Abstract

Discourses around the decolonization of Psychology in Africa have left the field in an existential crisis mode where issues of the hegemony of its epistemological and ontological realities are still as contested and controversial. Despite concerns about the all-inclusive, non-distinctiveness of its subject matter as well as its lack of closeness of fit with the interests of the majority of South Africans, psychology has repeatedly placed itself in the service of an oppressive regime and still remains complicit towards issues of decolonization. Even though there has been progress in the efforts to inform and re-inscribe the possibilities of 'Africanizing' psychology in the last two decades, the crux of the debate in recent arguments is in the recognition of a psychology that meets the demands of a 'culturally appropriate care'. This idea, as it has been evident in local texts and psychology training programs in universities, has been predicated upon South African psychology's inability to theoretically and methodologically see culture in its full complexity. Owing to this discussion, the following study will use social constructionism as its relevant theoretical framework to argue for the re-examination of notions of culture in mental health literature. This argument is predicated upon the idea that a definition of culture that intersects with a range of political issues and other subjectivities relevant to post-apartheid South Africa today is a suitable entry point in order to subvert the colonial knowledge systems of western psychology. Most notably this discussion acknowledges that a 'cultural' project should never allow itself to immerse into the euphoria of reductionist and fixed ideologies for the sake of understanding what it means to be African - because the result will ironically lead to the risk of recolonizing the present.

This article critically examines discourses of "culture" in the *South African Journal of Psychology* and *Psychology in Society* between 1994 and 1930. In a discourse analysis of 42 journal articles, three cultural discourses are identified. Particular emphasis is on how these discursive formations *function* and how that relates to the broader transformative efforts in South African Psychology. The significant finding of this research was that despite the ongoing debates about a psychology that closely mirrors the welfare of African citizens, there still remains quite a lot of challenges that are deep-seated and entrenched within the discursive paradigms of psychology. It was also revealed that there are changes that still need to be effected, moreso at the level of intervention, which must take into consideration the multiple heterogeneous cases (and their subjectivities) in the present demographics. Such changes can only take shape with the assistance of a committed pool of clinicians and

stakeholders who are willing to go above and beyond to make practicable the idea of transforming psychology into what we aspire it to be.

The indigenization debate in psychology has been around for a long time and it is a topic known to have had its controversies. Since the late twentieth century, indigenous psychology has been a global movement that seeks to tailor the epistemological and ontological realities of psychology into the other than western contexts (Sher & Long, 2015). This is because of the criticisms levelled against psychology for having its roots in an individualist/medical model that perpetuates a colonialist, racialized, and gendered practise. The individualist/medical model has always been criticized for its focus on pathology and on the weaknesses of the individual to the exclusion of their strengths, health, and well-being. Clinical psychology as a scope of practise has also been modelled on the methods of psychiatry and medicine - which have led most practitioners to idealize and implement western forms of practise that are unsuitable for those that need it the most (Peterson, 2012). Yet Foucault explicitly turned his attention to the ways in which these discursive regimes operate through discourse to constitute and position individuals in society (Yen, 2000). [add linking statement here about Foucault].Through the language of pathology, the psychiatric discourse is further elaborated and disseminated in ways that entrench its productive power by defining what is considered 'normal' and 'abnormal' behaviour (Peterson, 2012). The tendency of the western medical model to attribute undesirable states of mind to behaviour seen as undesirable or 'abnormal' has had a long history – and this is particularly the case in the classification of mental illnesses in the DSM and ICD (Ash & Sturm, 2007). Indeed, the language of psychology and psychiatry has succeeded in creating vocabularies of inner being - such as disorder, patients, treatment – perpetuating the idea that psychology deals with illness and pathology, further elaborating its idealization with the western medical model (Peterson, 2012). Such conceptualizations are evident of how these languages – and how they function – are constructed in ways that reproduce or render invisible, various boundaries of inclusion and exclusion.

Similarly, defences of multiculturalism in psychology can have the same conservative effect of entrenching these differences. Mental health professionals in the past have concerned themselves with 'cross-cultural' and 'transcultural' research when addressing

cultural issues. But in many cases such depoliticized analyses tend to reproduce ideas that are not integral to unpacking inequalities in the broader transformative sense. Yen (2000) has argued that the defence of multiculturalism in mental health literature has the effect of silencing issues of racism, identity, poverty, or migration etc. Instead, these notions have succeeded in reproducing an essentialist and fixed understanding of culture, often making reference to ahistorical postulations when trying to make sense of complex socio-political issues. This 'inclusivist' rhetoric has the potential to create a false illusion that public life is equally accessible for all and that structural boundaries (such as those of race, class and gender) are more "flexible and inclusive than they actually are" (Painter & Baldwin, 2004, p.2).

In recognition of this, well-meaning practitioners and authors responded to these criticisms by addressing the need for an 'African-centred' psychology stating that in order for the project to meet the demands of a 'culturally appropriate care', notions of culture in mental health literature must be re-examined (Yen, 2000). The general sentiment is that indigenous psychology writings cannot be fixed or static, but should be understood historically for the effects of naturalization to be done away with. Thus, indigenous psychology investigates from a historical perspective how culture has been appropriated politically within South African Psychology writings to argue for a 'culturally relevant' approaches that are attuned to the welfare of its people and their experiences (Long, 2017). The premise is that the theories and practises taught in university must be rooted in epistemological and ontological frameworks that are uniquely African (Sher & Long, 2015).

Notions of culture have also been central to the development of indigenous psychology (Eagleton, 2000). Since the emergence of the debates there has been a need for definitions of culture that are inclusive and culturally relevant to the lives of African people. These debates have informed much of the dominant perspectives around the transformation and decolonization of psychology in general. Proponents of African psychology have also sought ways of informing and re-inscribing narratives of culture (albeit immaterially) that are relevant to the lived experiences of its people. However, instead of serving the interests of the majority psychology has placed itself repeatedly in the service of an oppressive regime and still remains complicit towards issues of transformation (Sher & Long, 2015). Despite being the majority, Black South Africans still remain under oppressive power structures that are characterized by high rates of unemployment, violence, and poverty to name a few.

Looking at the establishment of the discipline in Africa during the late 19th century (Long, 2017), psychology was critiqued for its complicity in the system of colonialism (Hook, 2004). As the discipline claims to be a legitimate form of science – a 'science of mind and behavior' - that alone justified many of its projects which have continued to perpetuate stereotypes and other racist connotations (Buhlan, 1993).Examples include the use of intelligence and psychometric testing fundamentally used as tools to categorize people according to their intellectual capabilities – further legitimatizing racialized, gendered and class based stereotypes (Buhlan, 1993). Thus, it is not only that the black person is subjected to these racial stereotypes, but they internalize these racist belief systems to understand and make sense of themselves (Hook, 2004). Although these atrocities reflect past colonial views, its citizens continue to bear the brunt of its poisonous effects in post-apartheid apartheid South Africa.

The calls for cultural 'relevance 'in the 1980s were indeed long overdue. Twenty three years into democracy, the field of Psychology has taken a rather 'innovative approach' (Sigogo & Modipa, 2004). With the emergence of the debates around the field's 'irrelevance' towards African lived experiences, and of course Manganyi's influential writings and contributions to the debate, mainstream psychology in South Africa has had its back against the wall. However, as it is evident from local texts and psychology training programs in universities, Psychology in South Africa has, to a large extent, not made any progress in the development of indigenization (Ahmed & Pillay, 2004). As Reyes Cruz and Sonn (2014) assert, South African psychology "still struggles theoretically and methodologically to see culture in its full complexity" (Reyes Cruz & Sonn, 2014, pg. 6).

Against this backdrop, indigenous psychologists have asserted the need to reformulate new definitions of culture. This raises the question of the kind of society this new definition of will address; and also whose culture and whose psychology it hopes to be anchored in (Allwood, 2011). Matoane (2012) advises us that in order for an indigenous psychology to 'take off' in South Africa, there is a need for a definition of culture that is constituted historically and discursively, and one that is anchored in the local context of its citizens. As such, notions of 'culture' in indigenous psychology should be developed with the intention of understanding and explaining human behavior in ways that will prioritize the welfare of its people (Long, 2017).

Many definitions have been put forward. Broadly speaking, culture has been defined as "the complex of values, customs, beliefs and practices which constitute the way of life of a specific group" (Eagleton, 2000, p. 37). For the purpose of this project, I will focus on the ways in which culture has been conceptualized in contemporary debates and how this radical shift has been central to modern indigenous psychology.

In the contemporary view, culture is then understood as an "ongoing social construction that speaks of the ways in which we learn to live and make sense of life…within specific social/economic/political/historical contexts" (Reyes Cruz & Sonn, 2014, p. 8). As previous definitions have only understood culture as a mere transcendence, a reference to essentialist and primordial understandings, the latter definition represents, if you like, an antithesis to politics. One that is homogenous to what Pickren (2009) and many other proponents of indigenous psychology have suggested: a definition of culture that is explicitly anchored in political terms. Culture in this instance is then seen as a form identity or solidarity, a proxy that is able to critique the dominant or majority constructions around it (Eagleton, 2000). Moreover, contemporary views of culture that harbor essences of identity will undoubtedly carry liberatory potential, and are able to account for issues of social inequality.

Indigenization has also received similar contentions. As a concept that has traditionally been difficult to define, Sher and Long (2015) offer an all-inclusive definition: "a process during which disciplinary knowledge travels from one locale to another and becomes transformed in the process" (Sher & Long, 2015, p. 2). Pickren (2009) refers to the development of indigenous psychology as a dual process that involves the 'indigenization of psychology from within and from without'. Which generally refers to the integration of western theories and reconfiguring them with the local context (without). In contrast, indigenization from within favors a traditional method that works with ancient or native forms of culture. These expressions have illustrated the different kinds of approaches taken by proponents of African psychology, which, in many instances have been radical to the point of rejecting notions of western psychology completely (Pickren, 2009).

Exemplary to this is the notion of the 'African worldview' that draws on metaphysical conceptions of *spirituality*, *ancestors*, and the idea of *being* and *becoming* (Nwoye, 2015). Proponents of this philosophy have asserted the need for indigenous healers as the preferred 'psychologists' for rural Africans (Long, 2017). Others have warned clinicians against the diagnosis of 'hearing voices' or witchcraft amongst Black Africans because of its cultural

appropriateness. As such, they claim it should not be treated as any form of psychosis or hallucinatory symptom as the diagnosis would not be valid (Gobodo, 1990).

The grandiosity that surrounds many of these philosophical approaches has been met with strong criticisms. Many of which have questioned the framework for its often misguided and superficial attempts that have apparently offered nothing short of a dry comparison (Moll, 2000). Most notably, it has been argued that this scholarship has obscured many of the crucial facets that deal with the violence of the present (Long, 2017). As Sigogo and Modipa (2004) argue, African Psychology has failed to examine the material realities that characterize Black working class problems, such as the growing inequalities, homicide, poverty, gender-based violence and so forth. Perhaps what will move the debates even further on what African psychology purports to achieve is if we start to move away from middle-class investigations and start negotiating realistic solutions that will take power, oppression and inequalities seriously.

Aims and objectives

The main objective of the study is to examine the discursive representations of culture in post-apartheid psychology. This will specifically look at how these discursive practices create and reproduce power dynamics in society. The project aims to some gain insight on how the historical and discursive understanding of culture contributes to the broader engagements surrounding decolonization and transformation in South Africa today. It will further look at how this framework will contribute to the development of indigenous psychology in South Africa.

Theoretical framework

This study will examine the cultural discourses in post-apartheid Psychology between 1994 and present, and thus it will use social constructivism as its relevant theoretical framework. Social constructivism theory suggests that we learn knowledge construction through social interactions with others, and through culturally meaningful activities. Thus, our ways of being and becoming are constructed and maintained by social processes in which our ideas of the world are products of interactions amongst people (Jorgensen & Philips, 2002). Forming part of the broader umbrella of social constructionism, this project will take a discourse analytical approach in examining culture, and it will criticize (and argue against) the fixed, essentialist cross-cultural and cultural psychological models inherent in post-apartheid psychology. Instead, it argues that in order for the discourses of culture to

contribute to the development of indigenous psychology, notions of culture need to be understood as processes of ongoing historical and social constructions (Reyes Cruz & Sonn, 2014).

To reveal these discursive sources, I will draw on Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis, which is concerned with how discourses of culture connect with the broader political level, and thus will be used in analysing the framework of cultural discourses. More specifically, the analysis will look at representations of culture in patterns of written text, and how they are embedded in discourses of language, power, dominance and inequality.

Methodology

Research design

Social constructivism: constructivist methodology requires a very specific style of reasoning (Pouliot, 2007). By implication, constructivism cannot be interpreted outside of the post-structuralist ontology/epistemology, which emphasizes that all knowledge and social realities are mutually constitutive (Jorgensen & Philips, 2002). It has been argued that since constructivist methods draw from post-structuralist ideas, the approach needs to be inductive, interpretative and historical (Pouliot, 2007). In such cases this kind of research has to problematize (or debate) a specific domain of study (ontology), as well as to demonstrate its own criteria of evidence (methodology), and to formulate its own truth claims (epistemology). As such, the researcher has to ensure that the truth claims developed about a particular domain of study are never explained in terms of quantitative enquiries and can neither be 'natural' or 'inevitable'. Rather they have to be built on social facts that can make the social world come into being (Pouliot, 2007). According to Jorgensen and Phillips (2002) the object under study cannot be 'fixed' or 'static' and therefore needs to be understood *historically* for the effects of 'naturalization' to be done away with. This particular study for instance will give accounts of previous notions of culture that make reference to essentialist and primordial definitions, which, in many instances have often been at variance with the lived experiences of African people. As an attempt to problematize such definitions, the present study examines cultural discourses in post-apartheid psychology, and argues for definitions of culture that are constituted historically and discursively. Proponents of modern indigenous psychology argue that such definitions of culture have liberatory potential, and are able to account for issues of injustice and social inequality.

Discourse analysis: The term 'discourse has been understood in many different ways and often ubiquitously used in society. To most people, 'discourse' refers to all forms of communication in society. More importantly, proponents of this analysis have argued that communication shapes the world we live in, and the assumption is that when we communicate we draw from common sense knowledge to make statements that will make sense to others. However, the general idea behind discourse analysis is that language is structured according to how discourses are constructed in society, which can be found in various non-verbal and verbal mediums such as pictures, spoken language or written text.

The term 'Discourse' has been defined as a set of ideas or statements that construct an object by analyzing and interrogating its meaning. For instance, the current study examines the discursive constructions of culture in journal articles of psychology published from 1994 to 2017. By interrogating these discursive constructions, it is understood that they contribute in the creation and reproduction of power relations between specific identities and subject positions (Sher & Long, 2015). This is a direct reflection of the debates surrounding notions of culture in indigenous psychology and how they have been accused of being irrelevant to African lived experiences, but more-so on the ways in which mainstream psychology has been complicit towards issues of oppression along class, gender and racial lines.

Sampling procedure

A series of journal articles will be analyzed on the basis of their relevance to the indigenization debate in psychology. A list of keywords that will be used to summarize the main aspects of the indigenization debate are: "culture", "discourse" (Eagleton, 2000), "post-apartheid psychology" (Sher & Long, 2015) and "indigenous psychology". Markers of human difference will be central in the textual analysis, and as such will be used in reference to culture as the basic tenet for discourse analysis (Sher & Long, 2015).

Data set

This study will examine published articles in the *South African Journal of Psychology* and *Psychology in Society* between 1994 and 2017. This period marks the beginning of the current twenty-three year democracy in post-apartheid South Africa. More specifically, it was during this time that proponents of indigenous psychology questioned the fixed and essentialist understandings of culture that are not responsive to the broader notions of decolonization in South Africa today. Furthermore, the researcher chose this time frame because it represented the appropriate period when the developments of the indigenous

project started to gain prominence (Sher & Long, 2015). These two journals will be chosen because many of the dominant perspectives in indigenous psychology are within these particular forums. And it has been suggested that the contributions in these two forums are regarded as those that reflect some of the radical approaches, and those that resemble the range of critical perspectives inherent in the indigenization discourse (Sher & Long, 2015).

Analysis

This study will use critical discourse analysis as the method of data analysis. The researcher will therefore explain the characteristics of critical discourse analysis and some of the reasons this approach was chosen for this particular analysis.

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) has since become one of the most visible and influential branches of discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1992). This approach aims to explore the relationships between discursive practices and how these processes are ideologically shaped by relations of power and inequalities in society (Mogashoa, 2014). By implication, research in CDA is concerned with revealing these discourses through the analysis and studying of spoken and written texts (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002). For the purpose of this study, the researcher will be analyzing written texts of published journal articles, and as such CDA was relevant in this regard. The use of textual analysis can be valuable to discourse analysis. By extracting a particular text and paying attention to it allows for the possibility of engagement, and to identify how power dynamics are revealed and entrenched within a particular domain (Mogashoa, 2014). This kind of analysis is meant to identify discourses and analyze how they function vis-à-vis power relations - and most importantly offering the opportunity to challenge pre-existing notions with the possibility for social change (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002).

In critical discourse analysis, it is argued that discourses *do* something, meaning that they contribute to the creation and reproduction of power dynamics between social categories – for example gender, race or culture (Fairclough, 1992). Thus, the use of language and text are both a form of social action which is situated socially and historically, and that which people can use to change the world. As such, this approach is meaningful to the current study because it will offer valuable insights and suggestions of how contemporary views of culture should contribute towards the broader transformative efforts in indigenous psychological theory and practice

In the following analysis section, two discourses of culture were identified in the data set. Each of the discourses are defined on the basis of an ontological assumption for how psychology and "culture" interact with each other. These discourses will be elaborated separately using illustrative texts that relate to the ideological and socio-political context in which it they are derived. For the sake of clarity, I will provide a brief description of each of the discourses identified in the text:

Culture as a 'border space' – This discourse indicates that 'culture' was identified and framed using the 'border space' as a metaphor. Discourse 1 is taken from the idea that 'culture' in post-colonial Africa is seen as unpredictable, undefinable, fluid, and unknown in both action and conceptualization. And as indigenous African knowledge systems continue to occupy the current and future space, they need to also occupy a 'border space' of present realities. This is taken from Fanon's concept of the *beyond* (from Nell (2005)) in that it suggests an indigenous psychology that looks beyond the past, beyond the present, and beyond the future – and to therefore look at the 'border space'. This discourse further proposes that if psychologists are committed to (i) occupying the 'border space' of present and future demographics; (ii) occupy a new space in which to critique and make its own contributions in contemporary South Africa – they should rethink their rigid perspectives of what an African psychology should look like so as to avoid promoting further counter-hegemonies. This idea also acknowledges that an African indigenous psychology in SA can and should never be predicated on the ontological realities of eurocentrism, but it should never allow itself to immerse into the euphoria of a reductionist and missionary logic for the sake of what it means to be African.

Culture toward a decolonial agenda – This discourse emphasizes the role of 'culture' as a tool to disrupt relations of power in Psychology. By employing a 'decolonial' agenda is to foster a culture of well-being and justice, with a call to engage new forms of practise in the way that research and interventions in psychology are carried out. This will encourage the promotion of 'culturally relevant' practises in hopes of a better understanding of the welfare of citizens and their ecological connections. 'Culture' in this instance is then seen as a way of restoring black people's dignity from the shackles of colonialism – and to further challenge psychology to reverse these negative self-images and replace them with more positive identities.

Discourse 1: Culture as a 'border space'

Articles in the data set made reference to the importance of using "bifocal lenses" in conceptualizing culture (Eagle & Long, 2011, pg.348), and to do " justice to the notion of intersection rather than over-simplifying race, culture or gender politics and positioning" (Eagle & Long, 2011, pg.348). Furthermore, the idea of 'culture' as 'primordial' and 'static' was problematized and instead described variously as "rich and ambiguous" (Swartz, 1995, p.1), and as "malleable and open to personal interpretation" (Eagle & Swartz, 2005, p.48). By making reference to culture as something that's not monolithic but rather contested and ever-changing, acknowledges that African psychology ought to shed its "overused monoculture coat" (Makhubela, 2016, p.6).

'Culture' in this sense then becomes not only a critique of capitalism and the power structures that maintain it, but it is as much a critique of its own commitments to deconstruct the status quo. This 'self-undoing' nature of 'culture' recognizes that an extremely one-dimensional politics is not the means to an end. Rather it requires that those who advocate for social justice to be wary of completely devoting to the politics of partisanship and to look beyond their ruler's interests as well as their own (Eagleton, 2000).

Against this backdrop, the following excerpts discusses how psychology, as a reflexive discipline, should refrain from inhabiting linear spaces of the past - but should engage with a range of subjectivities that exist in the current and future demographics:

The form taken by the debate on Africanisation must be historicised. It needs to be seen as a product of the intersection of discourses of identity and power following colonialism and apartheid. As one of the disciplines which engages in researching and manufacturing personal and social identities, psychology is well placed to reflect both on the psycho-social consequences of various discourses of Africanisation, as well as on their implications for the nature of its practice (Dawes, 1998, pg.).

It is clear from the above extract that psychology's intersection with politics is a suitable entry point in subverting the colonialist, racialized and gendered worldviews of psychology. And by historicizing the debate it allows for all different epistemological and ontological realities – and the limits of their possibilities – to be analysed in and of themselves. Stevens (2016) notes:

The final point that I would like to recover from the text relates to knowledge and its constitutive, reproductive and contestatory role in subject formation. Knowledge helps us to craft understandings of ourselves, others and the world, and in so doing, are central to processes of personhood and

subjecthood, shifting in and out of hegemonic and subordinated positions, making it a key feature of what kind of subjects can be possible at any given point in history (Stevens, 2016, p.94).

The abstract above highlights the "shifting" role of knowledge suggesting that disciplines are not static but rather knowledge is contextually driven and always in a state of flux, allowing us to imagine the different kinds of possibilities and their limits in our attempts to recover and uncover our intellectual potency as black African subjects. These epistemic contestations have strong implications for how black subjects articulate their experiences and personal accounts. As Stevens (2016) notes:

> The black subject is never simply one-dimensional – the black subject meets the world on contradictory terms, but has the capacity for agency, resistance, re-appropriation and reconstitution

Meeting 'the world on contradictory terms' suggests the continuous negation and cultural oppression that black subjects are fed with daily in a society notorious for its anti-blackness. To be continually fed with cultural understandings which are not your own, that are alien towards your lived experiences, and which consistently devaluate our culture is testament of how Black people have internalized the colonizers stereotypes as a means of knowing self (Hook, 2004). However, the capacity to 're-appropriate and reconstitute' already suggests the possibility for negotiating these differences between the oppressor and the oppressed, whilst also recognizing the negative effects of a colonialist education and the aberrations of Bantu education. Nevertheless, Stevens (2016) notes that despite the pernicious relations between settler colonials and Black Africans – and the internalized submission towards whiteness in general - part of the 'negotiating' process still involves the attachment of value to education regardless of its colonial nature, "pointing out the possibilities of exploiting these spaces with their internal contradictions as well" (Stevens, 2016, p.92).

Indeed, the supremacy of particular western civilizations and their supposed contributions onto the field illustrates a kind of 'identity politics' that continues to haunt psychology. The irony of it though is that the struggle to reassert these identity politics and putting them into the prism of modern psychology may run the risk of recolonizing the present. Just as Makhubela (2016) puts it:

> I am always sceptical and unsettled whenever liberatory thought in Africa appeals or pivots itself on missionary logic and conceptions of what it means to be African, when attempting to undermine and unsettle colonialism, because the result is ironically just a reinforcement and the preservation of coloniality (author, year, page).

Similarly, Dawes (1998) adds that:

The "Africanness" of our psychology should not be driven by an over-determination of possible cultural differences of its peoples from those in the North or who are white. This is an essential point. We should be cautious in our use of "culture" as an explanatory variable, it is a seductive concept, with potential for abuse (Dawes, 1998, p.11-12)

If present day psychologists are committed toward occupying the 'border space' of present and future demographics, then African cultural knowledge systems cannot serve only to privilege staggering ruminations of the past. Instead, 'culture' should act as an instrument of social change and should not only be understood as a mere transcendence or a reference to primordial understandings, but rather as an ongoing social construction - a definition of culture that is explicitly anchored in political terms (Allwood, 2011).

'Culture' in this instance is then seen as a form identity, a proxy that is able to critique the dominant or majority constructions around it. Moreover, such a politically oriented approach to culture will undoubtedly carry liberatory potential and it will shed some light into how a 'relevant' psychology should look like.

Discourse 2: Culture toward a decolonial agenda

Articles have made various proposals on how the 'decolonial agenda' in psychology should look like, and how it make the idea of transforming psychology more practicable. Authors made reference to "a decolonial turn to psychology" (Pillay, 2017, pg.138), "dealing with the challenges of rising unemployment" (Maree, 2012, pg.1), "a searching examination of the material conditions of oppression" (Long, 2016, pg.431), and "the effects of political victimisation and repression" (SAJP 2, 2015, pg.?).

Long (2016) notes that:

If African psychology is to prosper, it will have to submit itself—in contemporary parlance—to a thoroughgoing process of "decolonization." It is somewhat ironic that African psychology—by defining itself in cultural opposition to "Eurocentric" psychology—has ended up colonizing itself

Suggesting that psychology requires a "decolonization" for it to "prosper" further emphasizes the failure of the 'transformation' and 'rainbowism' rhetoric to address issues of structural oppressions and the reasons for which they exist. Instead such an analysis only serves to conceal these oppressions by reproducing ideas that are not integral to unpacking inequalities and the plights that plague them. By focusing on the cultural symbols of inequalities such as violence, trauma, unemployment – and thereby historicizing the debate – then we are highlighting the importance of resistance by 'cracking' the status quo (Pillay,

2017) so that the structures that keep the hegemony of colonial knowledge in place are no longer sustained.

Long (2016) also cautions us that it would be unwise to attribute 'cultural incompetence' in the therapeutic encounter and the failure of intersubjectivity between patients and the clinicians with different cultural backgrounds to the "black box of culture" (p.430). Rather:

Psychology's failure to launch among Black South Africans has less to do with questions of "race," culture, or even language than with the enormous inequality that plagues life in our country (Long, 2016, p.430).

The mental health of ethnic populations therefore needs to be discussed with the awareness drawn to the presence of unique psychological difficulties of particular populations. Meeting these demands requires a collective body of researchers, social scientists, community leaders, activists, programme designers that are committed to designing massive interventions that are bold, imaginative and large enough to attract funding. These interventions must also be culturally sensitive and cognisant to the ecological context of the individual's experiences. The role of a decolonized psychology in this regard is to foster a culture of well-being and justice, with a call to engage with new forms of practise - in the curriculum, research, interventions - and investing in the promotion of emancipatory policies that encourage the understanding of ecological connections (Johnston, 2015; Pillay, 2017).

While reading the contributions in *SAJP* and *PINS* pertaining to this discourse it was apparent that the articles were grouped according to particular themes, such as resilience research in psychology (Maree, 2012), facets of well-being (Maree, 2011), and the role of culture in the theory and practise of psychology (Maree, 2012) to name a few. One of the contributions dealing with well-being, *Individual responsibility for health and HIV infection: a critical investigation of the lived experience of HIV-positive women* (Du Plessis, 2011), focused on how Black women living with HIV/AIDS struggled to forge new identities. In particular the discussion highlighted the power imbalances between the researcher and the participant. The author discusses this position in terms of the researcher's role as the medical expert, and how the patient is relegated as the subject body under the clinical gaze and surveillance. Mitchell (2011) further elaborates that:

The imbalance of power between the researcher and the research participant must be carefully considered in same-sex sexuality research. Several authors highlight the necessity to

understand and approach participants as individuals who do not fit neatly into a homogenous category for the purpose of being researched (Mitchell, 2011, pg.67-68).

These 'power imbalances' also highlight the methodological pitfalls inherent whenever there is an interaction between the researcher and African subject. The researcher-participant positioning creates an environment fraught with inevitable confounds where both parties during the research process might expect specific outcomes to occur (experimenter expectancy, social desirability bias); or the lack of full understanding of the researcher's language and culture, instead offering a diluted version of original content without clear contextual understanding (Buhlan, 1993).

Du Plessis (2011) also mentions that the dominant themes in risk taking behaviours of black women living with HIV/AIDS is centred on discourses of 'taking responsibility for one's health' and their 'lifestyle'. He further mentions that:

Living positively with HIV… impose practices such as following a given diet….HIV testing…disclosure…the adoption of safer sex practises… adhering to treatment regimes, going for regular check-ups and maintaining social activities (DU Plessis, 2011, p. 466).

The notion of 'living positively' and adopting a 'healthy life style' suggests the idea of normality and rationality where preventative measures are centred on reasonable conduct with "an almost obsessive preoccupation with own vigilance, behavioural surveillance, behavioural change and risk calculation" (du Plessis, 2011, p.466). These interventions as practised by many HIV/AIDS education campaigns can be understood in terms of what Foucault (1988) referred to as the regulatory regimes of the self. Despite the notion of a positive lifestyle, these prevention campaigns do nothing to empower and forge a sense of agency for these women. Instead they serve only to trivialize the women's lived experiences by attributing undesirable behavioural states (i.e. negative lifestyles associated with HIV/AIDS such sexual overindulgence and carelessness) in the face of prevention programs.

This has implications for intervention strategies and policy making involving sufferers of HIV/AIDS (and that also includes non-binary sexual identities and practise). It is important to understand that the notion of risk taking behaviours in people living with HIV/AIDS does not conform to all sufferers. Instead, intervention strategies need a more holistic approach in terms of recognizing the heterogeneity of different cases - and most importantly they need to strive for 'cultural' relevance and be contextually driven (du Plessis, 2011). Similarly another contribution, *Resilience in remarried families* (Brown and Robinson, 2012), investigated the resiliency factors in the adjustment and adaptation of remarried families. The major finding

was that the interventions should be directed at specific life stages since the challenges as well as the protective factors that families experience varies widely and occurs at different stages.

Against this backdrop, Dails-Bradford (2015) in his contribution, *Exploring resiliency: Academic achievement among disadvantaged black youth in South Africa,* lambasted psychologists for focusing on human weaknesses rather than on human strengths in their research. Instead he discusses how resiliency research empowers individuals to forge new identities while defeating adversity in the process, and "culminating with integrity in its resolution" (Stevens, 2016, p.92). He further adds that:

> Resiliency research… is a more positive development in psychology, and focuses on mastery, competence, coping, pro-social behaviours, strengths and resources (Stevems, 2016, p.574-575).

The above extract is an example of how "cultural" interventions can be used as a tool to empower disadvantaged black youth in South Africa. This suggests that a decolonized agenda to 'culture' should concern itself with the restoration of human dignity and agency; but that should not however be confused with 'positive thinking'. Rather a 'culturally appropriate' intervention should reverse the negative self-images of black people and replace them with more positive identities (Hook, 2004). This approach is drawn from Steve Biko's Black Consciousness philosophy where he points out the three-hundred year old inferiority complex that Black people still have to surmount, which had not only dented their self-confidence, but emptied them of their very self-hood - and consequently rendered them entirely passive (Hook, 2004). Thus, one of the challenges of Black liberation, in words that deliberately echoed Biko, is a rehabilitation of some magnitude that is not to be confused with positive thinking (Hook, 2004). This discussions is testament to how the 'legacy of apartheid' has been influential in the structuring of relations between the Black and white subjects. Inasmuch as the formalities of racism are no longer as pronounced, the tools of colonialism, heralding neo-colonialism, are still present today (Buhlan, 1993).

In South African politics the talk of different 'cultures' often appeals to how the concept was historically used to reinforce differences between European colonials and indigenous South Africans during apartheid. For instance, in the 18th and 19th century "culture" represented a quality possessed by the "civilized" that was lacking on the part of the "uncivilized." (Sher & Long, 2015, p.453). As a civilized individual it meant that you have to constantly evaluate your conduct –that you are significantly equated to good morals and good

conduct, a well-tempered personality, and everything else that represents good ethical behaviour. Just like in any liberal democracy today, if you are a 'cultured' person (i.e. you've tasted the fruits of modernity) it means that you demonstrate intellectual refinement and that you are superior to barbarism.

Subsequently, during the early 20th century, such differences in culture served to naturalize these so-called distinctions between White settlers and Black South Africans, such that they were harnessed to justify the segregation of Black people, not only from White people, but from themselves (Sher & Long, 2015). This idea extends to the common practises of democracy in South Africa where so-called liberal democrats are rarely ever implicated in riots, protests or any other form of violence that erupts. For the sake of peace, liberal democrats believe that national differences should also be downplayed (i.e. not 'seeing colour') as a way of valorising the 'rainbowism rhetoric'. As such, Black subjects who respond aggressively to structural violence by way of protest action are almost always policed. Under the liberal guise, anything that disrupts or compromises the day-to-day practises of colonial power structures – and the safety of those who indirectly or directly benefit from them – will almost always be labelled as barbaric, violent or even sub-human.

The way 'culture' is used to defend the rights of liberals and humanists to express their dissent towards 'violent' protest action is exemplary of how cultural discourses (or cultural differences) are used to naturalize and rank social groups. In other words cultural differences are used to explain the existence of social groups, and how those "natural processes operate to produce, preserve and destroy culture; and what processes produce conflict between cultures" (Durrheim & Dixon, 2002, p.98).

However, the defence of liberalism underplays the construction of violence in relation to society in the sense that it obscures the material manifestations of politically motivated acts by attributing retaliation as "social pathology that has its roots in family background, religious affiliation, and a lack of moral socialisation" (Hayes, 2011, p.2). Instead, Stevens (2016) emphasizes the need for alternative understandings regarding forms of social protest and violence embodied by colonized subjects, stating that:

the body can be seen as a canvass, as an instrument of power, as a communicative tool, as a mode of reinstating citizenship, and of course, as means of reconstituting obliterated psychic space – where embodied enactments are not simply ephemeral moments of irrationality, primordiality or psychically regressed states of being in the world, but are the

materialized manifestations of subjectivity that require analyses in and of themselves (Stevenson, 2016, p.94).

General discussions and recommendations

Western psychology has always been criticized for its obsession with remaining culture-blind and culture-bound, mirroring cultural traditions of the west and ignoring insights of many of the earliest-developed societies outside of the west. This idea continues to highlight how psychology has historically contributed in trivializing the role of culture in shaping human behaviour (SAJP 2). Well-meaning practitioners responded to these criticisms and mobilized to reshape the discipline, reflecting consistently in the emergence and subsequent issues in psychology journals (PINS). Recommendations around transforming the curriculum have included: the recruitment and training of black, culturally competent clinical psychologists (Sher & Long, 2015); taking dedicated modules on cultural issues (particularly African languages, healing processes and processes); and establishing departments where postgraduate students research African worldviews in order to create a foundation for an African indigenous psychology (PINS).

The South African population has a Black majority of 90% and yet many of them still remain under oppressive power structures characterized by high rates of unemployment, poverty, and violence to name a few (Ahmed & Pillay, 2004). Also South Africa experienced high levels of inequality, unemployment and poverty in the year 2010 compared to 1994 (Maree, 2011). All of this indicates that South Africa is in a state of crisis, and these social difficulties are most severe in South Africa's most poorest and vulnerable populations. Now that we know these challenges and are prepared to eradicate the socio-political barriers that plague the marginalized. South African Clinical psychologists need to find ways in which to recruit and train clinicians who are prepared to work in the most poorest and vulnerable communities. In addition, clinicians need to also invest in the development of relevant mental health policy, curricula, and addressing issues of equity and injustice to assist with the process of reparation and healing for individuals and communities. Furthermore, in contexts where psychological services are largely unavailable, and desperately needed, interventions should focus on issues that mirror that particular society and their lived experiences.

The history of psychology leading up to the beginning of the indigenization debates outside of western civilizations also had its controversies. Critiques have often been framed around the lack of diversity in the historiography of the field and how that has led to biases in

the representation of 'certain aspects of the historical picture at the expense of others' (Brock, 2006, pg. 218). The lack of representivity in this regard is exemplary of how the discipline has privileged traditional Euro-American forms of psychology that have often been at variance with contexts outside of the West. Internationally the discipline has had a well-developed history and it is practised in almost every country in the world, but very little of it makes it into *the* history of psychology. In fact, even when we look at the history of psychology in the United States in the late 19th and early 20th century, its development coexisted with a period of rapid modernization in that country (Long, 2016). The point is that we would expect psychology to prosper in western civilizations such as the United States because it is governed by a liberal democracy and it just so happens to adopt a 'modern' style of living. The growing demands of modernity, the effects of globalization and the development of the economy and science offers a breeding ground for psychological expertise - and that is the common perception for the spread of psychology across the world (Long, 2016). When we are confronted with the 'double consciousness's' of trying to reclaim a discipline that neither recognizes Africans nor allows us to return to our former selves, we cannot possibly talk of an ontology whilst South Africa is 'irrelevant' compared to the foreign values of the discipline. For as long as we fail to consider that South Africa is a pre-modern society that has a Black majority that still remains unequal compared to the minority of modern South Africans who are mostly White, fluent and psychologized, transforming the field to what we aspire it to be will continue to remain a challenge.

Summary and synthesis

This article critically examines discourses of "culture" in the *South African Journal of Psychology* and *Psychology in Society* between 1994 and 2017. In a discourse analysis of 42 journal articles, three cultural discourses are identified. The significant finding of this research was that despite the ongoing debates about a psychology that closely mirrors the welfare of African citizens, there still remains quite a lot of challenges that are deep-seated and entrenched within the discursive paradigms of psychology. It was also revealed that there are changes that still need to be effected, moreso at the level of intervention, which takes into consideration the multiple heterogeneous cases (and their subjectivities) in the present demographics. Such changes can only take shape with the assistance of a committed pool of clinicians and stakeholders who are willing to go above and beyond to make practicable the idea of transforming psychology into what we aspire it to be. A summary of the findings in Discourse 1 employs a social constructionist framework by problematizing cultural

essentialism, proposing that contemporary indigenous psychology writings should be a space of negotiation rather than negation in order to arrive at new forms of understanding. Drawing from Fanon's concept of the 'beyond' (Nell, 2005), Discourse 1 further proposes that if psychologists are committed to occupy the present and future space in which to critique and make its own contributions – Indigenous psychology should not immerse itself into the euphoria of cultural essentialism for the sake of what it means to be African, for that will run the risk of recolonizing the present.

The second discourse emphasizes the role of 'culture' as a tool to disrupt relations of power in Psychology. Discourse 2 also employs a 'decolonial' agenda by promoting psychological services that foster a culture of well-being and justice, with a call to engage new forms of practise in the way that research and interventions in psychology are carried out. This encourages the promotion of 'culturally relevant' practises in hopes of a better understanding of the welfare of citizens and their ecological connections. 'Culture' in this instance is then seen as a way of restoring black people's dignity from the shackles of colonialism – and to further challenge psychology to reverse these negative self-images and replace them with more positive identities.

Conclusion

Indigenous psychology as a global movement has created much of the historical groundwork necessary in tailoring psychological knowledge in other than western contexts, with culture being at the forefront of the debate. As noted, much of what constitutes the post-colonial understanding of culture (and as it has been used in this study) is the liberatory and revolutionary potential it has carried within a social constructionist paradigm. Proponents of indigenous psychology have also investigated how culture has been appropriated historically and politically in the literature. The result has been the need of a 'culture' that is defined in explicitly political terms and seen as an ongoing social construction. This premise acknowledges that cultural essentialism arguably has no place in a post-colonial society, and that culture needs to be examined historically for the effects of naturalization to be done away with. The general sentiment is that the theories and practices of psychology taught in universities must be transformed in ways that are uniquely African. Also the mental health of ethnic populations needs to be discussed with the awareness drawn to the presence of unique psychological difficulties and, most importantly, with recognition of their welfare.

This study has investigated both historically and politically the cultural discourses that are obtained in South African psychology writings in *SAJP* and *PINS* between 1994 and 2017. It also unravelled the ways in which culture has been conceptualized in post-colonial writings as way of problematizing some of the ways in which culture has been rigidly perceived and analysed in the past. However, the calls for the indigenization of psychology in South Africa should also be able to address the crucial facets that continue to plague issues of the present day, including high rates of crime, violence, youth unemployment, and gender discrimination and so on. Hopefully, such considerations will arguably provide valuable insights and also achieve a deeper theoretical understanding around discourses of culture in post-apartheid psychology. And when we have a psychology that commits itself to prioritizing the culture and the welfare of citizens that need these services the most, I believe we will have the courage to take bold moves in directions that sees psychology in South Africa fully contributing to an on-going and liberatory democratic project. As Chris Hani quotes:

"We must build a different culture, and the culture should be one of service to people".

Ethics

Since this study will make use of journal articles as the primary source of data, the researcher will not provide information on ethics as the data will not make use of human beings as subjects. Therefore ethical considerations will not be relevant to this particular study.

Limitations

Although critical discourse analysis is important for revealing the unspoken and unacknowledged discourses of culture and social change, the approach is not without its theoretical limitations. One of which is that new researchers (as well as experienced ones) may be confused by the similarities and differences between the concepts, especially if the concepts are not thoroughly explained and justified for their use in each and every analysis (Mogashoa, 2014). As mentioned above it also becomes difficult to provide information on ethics in this kind of research since archival research is done in isolation and does not make use of human beings as subjects. As such, it may be difficult to detect ethical flaws in how the analysis is carried out for instance, which raises many concerns for further scrutiny. Also, this approach has been criticized for having a general lack of explicit techniques for researchers to follow, as that has been seen as a hindrance or challenge – especially for new researchers (ibid).

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