Envisioning Photovoice as Decolonial Feminist Praxis

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Introduction

Photovoice is a visual participatory action research methodology (PAR) influenced by feminist theory and Freirian critical consciousness (Foster-Fisherman et al. 2005; Wang 2006), that speaks to some of community psychology's central aims, such as empowerment, liberation and social justice. However, these aims can be ambiguous and legitimize rather than challenge dominant structures (Burton et al. 2012). The participatory aspect of community psychology interventions are often undertheorized and are the point at which these aims are challenged in practice (Cooke and Kothari 2001). We argue that current debates on the decolonisation of psychology (e.g. Adams Gómez Ordóñez et al. 2017) should extend to community psychology to highlight power-relations in participatory endeavours. In this chapter, we reflect on how photovoice research might be practiced within an emerging decolonial feminist community psychology focusing particularly on participants' voices in the analysis and dissemination of academic knowledge.

Background on Photovoice Methodology

Photovoice, developed by Wang and Burris in the 1990s for public health research, has been used within community psychology to explore multiple issues including youth perceptions of safety (Suffla et al. 2015) and violence (Chonody et al. 2013); fatherhood (Helman et al. 2018); and survival after political repression (Lykes et al. 2003).

Photovoice connects with community psychology's stated – but often ignored in practice (see Gokani and Walsh 2017) – goal of social change. Participants produce photographs documenting aspects of their lives (Wang and Burris 1997; Wang 1999), which are then used to engage participants in critical group discussions about the oppressive conditions of their lives and how to enact social change. These photographs are publically exhibited to key stakeholders and the broader community, illuminating participants' experiences and perspectives; presenting opportunities for participants to engage with decision makers (Foster-Fisherman et al. 2005; Wang 2006; Wang and Burris 1997); and sometimes resulting in concrete changes in participants' lives (e.g. see Bishop et al. 2013).

Photovoice thus espouses an emancipatory research paradigm positioning participants as experts of their own lives, agents of change in their communities and co-producers of knowledge in the research endeavour (Wang and Burris 1997). Knowledge production is considered a participatory and collective process that mitigates the epistemic violence of much psychological research. However, participatory research has been criticised for subtly reproducing power relations (Cooke and Kothari 2001) and often participation ceases at the academic dissemination phase. As we will examine below, for photovoice to enable emancipatory praxis we propose situating the methodology within decolonial feminist community psychology,

which may mediate some of the implicitly oppressive tendencies of mainstream community psychology.

Photovoice as Decolonial Feminist Praxis in Community Psychology

Critiques of mainstream community psychology suggest it is largely acritical and at times complicit in upholding systems of oppression (Coimbra et al. 2012). There is some debate as to whether reactionary and apolitical inclinations within the discipline have been increasing over time (see Coimbra et al. 2012) or have been prominent within dominant community psychology since its development in the 1960s (Gokani and Walsh 2017). Regardless, critics emphasise the need for critical community psychologies to explicitly examine:

> the constructed consequence of prolonged colonialist oppression and profound social injustice recently reproduced in recent reactionary, so-called, 'innovations' in mental health social policy and practice in Western Europe which fail to address the most basic social, political and economic issues and, paradoxically, contribute to the creation of oppression, injustice and suffering (Coimbra et al. 2012, p. 138).

Community psychology in South Africa emerged in the 1980's as a critical response to much needed theoretical and methodological expansions within the discipline of psychology (Seedat and Lazarus 2011). Many were questioning the relevance of psychology (Long 2013), a discipline historically implicated in legitimising the oppressive structures of apartheid and colonisation by espousing practices of inferiorisation and control along 'categories' of race, class, and gender (Kessi and Boonzaier 2017). However, current debates on the decolonisation of higher education in South Africa have highlighted the need to revisit issues of relevance and the extent to which psychological research and practice sufficiently consider the particularities of postcolonial contexts (Kessi and Boonzaier 2017). In this regard, PAR methods such as photovoice have much to offer research in community psychology (Foster-Fisherman et al. 2005; Orford 2008). We propose that combining photovoice research with an explicitly decolonial feminist lens is a step towards challenging pathological thinking about colonised peoples and renewing the relevance of psychological research and practice.

Photovoice falls within feminism's theoretical ambit. Developed partly as a feminist approach to PAR (Wang and Burris 1997), photovoice, as Latz (2017) asserts, "is one way to *do* feminism" (p. 59). Photovoice, like feminist theory, is grounded on participants' active involvement in decision-making and the privileging of knowledge gained through lived experience (Wang 1999). However, feminist theories hold different overarching conceptions of participation. Whilst dominant approaches to feminism in community psychology tend towards liberal feminism which focuses on a gender rights discourse, alternative feminisms, such as Marxist feminism, radical feminism or African feminism have anti-capitalist, anti-patriarchal,

anti-racist, and anti-imperialist agendas (Kiguwa 2004). We see a decolonial femi-
nist praxis as drawing on these different approaches and addressing the multiple and
intersecting workings of power at local and global levels. A decolonial feminist
framework is not only rooted in a historical understanding of the effects of colonial
power in contemporary society, but also centres the lived experiences of womxn[1] in
their interconnectedness with others and with the institutions and structures of soci-
ety, as well as the experiences of all those (womxn and mxn) who have been histori-
cally marginalised and oppressed. The 'decolonial turn' is not a distinct school of
thought, but rather various theoretical positions, such as decolonial feminism, that
all "share a view of coloniality as a fundamental problem in the modern (as well as
postmodern and information) age, and of decolonization or decoloniality as a neces-
sary task that remains unfinished" (Maldonado-Torres 2011, p. 2).

Framing photovoice as decolonial feminist praxis means that its key basis of
participation must espouse an ongoing commitment to challenging these historical
multiple and interconnected forms of power. In practice, this is difficult to achieve
and participation has ambiguous effects. Critics of international development work,
for example, demonstrate how 'participatory' projects can legitimise processes that
maintain uneven power-relations between stakeholders (White 1996). This is rein-
forced through complex international aid chains (Kelly and Birdsall 2010) and the
institutional power to define 'how' participation will occur and what is considered a
successful outcome (Seckinelgin 2012). Contradictorily, this instrumental use of
participation can further disempower already marginalised groups. Furthermore,
without sufficient access to symbolic and political power, participants in a PAR
project may inadvertently reproduce notions about themselves and their communi-
ties as disempowered (Kessi 2011). Hence, photovoice projects too risk becoming
"instrumental practice" (Coemans et al. 2017, p. 18–19) if they fail to create condi-
tions for agency and resistance (Howarth et al. 2014) within oppressive power
structures.

When photovoice is "situated at the interface" of critical feminist and decolonial
methodologies it can facilitate "participant protagonism towards emancipatory
praxis" (Lykes and Scheib 2015, p. 131). A decolonial feminist theoretical frame-
work explicitly challenges the gendered, classist, and racialised power structures
embedded in the photovoice participants' lives and promotes socially just praxes
(Lykes and Scheib 2015). Thus, it may counter mainstream community psycholo-
gy's tendency to seek 'social reform' at an individual level rather than transforma-
tive changes to oppressive systems (see Gokani and Walsh 2017).

In the photovoice project we describe below, we were concerned with these mul-
tiple and intersecting oppressions operating within South African higher education
institutions and how photovoice can provide the tools for resistance and change.
Specifically, we extend the often ambivalent concept of 'participation' to include
the practice of co-authorship between three decolonial feminists from different
backgrounds and situated differently in a photovoice project.

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[1] We use the term 'womxn' to allow space for individuals who identify as genderfluid, genderqueer,
gender non-conforming, or non-binary.

Photovoice, Participant Co-Authorship and Critical Reflexivity

Although photovoice has social justice and empowerment potential, theorists have questioned whether in some applications of this method "much of its critical edge has been diluted" (Lykes and Scheib 2015, p. 140) with the risk of reproducing power inequity under the illusion of participatory action (Bishop et al. 2013). As Latz (2017) highlights, acknowledging the influence of feminist theory on photovoice does not guarantee that all aspects of a project will exemplify feminist principles. Despite photovoice's theoretical emphasis on participation, it is uncommon for participants to be involved in the academic dissemination of the research (Evans-Agnew and Rosemberg 2016; Sitter 2017). Only minimal published research articles have photovoice participants as academic co-authors (e.g. Bishop et al. 2013). Evans-Agnew's and Rosemberg's (2016) critical review of 21 photovoice studies concluded that photovoice project designs vary in how participant voice is advanced, to the extent that participant voice is most absent in the manuscript publication stage. This absence is significant because researchers' power is most often exercised in the publication and dissemination process (Lykes and Scheib 2015). There is a need to reflect more thoroughly on whose voice is served in the academic publication of participants' photo-stories (Evans-Agnew and Rosemberg 2016). Participant co-authorship has many important benefits. It ensures adequate credit is given to those who have contributed to knowledge creation (Castleden et al. 2010); and it reinforces the importance of considering perspectives and forms of knowledge from outside the academy (Flicker and Nixon 2016). For those participants based in academic environments (such as the participants in our study, who were university students), co-authorship may also have direct professional advantages (Flicker and Nixon 2016).

Qualitative research generally, and feminist and decolonial frameworks particularly, have highlighted the importance of considering researchers' reflexivity. This includes rejecting researcher neutrality; reflecting on the researcher's intersecting identities, their intentions, and their ideological assumptions; and considering the power dynamics between researchers and participants (Burr 1995). In photovoice projects, ongoing reflexivity ensures marginalised voices are centred and social change is promoted, but also reveals the author's influence and position. Despite researchers' ultimate control over photovoice project data dissemination and despite the commitment to critical reflexivity in feminist research, researchers rarely reflect on their positionality within PAR publications (Smith et al. 2010). The few photovoice researchers who have published critical reflections provide insight into the varied dynamics within the photovoice process (e.g. Horwitz 2012; Suffla et al. 2015). Suffla et al. (2015), for example, utilise reflexivity to reveal the tensions, power dynamics, and variabilities in their photovoice project on youth perceptions of safety. In community psychologies drawing on critical paradigms, such as decolonial feminist community psychology, changing oppressive and inequitable social arrangements requires a reflexivity comprising both critical reflection and action (Montero 2011; Suffla et al. 2015). As researchers we cannot challenge epistemological violence embedded in research practice without "deep reflection on

the ways the intersectionality of our identities plays out in the framing, design and interpretation of research" (Law 2016, p. 530). For a photovoice project to embody PAR aims, and align with both Freirean theory and decolonial feminism's attention to transformative praxis and challenging power imbalances, researchers should ensure reflective participation throughout the entire photovoice process, including dissemination (Sitter 2017). As Evans-Agnew and Rosemberg (2016) recommend:

> Given the underlying social justice intent of photovoice, and the primacy of privileging participants with the ability to speak and the right to be heard, we are left to question whether future photovoice researchers should rethink the fundamentals of their designs, and engineer distinct strategies to advance participant voice in the analysis and dissemination of photo-texts (p. 1028).

Until now, although participants in Shose and Josie's work have been involved in other forms of dissemination, despite our stated commitment to participatory research none of our academic publications have included participants in co-authorship roles. Shose and Josie have authored several publications on the project's findings (see Cornell and Kessi 2017; Kessi and Cornell 2015), including a publication in which we analysed Linda's photovoice data (see Cornell et al. 2018). We have tried to be sensitive to the participants' voices. We produced the photographs and captions unedited so the participants' voices reach otherwise inaccessible audiences directly. When participants used nudity to resist the University's institutional culture and requested that their photographs were uncensored, we agreed despite discomfort around the naked body in academic publishing. However, we felt a truly decolonial feminist reflection on the photovoice process should include participants' perspectives more directly. In this collaborative chapter, by adopting a decolonial feminist lens, we disrupt this, and reflect critically on the photovoice process from three positionalities within a photovoice project: research participant, student-researcher and academic supervisor. Specifically, we explore the enactment of decolonial feminist mentorship in community psychology through the lens of a photovoice project examining transformation at a South African university. Rather than analysing Linda's photo-stories, as Shose and Josie have done elsewhere, Linda presents, reflects on and contextualises her *own* photo-stories as co-author rather than subject. We argue this also addresses some of the ambiguous effects of participation, being the ability for powerful institutions (such as academia) to define the participatory process outcomes and we propose that this offers a method through which to decolonise how research in the academy is traditionally carried out.

Photovoice Study Background and Context at UCT

Our photovoice project examined black students' experiences of transformation at a historically white South African university, the University of Cape Town (UCT) between 2013 and 2015. After the dismantling of apartheid in 1994, UCT's transformation policy has focused on increasing the diversity of the student population.

However, beyond a more representative student body, transformation has been slow, inadequate and contested. As the RhodesMustFall[2] and FeesMustFall[3] student protests have highlighted, the University's institutional culture privileges whiteness, and many black students and staff experience alienation and exclusion. The photo-stories created by the students in our studies have elucidated, amongst other things, the curriculum's Eurocentric focus; the colonial symbolism around campus; the adherence to rigid gender binaries in the organisation of space; the lack of black academic staff; and the dominance of stigmatising discourses around blackness within the University. The students in the photovoice studies used their photo-stories to resist the coloniality embedded within the University's institutional culture and emphasise the need to decolonise the institution.

Part of this study formed the basis of Josie's Research Psychology Masters' thesis, supervised by Shose. Linda, an undergraduate student in the Department of Psychology at the time, was a participant in the 2015 stage of this project. Since her participation in the project, Linda pursued psychology as a postgraduate and now professionally. As a postgraduate student, Linda conducted her own photovoice project exploring how blackness and gender/sexuality is navigated at a historically white university.

Critical Reflections on Photovoice Across Levels of Participation

It has been a privilege to work together as emerging decolonial feminist community psychologists in this photovoice project about race in the academy. In many ways, the three of us were bound together from the start of the project given our common situatedness in an academic institution. Despite differences in our everyday experiences of UCT, we nevertheless shared an insider perspective on many unspoken and assumed cultural practices occurring within academic institutions. Unlike other community psychological work where researchers enter a community as complete 'outsiders', this project reflects our deep personal and political connection to the space and motivation to change it, as revealed in the following reflections.

As supervisor, lead researcher and initiator of this project, Shose's research practice is located within a historical institutional space in which she has experienced alienation as well as deep connection, therefore presenting both possibilities and limitations for promoting critical consciousness and social justice. Through this project, engaging with race, class, and gender within the university itself went to the core of the necessary epistemic questioning involved in building decolonial feminist scholarship. Before venturing into communities 'out there', it is important to ques-

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[2] RhodesMustFall is a student resistance movement initiated in 2015, which calls for the decolonisation of higher education in South Africa.

[3] FeesMustFall is a student resistance movement concerned with increased fees at South African universities which further impede black, poor and/or historically disadvantaged students.

tion our own situatedness and whether our conceptual and methodological practices can contribute to any kind of social justice. This project represented a 'way in' for students at UCT, both as researchers and participants, to reflect on the idea of the university, its role and its functioning through their own experiences of alienation and belonging.

Photovoice as a Participant

Linda's 'way in' was initially as a participant. As she reflects here below:

> *As the researched, I was involved in the photovoice project reflecting on the experiences of black students at UCT. My then lecturer, Shose, who would later informally become a mentor to me, approached me to participate. After a focus group discussion and camera training, I was asked the question "what does it mean to be a black student at UCT?" and used photography to answer this. Responding to this question verbally was straightforward as there was already an ongoing conversation about transformation in the institution. However, visually capturing what it meant to be a black student at UCT was a new and exciting challenge. The challenge came with knowing what my lived experience was in this body but being concerned with how I would meaningfully represent all of this in just a few photographs. I have always known that I am black but it was through my university education and experience that I came to understand what that truly meant on a larger scale. Each of my social science classes contributed differently to my growing critical consciousness, which unquestionably developed alongside this photovoice project. The answer to the aforementioned question included photographs of the base on which the Cecil John Rhodes[4] statue once sat (see Fig. 1 and 2).*

This photograph spoke to how fulfilling it was to have been a part of the process of getting the statue removed. Simultaneously, the remaining base was a painful reminder of how institutional racism remained even after the physical statue had been removed.
Additionally, I photographed (see Fig. 3) the doors and names of nine academics in the Mechanical Engineering department which I felt demonstrated the skewed racial and gender representation of academics at UCT.

> *In hindsight, my understanding of blackness was narrow and non-intersectional. I had expected that other participants would have similar experiences to me and that each photo-story would reiterate what others had captured. In my photo-stories, I spoke about and, more importantly, reflected on the range of experiences related to my racial identity. This included my involvement in the #RhodesMustFall movement, expressing my frustration with the lack of black academics in my department/university and speaking about the rude awakening that came with encountering microaggressions inside and outside the lecture halls. There was a moment of reflection of my gendered experience which meant speaking*

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[4] Cecil John Rhodes was Prime Minister of the Cape Colony in the late 1800s. He implemented multiple laws forcing black people off their land. He bequeathed the land on the slopes of Devil's Peak (the site of the University's Upper Campus) as the site for UCT and despite being a reviled figure the statue commemorating his memory was displayed at UCT until the RhodesMustFall student protests in 2015 forced its removal.

Figs. 1 and 2 Cecil John Rhodes Is Still Here: The above pictures were taken where the Cecil John Rhodes statue used to sit. Now you will find the stand with the words "C.J waz here!" and a shadow of the statue spray-painted in the same area. The #RhodesMustFall movement was an attempt at racial transformation at UCT. However, even though the physical removal of CJR was a great achievement, there is still a lot of racist actions within the institution. In my particular experience, the drawing of the CJR shadow is representative of a lack of empathy for the struggles of black students at UCT. It is painful to think that someone thought it would be funny or necessary to paint this shadow of CJR after students had articulated their struggles during the RMF movement

Fig. 3 What's in a name? The above pictures are of several names of the lecturers/professors in the Mechanical Engineering department. Here I attempted to show the lack of racial and gender representation within UCT. One of my biggest struggles has been that I seldom see people who look like me at the front of the classroom. The lack of diversity, in terms of race and gender, but also in terms of disability, sexual orientations, religion, etc. is concerning at such a university. A transformed UCT is one where these doors represent all types of social identities

on the lack of women academics and then having to find sisterhood with other black women lecturers and friends to compensate for this. Looking back again, I realise that I did not account for my able-bodied or cisgender privileges, nor mention my sexuality. It was during the photo-sharing portion of this photovoice project that I realised that the experience of being a black student at UCT was tremendously nuanced. One participant revealed the difficulty of being black while transgender and having to plot something as simple as going to the bathroom. Another participant highlighted how coming from a disadvantaged background and surviving at UCT was almost impossible. One other participant pointed out the difficulty of having a mental and/or physical illness and physically navigating and successfully completing one's studies. At this point I fully comprehended the many ways people experience their blackness. I came to better understand that is not only about race but also class, gender, sexual, mental/physical ability amongst other factors.

Photovoice as Student-Researchers

Linda's involvement as a participant deepened her understanding of the multiple raced, classed and gendered experiences of being black. But the development of critical consciousness through the photovoice process, while mostly considered in relation to participants, can also be considered in relation to researchers. Linda's experience as a photovoice participant and working with decolonial feminist researchers, impacted how she conducted her own photovoice project, how she made decisions around her own postgraduate research work and supervision choices, and the decolonial feminist principles she drew on when doing so:

> *I became the researcher the following year as a postgraduate student undertaking my own research project. The lecturer who had headed the photovoice project was one of three black women lecturers in my Psychology Department. When I had to choose a supervisor, although I was unsure about my research topic, I knew I would only be able to work with a black woman. I had decided on this for two reasons. Firstly, these black women offered comfort and camaraderie that was uncommon in my department. Secondly, their work was often based in critical or decolonial scholarship which was the same kind of academic work I intended to pursue. Fortunately, when the time came my project and my supervisor aligned perfectly. My familiarity and understanding of photovoice made it an easy choice for my own project. The research project looked at the experiences of black and queer (i.e. gender and sexuality) students at UCT. It was an unintended extension of the photovoice project in which I had previously participated. This project, however, was intentionally based on my thoughts and experiences of sexuality. At the time, I was navigating my complex identity as a queer and black woman and wondered about other students' experiences. It was only with my supervisor and the empowering process of photovoice that I felt I could be vulnerable yet still secure enough to conduct research rooted in my personhood.*
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> *When I became the researcher, I wanted to provide a similar space and experience that had previously been offered to me as a participant. As the researcher, I felt it was vital to apply reflexivity as often as I could. I knew I presented as a black, cisgender woman and was typically assumed to be heterosexual. This meant that particular narratives of gender and race were mutual to myself and my participants. However, being heterosexual-assumed meant that participants would not know if I shared experiences related to sexuality with them. I considered how this would affect the process and attempted to make it known during the interview process that I was queer to create a space of support and common under-standing as I had witnessed as a participant in my first photovoice project. Despite great efforts, my photovoice project did not make it to the final and, arguably, the most essential part, the exhibition, as UCT encountered its second phase of #FeesMustFall which called for an institution-wide shut down. This meant that I was able to collect these stories for the sake of my project, but I was unable to share them with other students and relevant stake-holders such as UCT. For a long time I meditated on the problematic nature of this. It potentially placed me alongside academics who collect the stories of marginalized people for the sake of scholarly consumption without contributing to broader change. Essentially, it was from a researcher's perspective that I understood the limitations of the photovoice.*

Josie, like Linda, was involved in photovoice as a student-researcher under the supervision of decolonial feminist academics. Unlike Linda, whose research project

was rooted deeply in her personhood, Josie describes herself as a privileged white student whose experience at UCT was characterised by belonging:

> Shose invited me to complete my dissertation as part of a photovoice research project she had conceptualised around black students' experiences in higher education. Shose made the decision to focus the research project on black students' experiences, based on the importance of centring and highlighting the voices of students who at that stage in 2013 (the project began prior to the RhodesMustFall movement and large scale student resistance initiated and lead by black students) were often silenced in discussions around higher education transformation in South Africa.

Shose considers that this was vital because:

> The focus on black students was instrumental in building solidarity amongst individuals with common experiences of alienation yet who were nevertheless situated on varying levels of privilege and disadvantage. As Linda suggested, the consciousness of being black took on many forms that were raced, classed and gendered.

In her reflection, Josie says:

> Because I am a white, middle-class, cisgendered, able-bodied postgraduate university student who occupied a privileged and comfortable position within this institution in comparison to many of the participants, there was a risk of this project becoming one in which a white student did research on black students, and spoke on their behalf. PAR methodology was thus important to enable participants to take an active role in the research process which may minimise my role, voice and possible influence (although as discussed in the literature review above, this is not guaranteed).

For example, the participants were actively involved decision making around the public exhibitions of the photo-stories. The participants gave speeches and shared their experiences at the exhibition opening nights, to an audience including high-ranking members of the university administration. In this way, the participants were able to speak directly to otherwise inaccessible institutional decision makers. Some participants also took ownership over the exhibits and used the photo-stories in their own events which were not part of the photovoice project or initiated by the researchers. Linda's own reflection on the exhibition as a participant, illustrates how the exhibition was able to do this and the benefits that can be gained from the PAR process. As Linda describes:

> At the end of this photovoice project, there was an exhibition where each participant had a board displaying their consolidated photo-stories. Fellow participants, students, lecturers and university stakeholders such as deans and heads of departments attended. It was both empowering and intimidating to have my work exhibited – especially considering the topic. The planning process was equally empowering because there was freedom in deciding how pictures would be displayed and when/how the event would run. Other participants took the opportunity to speak directly to the audience – an audience they would otherwise have been unable to access. This process allowed me to begin to build relationships with other students and lecturers who I might have never have engaged with had I not been a part of the venture. Years later, these relationships have benefitted me personally and professionally. It was the openness and fluidity of the photovoice process that facilitated the development of such relationships.

However, although the PAR process created space for participants' active participation and benefitted participants such as Linda, the research space was still influenced by Josie's position as a white researcher:

My whiteness may have affected, for example, how comfortably participants spoke about race at UCT in front of me. In her study of staff experiences of transformation at a previously white South African university, Ismail (2011) *found that, as a fellow black academic, most participants considered her an 'insider' and thus felt comfortable discussing their experiences with her. In some ways, I was an 'insider', doing research on my own university, with fellow students often from the same department. However, the position of 'insider' is not fixed, and what is deemed 'inside' depends on my varied identity positionings (*Trowler 2016*). My whiteness and other normative intersecting identities afforded me substantial privileges within the university's structure compared to many of the participants. Due to this 'insider/outsider' tension and status, I attempted to ensure participants felt comfortable and secure when discussing their (often painful) experiences in front of me. I think part of what helped is that the photovoice process started with focus groups in which, in terms of race, the participants outnumbered me as the white researcher (five in each group). In fact, the participants appeared to be comfortable being critical of white students at UCT even in the focus groups I (a white UCT student) was leading. I think what also helped was that my co-researchers[5] were black, and except for some focus groups, they lead many of the interactions with the participants, such as the workshops in which the participants discussed their ideas for their photo-stories. I think having black academics from senior positions discuss these issues with the participants validated their experiences and ensured they felt secure voicing their perspectives. Although, this does not negate the presence of my white body in this space.*

As Josie's supervisor, Shose reflects that:

Having a white woman as student-researcher in a predominantly black space was an opportunity to reflect on the role of photovoice in dismantling whiteness and developing the researcher's knowledge and consciousness.

Josie's involvement in a project as a white student, has affected the development of her own consciousness around her privilege and oppressive behaviours and assumptions. Continued critical reflection, guided by Shose, has been an important part of this ongoing development. As Josie reflects:

The university experience of marginalisation and silencing described by the participants as commonplace, was unfamiliar and surprising to me and one in which I was (and in many ways still am) complicit. Furthermore, as a student protected by my whiteness, class and other intersecting privileges I am able to reap the benefits of engaging in decolonial feminist research critiquing my university and whiteness, without taking on as much of the professional risk and emotional labour faced by my supervisor, Shose, (as a black academic) and the participants (as black students) at a university with an institutional culture privileging whiteness. To quote Law (2016) *from her critical reflection on researching inequality in psychology: "I am privileged to ask, but not to answer. I am privileged to construct the questions, rather than being constrained to respond to them" (p. 530). For these reasons, I think this kind of critical reflection is vital, if my co-authors and the participants are expected to dive into uncomfortable personal reflections then so must I; including examining my complicity in upholding the oppressive and marginalising structures embedded within this and other higher education institutions. The involvement of white academics*

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[5] Joy Moodley (as an honours student) and Professor Kopano Ratele of the University of South Africa were involved in various stages of this project.

in the project of decolonisation of higher education requires continued self-reflexivity, acknowledgement of privilege, and the unlearning of exploitative and oppressive knowledges (Heleta 2016)*. As a supervisor and decolonial feminist mentor, Shose has guided me along this process of critical reflection in a sensitive, supportive and insightful manner. This shows that the inclusion of a more representative body of academic staff will bring nuanced and diverse experiences and perspectives to teaching and supervision, to the benefit of all students.*

Photovoice as Supervisor and Mentor

Shose and other decolonial feminist psychologists in the Department, such as Professor Floretta Boonzaier, play an important role in mentoring emerging student-researchers such as Linda and Josie, engaging in decolonial feminist praxis. Particularly, in her facilitator role, Shose was guided by the following considerations:

> *Linda's and Josie's testimonies above speak to the importance of engaging with the interconnectedness of oppressions in the research project in terms of race, class and gender although it was also important to anticipate and manage how these differences would play out with a minimum of power relations. I saw my role as facilitating that process so that student-participants and student-researchers could participate and find a sense of ownership in particular aspects of the project. Does photovoice enable us to do research that gives voice? What does it mean to 'give voice'? What does it mean when a white woman analyses and presents black students' stories? What does it mean when a black academic analyses and presents black students' stories? What happens to the black students once their stories have been told and shared publicly? I cannot definitively answers these questions, but in the past decade of doing photovoice research, it has become clear to me that managing power dynamics have much to do with the experience, knowledge, and facilitator's sensitivity. The participatory work that I have engaged in over the course of my career, using photovoice in particular, has led me to reflect on my role as supervisor but also the many other elements of academic knowledge production. To this end, in collaboration with my colleague Floretta, we established the Hub for Decolonial Feminist Psychologies in Africa[6] located in the Department of Psychology at UCT. This Hub emphasises the need for joint supervision of students and participatory ways of teaching and doing research, including publications.*

Concluding Reflections

In this chapter, we critically reflected on the dynamics of a photovoice project from the different positionalities we occupy: as a photovoice project participant turned photovoice researcher; as a white student in a university with an institutional culture of whiteness researching black students' experiences under the supervision of a black academic; and as a black woman academic and decolonial feminist scholar in

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[6] https://www.facebook.com/UCTfeministdecolonialpsychology/

a historically white institution. As we have shown, photovoice has much potential for conducting decolonial feminist research in community psychology. As Linda reflects:

> *Out of this entire process, I formed necessary and fruitful relationships. With my supervisor, I co-authored a paper exploring black queer students' alienation in historically white university spaces. One participant produced a documentary on black, queer youth. They later reached out to screen the documentary at my new institution and potentially turn it into a forum for further discussions. With all of this in mind, I am still significantly fond of the photovoice process. It has offered me a delicate balance between decolonial feminist theory and praxis and provided me with mentorship I otherwise might not have had.*

Josie Concludes

> *I think my involvement in this project, while fraught with complex power dynamics and practices (such as academic publishing) which reinscribe my privilege, working with participant co-researchers, such as Linda, and under Shose's decolonial feminist supervision has been crucial in helping me along the ongoing and incomplete process of learning to enact a decolonial feminist praxis in community psychology.*

Shose Reflects

> *This particular project was highly successful in achieving many of the stated aims: it gained visibility at the highest institutional levels; student participants became involved in political mobilisation and action beyond the project's scope, such as RhodesMustFall and FeesMustFall; Linda chose a photovoice project for her honours research; Josie wrote a first class Master's thesis; and, up until today, we are receiving ongoing requests for presentations and dissemination of the photo-stories in various channels within and beyond the university both nationally and internationally. I attribute these successes largely to the ways in which the participatory, creative, affective and visible aspects of photovoice methods enabled participants to feel recognised and empowered within and beyond the project. A decolonial feminist lens enabled us to build openness and trust in which students shared deeply traumatic experiences because of the critical ways in which these experiences were located and understood in a social historical context, and not reduced to personal failure.*
>
> *This particular project significantly impacted my professional advancement at UCT. The stories told by our participants gained the attention of the senior leadership at UCT. In the first presentation of the findings at UCT in 2014, the then vice-chancellor, Dr Max Price unexpectedly attended the seminar. This was followed by multiple presentations and exhibitions in the various UCT faculties. I was subsequently invited to be an advisor on the Special Executive Task Team in the midst of the 2016 student protests. This project along with my other decolonial work has brought much attention in the university on how to embody a decolonial agenda for South African higher education.*

Our project's focus on praxes through creative participatory techniques represented a powerful channel through which student-participants, student-researchers and academic collaborators were able to start building a decolonial feminist agenda for the University.

It is important to acknowledge that the collaborative possibilities in this project were enabled by our proximity to each other as stakeholders of an academic institution. Although power dynamics were present, these were minimal in comparison to projects where the participants are removed from the researchers in terms of geographical location as well as identity considerations. The proximity and relative privilege we share made this co-authorship possible. Indeed, participant co-

authorship may not always be possible or advisable. Some participants may wish to remain anonymous. There is also a risk that the participant co-authors may appear to speak for all participants (Castleden et al. 2010). Some participants may not wish to co-author on academic publications as they are largely inaccessible and are implicated in a history of serving dominant colonial interests. Participants may also feel that there are more valuable uses of their time, and methods of dissemination better suited to their needs (Flicker and Nixon 2016). Despite the value of photovoice and our ability to extend its participatory imperative through the present co-authorship, it remains to be seen whether and how such a practice can be replicated in and with other participant communities.

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