recognition that they can make the time and space where they are better than it was before.

Through the process of analogical abstraction, the person can engage in an African-centred system of reasoning to arrive at a conclusion, a change in knowledge, attitude, belief and behaviour, that produces health and well-being. It is our contention that proverbs in various forms in the African diaspora represent one of the major keys, a necessary and sufficient condition, in the healing of the African community.

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Lawford L. Goddard et al.

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The Role of Proverbs in African-Centred Psychology

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NGOLO: (Re)membering the African American Child as a Normative for Self-Healing Power

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Abstract

In response to the need to clarify the ongoing experience of historical and contemporary trauma by African American people in the USA, Dr. Wade Nobles, co-founder and past President of the ABPsi introduced the concept of ‘Psychic Terrorism’ which he defined as the systematic use of terror to immobilize and/or destabilize a person’s fundamental sense of security and safety by assaulting his or her consciousness and identity (2015: 4). The USA’s practice of psychic terrorism demands that special attention be given to African American children’s identity development. In this regard, the unconstrained, western research’s dominance continues to function as a hindrance to the understanding of Black children’s positive identity development and resultant well-being. In this context the African child’s double invisibility (Jonsson 2009; Nsamenang 2007), obscurity and under-publication, and the African American child’s double visibility, pathologies and over-publication (Jackson & Moore 2008; Kunjufu1992), inhibits an appreciation of Black children’s substantive self-identity knowledge. The consequence of this for the African Child is unrecognition of their normativity as the universal original child. For the African American child, this unrecognition also impairs their connection to their generative African essence or Ngolo. Ngolo, as defined by Fu-Kiau, means in Kikongo, the ‘energy of self-healing power’. By employing the child development discipline, this article will problematize the minimization of the African child as the norm while illuminating the critical need for African American children to function in wholeness and wellness. The idea of wellness being evidenced in the sense of being fundamentally Spirit (often confused with spiritual¹) is most often missing in western conceptions of human

¹ Nobles (see Nobles and Mkhize, this edition) has noted that the misunderstanding of African beingness, i.e., as ‘human being’ and not ‘Spirit

develop-mental domains, i.e. spiritual. In the domain of wellness, belongingness to the past and future exists and enables Black children to function within three realms, i.e. the being, been, and will be (Fu-Kiau 1969: 1991) wellness is elicited via access to their Ngolo. This author seeks to articulate the need for African American children to '(re)member' (Nobles 2017) and connect to their self-healing power.

Keywords: African-American child, Ngolo, Self-identity knowledge, Spirit, wholeness, belongingness, wellness; self-healing

NGOLO: Ukukhunjulwa Kwengane yase Melika Engum-Afrika Njengesu Lokuzelapha

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Iqoqa

Ukubhekana nesidingo sokucacisa ngolwazi olusemlandweni kanye nolwamanje lokuhlukumezeka kwabama-Afrika abangamaMelikana ezweni laseMelika, uDkt. Wade Nobles, ongomunye wabasunguli noMongameli owedlule wenhlangano i-ABPsi, wethula ikhonsepthe ebizwa nge-*‘Psychic Terrorism’*(ukwesabisa engqondweni), ayichaza njengetulo lokwesabisa ngenhloso yokwenza ukuthi umuntu ahlalele ovalweni, ukuze aphelelwe ukuzazi nokuziqqaja ngobuqobo bakhe (2015: 4). Udlame lwaseMelika lokwesabisa engqondweni ludinga kulandelwe ukuthuthuka kobuqobo kwabantwana baseMelika abangama-Afrika. Ngale ndlela, ukubusa kocwaningo lwasentshonalanga olungavinjelwe kuzoqhubeka nokuba yizihibe ekuqondeni ukuthuthuka kobuqobo kwezingane ezinsundu nemiphumela

Being’ has resulted in the misidentification of African ‘spiritness’ as simply spirituality. In accord with this correction, this discussion will correctly use Spirit and not spirituality

emihle yalokhu. Kulesi simo, ukungabonakali kwezingane zase-Afrika (Jonsson 2009; Nsamenang 2007), ukungaveli kanye nokugqoza kwemibhalo ngazo, kanye nokuvezwa ngokuphindiwe emibhalweni eminingi ngezingane zabansundu baseMelika (Jackson & Moore 2008; Kun-jufu1992), kuvimbela ukwazisa ngolwazi olwanele lokuzazi ubuqobo lwezingane ezinsundu. Imiphumela yalokhu enganeni engumAfrika ukunganakwa kwabo nokungabi bikho kwemigomo ngabo njengezingane zendabuko jikelele. Enganeni yaseMelika engumAfrika lokhu kushawa indiva kuba nemiphumelo emibi ngoba kwenza zingabi nobudlelwano nemvelaphi yazo noma lokhu okubizwa nge*Ngolo*. I*Ngolo* ngokukaFu-Kiau, ngesiKikongo, ichaza amandla okuzilulamela. Ngokusebenzisa isifundo sokuthuthuka kwengane, leli phepha lizeveza inkinga yokuncishiswa kwengane yase-Afrika njengesihlava esamukelekile kube kodwa kunokuqhakambiswa kwezidingo ezinqala zezingane zase-Melika ezingama-Afrika zokuphelela nempilonhle. Umbono wempilonhle obonakala njengesisekelo soMoya (okubuye kuphambaniswe nokuba nomoya) uhlezi ungekho ezincazelweni zasentshonalanga ezikhuluma ngokuthuthuka komuntu. Esizindeneni sempilonhle, ukuba yingxeny yomlando othile kanjalo nekusasa kukhona futhi lokhu kwenza izingane ezinsundu zikwazi ukuba yingxeny yemibuso emithathu yempilonhle, okuyile, yilokho oyikho, yilokho obuyikho, kanye nalokho ozoba yikho (Fu-Kiau 1969: 1991) okutholakala kuyona i*Ngolo* yabo. Umbhali uhlose ukucacisa isidingo sezingane zaseMelika ezingama-Afrika 'ukukhumbula (isibili)' (Nobles 2017) ziphinde zixhumane namandla okuzilulamela.

Amagama asemqoka: ingane yaseMelika engumAfrika, i*Ngolo*, ulwazi ngobuqobo, uMoya, ukupheleliseka, ukuba mdibi munye, impilonhle, ukuzilulamela

Introduction

Being **Black** in the USA is a risk factor. This statement is a reflection of the experience of many African Americans who, as citizens in their country, have been subjected to a host of racially driven experiences that have caused them to question not just their physical safety, but their societal worth. While this African American perception of life in the USA is not new, it is especially concerning within the context of this nation's identification of violence as a

public health concern (Wen & Goodwin 2016). For young African American children, race, combined with their developmental life stage, creates a greater need for protective resources. Becoming aware of their African identity is an innate powerful asset that is available to all African people, and is especially important for children in the process of identity formation. In a detailed discussion of mental ideations, i.e. memes, Dr. Nobles suggested that we should (re)member, defined as reclaiming or recalling, the mental ideations that are grounded in our African heritage (Nobles 2017). (Re)membering is reclaiming or recalling our innate Africaness. The goal of this article is to articulate the critical need for African American children to (re)member their African identity and experience the benefits inherent when one fully functions as a Spirit Being. These benefits include self-healing power and an extended self that translates to an African child always feeling the protection of their community.

The article begins with an articulation of an African view of human development. A discussion about African Americans' subjection to racially driven violence including the 'denial of the validity of African people's humanity' (Nobles 2001: 8) is accompanied by a collective and ever-present total disregard and disrespect for the African and the right of people of African ancestry to exist, i.e. the *maafa*.² This is followed by a discussion regarding the need for the African American children to learn about their African identity as a critical protective factor, and the call for all early childhood professionals and caregivers of African and African American young children to take responsibility for teaching these children African-self-knowledge.

² Introduced by Marimba Ani, *maafa* is a great disaster and misfortune of death and destruction beyond human convention and comprehension. The African *maafa* is not a single abhorrent event in history. It is an on-going, sophisticated, continuous 'process' supporting worldwide white supremacy; driven by fear and racial hatred and designed to dehumanise and/or destroy African people. The critical feature of the *maafa* is the denial of the validity of African people's humanity, accompanied by a collective and ever-present total disregard and disrespect for the African and the right of people of African ancestry to exist. The African *maafa* gives licence to the continual perpetuation of a total systematic and organised process of spiritual and physical destruction of African people, both individually and collectively.

African Human Development

Globally, early education programmes have adopted the western version for young children's positive growth and development. Often, this knowledge was generated by researchers studying their own offspring (Darwin 1877; Piaget 1963; Skinner 1944). In their collective arrogance, western scholars compiled knowledge and conceived theories without the inclusion of the African child. As the original child, the African child offers a window into the notion of universal child development and yet studies on these children are sparse, and when they occur, they are under published. Nsamenang (2007) identifies this phenomenon as rendering the African child '*double invisible*'. Conversely, the African Americans in the USA are disproportionately the subject of deficit research and found to be in need of intervention (Toldson 2019). These studies are typically overpublished and position the African American child as '*double visible*' (Jackson & Moore 2008; Kunjufu 1992), and the model for negative growth and development. In his recent work, *NO BS (Bad Stats)* 2019, Toldson articulates the utilization of statistics by educators and advocates to denigrate and dispirit Black students; the outcome is internalized negative emotions that lead to self-isolation from their peers, community, and culture. Forcing students to adapt to racially biased curriculum to succeed is especially concerning when the epistemological underpinning is antithetical to African ancestry people groups. As an early childhood educator who recognises the value of providing young children with opportunities that allow for optimised growth and development, the striking contrast between the African child's 'invisibility' and the African American child's 'double visibility' is particularly concerning.

Logically, the African child's membership in the original human group positions him or her as the candidate for exploring the notion of a universal pathway for child development. Instead, the field of early childhood development has relied upon Western scholars' study of 5% of the world's children to comprehend the other 95% of children (Zukow 1989). This academic arrogance **predictably** can hinder the development of **Black** children, both in the African motherland and in the African Diaspora. This is especially true when these young children are growing and developing in environments where they are subjected to multiple risk factors the most recent being the twin pandemics of the novel COVID-19 and the overt displays of classist racism. For **Black** children, an innate source of protection exists in their

African identity as Spirit Beings, the understanding of which should be grounded in African-centred ideas and concepts. One such concept is *ngolo*. The idea of *ngolo* is a generative healing source that allows one to not just survive, but to thrive.

Problematisation of Western Thinking

The application of western thinking in the understanding of the development of African children is problematic in that it fails to illuminate the critical need for **Black** children to know their African self and the power that exists within them as African people. Western theory states that the acquisition of a self-identity begins in early childhood, and is later completed during the adolescent life stage (Erikson 1982). In the African view, the child enters the physical world with an identity. The child, like all Africans, has what can be described as possessing three distinct identities, namely: a been-self, a being self, and a yet-to-be self, all of which are both spirit-defined and spirit-driven (Fu-Kiau 1969). The co-existence of identities is articulated by Nobles (1976) as an extended-self, and can be understood using the ontological principle of consubstantiation (Akbar & Nobles 2006). Within this context, the being-self functions in the physical or visible world. Significantly, the African conceptualisation of human development includes a **Spirit** domain that connects all Africans to a single source that represents the original life force. Western thinking, however, views human development as occurring through three interdependent domains identified as biological, psychosocial, and cognitive. There is no **Spirit** domain or metaphysical connectivity between individuals or a life force. In this view, the physical world is made of **more mature** individuals who, during the childhood life stage, are tasked with ‘acquiring’ a self-identity.

From an African worldview, the only ‘self’ is an ‘extended-self or collective-self’ that is connected to one single life source (Fu-Kiau 1969). The co-existing identities are articulated by Nobles (1976) as an extended-self, and can be understood using the ontological principle of consubstantiation (Akbar & Nobles 2006). Within this context, the being-self functions in the physical or visible world. Significantly, the African conceptualisation of human development includes a **Spirit** domain that connects all Africans to a single source that represents the original life force. Western thinking, however, views human development as occurring through three interdependent domains

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From an African worldview, the only ‘self’ is an ‘extended-self or collective-self’ that is connected to one single life source (Fu-Kiau 1969). Life cannot exist without this connection. Significantly, this connection is operationally expressed as *ubuntu*³ or the connectivity that allows all to be. *Ubuntu* is the cosmic universal force and is often simply defined or translated as ‘I am because we are’. Accordingly, for the African, identity not only exists in three different forms, the past, the present, and the future, but also in two different realms i.e., the seen or physical world, and the unseen or metaphysical world. What western theory defines as resiliency for the **Black** child, is, a manifestation of their African extended or collective self. As noted above, no African or **Black** person, including their children, is ever a separate self. Based on an African identity, separateness and individualism is not a **possible state of existence**. The **Black** child is never alone. Always being in the company of others (visible and invisible) offers a particular comfort to a young child who, based on their developmental stage, depends more upon mature others for both survival and comfort. The consubstantive nature of their identities, existing within the visible and invisible world represents an added bonus based on the ability of ancestors to become the “Living” when deemed necessary (Nsamenang 2006).

The African American Child

The three states of *being*, i.e. *been* (ancestors), *being* (living), and *will-be* (unborn), that exists in all African people (Fu-Kiau 1969), is also present in African Americans and all African diasporic people. This Africanness or Africanity allowed for the collective survival from the *maafa* (Ani 1997; Latif & Latif 1994) experienced by today’s children of African ancestry. The level of brutality enacted upon the number of Africans who were enslaved and

³ *Ubuntu* is a core African philosophy (Kikongo) that asserts that the process of becoming *ntu* or ‘Spirit’ in which being and beings coalesce, wherein Spirit also manifests one’s interactions with the totality of creation.

survived this traumatic violence cannot be explained as simply resilience. Leary (2005), in her seminal work on the impact of the transatlantic slave trade, referred to as *maafa* (Latif & Latif 1994), provides a comprehensive view of the historical trauma experienced by this African diasporic people today. She conceptualizes this historical trauma as post traumatic slave syndrome or PTSS (Leary 2005). While her word choice of ‘post’ may confuse the reader into comprehending the negative impact of this racially-informed trauma violence as a past event, this is not Leary’s intent. The systemic inhumane treatment of African Americans did not end with the ban on chattel slavery. In reality, the systemic inhumane treatment of African Americans did not end with the ban on chattel slavery.

The systemic inhumane treatment of African Americans did not end with the ban on chattel slavery. These anti-**Black** iterations include racial segregation known as Jim Crow Laws, the establishment of a white Nationalist terrorist group named the Klu Klux Klan or KKK, peonage via sharecropping, and barbarism disguised as science (Kapsalis 1997; Washington 2008). Michelle Alexander’s seminal work entitled *The New Jim Crow* (2010) illuminates the ways in which the disproportionate incarceration of **Black** males represents an intentional practice for a free/extremely low cost of human labor source. Nobles (2015) offers the term ‘psychic terrorism’ to describe the continued iterations of violence against the **Black** citizenry of the United States. His articulation illustrates the constant and persistent assault experienced for individuals living in a psychologically toxic and violent society. Notably in the context of the 2020 novel COVID-19 pandemic, African Americans are being subjected to a new form of psychic terrorism in the form of the twin pandemics of a deadly infectious disease combined with overt deadly acts of anti-Black racism (Laurencin & Walker 2020).

As previously noted, the three states of *being*, i.e. *Been* (ancestors), *being* (living), and *will-be* (unborn), that exists in all African people (Fu-Kiau 1969), is also present in African Americans and all African diasporic people. This Africanness allowed for the collective survival of the *maafa* experienced by today’s African American direct African descendants. Literature on the level of brutality enacted upon the number of Africans who were enslaved and survived this traumatic violence cannot be explained as simply resilience.

The ability of African Americans to survive, and for some thrive, in the face of this psychic terror has been examined through a western lens that is consistent with the Western preference for individualism and obsession to

quantify and measure people and events. The National Scientific Council on the Developing Child at Harvard University (2015) has established a set of characteristics that enable an individual to be resilient. They are as follows: a) at least one stable, committed relationship with a supportive parent, caregiver, or other adult; b) a biological resistance to adversity and strong relationships with the important adults in their family and community; c) a sense of self-efficacy and perceived control; d) opportunities to strengthen adaptive skills and self-regulatory capacities; and e) access to the mobilising sources of faith, hope, and cultural traditions. Significantly, this western articulation believes that learning to cope with manageable threats aids in the development of resilience; acquisition of resilience can occur at any time. This cognitively bonded analysis continues to ignore the foundational Spirit essence of African Americans who retain their Africanness regardless of their diaspora location. This western premise unfairly views African American children, whose ancestors endured chattel slavery and related subjection to complex trauma, as disproportionately inheriting the collective ability to cope with stress and trauma based solely on their ethnic/racial group membership.

A related body of work is presented to illustrate USA scholarship that focused exclusively on resilience in African American children and youth (APA Task Force on Resilience and Strength in Black Children and Adolescents (2008), these scholars recognized the uniqueness of the Black experience in the USA and applied a strength based, as opposed to deficit or pathological supporting approach. In their conceptualization, Spencer (2005) PVEST model was used to capture the sociohistorical and political realities of African Americans; from this framework five domains of development accompanied with behavior descriptions were established as exemplars for wellbeing. The domains and related examples are as follows: (a) identity (communal or extended-self identity); (b) cognitive (academic self-motivated toward excellence strong inter and intra personal intelligence); (c) social (genuine respect and concern for the well-being of family, school, and community); (d) emotional (emotional intelligence that includes self-regulation of destructive emotions) and; (e) physical health (rejection of dietary and activity patterns that increase negative health outcomes). From this comprehension they identified four dimensions that contribute to the aforementioned optimal functioning that translates to the following four protective factors: they are (1) critical mindedness; (2) active engagement; (3) flexibility, and (4) communalism. Conceivably, African American scholars

contributed to this work. Unfortunately, based on their conceptualization, what Kambon (2012) identified as pseudo-Afrocentricity is present. While focus on the African American culture guided their conceptualization, the uncritical adoption of Eurasian thought results in the arrested thinking that is inherent in the Eurocentric knowledge base that erroneously touts universal applicability. In their articulation, they identified the communal or extended-self-identity as a protective factor but did so using the Western view that ignores/omits/denies the metaphysical realm as a factor in optimal functioning. By limiting their articulation to the physical realm and horizontal connectivity with animate beings they missed the wholeness and the ontological consubstantiation nature of their African identity (Fu Kia, 1969; Nsamanang, 2006). The omission of African Beingness translates to not only denial of a key protective factor that aids in wellbeing, but also will at a minimum limit the efficacy of mental health strategies that target African Americans. Given the developmental vulnerability of young children, application of models that fail to recognize Black children as Spirit Beings can also retard or even harm the development of their foundational Spirit domain.

In summary, Western-informed models are not suited for comprehending African American development; this view does not allow for the development of strategies for optimized functioning and the identification of protective characteristics that result in resiliency. This is evidenced by the fact that the application of the resilience factors from the Harvard findings would not have been sufficient to survive the maafa experience (Latif & Latif, 1994). For the Africans who were initially enslaved, the identified components for resilience did not exist. For example, physical relationships were violently severed, self-efficacy and perceived control was denied, and access to resources that allow for cultural grounding and the resultant hope was no longer possible. Consequently, Africans' survival of the maafa cannot be explained as simply resilience, a greater force was in effect; this same force continues to operate as a source that allows for not just basic collective African American survival, but in some instances results in extraordinary thriving in the context of unrelenting complex trauma. In the current context of the USA the need for African resilience is especially important to maintain the level of wellness needed to resist the impact of what Nobles (2020) recently identified as White Supremacy Mental Illness 19 (WSMI-19) that began in 1619; he informs us that not all Whites are infected by this disease but those that exhibit anti-Blackness that may have epigenetic roots.

In the context of the current manifestations of WSMI-19, more young African American children have been subjected to racist attacks that disregard their humanity and that of their families. Two examples are the police shooting of Jacob Black in the presence of his three young children ages 3, 5, and 8 on August 26, 2020; the second traumatic police encounter occurred 24 days earlier when a Black mother and her 4 daughters ages 6 – 17 on August 2, 2020. In the latter incident the police mistakenly believed the mother was driving a stolen vehicle and during the traffic stop ordered the entire family to lie face-down on the ground; the order was given while guns were being pointed at the family and at least two family members were handcuffed (Bonvillian, 2020). While information on these encounters are still ongoing, two prior events that demonstrate African American children's subjection to psychic terrorism is provided below to support the need for Black children to comprehend their Africanness and embrace it as a protective factor.

The first is an incident that occurred on July 6, 2016. While strapped in a car seat in the rear of a vehicle, a four-year-old girl witnessed her mother's boyfriend, Philander Castile, being killed by a police officer. During a traffic stop, the police officer placed his gun inside the vehicle and shot multiple bullets into Mr. Castile's seated body. Immediately following this deadly incident, the child and her mother, Diamond Reynolds, were locked in the rear of a police vehicle. The Dashcam video recorded the interactions between the handcuffed mother and her daughter. As Ms. Reynolds cried out in agony and despair, the child was observed comforting her mother. The child tells the mother, 'I can keep you safe' and to be calm because 'I don't want you to get shot' (Schladebeck 2017). This recorded exchange is emotionally charged and extremely disturbing in terms of the child's development when comprehended from a western lens.

On August 1 of the same year, a second US example of the violent psychic terrorism experienced by young African American children occurred in the shooting incident of a mother, 23-years-old Koryn Grains, along with her five-year-old son, in their apartment. While present to serve a warrant, police shot the mother and son after a seven-hour stand-off. The mother died and the son was shot in his left cheek. He states he was shot while he was running away from the police. Authorities state the bullet that shot him first went through his mother. Five months' prior the mother was stopped by the police while driving with her five-year-old and her one-year-old daughter. During the stop the mother video-recorded the encounter, which included a

verbal discussion with her son about police killing of Black people; with Ms. Gaines telling him to ‘fight them asses if they tell you to get out of the car’. She also states her sons will be rebels and live on forever. During the deadly encounter at the apartment, the mother live streamed the event on Facebook, critically prior to the shooting the police were able to shut down the streaming. In this incident, the police bodycams were not operating. There is documentation that Ms. Gaines suffered from mental illness as a result of lead exposure (Green 2016). An excerpt of her video-recorded words below prior to being arrested during the traffic stop revealed a disturbing reality for African Americans in the USA:

... I can pull a video up right for him right now of you killing people for no f[...]king reason. People who look like his father, his uncle, his sister, his brother, his anybody ... (Korryn Gaines 2016).

In both cases the police officers were not charged for the deadly shootings. Two years later, a jury awarded civil damages to the Gaines family to the amount of \$37 million. However, a year later, in February 2019, a judge overturned the decision and the family is planning to appeal. The Black Lives Matter movement was conceived as a result of the continuous subjection to what has been defined as ‘State sanctioned violence’ and police officers not being held accountable. Significantly, young children have been directly involved in protests that include raising their hands in surrender and entreating, ‘don’t shoot!’, or laying on the ground and pleading, ‘I can’t breathe!’ Both of the young African American children directly involved in these police killings of their caregivers/ protectors survived, and are reportedly alright, given the circumstances.

To date, police continue to disproportionately exhibit the need to collectively control the movements of Black bodies and the murder rates of unarmed Black people continue to rise (Mapping Police Violence 2017). Critically, during and following the national COVID-19 informed sheltering-in-mandates, non-police Whites have taken it upon themselves to also police the movement of Black people (Romo, 2020). As a mother, an early education professor, and simply a human being, these incidents are especially impactful. When applying western knowledge to these events, one is left feeling much like the mother of the four-year-old handcuffed in the rear of the police vehicle. Agony, despair, and hopelessness are accurate descriptors that predictably

transcend to frustration, anger, and even rage. Fortunately, as one who actively seeks to connect with their African identity for the purpose of maintaining wellness and wholeness, personal communication with African-centred psychologists consistently provides both healing and spiritual comprehension. In a discussion about this event, African-centred psychologist Baba Wade Nobles was quick to point out the fact that the Ancestors stepped up to speak to the mother through the child, so as to restore order in the midst of this traumatic chaos (Personal Communication 2016). Indeed, the recording reveals the child's words that 'it [was] going to be okay'. were effective, and allowed the mother to re-gain her composure and to once again fulfil her role as the child's protector. This in turn comforted the child, and the two were able to continue functioning in their state of *being-self*. Once this was accomplished, the *been-self* in the child and mother was able to return to their metaphysical world with the knowledge that life would go on and the way would be made for the *will-be* to enter into this world at a future date (Mbiti 1970). Put simply, the child's *extended-self* came forth to speak to the mother.

In the second incident, the five-year-old-boy's mother is talking to him not as a child, but as an adult who is expected to function in a manner that recognises what it means to grow and development in the context of psychic terrorism. In this case, western theory would view the mother as inappropriately subjecting the child to traumatising events, or as psychologically delusional. She is not preparing her child for play, instead she is preparing him for war. She is telling him to become a warrior and to fight for his life and for the life of others who look like him. Unbeknownst to us, five months later, this same child would be in a situation where his life and that of his mother's would be threatened by police officers. From a western view, the mother's earlier recorded conversation was evidence of the mother's mental illness, where an order for removal from his mother could have occurred. Yet from an African view, it is conceivable the Ancestors spoke through the mother to prepare the child for the deadly encounter (Mbiti 1970) that resulted in his mother being killed, and him being shot. Notably, during the standoff the boy elected to remain with his mother, and was given permission by his younger sister's father to join his mother after he was invited by the police to leave the apartment. This African American child survived the encounter. Was it resiliency, or his African Ancestors preparing him? This author believes the latter.

In the first incident where the four-year-old girl was strapped in the car-seat, the *been-self* (past/Ancestors) arose in the *being-self* (present) of the

child in response to the mother being handcuffed in the rear of the police car. In the second incident with the five-year-old, the *will-be self* (future) arose in the mother while talking to her five-year-old son who, five months later, would not only be shot, but would also witness his mother dying from the gun shots. In both situations, the African American children were able to survive the traumatic violence in the moment and have been able to go forward. The existence of a *been-self* and *will-be-self* provides an explanation for these children's survival of this experience. Absent their Africanness and the involvement of their ancestors, neither of these children would have come to be, i.e. survived the *maafa*.

Through a western lens, we comprehend a child taking on what we perceive as an adult role, i.e. protector, as negative. We negatively view this behaviour as '*parentification*', and admonish adults for their failure to function in the role of protector. Western thinking arrogantly informs the world that the work of the child is play, while failing to take responsibility for their role in treating the world as their own adult 'playground' via colonisation, imperialism and actions to control the world's natural resources and monopolise natural spaces for vacationing and holidays. Their actions create a world of war zones, in which too many children are now forced to grow and develop. From an African stance the behaviour of Black children who are White defined as 'parentified' may reflect the Black child's *been-self* or Ancestors acting through the child, just as they did in the case of the four-year-old young child to calm her handcuffed mother while they were in the rear of the locked police car. Through functioning as a *been-self*, or ancestor, the child as a *being-self* is positioned to ensure the survival that is necessary to bring forth the *will-be-self*. While this may be difficult based on the traumatic nature of the event, survival becomes possible and the explanation for this outcome cannot be comprehended as simply resilience.

The African Child

AIDS had a disproportionately fatal toll on Africans and left an unprecedented number of children as the primary caregivers for their younger siblings (Bey 2004; Wild 2001). In the past, other adult relatives would take on the responsibility of raising these children. Unfortunately, the toll enacted by this specific disease has resulted in not having enough adult relatives for the numbers of children with deceased parents. The outcome is a generation of what

western theory would categorise as ‘parentified children’. This negative conceptualisation is made worse by the social stigma attached to this infectious disease.

To address the disease, imagine a healing approach that celebrates these children as the living examples of their ancestors functioning in the physical world with everyone. Imagine these *being-self* children as the been-self Ancestors who have left the invisible realm to commune with those in the visible or *being* world. Bestowing this type of reverence upon these *being-self* children who are raising their siblings would conceivably function as a healing medicine to fight the disease of social stigma and the resultant isolation. Consider the importance of re-positioning these youths as sacred members of the community and as the ancestors’ chosen ones, as opposed to those whose parents AIDS has stolen. The western comprehension of human development will not allow for this view. Its limitation to a single physical view of *being* does not allow for an acceptable escape to a metaphysical state. Instead, it would identify escapism as a form of a mental disorder defined as ‘disassociation’, and from this medical model, one would engage in therapy to assist the individual in accepting their current *being*, and to learn to cope accordingly. The African child in this situation must be reminded of their African identity as possessing three states that are both physical and metaphysical. Through accessing their *been-self*, they can function as wise adults, who have experienced both joy and pain, and who know that this too shall pass. At the same time, other Africans who are in the environment with our children must remember their own African connectivity, and find ways to include other Africans, and especially young children. They must employ the concept of *ubuntu* and not fall prey to the western behavior of individualism.

In terms of the African child whom child development scholars have rendered as ‘*double invisible*’ (Jackson & Moore 2008; Kunjufu 1992), the child soldier is perhaps the most challenging group in Africa. The fact that these children have been forced to participate in brutal murders of their family members and to commit atrocities against adults (Kaplan 2005) is a form of *maafa* in the Motherland. While this author has no direct experience about this deviant human behaviour, and, therefore, is beyond the scope of this current article, it is conceivable that traditional healing practices can be applied using the basic comprehension of African connectivity through the three stages of *being*. It may be that a cure is impossible if the focus is solely on the being-self, where forgiveness cannot be achieved (Twun-Danso 2003) for either the

child soldier who cannot forgive his/herself, or the victim who has directly or indirectly been impacted by the acts of the child soldier (Solheim 2003). Hope is found in the knowledge of the African identity that includes the foundational Spirit domain, where the *ngolo* resides and can generate healing power. This metaphysical place of hope is also where the connectivity to a space before and after the current disconnecting behaviours occurred. Perhaps the connectivity can then restore wellness and wholeness to both the child soldier and those harmed by their actions.

African Identity: The Protective Source for the African American Child

In returning to the African American child who lives in the context of a nation who has identified violence as a public health concern and whose cultural affinity membership makes them a target for multiple systemic, cultural, and individual risk factors, a conscious awareness of their African identity is a powerful protective factor. In the US literature they are overrepresented in studies designed to portray them as inferior. This identification then positions them as the continuous subjects of intervention techniques (Toldson 2019). A current example is found in the trauma-informed movement. The plethora of publications written under this banner on African American children has resulted in their becoming the ‘poster child’ for intervention services. The pathologising of these children, combined with their subjection to psychic terrorism, is evidence for the need for their caregivers and teachers to assist these children in (re)membering (Nobles 2017 personal communication) or awakening their African-Self. To do so, and specifically during their early life stages, where identity development is a foundational developmental task, would afford these children an invaluable gift for survival and self-healing.

For the African child, accessing their *ngolo* is an easier task. It is based simply on being surrounded by other Africans, who have not lost, or are rescuing their African identity. So, they also do not lose their resultant ways of Being and functioning in the three physical and metaphysical states. Residing in the Motherland, despite the western footprints and current handprints throughout the early childhood education programmes allows for ready reference to self-knowledge, e.g. customs and practices, language, names, land, space, etc. For the African American child whose experiences in the US have been designed to extinguish their African self (Akbar 1984), it becomes

necessary to engage in the process of (re)membering (Nobles 2017 personal communication) that provides for the reclamation, recollection, and rescuing of the mental ideations that are grounded in our African heritage through an *extended-self* that allows for connectivity in both the physical and metaphysical realms.

The western comprehension of human development and its blatant disregard for non-western and especially African thought (Masowa, Gopo & Mamvura 2013) creates a challenge for the African American child to fully develop. In the Western view, humans develop in three interconnected domains that include the biological, psychosocial, and cognitive. All things, including violence are experienced through these domains and therefore must be addressed via one or more of these domains. Western thought uses a medical model for disease and illnesses. This separation results in treatment approaches that cause a person to go to a medical doctor for stomach pains and a psychiatrist or psychologist for emotional/mental discomfort. In this context, the trauma or psychic terrorism as articulated by Nobles (2014) would be treated via a focus on the psychosocial domain. There is no regard for the individual's Spirit, and as such, the treatment focus is on 'curing' as opposed to 'healing'. The western view also comprehends the early childhood life stage as that period where a sense of self or identity is acquired. While older others assist young children in this acquisition, the outcome is a self-identity. Their group identity is initially determined by society based on the individual's race or other phenotypical characteristics. For the African American child, this is an unacceptable identity development pathway.

The African comprehension of human development includes a spirit domain that is foundational, and which allows for connection to all things in both the physical and metaphysical world. The individual exists as an *extended-self* whose developmental task is to determine their purpose as member of the group. Their group identity is pre-determined as they enter the physical world already connected to the ancestors who reside in the metaphysical realm, and is already connected to the others who are functioning in the physical world. For the young child, the developmental task is not to find out who they are, but to determine ways in which their *being* can contribute to the others to whom they belong. It is not a matter of learning the best way to earn societal acceptance. Acceptance is a given, and the task is learning to show appreciation for the unearned acceptance (Nsamenang 2006).

Unlike the African child, the African American child in the US is cate-

gorised as a minority within a larger group of non-white people. Along with this categorisation is the societal belief that **Black** people are the least valuable or respected of non-white people (Cross 1995), with the corollary that anything African would represent inferiority (Akbar 1984; Masowa *et al.* 2013). This societal belief has recently been reinforced with the outgoing forty-fifth US president infamously describing the place of their ancestors as ‘shithole countries’ (Brown 2018). While the opportunity for these children to manifest their *African-self* exists within the child’s smaller African American community (McAdoo 2006), in the larger societal context the young African child is expected to acquire the western self-identity, and to do so in the face of the non-acceptance of their African identity. Historically for African American families, religion and church attendance served as a mechanism for survival that has fortified Black people against racism and from a hostile White world (Hill 2003; Staples 1997). This space provided an arena for support and the release of pent up emotions (Abney & Priest, 1995) and makes the case for the need for young African American to nurture their Spirit development. Critically while early education programs tout their acceptance and celebration of all their student’s cultures, the reality is few non-religious, public programs incorporate the non-Eurocentric conceptualization of human development that recognizes the Spirit as a developmental domain. Educational research also reveals the general existence of a poorness and/ or conflictual relational fit between an African American child and their non-Black teachers (Iruka *et al.* 2020); this is especially concerning given the fact that these young students are growing and developing in a racist society that actively seeks to deny their humanity. This is especially concerning given their young developmental life stages and translates to a unique need for international nurturing (Williams 2013). This litany of factors creates a synergistic need for protective resources that not only allow the African American child to experience a sense of Belonging, but also to develop the skills to confront and survive anti-Blackness racism while learning that the racist individual, and not their Black identity, is the problem.

The Call for Living Adult Spirit Beings

As the oldest human people and the adult Spirit Beings present in the physical world, all African scholars, educational professionals, and caregivers are charged with guiding their groups’ children into their Spirit fullness. The

failure to do so not only leaves these young children who are becoming *Spirit Beings* with less protection, but also unnecessarily causes them to expend energy toward surviving. Conceivably, when this occurs, the Ancestors unknowingly will leave the invisible realm and return to the physical realm. The role of both African and African American adults is to function in the physical realm in a manner that adequately prepares for the entry of the *yet-to-be*.

Amos N. Wilson (1991), an African American scholar reminds us that African children are naturally precious and gifted and therefore African American children as their diaspora counterparts have the advantage of what he defines as ‘*Afrikan natural genius*’. The African nature of African Americans is evidenced in their ways of being and can be observed through the lens of specific developmental domains. It can be found in their African Vernacular or Ebonics (V. Nobles 2015), their rhythmic physical movement (Akbar 2003), and their collective approach to cognitive problem-solving (Hale-Benson 1986; Hilliard 1995). In addition to their exhibitions of shared African heritage, literature reveals African Americans have a long history of engaging in behaviours that indicate a spiritual belief system that is evident in phrases like ‘*the Lord will provide*’ (Hill 2003; Staples 1997). An observation of their uniform response to the news of another State-sanctioned murder, the killing of a **Black** person by a police officer, and emotional expressions of extreme states of joy or pain, reveals the people to be metaphysically connected and behaving on one accord or in unison.

Critically, as a result of the physically separating *maafa* experience, many African Americans are not fully aware of their African self and are in need of the type of parenting guidance offered by scholars such as Robert L. Williams (2013). Yet, studies continue to find a link between African American cultural practices and the common practices of African people’s in the Motherland (Akbar 2003; Nobles 1978). These shared behaviours support the notion of a common metaphysical connectivity between African Americans and Africans. Perhaps the strongest evidence of sameness is found when examining the way in which each group has exhibited supernatural strength in the face of past and present adversities. The ability to move forward after traumatic events is ill-defined by the western informed concept of resilience (American Psychological Association Task Force on Resilience and Strength in African American Children and Adolescents 2008). The remarkable ability of both Africans and African Americans to overcome extraordinary threats to

their physical, psychological, cognitive functioning can only be defined through comprehension of their African essence or *ngolo*. The *ngolo* is the source of the strength that continues to equip African cultural affinity groups with the ability to overcome a host of traumatic events that include, but are not limited to, colonialism, apartheid, the transatlantic slave trade, national and civil wars, disease, famine, psychic terrorism (Nobles 2014), lynching, and barbaric scientific experimentation.

Africans, as aware *Spirit Beings*, must not be distracted by what is presented by westerners as a 'helping hand' to assist with restoration following man-made and natural disasters. The United Nation's UNCRRC offers an example of this arrogant pseudo-benevolence (Masowa *et al.* 2013). African Americans, as African diasporic people, must not ignore their Spirit defined and Spirit driven selves that is naturally within them; this Spirit is evidence of their African essence and must be recognised as such. The children of both groups are being subjected to multiple adversities that negatively impact their functioning. Protection and healing from these experiences can be found by tapping into their African energy source and their African connectivity. The African child must be reminded of their African Spirit nature and the African American child must become conscious of the African Spirit within them.

In the USA, the trauma-informed or TI approach is being promoted as best practice for improving the mental wellness of trauma exposed individuals. African Americans, more than any other USA group, collectively have collectively been disproportionately subjected to historical and current racially-informed, systemic and individual trauma. As such, they are the primary targets for TI intervention models (Complex Trauma Treatment Network of the National Child Traumatic Stress Network 2016); the psychological impact of COVID-19 predictably will result in greater targeting of African Americans as a high profit market of mental health services. The TI western conceived approach, similar to most Eurocentric theories and concepts, do not acknowledge/recognise the African nature of African Americans and therefore offers little to no benefits to their targeted Black clients. To effect real care, an Afrikan-Informed or AKI (2019) approach is required and can best occur between African peoples.

Becoming Afrikan-Informed (Nunley 2019) is simply assisting African American children in knowing that they are African in nature, while being American in nurture (Nobles 1984). Nunley conceived the '*Five B's of Blackness*' (2019) as a strategy for parents and caregivers of young African

American children to assist them in awakening their African identity. In gaining African self-knowledge they will learn that they are not only Spirit Beings, but also have an extended-self-identity. Their tri-fold identity extends to all beings in the past, present, and future in both the visible and invisible worlds and is made possible by the fact that they are *Spirit Beings*. Being informed about one's Africanness will allow them to know that, as Africans, they are never alone and that they are developing their *Spirit*. These children must learn that as *Spirit Beings* they are standing on a higher ground that has been previously prepared for them. As *Spirit Beings* (Akbar 1985), their role is to discover their individual service to all *Beings* (Nsamenang 2006); and to know this is the sacred call for all African people that positions them as leaders and not followers. Cakata (2019) reminds us that as Africans we must position ourselves not as purveyors of social justice but as living examples of the human justice that was once found in the village where *umntu uhlala engumntu* (a human being remains a human being) was once practiced. As living adult *Spirit Beings*, we must teach our children that humanity and harmfulness cannot, and should not, be allowed to co-exist (Cakata 2019).

Conclusion: Our Sacred Duty

Unconstrained western research has functioned to make the African child *double invisible* (Jonsson 2009; Nsamenang 2007) and the African American child '*double visible*' (Jackson & Moore 2008; Kunjufu 1992). As the living adult *Spirit Beings*, African and African American child development professionals, scholars, and caregivers, must re-visit their sacred call as leaders and no longer allow humanity's youngest children, i.e. Europeans, to function as the wise elders to whom we look for instructions on how to raise our children. Javangwe and Chirisa (2013) are among the African scholars who recognise the wealth of knowledge that exists in the Motherland and have engaged in the process of documenting this reality. The western obsession with materialism (Kambon 1992), has resulted in western scholars' extensive documentation on their long history of murder, abuse, and neglect committed by parents and other adults toward their children (Crosson-Tower 2010; Piers 1978; Wolfe 1991). Notably, during medieval times, infants were viewed as talented pets, who were interesting because they could speak (Aries 1962). This slowly maturing European/ Western people group's comprehension of human childhood as a protected life stage is recent (Walker, Bonner &

Kaufman 1988; Wolock & Horowitz 1984) and therefore Africans and African Americans must not be fooled into believing they possess special knowledge. A child cannot know what an elder knows, because he is still learning about how to be. As Spirit people, and the human life elders, we possess a rich body of knowledge gained from the experience of living and rearing the original child (Masowa *et al.* 2013).

Our primary focus must not be controlling western scholarship's ill-informed arrogance about our **Black** children. As living adult *Spirit Beings* our critical task must be ensuring that our children are aware that they are African *Spirit Beings* who are growing and developing in a human body (Akbar 1985; Hillilard 1998). It is our sacred duty to make our children aware of the generative power that exists in their individual *ngolo* and that they are connected to all African people past, present, and future. This awareness is the key to improved functioning of all **Black** people and especially the young children who based on their young chronological age are in the first stage of 'becoming' fully functioning *Spirit Beings* (Fi-Kiau & Lukondo-Wamba, 1998). For the young African American child who is growing and developing geographically away from their African Motherland, African self-knowledge and discovery of their *ngolo*, self-healing energy (Fu-Kiau 1991) is foundational for a successful journey toward wholeness and wellness that all children, regardless of their ethnicity, rightfully deserve.

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Patricia Nunley

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Critique of Ramon Grosfoguel's 'The Epistemic Decolonial Turn'

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Abstract

In this essay we offer a critique of Grosfoguel's 'The Epistemic Decolonial Turn' (2007). In order to do so, we situate him in the context of the conceptual history of Latin America, in particular its political philosophy. We argue that in view of the conceptual history of African political philosophy in the struggle against the injustice of colonisation the idea of 'decolonial' is redundant. We suggest that the force of Grosfoguel's argument must be taken seriously. Our submission is that instead of assimilating 'decolonial', it is best to opt for re-humanisation of human relations at all levels, since the project of Western colonisation has been and continues to be the stubborn refusal to recognise 'the other' as a human being. Using our own linguistic resources backed by the philosophy of *ubuntu*, we would rather opt for *mothofatso* and not 'decolonial'.

Keywords: colonisation, *ubuntu*, 'the right to be different', decolonisation, 'decolonial', 'colonial difference', insight, concept, epistemology, his-story, humanisation, African political philosophy

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Iqoqa

Kuleli phepha, siveza ukuhlolisiswa ‘kwezindlela zokwazi zokuguqula ukulwisana nokuqonela’ zikaGrosfoguel. Ukuze kwenzeke lokho simbeka esimweni somlando oqanjiwe waseLatin America, ikakhulukazi indlela yokubuka izinto ngokwezepolitiki. Siqakulisa ukuthi isimo esiqanjiwe sendlela yokucabanga ngokwezepolitiki sase-Afrika emzabalazweni obhekene nokungalingani komqondo wokulwisana nokuqonela akunamsebenzi. Siphakamisa ukuthi amandla omqakuliswano ka-Grosfoguel kumele athathelwe phezulu. Isiphakamiso sethu ukuthi esikhundleni sokuhlenganisa ‘ukulwisana nokuqonela’ kungcono kakhulu ukukhetha ukwenziwa kabusha ukwenza okunobuntu bobudlelwane babantu kuwo wonke amazanga, njengoba uhlelo lokuqonela laseNtshonalanga beluqhubeka futhi lusaqhubeka nokwenqaba ngenkani ukuveza ‘omunye umuntu’ njengomuntu ophilayo. Sisebenzisa izinsiza zolimi esinazo ezesekwa indlela yokucabanga yobuntu, sincamela ukukhetha *imothofatso* hhayi ‘ukulwisana nokuqonela’.

Amagama asemqoka: ukuqonela, ubuntu, ‘ilungela lokwehluka’, ukulwisana nokuqonela, ‘okwendlela yokulwisana nokuqonela’, ukwehluka kokuqonela, ukuqonda, umqondo, izindlela zokwazi, umlando wakhe, ukwenza okunobuntu, indlela yokucabanga ngokwezepolitiki yase-Afrika

Phetlheko ya taodisho ya Ramon Grosfoguel mabapi le seo a se bitjago ‘The Epistemic Decolonial Turn’ ebego phetogo ya tsebo go tloga ka nako ya tokologo ya monagano bokgobeng

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Modu wa Taba

Sebakwa taodisong ye ke go kwisisa gore na lethlaodi, ‘decolonial’ le tloga le tlhokagala na ge motho o tseba tatelano ya mantsu le diema tseo di bego di somisiwa ntweng ya tokologo ya mafatshe a Afrika. Letlhaodi le ‘decolonial’ le somiswa ke mongwadi Grosfoguel. Mo taodisong ye re ngaga gore letlhaodi le gale tlhokogala ge motho o kwisisa gabotse ntwaga ya tokologo ya mafatshe a Afrika. Re tshishinya gore go enale gore re adime letlhaodi le re kampe ra somisa la setso lentsu leo le laetsatsang gabotse gore go dira ba bangwe batho makgoba ke gobane bao ba dirang bjalo ba tlhoka botho. Gore mabaka a boele sekeng re tshanetse go kwisisa gore sebakwa ke mothofatso ya phedisano mmogo magareng ga batho.

Keywords: tokologo bothopjoeng, bokgoba, Afrika, Grosfoguel, mothofatso.

Introduction

This essay is written in order to fulfil specific but interrelated purposes. One is to show that the argument of Grosfoguel in the article¹ lending its title to this essay can best be understood by reference to Latin American philosophy. This applies also to his other articles published in English to which we will refer. We distinguish between insight and concept. The former means the capacity to discern the deeper meaning of a situation and to act accordingly. Understood in this way, insight may be described as intuitive knowledge. The latter is the active construction of specific ideas or knowledge based upon a particular experience at a given point in time.

Our idea of history presupposes a criticism of history as a scientific discipline. History as a scientific discipline is inherently ‘his-’ or ‘her-story’, despite its claim to ‘objectivity’. As such, it is unlikely to become ‘our story’, that is, the ‘objective’ story of human beings as a family on this our mother Earth, thus far known to be the only planet hospitable to human life. The unlikelihood of ‘our story’ is as ethically disturbing as it is a fundamental contradiction of the scientific finding that:

At the DNA level, we are all 99.9 percent *identical* [emphasis added]. That similarity applies, regardless of which two individuals from around the world you choose to compare. Thus, by DNA analysis, we humans are truly part of one family (Collins 2007: 125 - 126).

It is significant that Collins uses the word ‘identical’, which underscores the oneness of humanness. To construe human beings as ‘the same’ is to allow for the possibility that others might be ontologically ‘different’. Social myths such as ‘blue-blooded’ human beings are predicated on the biological fallacy that human beings are ‘the same’. Differences in physical appearance are real. However, they may not be transmuted into ontological inequality. The right to exist and to reason is not dependent upon any specific biological feature. It also does not originate from the prior will and consent of any human being to come into existence.

As Gutierrez points out, ‘The right to think is a corollary of the right to be, and to assert the right to think is only to assert the right to exist’ (1983:

¹ Ramon Grosfoguel 2007. The Epistemic Decolonial Turn. *Cultural Studies* 21: 2-3, 211-223.

101). As will be shown in this essay, the transmutation of biology into ontology permeates much of the ‘history’ of the West, and the rest of humanity.

The second purpose of this essay is to show that Grosfoguel’s reference to Africa, especially in his initial articles, is often incidental. It is not directly focused on Africa in a way that delivers a substantial treatment of a particular aspect of the history of Africa with particular reference to colonisation and decolonisation. I am grateful to Grosfoguel for making time for person-to-person discussion of this aspect of his writings in Coimbra, Portugal (November 2018), along with subsequent correspondence.

Without denying the need for dialogue as the core of philosophical reasoning and practice, the third purpose of this essay is to assess the influence of Grosfoguel on decolonial thought in Africa and South Africa in the light of the paucity of the substance of his articles with regard to Africa and, South Africa and also with his explicit insistence ‘that decolonial thought cannot be developed by importing theories produced in different continents with very different social and historical realities to the African continent’ underlined by his direct admission that it is possible to produce ‘decolonial theories relevant to African liberation struggles’ (November 2018).

The fourth purpose of this essay is to question the relevance to Africa of ‘decolonial’ in view of the conceptual history and practice of colonisation and decolonisation in Africa. Linked integrally to this questioning is the intention to show that the continued use of the vocabulary of the colonial conqueror, in its initial and subsequent historical manifestations, is an implicit concession to the colonial conqueror’s ethically illegitimate authority to name and make, indeed to construct, reality on behalf of the conquered. The argument here is that it is ethically illegitimate to make this concession. We now turn to situate Grosfoguel in the conceptual history of Latin America.

We take the liberty to turn to literature in protest against ‘science’, which resists laughter and dance, even though it espouses aesthetics. A ‘science’ that adheres strictly to the *‘aequanimitas’* of William Osler is a questionable division of the human being into reason and emotion. It is a comatose reflection upon being-a-human-being-in-the-world. Be-ing as perpetual motion may be construed as reason manifesting itself as a rhythmic ebb and flow of the pluriversality and variety of beings in a dance.

Grosfoguel in the Conceptual History of Latin America

From ‘Latin America’ we read the ethically compelling argument that: ‘Only

by looking historical truth full in the face shall we be able to embark upon the times to come with responsibility and efficacy' (Gutierrez 1993:4). The basic message of this citation is that an imprisoned truth cannot fulfil its mission to liberate others. The ethical imperative to 'face the truth of history' is a highly contested moral undertaking in theory and practice. This is primarily because:

Certain historians, sometimes whole generations of historians, find in certain periods of history nothing intelligible, and call them dark ages; but such phrases tell us nothing about those ages themselves, though they tell us a great deal about the persons who use them, namely that they are unable to re-think the thoughts which were fundamental to their life It is the historian himself who stands at the bar of judgement, and there reveals his own mind in its strength and weakness, its virtues and its vices (Collingwood 1946:219).

Hence whereas some regard 'history' as valid and true others and, sometimes even as the final statement on a particular situation, others consider it to be dubious and falsifiable. This may be illustrated by the reference to the fact that 'history' including that of Latin America, may be understood from two different and contending perspectives.

Latin America [is] a third continent promptly and violently incorporated into the process of which we speak. This even is regarded as a *discovery* by those who see history from the old continent (as they themselves call it.) A covering, others call it – referring to a history written in blatant disregard of the viewpoint of the inhabitants of the so-called New World. The 'Conquista,' it was dubbed in the old history books; 'invasion', some prefer to call it today (Gutierrez 1993: 2).

It is plain from the above that 'history' not only of Latin America but across the globe is a morally contested terrain. Even the name Latin America is morally and historically problematic to the extent that it is not the name given to this region by the indigenous peoples conquered in the unjust wars of colonisation. If Columbus had the courtesy to ask the indigenous peoples the name of the place he landed on first and, of the region would the region be known as Latin America? We will revert to an elaborate answer to this question in our discussion of the authority to give a name to a human being or a place. In the

meantime, we use the name in this essay with more than guarded scepticism.

From the literary point of view, Sir John Squire reflects upon the history of Latin America in his poem: *There was an Indian*.

There was an Indian, who had known no change
Who strayed content along a sunlit beach
Gathering shells. He heard a sudden strange
Commingled noise; looked up; and gasped for speech.
For in the bay, where nothing was before,
Moved on the sea, by magic, huge canoes,
With bellying cloths on poles, and not one oar,
And fluttering coloured signs and clambering crews.
And he, in fear, this naked man alone,
His fallen hands forgetting all their shells,
His lips gone pale, knelt low behind a stone,
And stared, and saw, and did not understand,
Columbus's doom-burdened caravels
Slant to the shore, and all their seamen land.

The 'naked' man gathering shells on the beach did not tell Columbus that he was an Indian. Instead of telling Columbus who he was, the 'naked' man ran away, unseen by Columbus. So, why is he an Indian? Palmer replies that:

The name West Indies recalls the fact that the discovery of the New World was due to an attempt to find a western route to India, and that, when Columbus crossed the Atlantic and sighted land, he fancied he had reached the western coasts of the Indies The Spaniards did their best to convert, massacre, or enslave the native population; which, gentle and unwarlike, could offer only a poor resistance. Human life was held cheap by these conquerors. Their cold-blooded cruelties were as revolting as they were frequent (Palmer 1924: 19).

Grosfoguel (2013: 82) describes Columbus' imagination as a 'mistake'. Earlier, he refers to this 'mistake' as a wrong belief on the part of Columbus (Grosfoguel 2013: 79). He does not proceed to pose directly and explicitly the question as to whether or not Columbus had any authority to give

a name to the region. However, the question is implied through his use of 'Indians' in inverted commas. This suggests that he is in accord with the submission that it is ethically questionable to impose an identity on a people and their land, simply on the basis of 'fancy' or a 'mistake'. It is even more curious that erudite scholars such as Francisco de Vitoria wrote a learned treatise 'On the American Indians' (*De Indis*) with apparent lack of concern over the validity of the identity of the people about whom he was writing.

Columbus, cited in Grosfoguel, confirmed the bodily nakedness of the 'Indian'. From this he inferred an 'epistemic nakedness' based on the imagined docility of the 'Indian'. For him, this meant that the 'Indian' was ready-made by nature to be a 'servant'; a slave with the capacity to be converted to christianity² (Grosfoguel 2013: 80). In the light of this preliminary critique of the authority to name, what are we to make of the name of the country, Colombia?

Whereas it took only arrogant 'fancy' and an indifferent 'mistake' to impose a name on a people and their land, we know that a 'British woman, ... Lugard's girl-friend ... christened us Nigeria' (Achebe 1984: 6). Thus, the name 'Nigeria' is not the product of a collective democratic decision by the indigenous peoples inhabiting that geographic region. The fact that the indigenous peoples were not consulted at all in the naming of the political construct called Nigeria is not merely an incidental disregard (Taylor 2013: 33) or innocent discourtesy to the indigenous inhabitants. On the contrary, it raises the question as to whether or not Lugard and his girlfriend considered them human beings equal in dignity to themselves.

From West to Southern Africa, we read concerning the latter that Cecil Rhodes was 'one of the few men to have given his name to a country' (Maurois 1953: 22). Rhodes himself declared proudly that: 'to have a bit of country named after one is one of the things a man might be proud of' (Maurois 1953: 95). Today, Rhodesia is replaced by Zimbabwe. Rhodes still lies buried in Zimbabwean soil. If humans could speak from their graves Rhodes would have long answered the question whether or not he is 'proud' to be buried in Zimbabwe. It is interesting to note that many writers, myself included, continue

² We take the view, like Wole Soyinka (1999: 32) that the 'convention that capitalises this [Christianity, Christian] and other so-called world religions is justified only when the same principle is applied to other religions, among them, the Orisa'. We will use the small letter 'c' except in the case of verbatim citations.

to refer to 'Latin America' even in the face of the submission that '*Abya Yala*' is the indigenous name of the region. It seems best to consider the following as a partial answer to the question of the continued use of 'Indian' and Latin America.

We shall use, without fear of objection, the word 'Indian', since that is what the inhabitants of these lands (regarded, for well-known historical reasons, as the 'West Indies') were called in Las Casas' time; indeed it remains common usage today, even among native persons and organizations [sic] of Latin America (Gutierrez 1993: 468).

We underline the point that the conquered of the Earth, with exceptions among them, live until this day under the increasingly heavy yoke of 'Columbus's doom-burdened caravels'. The survival of Columbus' burden of invasion without moral justification underlines the point that his-story is a contested moral terrain. It is a pointer, in our time, of the unfolding struggle for 'our history' as a true reconstruction and reflection of the 'truth' about ourselves as human beings on this contingent mother planet Earth; the 'truth' that includes the revelation of truths concealed and suppressed for centuries by those who continue to refuse to know them as they are being enunciated by the conquered of the Earth. The 'two truths' told in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* can hardly suffice, because they are a species of self-deception that makes *Macbeth* a tragedy. Five centuries ago, Las Casas warned us against such concealment and suppression of other truths. According to him:

Only historical honesty can deliver us from the prejudices, narrow interpretations, paralyzing [sic] ignorance, and the deceptions foisted on us by private interests, which lay our history on us like a permanent mortgage instead of transforming it into a thrust to creativity A concealment of the complexity of what occurred in those years for fear of the truth, in order to defend current privileges, or – at the other extreme – a frivolous, irresponsible use of offensive expressions, condemns us to historical sterility (Gutierrez 1993: 457).

We now turn to the ethical question on the authority to give a name to another; a human being or land – country. The ethical aspect of this question is that imposing a name on another human being is to undermine the principle

of the ontological equality of all human beings. To disregard inquiring from the original inhabitants of the land the name of their land is to be afraid of ‘the truth’ of history.

The Authority to Give a Name to Another: A Human Being or Land – A Country

He or she who gives a name to another must have the legitimate authority to do so. This adage is deeply-rooted in many cultures of Africa. In practice, it is manifested as a hallowed ritual permeated with sacredness. It is elevated to an ethical status. Its observance – though challenged by the intrusion of Western ‘civilisation’ – is such that in practice if one or more of the relevant aunts or uncles is absent, then the name-giving ceremony may be halted. In the name of proselytisation, christian names were imposed upon the indigenous peoples conquered in the unjust wars of colonisation, including those in conqueror South Africa. Pairing indigenous with christian names was deemed to be a superstitious mixture of the profane and the sacred.

It is instructive to consider the name ‘South Africa’ itself. An ethical historical reflection would surely render it more truthfully as: ‘Conqueror South Africa’. Many of our relatives and friends ended up not only being given christian names, but also being renamed, for example, ‘*two boy*’ just because the posterity of the colonial conqueror had neither the wish nor the patience to learn to write and pronounce the name Mosimanegape, meaning; yet another boy.

In the wake of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) in Conqueror South Africa, in part influenced by Aime Cesaire, the teacher of Frantz Fanon, many adherents of the BCM, together with many other politically conscious people among the subjugated and the exploited renounced their christian names in order to undermine the illegitimate authority of the colonial conqueror to give them names. Others, determined that victory over colonialism in its various historical manifestations shall be attained, gave their children victory-oriented names such as Bafentse, Nqobile, Koketso, Hlulani, Mofenyi, Manqoba, Moferefere, Gundo, Mailagofengwa, Ofentse, Nkululeko. In the light of this, Paulo Freire’s argument that even the peasant ought to win back ‘the right to *say his or her own word, to name the world*’ [emphasis original] (Freire 2003: 33) is beyond reproach.

This will to resist and renounce the illegitimate authority of the colonial conqueror to impose names upon the conquered is a significant reaffirmation of the power of the conquered to recover their authority to give names to themselves according to their own culture. It is thus a change in the geography of authority from illegitimate to legitimate authority. It is the restoration of epistemic freedom and the repudiation of slavery especially if one considers that from Western antiquity right up to our own time – despite the formal abolition of slavery – the slave was deemed to be a nameless sub-human being.

When a person's name is changed, their former name is made obsolete and so, in theory, is the life they knew prior to enslavement Greek literature expresses a reluctance on the part of free persons to address slaves by name choosing to address or not to address one's slave by name is indicative of the power the master has over his slave By not acknowledging a slave's name, the slave is deprived of an individual identity and is relegated, a nameless entity, to a subhuman status (Wrenhaven 2013: 32 and 40).

The 'nameless', 'subhuman' status of a slave, identifiable by an arbitrarily imposed number, by way of condescension, means that the slave is merely an object of command. To resist and challenge this as the Black Consciousness Movement activists have done is to reaffirm the right to human identity second to none in its humanness.

Grosfoguel belongs to the Conceptual History of Latin America

One of the earliest figures in the history of Latin America is the Spanish Dominican priest – later Bishop of Chiapas – Bartolome Las Casas. He is, historically, the predecessor of Enrique Dussel by at least four centuries in Latin America. He is known to have been an incisive and relentless critic of the Spanish conquest of Latin America and, later Africa by Portugal, after his deliberate renunciation of its fundamental injustice which he condoned initially (Gutierrez 1993: 304 and 320). To Las Casas, Africa was present not incidentally but in a focused and substantive manner (Gutierrez 1993: 319-324). Dussel does not hide that he was inspired by Las Casas. In admiration, he embraces him as 'the theologian of liberation' (Dussel 2003: 213-314) even

though this appellation did not exist at the time of Las Casas. We will revert to this point. Grosfoguel also acknowledges Las Casas (Grosfoguel 2013: 83). However, he accords him much less significance and prominence than he deserves compared to his disproportionate elevation of Nelson Maldonado-Torres (Grosfoguel 2013: 81). Furthermore, Grosfoguel does not conceal that he was inspired by Dussel. He extols him as a scholar whose philosophical and theological writings are ‘fundamental for anybody interested in the decolonization [sic] of knowledge and power’ (Grosfoguel 2013: 73) in our time. This brief chronology delineates the chain of identity of insight in successive historical contexts, yielding multiple and varied conceptual constructs speaking to the evolution of the original injustice of colonisation. The sustained focus upon this original injustice constitutes the basis for conceptual affinity in varied historical conditions. Grosfoguel belongs to this conceptual history in Latin America, even though he is himself a native of Puerto Rico. He may, therefore, be regarded as one of the proponents of the conceptual history of Latin America. Mignolo also acknowledges Las Casas (Mignolo 2002: 92). We now turn to the identification of some of the specific insights and arguments of Las Casas with the acknowledgement that both Gutierrez and Dussel (Dussel 2011: 190-210 and 240-251) have already done so. The purpose is to show, following both authors, that some of the specific insights and arguments of Las Casas endure until our time albeit under different names.

The Case Put Forward by Las Casas

Born in Seville, Spain, in 1484, Bartolome Las Casas was ordained a Dominican priest in Rome in 1507. He arrived in the Indies ‘only ten years after Columbus[’s] ... “doom-burdened caravels”’ (Gutierrez 1993: 17). In 1543 he became Bishop of Chiapas. Although initially complacent about the injustice of the Spaniards towards the indigenous inhabitants of the ‘Indies’, he subsequently renounced this position and turned into a vigorous and relentless critic of this injustice until his death in Madrid on 18 July 1566.

Las Casas’ renunciation of the Spanish injustice was – to use a theological term – a veritable *metanoia*; a radical change of epistemic and convictional perspective demanding a practice consonant with the fundamental change. In this sense, Las Casas proved himself able to adopt the viewpoint of the ‘other’ without becoming the ‘other’ or claiming to have first-hand direct experience of being the ‘other’.

The adoption of the viewpoint of others became for Las Casas a matter of Christian spirituality and theological methodology alike He tried to understand things from a point of departure in the Indian, poor and oppressed This way of looking at things could only be very different from that of his compatriots for Las Casas, it is not a mere question of the importance of *direct knowledge* of a particular state of affairs. It is also a matter of adopting the perspective of others, other persons, in order to experience and understand from within the situations and events in which those persons are caught up (Gutierrez 1993: 85 and 87; italics in the original).

This is the first insight that we wish to identify from the life of Las Casas. It underlines the point that it is cognitively possible to adopt the viewpoint of the 'other' and act upon such an understanding. It would appear that Mignolo's understanding of the 'colonial difference' is, paradoxically, a rejection and, an acceptance of this point.

Las Casas defended the Indians, but the Indians did not participate in the discussions about their rights Black Africans and American Indians were not taken into account when knowledge and social organization [sic] were at stake. They, Africans and American Indians, were considered patient, living organisms to be told, not to be heard (Mignolo 2002: 63).

The presupposition pertaining to the first sentence of this citation is that if the 'Indians' had spoken for themselves about themselves then their enunciation of their experiential historical condition would have been qualitatively different from that of Las Casas. One need not quarrel with this because even a slave and a slave-holder will not articulate the same – but not identical – historical experience in qualitatively the same substance. Arising from this understanding, the following question may be posed: how are scholars like Dussel, and Grosfoguel, to name but a few, different from Las Casas as portrayed here by Mignolo?

Quijano and Dussel make it possible not only to conceive of the modern/colonial world-system as a sociohistorical structure coincident

with the expansion of capitalism but also to conceive of coloniality and the colonial difference as loci of enunciation. This is precisely what I mean by the geopolitics of knowledge and the colonial difference Decolonizing [sic] the social sciences and philosophy means to produce, transform, and disseminate knowledge that is not dependent on the epistemology of North Atlantic modernity – the norms of the disciplines and the problems of the North Atlantic – but that, on the contrary, responds to the need for the colonial differences. Colonial expansion was also the colonial expansion of forms of knowledge, even when such knowledges were critical to colonialism from within colonialism itself (like Bartolome de las Casas) or to modernity from modernity itself (like Nietzsche). A critique of Christianity by an Islamic philosopher would be a project significantly different from Nietzsche's critique of Christianity (Mignolo 2002: 61 and 80).

It would appear from the above citation that Mignolo denies the possibility that one can adopt a perspective other than one's own – from one's roots – in investigating reality, in particular, human relations. His observation that Las Casas' criticism of the injustice of colonialism was a criticism 'from colonialism itself' is based on his understanding of 'coloniality and the colonial difference as loci of enunciation'. This is somewhat ambiguous and dubious. It is true that Las Casas arrived in the 'Indies' with the epistemological baggage of his time. Thus, his absence from his native Spain did not necessarily mean that a shift in geographic space is equal to a shift in epistemological position. Up to this point we concur with Mignolo. However, his assertion that Las Casas criticised colonialism 'from within colonialism', presumably in epistemological terms, is dubious.

If we understand Mignolo correctly, this means that it is experientially impossible to adopt the viewpoint of 'the other'. Mignolo's insistence on the 'colonial difference' as the locus of enunciation is indeed valid to the extent that it is the recognition that immediate and direct experience is epistemologically non-transferable. The problem arises when this is extended to mean that it is cognitively impossible to adopt the viewpoint of 'the other'. This position dissolves his 'colonial difference' into solipsism, precluding dialogue. The non-transferability of direct and immediate experience is not equivalent to the impossibility of cognitive comprehension and communicative expressibility of the experience to others. Expressibility opens the way to dialogue, which is an

indispensable element of philosophising. Based on this reasoning, ‘colonial difference’ is not tantamount to radical epistemological inexpressibility, leading to inevitable solipsism. On the contrary, the immediacy and directness of experience is mediated by expressibility, which is the possibility condition for dialogue. In the dialogical encounter, it is possible to assume the point of view of the ‘other’ in the quest to understand and change reality. Understanding the ‘other’ from the ‘other’s’ point of view is necessarily limited, because the ‘other’ as alterity cannot be comprehended totally and fully. This is because the emergence of the ‘other’ is a simultaneous exposure and concealment, thus leaving a residue of the unknown about the ‘other’. Nevertheless, the ontological impossibility of grasping the ‘other’ totally and fully opens the window to a limited knowledge of the ‘other’. Accordingly, in the domain of human relations, rootedness in mother Earth does not signal inevitable death when the roots are replanted in another different type of soil. Is Antjie Krog’s *Begging to be Black*, an ill-fated undertaking even before it is begun?

Mignolo’s apparent radical epistemology steeped in ‘colonial difference’, leads to the edge where a distinction must be drawn between ‘alterity’ and ‘exteriority’. Given Dussel’s reliance on Levinas and, Mignolo’s endorsement of Dussel, it is apt to turn to another interpretation of Levinas in the search for the distinction between ‘alterity’ and ‘exteriority’. Burggraeve explains the concept of ‘exteriority’ thus:

To read is to raise oneself up to, to listen to and obey exteriority, the essentially new which does not rise up from within ourselves but breaks in upon us as a ‘revelation’ from the foreign, touching us such that we – while remaining ourselves – become radically ‘other’ (Burggraeve 2007: 31).

Obedience to ‘exteriority’ is impossible without being touched by it. It is the feeling of being touched which solicits a response from the one touched. The response can be varied. The variety includes the possibility of the touched becoming ‘radically ‘other’’. Is this another way of stating that the touched can adopt the point of view of the ‘other’ even without losing its own rootedness?

Burggraeve develops the theme of the ‘radical alterity of the other’. He submits that: ‘the other person does not belong to any series or set: the otherness of the other person is not inscribed in any logic and is not at all reversible or mutual. ... the other person exceeds and thus escapes the genre

which is human. His otherness is other than that of the series a, b,c, d. It is not relative but absolute, and therefore wholly irreducible to either me or any genre' (Burggraeve 2007: 88). This is approaching Mignolo's 'colonial difference' very closely, but as 'alterity' and not 'exteriority'. It appears that 'alterity' and 'exteriority' are synonyms according to this citation.

This impression is strengthened by the following.

Wisdom does not come from within, by means of self-knowledge ... but from without, from the outside. Wisdom begins in the traumatism of exteriority and alterity, which at the same time implies a sublimity By speaking to me the other awakens in me something new, which I previously did not yet possess and which would need to be drawn out of myself and made explicit. In this regard the other is my 'teacher', who by means of speaking to me ... brings me into contact with his non-extraditable alterity that can only be known if it is acknowledged and respected. I cannot predict nor foresee the speaking – the revelation – of the other; I do not have the other in my hand, and that is precisely its alterity that makes me 'wise'. In being addressed by the other I am no longer the first and the original, the 'arche' or 'principle' to which all else refers back; I am no longer the designer but the addressee, the one who listens and thus is called to respond and again question (Burggraeve 2009: 131).

It is important to note Burggraeve's use of the conjunction 'and' with reference to 'exteriority', 'alterity'. Despite the conjunction, which appears to connect two different concepts, it seems 'or' could have served the same purpose to the extent that both concepts appear to be synonymous. The 'non-extraditability' of 'alterity' is once again very close to Mignolo's 'exteriority', which underpins his 'colonial difference'. Perhaps one has to abandon the search for a difference in meaning and, instead acknowledge the 'proximity' rather than the synonymy of both concepts.

Dussel, one of Mignolo's flagships, argues that Las Casas respected the Indian in his '*exteriority* [showing] precisely his ability to cross the frontier of the system and make himself open to the *exteriority of the other as other* Our prophetic theologian of liberation goes on building up his case against the alienation of the other This explicit *theologian of liberation* was, in addition, an ideological theologian' (e.i.o. Dussel 2003: 213-214).

It would seem then that Dussel does quite explicitly accept that it is cognitively possible to adopt the position of ‘the other’. To the extent that Mignolo relies on Dussel for his understanding of exteriority in that much should the paradox of its acceptance and rejection of this possibility evaporate. In support for our argument on the evaporation of Mignolo’s paradox, we read, furthermore, that:

Bartolome de Las Casas assumes decidedly in his argument the dominated indigenous perspective as the starting point of his critical discourse, organized [sic] logically and philosophically from the horizon of the modern scholasticism of the School of Salamanca ... (Gutierrez 1993: 198).

The *second point* we wish to identify is Las Casas’ ethical defence of ‘the right to be different’. With particular reference to an errant conscience: ‘the conscience of those who believe themselves to be performing a good deed’ because of an ‘*excusable and invincible ignorance*’ (Gutierrez 1993: 2003). Las Casas submits – with particular reference to the performance of human sacrifices – that: ‘The Indians ‘are obliged’ to defend their own traditions and religion by force of arms against those who would seek to suppress them by force. So we have a just war indeed’ (cited in Gutierrez 1993: 204). This matter is already complex. But it becomes even more engaging and complicated when it is extended to the political domain. At the time of respective concessions to political independence of the majority of the countries in Africa, the ‘traditions and religion’ of the indigenous peoples conquered in the unjust wars of colonisation were simply acknowledged as ‘customary or traditional law’, never to attain epistemic parity with the law of the conqueror, benignly named ‘The Constitution’ as the ‘highest law of the land’. This hides the immorality of transmuting the original injustice of colonisation into justice. Based on this reasoning, the appellation, ‘customary or traditional law’ is the living reminder in our time that it is unethical to transmute injustice into justice.

The *third point* we wish to identify is Las Casas’ defence of the ethical imperative to learn and know the language of ‘the other’, in this case, the ‘Indians’. He submits that ‘a language is an element of the culture of a people. And culture is life, ...’ (Gutierrez 1993: 90). It goes without saying that many missionaries have tried their best to obey this imperative. It is also unnecessary to labour the point that it is in the interest of scholarship to have ‘a working

knowledge' of the language of 'the other' being researched.

The *fourth point* we wish to identify is Las Casas' direct and forthright concern with the just war doctrine, with particular reference to the Indies and Portugal's invasion of Africa. The divine or ecclesiastical backing for the latter is the well-known bull *Romanus Pontifex* issued in 1455 by Pope Nicholas V, to king Alfonso V of Portugal. Las Casas considered that Africans had the same rights as Indians (Gutierrez 1993: 327 and 329). For him, the critical question was,

whether the wars being waged against the natives were just or not the wars being waged by the Portuguese are bereft of all justification. As these wars are not just (although defensive wars waged by Canarians or Africans against Europeans would be), the slavery to which these populations are being reduced is illegal and immoral (Gutierrez 1993: 321 and 326).

Thus, Las Casas, more than five centuries ago, established the relevance of the just war doctrine to all the situations of the injustice of colonial conquest.

In our time, the original injustice of colonial conquest appears to be overlooked by Davis' superlative laudation of the constitution of Conqueror South Africa (Davis 2018). This is possible only if the 'history' of the country is a covering based on the ethically questionable 'right of conquest'. It is pertinent to remind the learned judge Davis that from within the camp of the colonial conqueror, we read more recently that:

The basis on which the modern South African law has arisen is the Roman-Dutch law. This legal system resulted from the combination of principles of Roman law and Germanic law in the Netherlands and was brought here, of course, by the early settlers (Gibson 1975: 1).

It is significant that Gibson here takes for granted – as a matter of course – that early settlers brought their law to what they named South Africa by mere benign divine ordinance. The disregard of the reason and the means by which 'Roman-Dutch law' came to be 'the basis' of 'the modern South African law' until this day is also to be found, for example, in earlier publications by Verloren van Themaat and Wiechers, *Staatsreg*, Hahlo and Kahn, *The South African Legal System and its Background* and, a later publication by

Hosten, Edwards, Nathan and Bosman, *Introduction to South African Law and Legal Theory*. It is necessary to remind the readers that it is through the injustice of colonial conquest in total disregard of the just war doctrine that ‘the Roman-Dutch law’, modified in different historical contexts, persists to this day as the ‘basis’ of the contemporary law in Conqueror South Africa. Accordingly, the just war doctrine is still relevant to Conqueror South Africa despite the historical blindness of Praeg mesmerised by the ‘history’ of ‘South Africa’ according to the conqueror (Praeg 2019: 104-107). Contrary to Praeg, the doctrine of the just war is still alive, even outside the boundaries of Conqueror South Africa as the wars on Afghanistan and Iraq demonstrate (Craig 2011).

The *fifth point* we wish to identify is Las Casas’ concern over the ontological equality of all human beings. For him, all human beings are ‘racial siblings’. The practical outcome of his convictional insight, following upon his debate with Sepulveda, was *Sublimis Deus*, the bull of Pope Paul III issued on 2 June 1537. The bull is regarded ‘as the most important papal pronouncement on the human condition of the Indians’ (Gutierrez 1933: 302). The bull is definitely important for ‘the human condition of the Indians’; their ontological status. However, its opening sentence, ‘All men are rational animals’ is a decisive rejection of the restrictive interpretation of Aristotle’s famous ‘man is a rational animal’. At the same time, the ‘all’ extends the scope beyond the ‘Indians’ and thus includes all human beings, especially the conquered of the Earth. Instead of bringing to an end in terms of both conviction and practice to the struggle for reason, *Sublimis Deus* has ironically intensified this struggle for the humanisation of humanity up until our time.

The five points we have identified testify to the relevance of Las Casas to the contemporary struggle against the injustice of colonisation in its various manifestations under successive historical situations. The physical memorial of the yellow *San Cristobal de Las Casas* monument in Chiapas, Mexico stands out as a beehive from which many continue to suck the honey of wisdom. Las Casas is also remembered in our time as carrying a bread basket, sharing bread with the poor and feeding them with the spiritual works of mercy. He is the memorial of a never drying up well from which the many who are thirsty for truthfulness, justice and peace continue to quench their thirst. The *Instituto Bartolome de Las Casas-Rimac* in Peru is the granite fortress challenging scholars to be faithful to the truth of history for the sake of justice and peace in the world: an objective to which Las Casas fearlessly devoted the better part of his life. It is therefore fitting to conclude this section with two

stanzas from Casaldaliga's poem, *A Bartolome de Las Casas* (To Bartolome Las Casas). The poem is translated from Las Casas native Spanish (in Guitierrez 1993: 470-471). The two stanzas read as follows:

Five hundred years shall they be, O seer,
and today, more than ever, the continent roars
like a volcano of wounds and burning coals.
Teach us once more to evangelize [sic],
Along a sea delivered of its caravels,
Holy father of America, Las Casas!

It is in 'the open veins of Latin America', the [*Las venas abiertas de America Latina*] (Galeano 1973) and across the globe in the roaring 'volcano of wounds and burning coals' that the struggle against the inhumanity and the injustice of colonial conquest continues in our time. We now turn to Augusto Salazar Bondy's characterisation of Latin American philosophy in our time.

Bondy's Characterisation of Latin American Philosophy

Six years before Grosfoguel obtained his Doctorate in Sociology, Bondy gave the following characterisation of Latin American philosophy. The characterisation is important because it is a further elaboration on the conceptual history of philosophy in Latin America. Bondy, is a Peruvian philosopher born in Lima. In his article, *The meaning and problem of Hispanic American Thought* [*Can there be a Latin American philosophy?*] he submits that in Latin America, 'there are no creative figures to found and nurture their own peculiar tradition, nor native philosophic 'isms'' (Bondy 1986: 233). He then proceeds to identify seven characteristics of the Latin American philosophy of his time, namely:

1. *Imitative sense of thought.* Thinking is done according to theoretical moulds already shaped in the pattern of Western thought – mainly European-imported in the form of currents, schools and systems totally defined in their content and orientation.

2. *Universal receptivity.* An indiscriminate disposition to accept all manner of theoretical product coming from the most diverse schools and national

traditions, with extremely varied styles and spiritual purposes This receptivity, which betrays a lack of substance in ideas and convictions, has often been taken for an Hispanic American virtue.

3. *Absence of a characteristic*, definitive tendency, and of an ideological, conceptual proclivity capable of founding a tradition of thought, of sketching a profile in an intellectual manner.

4. *Correlative absence of original contributions*, capable of being incorporated into the tradition of world thought. There is no philosophic system of Hispanic American roots, or doctrine with meaning in the entirety of universal thought The most relevant philosophical figures of Hispanic America have been commentators or professors, but, no matter how fruitful their action in this field may have been for the educational process of our countries, it has not had an effect beyond our own cultural circle (Bondy 1986: 234; italics in the original text).

5. *Existence of a strong sense of intellectual frustration* among cultivators of philosophy. It is symptomatic that, throughout the history of our culture, its most lucid interpreters have planted time and again the question of the existence of their own philosophic thought. Responding to it, ..., almost unanimously with a complete negation, they have formulated projects for the future construction of such thought. Significantly, this unrest and reflection are not found, or are rarely found, among those nations that have made fundamental contributions to the development of philosophy.

6. *There has existed permanently in Hispanic America a great distance between those who practice philosophy and the whole of the community*. There is no way to consider our philosophies as national thought, with a different seal, as one speaks of German, French, English, or Greek philosophy. It is also impossible for the community to recognise itself in these philosophies, precisely because we are dealing with transplanted thought, the spiritual products of other men and other cultures, which a refined minority makes an effort to understand and to share However, when an elaborate intellectual creation is genuine, it reflects the conscience of a community finding in it profound resonance especially through its ethical and political derivations.

7. *The same scheme of historic development and the same constellation of traits – although negative – are suitable to the activity unfolded during more than four centuries by the men dedicated to philosophy in a plurality of countries, often far removed physically and socially from each other as is the case of Hispanic America ... [emphasis original] (Bondy 1986: 235).*

These seven characteristics may be construed as a censure of dependency upon the ‘local histories’ of others in the elaboration of philosophy, which is, in the first place, the manifestation of the epistemological paradigm of other ‘local histories’. They pose a challenge to philosophers to elaborate on a sovereign ‘philosophic-ism’ rooted deeply in the experience of being-a-Latin-American-in-the-world. Bondy’s challenge then is an argument for the necessity of what will later be called the ‘philosophy of liberation’; a call for the transition from dependency upon the ‘local histories’ of others; later to crystallise itself as ‘the colonial difference’. His is the demand for reasoning from the ‘border’, even if the border was not erected by those excluded from that which it encircles. Enrique Dussel, a contemporary of Bondy, is among the first to respond to this challenge. It is important to note that in his response, Dussel does mention Bondy specifically. Note also the ambiguity of the answer that Dussel ascribes to Bondy. According to him:

Of all the facts of daily experience in the world, philosophy of liberation has interpreted one as the fact that can gestate a new discourse. Since about 1965, there have been some Latin American philosophers who have asked themselves whether it was possible to do philosophy in underdeveloped countries. A little later the question was put another way: Is it possible to philosophize [sic] authentically in a dependent and dominated culture? That is, the facts of underdevelopment and then of dependence and the fact of philosophy appeared to be mutually exclusive or inclusive only with difficulty. Those facts reshaped themselves into a problem, into the central problem of philosophy of liberation: Is a Latin American philosophy possible? With time it grew into: Is a Latin American, African, or Asian philosophy of the peripheral world possible? (Dussel 1985: 172).

Peruvian Augusto Salazar Bondy, now deceased, answered courageously: No! No, because a dominated culture is one in which the ideology of the dominator has been adopted by the dominated – by

the colonized [sic], Memmi would say. The problem evanesces with a flat denial. Nevertheless, there is another possibility, an affirmative possibility. It has been put forward as a working hypothesis (Dussel 1985: 172).

Does Dussel mean by this that Bondy actually denied the possibility of ‘an-other’ philosophy, rooted deeply in the Latin American experience? If the answer to this question is in the affirmative, then what is the significance of Bondy’s seven point critique of the Latin American philosophy of his time? Bondy himself answers these questions and removes any ambiguity there might be. We note the difference in year of publication of the English versions, with Dussel’s text appearing a year earlier than that of Bondy. However, the fact that the Spanish version – a language the present author does not know – was published in 1968, *Existe una filosofía de nuestra América?*, and his other: *Sentido y problema del pensamiento filosófico hispanoamericano*, published in 1969 suggests that Dussel, conversant in Spanish, is referring to either one or both of these texts being the only ones written by Bondy on the question on hand. Bondy’s answer is the affirmation of the possibility and, indeed the demand for ‘an-other’ philosophy in Latin America.

Hispanic American philosophy has before it – as a possibility of its own recuperation – a destructive task that, in the long run, will be destructive to its current form. It must be an awareness that cancels prejudice, myths, idols; an awareness that will awaken us to our subjection as peoples and our depression as men. In consequence, it must be an awareness that liberates us from the obstacles that impede our anthropological expansion, which is also the anthropological expansion of the world. It must be, in addition, a critical and analytical awareness of the potentialities and demands of our affirmation as humanity It has been suggested, even by outstanding figures of our culture, that in the distribution of philosophical tasks, theory should belong to Europe and application to Hispanic America. I am convinced also, however, that the strict theoretical character, which is the highest contemplative requirement indispensable to all fruitful philosophy, is merely another way of condemning ourselves to dependency and subjection. In philosophy, as in science, only he who has the key to theory can appropriate the advances and powers of civilization. Our

philosophy should be, then, both theory and application, conceived and executed in our own fashion, according to our own standards and qualities (Bondy 1986: 243).

In view of the above citation, there is neither uncertainty nor ambiguity with regard to Bondy's position on the question as to whether or not there can be a Latin America philosophy. It is significant that Bondy uses the word, 'liberates' as though he is conveying the wish to be counted among the precursors of the philosophy of liberation. His critique of the conceptual history of the Latin American philosophy of his time remains a crucial contribution to the shift of philosophical paradigm and emphasis that is critical of the original injustice of colonisation in its various historical manifestations. Against this background, we continue with Dussel's response to the challenge posed by Bondy.

This hypothesis, under the thematic of a 'philosophy of liberation', was launched by a group of thinkers from Argentina. The hypothesis is as follows: It appears possible to philosophize [sic] in the periphery – in underdeveloped and dependent nations, in dominated and colonial cultures, in a peripheral social formation – only if the discourse of the philosophy of the center [sic] is not imitated, only if another discourse is discovered. To be different, this discourse must have another point of departure, must think other themes, must come to distinctive conclusions by a different method (Dussel 1985: 172-173).

It is within the context of the philosophy of liberation that Grosfoguel participates in contemporary Latin American thought. Bondy presented a strong argument against the intellectual dependency of Hispanic thought on West European philosophy. He also argued against material or economic dependency with particular reference to the relationship between the United States of America and Latin American states (Bondy 1986: 241). In an apparent response to Bondy's arguments, Mignolo makes the submission that:

Dependency theory has not yet lost its posture, although it has been severely criticized [sic]. It is capable of holding its own in the middle of a critical tempest because its critics addressed the conceptual structure of dependency, not its *raison d'être*. The fact that dependency

at large was and is the basic strategy in the exercise of coloniality of power is not a question that needs lengthy and detailed argumentation. Even though in the current stage of globalization [sic] there is a Third World included in the First, the interstate system and the coloniality of power organizing [sic] it hierarchically have not vanished yet (Mignolo 2002: 62).

It is in the light of this submission that we may understand Mignolo's introduction of 'border thinking' as one of the important concepts of contemporary Latin American philosophy³.

Border thinking or theorizing [sic] emerged from and as a response to the violence (frontiers) of imperial/territorial epistemology and the rhetoric of modernity (and globalization) [sic] of salvation that continues to be implemented on the assumption of the inferiority or devilish intentions of the Other and, therefore, continues to justify oppression and exploitation as well as eradication of the difference. Border thinking is the epistemology of the exteriority; that is, of the outside created from the inside; and as such, it is always a decolonial project 'Critical border thinking' instead is grounded in the experiences of the colonies and subaltern empires. Consequently, it provides the epistemology that was denied by imperial expansion. 'Critical border thinking' also denies the epistemic privilege of the humanities and the social sciences – the privilege of an observer that makes the rest of the world an object of observation (from Orientalism to Area Studies). It also moves away from the post-colonial toward the de-colonial, shifting to the geo- and body-politics of knowledge (Mignolo 2006: 206).

It is in this context that Grosfoguel focuses on 'the ego-politics of knowledge' (Grosfoguel 2012: 88-9), where he problematically states that: 'In

³ Mignolo uses the concepts 'Third World' and 'First World' also at pages 63, 65 and 73 of the cited article. He does not, however, give any hint that he is critical of the broader usage, unlike F. Parkinson, who rightfully argues against such in his *Philosophy of International Relations: A Study in the History of Thought* (1977).

order to escape the predicament of the ego-politics of knowledge, it is absolutely necessary to shift the geography of reason toward ‘an-other’ geopolitics and ego-politics of knowledge’ (2012: 95). His endorsement of the ‘ego-politics of knowledge’ here undermines his earlier criticism of Descartes ‘solipsism’ as indispensable for the making of the ‘myth of a subject with universal rationality that confirms itself as such’ (Grosfoguel 2012: 89). Since the ‘an-other’s’ construction of knowledge is also based – in part – on the ‘ego-politics of knowledge’, is its knowledge free from ‘solipsism’? Solipsistic knowledge which is ‘mythical’ by definition can hardly make a credible claim – theoretically, at least – to a place in the geography of either ‘universal’ or ‘pluriversal’ knowledge. Solipsism must dissolve to restore the subject’s freedom to engage in dialogue in the construction of knowledge. Furthermore, Grosfoguel focuses on Africa, albeit incidentally, in his argument against the original injustice of colonisation in its various historical manifestations. It is to Grosfoguel and Africa that we now turn.

Grosfoguel and Africa

In the very early days of his philosophical writings in the English language, Dussel emerges with a direct and substantive interest in, and concern for Africa. Having mentioned figures of resistance to the colonisation of Africa such as Frantz Fanon, Samir Amin and Agostinho Neto (Dussel 1985: 74 and 77), and of Patrice Lumumba, a Congolese; certainly a member of the Bantu-speaking peoples, he writes:

When the traitorous soldier was about to plunge his bayonet in Lumumba’s entrails, that hero exclaimed, ‘All for the liberation of the African people!’ His life was an offering and homage in the *projecto* of a new country. The supreme moment of his liberative praxis was his own death. His blood fertilizes [sic] the birth of a new Africa. That is why his subversive praxis was ethical; what he undertook – destruction of the old, the dead – was metaphysical (Dussel 1985: 77; italics in the original).

Even in his later work, *The Politics of Liberation*, Dussel reveals a substantive focus on Africa, including the Bantu-speaking peoples (Dussel 2011: 236-246). In this way, Dussel is very much closer to *ubuntu*, the philosophy

and praxis of the Bantu-speaking peoples in Africa. In this respect, he is light years away from Grosfoguel. The latter would probably plead, in reply, that:

There are plenty of decolonial thinkers in Africa and South Africa that anybody interested in producing African decolonial thought has to take very seriously in order to develop Decolonial theories produced in relation to the context and realities of Africa [...] decolonial thought and theory cannot be the same everywhere. It has to be plural according to different contexts and realities. Kwame Nkrumah, Steve Biko, Ngugi Wa Thiongo, Julius Nyerere, Amilcar Cabral, etc. are among decolonial African thinkers that I have encouraged to read and study seriously in order to produce decolonial theories relevant to African liberation struggles (Letter to author from Grosfoguel, dated 21 November 2018).

None of the ‘decolonial African thinkers’ mentioned in the letter become ‘decolonial thinkers’ merely by virtue of a solemn baptism from ‘the epistemic decolonial turn’.

Both Las Casas and Dussel were and, the latter still is, physically far away from Africa. Yet, their focus on Africa was substantive. The result is the continuing impact of their insights and arguments on African thought. It is indeed fair to leave the construction of ‘decolonial’ or any other theory to Africans themselves as Grosfoguel does. However, it is not cognitively impossible for non-Africans to make a substantial contribution to African thought. By virtue of the ethically questionable ‘right of conquest’ the conquered of the Earth have, arguably, made a substantial contribution – though rarely with any influence at all – to the thought of the colonial conqueror. By voluntary commitment to the conquered of the Earth it is possible to make to make a substantial synergetic contribution to one another.

It is pertinent to note that Dussel’s philosophy of liberation was published in Spanish – *Filosofía de la Liberación* – twelve years before Grosfoguel obtained his Doctorate in Sociology. In appreciation of Dussel’s contribution, from 1986 the present author lectured on Dussel including other Latin American philosophers such as Leopoldo Zea, Augusto Salazar Bondy, and Arturo Andres Roig, alongside some African philosophers such as Theophilus Okere, Kwame Nkrumah, D. Masolo, Kwasi Wiredu, Paulin Hountondji, and Kwame Gyekye in the University of Zimbabwe. He

subsequently extended this to Addis Ababa University in Ethiopia, and many universities in South Africa. The difference between their contribution and the influence of Grosfoguel in Conqueror South Africa is that the insights and arguments of the former do have a substantive content on Africa and, thus meet the criterion of ‘relevance’. Only with vulnerable affirmation can the same be said with regard to the latter.

Like Dussel, who described Las Casas as a ‘theologian of liberation’, Grosfoguel also embraces Aime Cesaire as a ‘decolonial thinker’ (Grosfoguel 2012: 95). The recognition of identity of insight points only to conceptual affinity. It may not be transmuted into conceptual identity. Furthermore, Las Casas and Cesaire belonged to historical contexts different from our own. Against this background, we concur with Gutierrez that:

... to dub Las Casas a ‘liberation theologian’ may have the interest of calling attention to certain important aspects of his thought We understand and appreciate what is meant by those who express themselves in that way. Still, we prefer not to do so. It does not seem to us to be appropriate, even necessary, for an expression of our appreciation of his theological work and witness. That work and witness transpired in a context very different from today’s, at the social level as at the theological. Conceptual tools and the language are different too We cannot ask him to speak after the fashion of a person of the twentieth century (Gutierrez 1993: 8).

Using the vocabulary of the colonial conqueror to pursue critical dialogue between the conquered and the colonial conqueror is to imprison the conquered in the epistemological paradigm of the colonial conqueror. It is one thing to use the vocabulary of the colonial conqueror in the quest to identify precisely what is at stake. This is a must. But it is quite another matter to confine the critique of the issues raised to the linguistic and, by implication, the cultural framework of the colonial conqueror. The vernacular languages of the conquered do have equal ethical value to that of the colonial conqueror (Gutierrez 1993: 87). The present author has, in concurrence with Ali Mazrui, declared more than a decade ago (Ramose 2003) that I shall use the invention of ‘Africa’ (Mudimbe 1988) under protest (Mazrui 1986: 38).

We now turn to the significance of Grosfoguel’s ‘The Epistemic Decolonial Turn’ for Africa.

The Significance of Grosfoguel's 'Epistemic Decolonial Turn' for Africa

Grosfoguel commences his essay with the clarification of his dissatisfaction with the Latin American Subaltern Studies Group 'composed primarily by Latinamericanist scholars in the USA' (Grosfoguel 2007: 211). His main concern is that the Group reproduced the epistemic schema of Area Studies in the United States. This had epistemic 'consequences' which he 'as a Puerto Rican in the United States' could not readily accept. For him there was a need for an epistemology that could move beyond the 'epistemic schema' of Area Studies in the United States. This is the need to 'decolonise the Western canon and epistemology' (Grosfoguel 2007: 211). The outcome of his experience with the South Asian Subaltern Studies Group was the 'need to decolonize [sic] not only Subaltern Studies but also Postcolonial Studies' (Grosfoguel 2007: 212).

Grosfoguel identifies three points in order to transcend the deficiencies mentioned in the preceding paragraph. These are:

- (1) that a decolonial perspective requires a broader canon of thought than simply the Western canon (including the Left Western canon);
- (2) that a truly universal decolonial perspective cannot be based on an abstract universal but would have to be the result of the critical dialogue between diverse critical epistemic/ethic/political projects towards a pluriversal as oppose to a universal world;
- (3) that decolonization of knowledge would require to take seriously the epistemic perspective/cosmologies, insights of critical thinkers from the Global South thinking from and with subalternised racial/ethnic/sexual spaces and bodies (Grosfoguel 2007: 212).

We take no issue with Number 1 except to state that 'decolonial' is subject to our criticism of the use of the vocabulary of the oppressor. We have made this criticism above. We note that 'oppose' in Number 2 is as it appears in the original text. Furthermore, Grosfoguel's option for the 'critical' leaves the exclusion of the uncritical unexplained. His use of 'universal', though elaborated in the subsequent 2012 article, to which we have already referred, does occupy a somewhat tense relationship with 'pluriversal' under Number Three. In the 2012 article, Grosfoguel opposes 'uni-versalisms' to 'decolonial

pluri-versalism'. This opposition does not meet his third criterion requiring that taking 'seriously the epistemic perspective/cosmologies, insights' of others – as we struggle with his exclusion of the uncritical – from 'the Global South'. We understand 'the Global South' not as 'a simple geographic location but a metaphor for human suffering under global capitalism' (Mignolo 2002: 66). Accordingly, Africa as a whole also belongs to 'the Global South'. The question then is: why '-ism' – as in pluri-versal-ism – singular or plural since the basic philosophic 'insight' of the philosophy of *ubuntu* is the suffix '-ness' and not 'ism'? (Ramosé 2005: 35-46) The purpose of this question is to show that unlike Las Casas and Dussel, Grosfoguel is light years away from Africa as we have already argued above.

Grosfoguel identifies his main proposal as the search for an epistemic perspective enunciated from 'racial/ethnic subaltern locations' in order to contribute 'to a radical decolonial theory beyond the way traditional political-economy paradigms conceptualize [sic] capitalism as a global or world-system' (Grosfoguel 2007: 212). Grosfoguel leaves it to the reader to determine which tradition he has in mind, since his conception of the 'traditional' leaves the question open. Furthermore, since the 'subalternised' did not voluntarily put themselves in that position, historically, one wonders at Grosfoguel's complacent adoption of this concept. Why should those continuing to suffer the consequences of the original injustice of colonial conquest still cling to the vocabulary of the conqueror as if they lack linguistic resources to construct their own concepts related directly to their continuing suffering? (Sogolo 1993: xiv-xv). Talk of an 'African renaissance', for example, is disturbingly close – psychologically – to the desire to remain as close as possible to the oppressor. It is fearful of emancipation from the deadly claws of the oppressor.

We take issue with Grosfoguel's uncritical acceptance of the appellation 'Third World' just as we have already done above with regard to Mignolo. Furthermore, we note that we have already critiqued his use of the 'ego-politics of knowledge' above and need not repeat the critique here. It is also interesting that Grosfoguel refers to the 'so-called discovery', but overlooks to give any hint of its technical meaning – precisely in the conqueror circuit – as Williams (1990) does. Furthermore, we take issue with Grosfoguel's use of 'non-European languages' and 'non-Western people' as if other languages and the rest of humankind is simply a counterfoil of the European and the Westerner. The present author has experienced robust aversion and rejection by the 'Europeans' or 'Westerners' being addressed as

the non-Africans. The Black Consciousness Movement in Conqueror South Africa travelled a long liberating path in debunking the myth of ‘non-Europeans’ or ‘non-whites’ spread along the breadth and length of the country to ensure exclusion based on a fictive ontological hierarchy.

One of the problematical assertions of Grosfoguel is that:

One of the most powerful myths of the twentieth century was the notion that the elimination of colonial administrations amounted to the decolonization [sic] of the world. This led to the myth of a ‘post-colonial’ world (Grosfoguel 2007: 219).

It is doubtful if this ‘myth’ ever was in Africa. In the first place, the physical ‘elimination of colonial administrations’ in many parts of Africa involved only bodily absence. The new administrators of Africa in black or yellow bodies often continued the same administration that was forcibly implanted into Africa. It is therefore problematical to equate physical ‘elimination’ with epistemic eradication. Even those African leaders who openly declared their love of the Westminster or French political paradigms recognised, by their very love of these systems, their administrations as the continuation of that of the physically absent administrators. The proposal of *Ujamaa* by Nyerere was an epistemic departure from keeping the physically absent administrators present. Because of this, Western imperialism killed Tanzaphilia (Mazrui 1969: 267).

The love of the Westminster or French system did not blind certain African leaders to the ethical imperative for epistemic liberation. For example, in his speech to the first meeting of the republican parliament of Ghana, Nkrumah declared that:

A commission is being appointed to investigate and report upon university education and the Government intends that a University of Ghana will be created which will not only reflect African traditions and culture, but will also play a constructive part in the programme of national awakening and reconstruction.

Thus, for Nkrumah, the ‘postcolonial’ world meant also the practical implementation of a programme towards epistemic liberation. Nyerere with his *Ujamaa* and Nkrumah with his ‘creation’ – perhaps inadvertently indicated a beginning from zero, in the sense of either the elimination or the modification

of the Western epistemological paradigm – of a ‘University of Ghana’ asserted and affirmed by an epistemic turn after the concession to political independence by the colonial conqueror.

The epistemic turn described above does not necessarily require the label ‘decolonial’, especially in view of Nkrumah’s *Consciencism: A philosophy and ideology for decolonisation*. Decolonisation refers to the cessation of the status of being a colony. The colonies ceased to exist physically in Africa at political independence. Some African leaders, for example Nkrumah and Nyerere, asserted and affirmed an epistemic turn precisely as a challenge to the still dominant epistemological paradigm of the colonial conqueror. In this situation, why should ‘decolonial’ return to Africa act not only as a reminder that there were colonies in the continent but also as the harbinger of a purportedly new epistemic paradigm to deal with the already challenged epistemological paradigm of the colonial conqueror?

In his speech, ‘Africa’s Challenge’, delivered to the Ghanaian Parliament on 6 August, 1960, Nkrumah argued that ‘The new colonialism creates client states, independent in name, but in point of fact pawns of the colonial power that is supposed to have given them independence’. Nkrumah does not return to decolonisation. Rather he introduces a concept consistent with the recognition that the colonies have ceased to exist, at least physically. This concept is: ‘the new colonialism’ extensively discussed in his book, *neo-colonialism*. As is well-known, aid promised to Ghana by the United States of America was withheld at the publication of the book. It would seem that even the United States observed a burgeoning epistemic turn deemed to be a challenge to its hegemony.

It would seem then that the addition of ‘decolonial’ to the conceptual history of African political philosophy is somewhat redundant. The redundancy is placed into sharper relief by the recognition that the insights contained in Bondy’s article already referred to are identical to those of Nkrumah’s *Consciencism*. Though geographically far away from each other and, not knowing each other at that time, it is as if Nkrumah and Bondy were writing sitting right next to each other. Here is an example of identity of insight. Nkrumah cautions the ‘non-Western’ student of philosophy against studying philosophy ‘in the same spirit’ as the Western student. We certainly censure Nkrumah’s use of ‘non-Western’, just as we have done with regard to Grosfoguel. We however recognise that his conception of the ‘non-Western’ also includes Latin America. It is salutary to note that his ‘non-Western’ must

give place to ‘the South’ as explained by Mignolo above. Here is an example of a new concept preserving an insight already present in the past. The same cannot be said of Grosfoguel’s ‘The Epistemic Decolonial Turn’. However, the force of his argument in this and his other essays we have referred to must really be taken into account, and this is the significance of Grosfoguel to Africa and, South Africa in particular. Does Africa and the conquered of the Earth fare much better without the concept, ‘decolonial’? To this question we now turn.

Colonisation is against Learning to be Human

The basic thrust of Western colonisation in its various historical manifestations to date involves the stubborn refusal to treat ‘the other’ as a human being. We limit ourselves to the experience of colonisation by the West without implying any moral excuse for other colonisers in the world. From ancient Greece right up to our time, the leitmotif of colonisation has been the defence of the de-humanisation of ‘the other’ by guile, myth and the application of brute physical force (Isaac 2004:30). Often these three elements went together in the West’s self-imposed mission of the de-humanisation of humanity under the guise of ‘civilisation’. In the contemporary conceptual history of African political philosophy, ‘the quest for a true humanity’ second to none underlines both the beginning and the continuation of the struggle against the original injustice of colonisation. To borrow the expression in inverted commas from Bantu Biko is not to dub him a ‘decolonial’ thinker. On the contrary, it is to underline the point that the ontological equality of all human beings ought to be realised in practice. From Latin America we learn that:

Dehumanization [sic], which marks not only those whose humanity has been stolen, but also (though in a different way) those who have stolen it, is a *distortion* of the vocation of becoming more fully human. This distortion occurs within history; but it is not an historical vocation. Indeed, to admit of dehumanization [sic] as an historical vocation would lead either to cynicism or total despair. The struggle for humanization [sic], for the emancipation of labor, for the overcoming of alienation, for the affirmation of men and women as persons would be meaningless. This struggle is possible only because dehumanization [sic], although a concrete historical fact, is *not* a given

destiny but the result of an unjust order that engenders violence in the oppressors, which in turn dehumanizes [sic] the oppressed (Freire 2003: 44).

The ethical-historical counter to dehumanisation is learning to be human. It is indeed a life-long learning, because each historical moment can have its peculiar manifestations of dehumanisation. Because of this re-humanisation presents itself as the fundamental ethical counter to dehumanisation. On the basis of this reasoning, it is re-humanisation and not ‘decolonial’ that speaks to the basic issue of the struggle for truth, justice, and peace in the world. As a conceptual tool to understand and struggle against injustice in a given historical moment, the ‘decolonial’ is merely optional, since it can neither supersede nor eradicate the ethical-historical project of the re-humanisation of human relations at all levels. It is not only Africa but the entire human family – the ‘racial siblings’ of Las Casas – that will fare better with the pursuit of the project to re-humanise human relations.

Conclusion

We have placed Grosfoguel in the conceptual history of Latin America, in particular, the political philosophy of that history. We have shown that he does belong to this history and is its continuator in his own right. We have questioned the relevance of ‘the epistemic decolonial turn’ to Africa showing that the conceptual history of African political philosophy can fare better without the label ‘decolonial’. We are aware of the many points we could have raised, for example, Grosfoguel’s distinction between ‘coloniality’ and ‘colonial situations’ (Grosfoguel 2007: 220) in relation to the ensuing tension between ‘democracy’ and timocracy. But the strictures of space dictate otherwise. By challenging Grosfoguel’s predilection for ‘-ism’, we have shown how far away he is from the ‘-ness’ of the philosophy of *ubuntu*. If we should resort to our linguistic resources against the background of this philosophy then *mothofatso* would be the appropriate concept for a continued re-humanisation of human relations.

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📖 Book Review 📖

The Quintessential Frantz Fanon

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Frantz Fanon: Alienation and Freedom

Edited by Jean Khalfa and Robert J.C. Young

Translated by Steven Corcoran

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[...It] is always necessary to remember that mental illness is often manifest through an alteration in the notion of the 'I' (p. 318).

Alienation and Freedom is a voluminous collection, which reaffirms Frantz Fanon's stature as a prolific writer and epitomizes his eclecticism by demonstrating the multi-disciplinary calibre of his intellectual acumen. Divided into 5 sections, namely, 1. Theatre; 2. Psychiatric writing; 3. Political writing; 4. Publishing Fanon's Library and Life, this collection of Frantz Fanon's posthumous writing helps to fill the gap on what has, hitherto, been missing in the studies of Fanon's oeuvre by publishing, to a great extent, previously inaccessible writings of this revolutionary public intellectual. The collection covers a wide spectrum of genres, including Fanon's doctoral thesis, case studies, letters, journal entries, speeches, lectures, articles etc.

Largely known for his psychiatric and political writings, the bulk of the chapters of this Fanon collection focus on his unwavering commitment to and straddling of these discourses. Regarding the section on Fanon's psychiatric writing, it is somewhat befitting that it begins with his doctoral

dissertation, which is preceded by Jean Khalfa's broader contextualization of Fanon's psychiatric writing. This is the more so because herein lies the roots of Fanon's transgressive discourse that was meant to challenge and invert colonial logic. Jean Khalfa provides an incisive argument on Fanon as a revolutionary psychiatrist by delineating an evolution of Fanon's thought that some Fanon scholars seemed to have glossed over, either because of his neuro-psychiatric approach which, Khalfa argues, may not be as easily accessible to scholars from other disciplines, unlike his focus on the psychopathology of the colonized, which has been the staple diet for most studies on Fanon. He goes on to point out that the bulk of Fanon's initial or early publications were taken from his doctoral thesis, which focused on neurology but dealt, albeit glibly, with the alienation of the Black person.

The editors have chosen to follow a somewhat chronological order in the structure of chapters on psychiatric writings for the purposes of their readers' understanding of the evolution of Fanon's trajectory in this field. As can be inferred, for readers not well conversant with the technical intricacies of psychiatry, Khalfa's introduction as well as annotations are extremely useful, especially when it comes to grappling with the gist of Fanon thesis. Some of the case studies are, however, easily accessible, for example, 'Maghrebi Muslims and their Attitude to Madness', when Fanon argues:

.... [The] mentally ill patient is absolutely alienated, he is not responsible for his disorder; the genies alone bear responsibility. The patient is an innocent victim of the genie or genies that possess him The patient's conduct is 'interpreted' according to general beliefs.... His credit remains intact (pp. 422-423).

Sounds familiar for readers rooted in African communities! Of course, there are those chapters that are rather too technical for a lay person's eye and this is to be expected.

The profundity of Fanon's thought is, nevertheless, captured as he proffers succinctly his view on what may be considered the mundane practices of everyday life, as in the chapter titled 'Trait d'Union', which is taken from the ward journal of Saint Alban psychiatric hospital, where Fanon was an intern. For example, in his entry to the journal on 30 January 1953 titled 'The human being faced with things', he writes: 'to want or desire a car is to want to have the desire for a car no longer. To desire something is to want to desire

it no longer' (281) or, later 6 March 1953 'Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow': 'Memory is often the mother of tradition. Now, if it is good to have a tradition, it is also agreeable to be able to go beyond the tradition and invent a new mode of living' (283). These are just a few of the examples that demonstrate Fanon's consummate writing skills in persuading his readers to endorse his views. Uppermost in Fanon's psychiatric writings, is the notion: 'Colonialist psychiatry as a whole has to be disalienated' (417) and this is a stance that draws on the 'disalienist' teaching of Saint-Alban asylum and Professor Tosquelle, according to Khalifa. The last chapter in the section on Fanon's writing titled 'The Meeting between Society and Psychiatry', is based on the notes taken by Lilia Ben Salem, Tunis, 1959-1960 (27). It has to be pointed out that this is the most accessible chapter to a lay person, maybe because these are lecture notes meant for the consumption of Fanon's students:

The mad person is one who is 'foreign' to society. And society decides, to rid itself of this anarchic element. Internment is the rejection, the side-lining of the patient. The psychiatrist is the auxiliary of the police, the protector of the society... (p. 517).

There are shades of Du Bois in the subsection 'Problem of the Encounter' in this passage:

In a society that is as divided as American society, to what extent can a Black encounter a White? When a Black American is face to face with a White, stereotypes immediately intervene; it is necessary for him not to be 'true' with the White because the value systems are not the same; at bottom, there is a lie which is the lie of the situation When a Black addresses a White, first he has a particular voice, as well as particular demeanour and style. When the white element intervenes in Harlem, racial solidarity is immediately manifest (p. 526).

This obviously calls to mind Du Bois metaphor of 'double consciousness', in terms of which the African American of the 20th century had to negotiate the dichotomy of reconciling the self with an all-embracing American identity in order to resolve his or her predicament and find the true self.

Fanon was obviously a voracious reader who had a keen interest in psychology, politics and sociology, literature, as can be inferred from his

previous publications, however, what came as a surprise to me was that Fanon also dabbled with creative writing; theatrical productions such as *Drawing Eye* and *Parallel Hands* (1949) included in this collection are a case in point. Robert Young's lengthy introduction to Fanon's theatre provides the historical context of Fanon's theatre as well as a profound analysis of the two plays, which is crucial for potential readers to get to grips with Fanon's theatre. As Young puts it, in parts:

[...] the plays could be best described as philosophical dramatisations: they are primarily plays of ideas not of character. However...they are not merely cerebral, as a result of the distinctive poetic-surrealist idiom of Fanon's language, they come across as 'lived things', intensely physical, visceral, full of affect, with the sensations of the trembling dispersed body emphasized from it (p. 14).

Indeed, Young's analysis of both plays is illuminatingly exhaustive in its provision of possible multi-readings of the two plays by Fanon. It will not come as a surprise, therefore, if there is, in the recent future, a proliferation of papers or studies with a keen interest in focusing on these two plays.

Most important with regards to the literary Fanon, is his scathing critique of Richard Wright's 'White Man Listen'. Having read with interest and enjoyed Wright's writings prior to this (as clearly indicated on the footnote, p. 637), he takes issue with the political logic of this work, in a letter to Wright. Fanon indicates here that he was so interested in Wright's work that he was working on a study on the human significance of Wright's work. He goes on to make his point by immediately pointing out the pitfalls of Richard Wright's liberal humanism:

If we can point to a sterile approach, then it is one that consists for an oppressed person, in trying to speak to the 'heart' of his oppressors: history contains no example of a dominant power yielding to the tongue lashings, however, reasonable and moving, of those that it crushes, against material interests, sentiments and good sense are never heard (p. 637).

He continues in his objection to Wright's ideological stance (p. 638): 'Wright is satisfied with citing the main components of the black man of whom he provides a global and, consequently, superficial view [...] the black man that

Wright shows to the white man is not the black man he speaks to him about'. He sums up his argument with this cynical question: 'Has history taught Richard Wright nothing?' and a retort, 'We might be permitted to think so' (640).

For South African literary scholars, this brings to mind the debate that Njabulo Ndebele raised in the 1980s over the proposed title of the anthology of Black South African poetry that was due for publication. When the editor Essop Patel suggested the title 'Ask Any Black Man', Ndebele wrote a long letter to *Staffrider* taking issue with that title on the grounds that it implied targeting the 'hearts' of whites, which was a rather futile exercise given the historical context of the struggle narrative at that point in time. As a result of his intervention, the title was changed to *The Return of the Amasi Bird*. Coming back to Fanon's reading of Wright's book, the title of Wright's book, in terms of the clarion call of its plea here, bears the imprint of such an anachronism within the American context in that era, and Fanon captures this very succinctly in his letter to Richard Wright which appeared in *El Moudjahid*, No. 47, 3 August 1959 (p. 637-638).

The bulk of the book consists of Fanon's political writings; the recurring message throughout is summed up in his radical political stance, marked by his revolutionary zeal, as can be seen here:

The African peoples, in a painful and heroic effort, are standing upright, and have decided at all costs to take back their stolen personality, to affirm their humiliated dignity, to wrest back their status as free peoples, to turn forever the hideous page of slavery and servitude (p. 627).

Some of the chapters in this section overlap with or reiterate Fanon's political stance as found in his collection of political speeches that appeared in *Towards an African Revolution*. This includes his endorsement and justification of violence in the fight for liberation against colonialism, as well as his analysis of the unfolding of the liberation struggle in Algeria and the continent. The difference in this collection is that these ideas are more clearly pronounced than in the earlier publication. Fanon's unwavering commitment and revolutionary zeal ring true in the following retort, which appears in chapter 3 of his political writings, under the title 'National Independence: The Only Possible Outcome'.

The revolution is by essence an enemy of half-measures, compromises and backward steps. Taken to its end, it saves peoples; stopped in the process of happening, it brings about their loss and consummates their ruin. The revolutionary process is irreversible and inexorable. Political sense commands that its march not be stymied (p. 553).

As can be inferred from these words, writing this piece for *El Moudjahid* in September 1957, these are the pronouncements of an activist brimming with confidence that the gains of the revolution were irreversible and victory was within reach.

Having said that, Fanon's posthumous collection provides a new dimension to the Fanon scholarship in so far as it unearths some previously unpublished material and, therefore, serves as an invitation for Fanon scholars to re-read and rediscover Fanon. Whether this new publication will throw the existing Fanon scholarship into disarray or will help augment and shed more light on the existing scholarship even more, is a moot point; what is clear, however, is that, in the light of this revelation of a broader canvas of Fanon's work, Fanonian studies will need revisiting. For cultural studies and literary studies scholars, however, the book paves the way for an appreciation of Fanon's aesthetic perspective; but, more importantly, it provides something to ponder for scholars in psychiatry and politics. Ultimately, this collection is the quintessential for the Fanon scholarship across disciplines: Fanon's attention to detail, his astute analysis and clarity of vision are amplified in this collection. As a matter of fact, the richness of Fanon's *Alienation and Freedom* cannot be exhaustively captured within the confines of a book review; its profundity requires a longer review article.

Be that as it may, this collection of Fanon's work not only bears testimony to Fanon's versatility, but also provides yet another wider dimension of Fanon's astute analysis of the postcolonial human condition. The broader packaging of the book, and its representation, is excellent, and noteworthy; it makes for insightful reading. If you want to immerse yourself in yet another Fanon milestone contribution to postcolonial studies, this should be your bedside book!

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Journal article by one author

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Journal article by two authors

Mkhize, N. & N. Ndimande-Hlongwa 2014. African Languages, Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS), and the Transformation of the Humanities and Social Sciences in Higher Education. *Alternation* 21,2: 10 – 37. Available at: <http://alternation.ukzn.ac.za/Files/docs/21.2/02%20Mkh.pdf>. (Accessed on 08 May 2017.)

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ARTICLES

Afrikan-Centred Psychology:

Illuminating the Human Spirit: Spirit(ness), *Skh Djr*, *Moya*

<i>Nhlanhla Mkhize and Wade W. Nobles</i> Editorial	1
<i>Wade W. Nobles and Nhlanhla Mkhize</i> The Charge and the Challenge of Illuminating the Spirit (<i>Skh Djr</i>): The Question of Paradigm, Episteme and Terminology for Therapy and Treatment	6
<i>Taylor D. Duckett</i> Spirit Talk within the African Epistemological Framework	40
<i>Vera L. Nobles and Roberta M. Federico</i> African Tongues in Our Mouths: Their Role in African-Centered Psychology	50
<i>Julia Simango and Puleng Segalo</i> Re-imagining Psychology: An Africanist Perspective ..	67
<i>Derek Wilson</i> African Cultural Psychology	85
<i>Zethu Cakata</i> Safely Nestled in IsiXhosa is a Psychology of a People	113
<i>Lesiba Baloyi</i> Epistemological Exclusion: The Case of the Master's Degree Programmes in Clinical Psychology in South Africa	130
<i>Huberta Jackson-Lowman</i> Serial Forced Displacements and the Decline of <i>Ubuntu</i> in Afrikan American Communities	153
<i>Cheryl Tawede Grills, Enola G. Aird and Patrick G. Frierson</i> African Psychology and the Global Movement for Freedom from the Lie of Black Inferiority	170
<i>Molebogeng Kalija Makobe-Rabothata</i> The Adoption of <i>Lekgotla</i> in Understanding Positive Experiences of Working in a Transforming Open Distance Learning (ODL) Academic Context	207
<i>Lawford L. Goddard, Daryl M. Rowe, Erica M. McInnis and Chante DeLoach</i> The Role of Proverbs in African-Centred Psychology	224
<i>Patricia Nunley</i> <i>NGOLO</i> : (Re)membering the African American Child as a Normative for Self-Healing Power	244
<i>Mogobe Bernard Ramose</i> Critique of Ramon Grosfoguel's 'The Epistemic Decolonial Turn'	271

BOOK REVIEW

<i>Jabulani Mkhize</i> The Quintessential Frantz Fanon. Review of <i>Frantz Fanon: Alienation and Freedom</i> , edited by Jean Khalfa and Robert J.C. Young (2019)	308
Contributors	315

