# From Where We Stand: Reflecting On Engagements With Decolonial Feminist Community Psychology

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## Contents

## Introduction

In an earlier conversation we highlighted the challenges and silences in psychology concerning feminist psychology (Segalo and Kiguwa 2015). In particular, we highlighted the challenges of mentorship, marginalisation of feminist work and Black scholars in the discipline, and the hegemony of western-centric knowledge systems. In this chapter, we reflect on these continued gaps and challenges with particular focus on our work in the academy. Through a decolonial feminist lens we highlight aspects of our teaching (including supervision and mentorship), community work, and research. In doing so, we engage the complexities of working from a decolonial feminist perspective highlighting the potential for disruption of the academic space. Furthermore, we argue that the separation of academic and community work remains a barrier to doing decolonial work. This is because decontextualised

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psychology is inadequate in its engagement with communities. Finally, we discuss the potential of a decolonial feminist community psychology for re-imagining the discipline.

## *Self-Location*

We start by offering a reflexive background to our epistemological positioning as feminist/decolonial/community psychologists. This self-location is important given our entrenchment within social justice and feminist politics. Social justice and feminist work and politics emphasise the need for continuous self-reflexivity within our scholarship. This is important because it is necessary to continually interrogate our enmeshment within intricacies of power. In choosing to self-locate we recognise that we are part of the myriad dimensions of power – both conscious and unconscious – that influence our subjectivities and politics. In order to continually interrogate these intricacies of power within ourselves as well as how they impact our work within communities, recognising and interrogating who we are and how we are located within society and the communities within which we work is important. We draw from Paulo Freire's pedagogy of freedom (Freire 1998) and assert that we cannot be facilitators of learning if we do not recognise with great clarity that our practice demands of us a definition of where we stand. This self-locating is important for two reasons: firstly, it allows an awareness of self and value orientation that is necessary for a more socially just psychology; secondly, this awareness facilitates a transformative approach to practicing psychology. This will allow us to engage layers and possibilities for change that are not imposing, dehumanising, and oppressive. This chapter discusses our teaching, community work, and research as a means of engaging these possibilities and troubling current practices. Writing our stories and reflecting on our practice is both a personal and political necessity that recognises that it is through critical interrogation of ourselves and our practice that we understand how we are always configured in politics. This understanding is necessary for disciplinary disruptions that unsettle how Psychology in general remains epistemologically and methodologically problematic. We discuss these continuing problematics later in the chapter.

When I (first author) frame myself as a feminist psychologist I understand this as an interest in social (in)justices and their effects on women. I am also interested in how we can respond to social injustice not only as a society but also as psychologists. Feminist psychology for me means thinking about how psychology can engage issues of gender and sexual inequalities in society as they affect women. I am interested in how psychology can be of service to healing the gendered traumas that remain so pervasive in our society. Doing this work means two things: it means not viewing gender-based traumas that result from inequalities through an individualistic lens but rather as community focused. It also means working towards intersectional responses to structural violence. I am also interested in what it means to do feminist work as a black woman and African psychologist, living in Africa as

opposed to living elsewhere and embodying a different raced and gendered body. Given this, we will have to take seriously what it means to practice and position ourselves as decolonial African feminists in an African context. We will have to consider the myriad ways that a feminism rooted in western-centric contexts is problematic for African contexts. When we blindly and uncritically attempt to understand any context through an ontological and epistemological lens that belittles, fails to fully see, as well as further marginalizes how cultures and people do gender differently, we stand in danger of enforcing a kind of epistemic violence as researchers.

Being a decolonial feminist psychologist involves me (second author) taking seriously the everyday structural challenges that women face in society. I am interested in the ways in which psychology plays a role in contributing towards how women are marginalised, are perceived as helpless and in many ways without a voice. I frame myself as a decolonial feminist psychologist because the aim is to build on what feminism has offered us and to interrogate some of the ways in which it addresses gender. In many ways, 'imperial feminism' is a feminism that operates on behalf of American and European canons. It dominates instead of liberates; and it does this often without taking context and geographical specificities into consideration. A feminism that embraces decoloniality has the potential to see the importance of history, colonization and the impact these have had on the perpetual gendered challenges we constantly have to contend with. I am interested in a psychology that acknowledges the multi-layered, multi-textured, fluid and complex understanding of spaces occupied by women and men.

## Contextualizing Community Psychology

Community psychology departs from 'traditional psychology' as it acknowledges the importance of context in the work that we do. A number of community psychology scholars (e.g. Dutta 2016; Lykes 2013; Prilleltensky 2012; Seedat and Lazarus 2011; Sonn 2016) have discussed the need to critically reimagine the sub-discipline and challenge the ways in which it has not thoroughly engaged with communities' multiple and intersecting experiences and injustices. In her proposal for a decentered community psychology, Dutta (2016) asks pertinent questions around what counts as knowledge and what are the implications thereof. She challenges community psychology to move from labelling and categorizing people as, for example, 'lacking' or helpless towards acknowledging the resources that people possess and how these could be drawn upon if a space for a participatory approach is created. In such a space, multiple forms of knowing are acknowledged. Community psychology has the potential to and should engage and confront the taken for granted notions of knowledge production and how the right and power to produce knowledge is often reserved for those from the Global North while 'others' are constructed as consumers of this knowledge. It has to shift from what Sonn calls "intellectual colonisation" (2016, p. 310) where voices and experiences of those based in the

Global South are not offered space in our theorising in community psychology. However, within the Global South current decolonization projects have also tended to reproduce this dichotomy of knowledge imposition. For example, decolonial knowledge canons (based largely in South America) have also tended to marginalize voices and knowledge contributions from Africa. Even more layered is the marginalization of feminist contributions to this canon of knowledge. Very few feminist contributions to the decolonial project have been widely recognized within the canon, with the exception of scholars such as Maria Lugones and Oyeronke Oyĕwùmí. In a series of social justice movements, gender tends to take a back seat to race as a galvanizing stronghold that demonstrates how race has predominantly been taken up as a political project and not gender. And yet, as scholars such as Pumla Gqola show, gender has always been central to the colonial project. If it has been central to the colonial project then it makes sense that it should be central to the decolonial project.

Within South Africa in particular, much community psychology has taken a liberatory stance (Freire 1993) wherein a concerted effort is made to have learning happen within communities. However, teaching and learning in community psychology is often undergirded by the assumption that researchers go into communities to 'empower', 'impart knowledge', and 'introduce programmes' without acknowledging the knowledges already present in the communities. We often go in as 'experts' and this can be seen in many of the practical sessions students are required to fulfil as part of their training. It is at this point where we deem a decolonial approach important for rethinking how we practice community psychology. Community Psychology has to be self-critical and should acknowledge its complicity over time on how Euro-centric knowledge was privileged and assumed applicable in multiple contexts globally. Community psychology does not toss the net wide enough to allow for the multiplicity of ways in which people engage the world.

While there has been progress within community psychology regarding the need to acknowledge context and people's knowledges, we would like to argue that there is still a need to take seriously issues of gender, sex, race and class amongst others. Not paying attention to these dimensions is problematic as it assumes that they are not important when engaging in people's lived realities. These omissions are even more problematic when understood in relation to the ways in which they shape women's experiences. Understanding these issues from a decolonial feminist perspective would mean taking history and the influence of colonialism into perspective when engaging with how these play out. For example, Mmatshilo Motsei (2007, 2017) works with gender-based violence and with men in communities using a socio-historical and feminist approach that sees violence not as intrinsic to the community or to men. She sees violence as having a history that intersects with multiple layers of how people are violated (economically, socially, and culturally) and how all this has a history that ties back to colonialism. She connects this with the intergenerational transmission of trauma so that the attainment of masculinity comes to be seen as something that is violent. Her work offers an example of how a decolonial feminism might be possible and the ways in which community psychology can be practiced from a decolonial perspective.

Cosgrove and McHugh (2000) maintain that community psychology has indeed incorporated elements of feminism in its engagements with oppression and injustice. However, they also point out that the sub-discipline has not fully embraced feminist scholarship. We would argue that this may not always have been the case. Community and feminist psychology both challenge and engage with assumptions made by mainstream psychology; often uncritical in how it engages societal issues. Mainstream psychology does not pay particular attention to political, historical, cultural and structural issues that play a role in how people make sense of the world. Specifically looking at women, mainstream psychology often defines women as lacking, helpless and needing to be rescued. They are marginalized and assumed to have no agency. As Cosgrove and McHugh (2000, p. 816) note, "as feminist researchers we challenge the implicit values in traditional research that render women as Other and conflate difference with deficiency". In our psychological research endeavours it is important to critically engage theories and methodologies used to make sense of what we know and how we come to know. What does it mean to privilege feminist understandings of the world? It is this privileging that we want to pay particular attention to and we do this by drawing from a decolonial feminist perspective which we believe can assist us to move towards a decolonial feminist community psychology. And yet, the work that continues to be prescribed in most community psychology classes relies on "traditional, psychologistic assumptions about subjectivity" (Cosgrove and McHugh 2000, p. 824). Those who have embraced a critical stance still do not centre feminist theories in their engagement with communities. In this sense then, mainstream community psychology has been deeply problematic as a resource for decolonial and feminist interventions within the community. In the rest of the chapter, we point to ways in which this can be addressed. Drawing from a number of examples based on our own work, we highlight what this might look like by providing examples that show how we attempt to move towards an action-oriented and a liberatory approach in our teaching and in the research projects that we are part of.

## Teaching, Community Work, and Research

### Pedagogies of Disruption in Teaching and Learning

Troubling current practices demands a willingness to disrupt our current ways of envisioning the world as well as the content of what we teach. Through a pedagogy of disruption, we can begin to not only challenge the current canon of knowledge but also engage alternate knowledge systems. For example, the reading materials that we prescribe in our curriculum, including the teaching of community psychology, include the works of Euro-Western black and African black (women) scholars in conversation with each other. We do this as an attempt to epistemically rebel against the perpetual centering of Western canons which assumes knowledge to be universal and therefore applicable everywhere. We aim at de-centering that which

has been centralized by acknowledging the need for pluriversal ways of knowing and being. A pluriversal approach allows us not only to gain a sense of marginalised scholars' contributions to psychology as a discipline but also to engage with the socio-political context.

The materiality of race and gender is important to address as one of the key gaps of the discipline and as characterised by western-centric knowledge canons. By materiality we refer to the phenomenological experiences of race and gender as these are embodied in the lived realities and bodies of black Africans. Here, race and gender do not just function as structural realities that exist in social policies and institutional structures but also come to take on real embodied 'livedness' in people's lives and bodies. How we understand gender and race in our work must therefore incorporate these micro embodiments. Canons of knowledge that tend to favour so-called objectivist, individualist, and empirical forms of knowing do not acknowledge these subjective and micro politics of human subjectivities to the detriment of enhancing social justice interventions in communities. We argue that borrowed ways of knowing, such as the view that gender is binary (Oyěwùmí 1997) that we have given home in our minds, cannot be used as a basis to imagine and transcend coloniality. We acknowledge that often the fundamental framework of our studies is not African. We may have an African perspective (that purportedly addresses African ways of knowing) but when our work relies on such alienating epistemologies/theories, we stand in danger of engaging in epistemic violence in our interventions. Our aim therefore is to think from where we are unashamedly; and this starts with the pedagogical practices we employ.

We see the teaching space as a dialogical space that involves students and teachers engaged in a dialogue about themselves and their society. This involves shifting from the obsession with the end product/outcome and instead focusing on the process of learning and creating an environment where students are active participants in the creation of knowledge. In so doing, we align ourselves with Paulo Freire's (1993) notion of liberatory pedagogy which prioritises the student's capacity for critically reflecting on the world with a view to transforming it. In this instance the student and teacher are both co-creators of knowledge, where at one given moment one takes on the role of the teacher (and the other a student) and at another moment the other takes on that role. Where a large class size of 500+ students makes it challenging to be creative, the temptation is to deliver the lecture in a banking model (Freire 1993). While a bigger size class may be challenging, it is not impossible to deviate from the traditional banking roles of teaching. For example, the ways in which the curriculum is structured should be in such a way that allows for a dialogue and not a rigid model and approach to teaching. Students should be able to speak back to the curriculum and in that way contribute towards the reshaping of it. There should be space for them to draw from their experiential ways of knowing. For example, mainstream psychology's construct of the self that is introduced in the history of psychology invalidates other ways of knowing that are rooted in community and other relational networks.

The process of how we teach and what we teach has many implications for how we assess. Traditional methods of assessments favour particular understandings and

forms of knowledge to the detriment of others. For example, multiple choice forms of assessment require students to choose from a selection of pre-determined answers thereby not allowing space for engagement, disagreement or critique. Many forms of assessment *force* students to memorise what they have learnt in a quantitative manner (e.g. how much can you remember?) as opposed to qualitative shifts in learning, such as students' ability to reflect on the socio-political context of their world. It is these shifts that influence and contribute to students' capacity for transforming their world. A community psychology that is committed to being relevant should prioritise the latter form of learning and assessment.

Further complicating assessment practice is the role of prioritised languages in South Africa (such as English and Afrikaans) as primary mediums for assessment. These mediums function to exclude speakers of other languages who, given the chance might be able to articulate their knowledge more efficiently if allowed the opportunity to engage in a language they are more comfortable with. The quantitative mode of assessment demands the use of the prioritised languages whereas a more qualitative mode of assessment that is focused on students' critically reflective shifts allows for the possibility of a more inclusive engagement. This will include students engaging in their preferred language. What we are calling for is a rethinking of current pedagogical practices that emphasise written assessment tasks to the exclusion of other modes of engagement. Both students and teachers may feel a sense of discomfort with such a pedagogical shift. However, as Bozalek et al. (2010) have argued, discomfort is fundamental to consciousness raising. The urge to make ourselves and our students comfortable in the classroom makes it impossible to engage fully and reflexively. This is akin to Leonardo and Porter's (2010) notion of a pedagogy of disruption which posits disruption not as repressive violence but as productive violence. The latter allows for authentic dialogue and interrogation of our place in society. For example, a curriculum that disrupts whiteness as the centre of knowledge and normative way of being is very often received by many white students in the class as violent. We maintain however, that this form of violence is necessary and productive in its invitation for more authentic forms of engagement that is not characterised by coloniality of power.

Pedagogic disruption is also important to how we re-imagine the supervision space and the transmission of knowledge between student and supervisor. In keeping with Freire's (1993) notion of critical pedagogy, we advocate for the supervision space as a reflective dialogical space that considers how both the student and the supervisor are co-constructors of knowledge. Part of this process entails reflecting on our choices for research topic exploration including how we mentor and reflect with students their engagements with the communities that they work with in this process. This relationship between student and supervisor is very important for mentorship and inculcation into a critically reflexive epistemology whereby the student begins to understand in practice the ideological and political ramifications of self-positioning in research. Furthermore, the supervision process itself is a deviation from the banking model in which the supervisor is positioned as the arbiter of knowledge to one which recognises that there will be moments where the student becomes the teacher and the teacher becomes the student. For example, in a study

exploring black women's experiences of the meaning of sexual liberation within a democratised South Africa I (second author) and my student had to carefully consider what it means to gain knowledge from communities without ethically engaging them in the challenges that they open up to us. As one community member said to my student: "*You know they open up this well of pain and then leave you like that and not come back to assist you based on what you told them. I am only talking to you because you are like my grandchild; otherwise I don't want to hear from those people who exploit our pain just so they can write big reports and forget about us*" (Chauke, forthcoming). This assertion was a critical reminder of the epistemic violence that is possible when we do not reflect on self-positionings as 'experts' when we work with communities. It is also a reminder of the ethics of undertaking such work for the mere purpose of excavating stories about suffering. Feminist decolonial community psychology must continually interrogate what it means to bring these stories to light. Community work must be aimed at bringing about social change and transformation that directly speaks to the needs of the community. It also means recognising that communities are able to exercise agency in choosing whom they will be in conversation and collaboration with.

In another example utilising a feminist participatory action research epistemology, I (first author) had to consider the implications of producing knowledge that is challenged and rejected by the rest of my team and participants. In engaging with research data through a feminist lens, what does it mean for us when our participants refuse the epistemologies that we work with and also offer alternative understandings that fundamentally challenge our feminist framings? In this particular study, my reading of participants' gendered constructs of identity, behaviour and agency (through the self-identified registers of 'top' vs 'bottom') amongst a group of self-identified lesbian, gay and bisexual youth as reproductions of a heteronormative norm was not only rejected as "elitist and patronising" by these youth members but they also offered an alternative reading that positioned this other register as empowering. In continuous dialogue within the group, we (the facilitators) challenged our different ideological positions and reflected on our different identity intersectionalities in how we interpreted the data. In the end, we settled on an analysis that incorporated these multi-layered ways of seeing and critically engaged with the myriad implications thereof. What is important to note here is that we adopted an approach to doing research that did not exclude or marginalise conflictual voices in the project. We also engaged a process of self-interrogation that demanded we understand each other's point of view.

## Towards Transformative Mentorship

The idea of 'academic acculturation' has been used by scholars such as Davis (2008) to describe the mentorship process that happens between students and faculty members of the academy. Academic acculturation engages those processes and practices whereby new and emerging scholars – who may include students and/or emerging faculty members within an institution – are socialised into the disciplinary and institutional profession by an established scholar. The latter person takes on the role of

socialising the newcomer into the values, networks and resources necessary for successful adaptation to the new context. Such a process and practice is further made complex through intersections of race, sexuality, disability, class, language and gender dynamics that can either hinder or enhance the mentorship process. Understanding the challenges and experiences of marginalised bodies within the academy requires a more critically reflective effort at understanding the role and practice of mentorship within institutions. Davis (2007) demonstrates that the career trajectory and aspirations of many black students and staff are likely to be influenced by the lack, quality and form of mentorship that they experience within the institution. Her study also highlights the importance and role of black faculty as mentors to black students and other black faculty members. This is a finding that Chan (2008) also highlights in a study on mentoring ethnic minorities in the academy.

In our experiences as emerging scholars we experienced several challenges related to finding mentors as emerging black feminist women scholars. In our earlier work (Segalo and Kiguwa 2015) we pointed to the struggles that we were confronted with as a result of a lack of mentorship and mirrors we could look into so as to imagine the journey ahead. The discipline of psychology for a long time *refused* to offer a platform to women (Black women, in particular) scholars thereby making it difficult for many of us to imagine ourselves occupying such spaces. A transformative mentorship makes it possible to re-imagine our sense of belonging in the academy. In this sense, we re-imagine the academic space as community; a place where our identities are not questioned, where our knowledges are part of the canon, and our competencies acknowledged. Furthermore, a transformative form of mentorship should cut across hierarchies: between students and academic staff, among staff members, and among students. This could be achieved through collaborative projects that develop different skills and promote the interchange of skills.

Mentorship further allows for the sharing of experience and anxieties related to the bureaucratic functioning of the academy. For example, in my (second author) work with women academics at my institution we have created what we call *Women Researchers Corner* which is a platform that brings together both emerging and established women researchers. This platform aims at providing space for the sharing of ideas, guidance on how to confront challenges linked to studies (mainly Masters and Doctoral studies), writing funding proposals, navigating the academic space more broadly, and how to respond to negative feedback. This engagement is not confined to the university space as we also go on retreats off-campus where we spent time engaging the multiple challenges faced by women researchers. In another example, at my (first author) institution we have formed the *Women Intellectuals Transforming Scholarship in Education* which consists of academic staff and students. This group provides a space for sharing research ideas, a platform for engaging scholarship for women and by women. It is also about developing skills for sourcing of funding and a space for sharing anxieties, experiences and ideas in how we engage with the broader university community. We further provide skills-building workshops. These examples highlight the necessity to shift away from traditional modes of mentorship that (1) impose and sustain hierarchies of power; (2) do not create spaces for the personal and (3) do not recognise the importance of (Black) women only spaces.

## Community and Research (Within and Beyond the University)

In her enunciation of decolonial feminism principles, Lugones (2010) calls for an approach to gender that is not individualist but considers gender in relation to the community. Gender is understood here as not fixed. She argues that part of the task of resistance of a coloniality of gender involves shifting from such an individualist approach that separates our sense of being and doing from our communities: "Communities rather than individuals enable the doing; one does with someone else, not in individualist isolation" (p.754). A decolonial feminist community psychology approach recognises the role and meaning of community to individual well-being and sees these two modes of connection as inseparable. Understanding how gender structures itself in our everyday lives requires an engagement with socio-political and psychosocial dimensions of gender in terms of such connection.

A decolonial feminist community psychology proposes a radical shift from the linear and binary modes of thinking that present gender and gendered violence in binaried ways. We acknowledge that who we are now as 'gendered beings' is as a result of the colonial past which has pitched people against one another. In her seminal work, *Rape: A South African Nightmare*, Gqola (2015) discusses race as an ordering system that institutionalises violence against particular bodies. She further argues that gender's history is no different but rooted in a colonial past. This past orders gender in linear and binary ways that do not acknowledge the histories and cultures of African peoples. Oyěwùmí (1997) argues this strongly in her claim that the colonial state not only categorised men and women in specific gendered ways but also created different axes of privilege and power in relation to this. Therefore it is important to take these historical moments into consideration as they play a critical role in how gender is performed in the present.

Our approach to community work and research adopts a view of these two practices as interconnected. Two such projects which we discuss next and that we are part of (*Inside-Out Outside-In Corrections Project* and *The Young Women's Leadership in Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Project*) demonstrate this interchange between community work and research. We conclude by reflecting on the importance of collaborative community engagement that does not treat communities as merely sites for data collection.

## *Inside-Out Outside-In Corrections Project*

The *Inside-Out Outside-In project* that I (second author) am a member of, started as an interest group that later morphed into a formal community engagement project. The project seeks to create a platform that engages the lived experiences of offenders, ex-offenders and corrections officials. The project looks broadly at some of the challenges faced by incarcerated women, notions of motherhood and fatherhood

while incarcerated, and challenges faced by ex-offenders upon their release from the corrections facilities. The project looks broadly at the multi-layered functioning of corrections and zooms in at the possibility of rehabilitation and what it means through the lens of those who are part of this system. It is a collaborative project that involves multiple stakeholders and collaborators with the hope and aim of having multiple voices engaging on challenges and possibilities linked to corrections. It is a university project housed in a Psychology department but functions in close partnership with multiple correctional facilities based in various parts of South Africa. Through engagement with our collaborators, we learn with and from each other and together critique and re-imagine what corrections could look like and we further imagine the possibility of a differently functioning system. The idea is to work towards a system that opens itself up to the possibility of thinking differently about how we deal with and respond to 'societal norm digressions'. A decolonial feminist community psychology is a useful theoretical lens that helps us to do the work of tackling masculinities in societies, especially what we would call toxic masculinities. A feminist approach challenges patriarchal and hegemonic notions of what it means to be a man. The *Inside out-Outside in project* importantly focuses on male prisoners because it is about addressing toxic masculinities and doing the work of reimagining what a healthy masculinity could look like. One of the aims of decoloniality is not to impose but be involved in a participatory intervention process that allows space for people in the community (in this case, the corrections facility community) to determine their own needs as part of this reimagining.

The project takes a participatory action approach wherein all the stakeholders contribute towards the shaping and identifying of concerns to be given attention and the possible directions to be taken in responding to identified issues. In their article entitled *Participatory Action Research: From Within and Beyond Prison Bars*, Fine et al. (2004) engage with the various ways in which a participatory approach offers space for multiple voices and perspectives that lend themselves to de-centralising where the power lies. Their work points to the importance of having a multi-stakeholder collaboration when planning, executing and implementing a project. Working within the Corrections environment, they highlight challenges and opportunities that exist when working within a highly regulated and securitised space.

## Young Women's Leadership in Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Project

The *Young Women's Leadership in Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights* research team (YWL in SRHR) that I (first author) currently coordinate with a team of colleagues seeks to develop young women researchers in the field of sexual and reproductive rights. This seven year-old project creates a platform for young women students within the tertiary education context to develop their critical research skills while also developing their psychosocial engagements with the university and the

community at large. Through weekly research mentorship meetings that involve all members of the team reading, sharing and discussing aspects of their own and the group project, this platform provides a space for the mentorship and growth of women academics that is not typically cultivated in this context. The team has also formed partnerships with community and Non-Governmental partners that highlight the necessity for bridging the academic-activist divide that tends to exist in the academy. These partnerships entail work related to gender-based violence, conducting workshops and intervention community briefings that engage the community in aspects of sexual and reproductive health and rights. Through these briefings we construct a platform for dialogue and reflexivity related to core tensions in doing feminist participatory action research and critically interrogating the notion of empowerment. The Project's epistemological thrust is that matters of sexual and gender violence in South Africa and the continent more broadly, are structurally and intra-psychically intersected with a psycho-political history of colonialism that continues to influence current configurations of violence. In addressing gender-based violence and sexual and reproductive rights for women, it is important that such a psycho-political history is considered in how we conceptualize and intervene in different contexts. Gendered configurations and experiences embody the struggles, contradictions and tensions of such a history that in turn influence how the personal configured in the social and vice versa is a political and not just psychological project.

The above two examples highlight the importance of not treating community sites as merely sites for data collection whereby proposals for recommendations are made that do not include the voices of the community. Decolonial feminist community psychology recognises the arbitrary divide that tends to exist between the academy and activist spaces. This divide posits superficial claims to legitimate knowledge in the one domain to the detriment of the other. Thus indigenous knowledges are often positioned as 'non-academic' or 'non-scientific' and therefore illegitimate.

## Towards a Decolonial Feminist Community Psychology

A decolonial feminist community psychology must carefully consider the capacity for agency that communities possess in thinking about solutions to challenges that they are confronted with. This means a rethinking of how we disseminate knowledge gained as a result of our engagement with communities. Conversations and dialogues are critical in this process. We show in our examples of the projects we run that being academics and being activists involve identities and practices that we do not easily separate from ourselves as feminist decolonial community psychologists. We believe that academic engagement with broader communities outside of the academy must not be reduced to data collection processes that leave communities feeling exploited and undermined. Instead, we view such interaction and engagement as dialogical between community members and ourselves as

researchers, that involves shared learning and that includes joint intervention brainstorming. In this chapter we have highlighted and shared some of our ideas for reconceptualising community psychology practice from a decolonial feminist perspective. We note some of our tensions and discomforts as black female academics working in institutions of higher learning that continuously separate the practice of the academy in teaching and research from broader community practice. We argue that this divide remains an artificial one that only serves to reinforce hierarchies of power in knowledge production. Through examples of some of our mentorship, teaching and community practice, we demonstrate some of the ways that decolonial feminist community psychology entails a shift in epistemological lens as well as adoption of teaching and research practice that deviates from the traditional approach of objective and expert observers. A decolonial feminist community psychology endeavours to reframe how we think about communities, how we conceptualise our roles as knowledge producers, the politics of knowledge dissemination and teaching as critical pedagogical practice.

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