FINDING COMMUNITY, PLACING PSYCHOLOGY: REFLECTIONS ON THE 6TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGY

Amy Quayle[*], Lutfiye Ali[*], Alison Baker[*], Christopher Sonn[*], Sam Keast[*], and Romana Morda[*]

The 6th International Conference on Community Psychology was held in the city of Durban in South Africa in 2016. The conference theme 'Global Dialogues on Critical Knowledges, Liberation and Community' reflected South Africa's current political struggle for transformation and the connection to issues of social and economic inequality internationally. Guided by storytelling as a methodology, this paper draws on individual reflections of delegates from Victoria University, Australia, to explore the implications of the conference for us individually and collectively. We organise our collective reflections around two themes: the limitations and constraints of psychology teaching and training, and the value and challenges associated with critical and contextualised approaches to community psychologies. Drawing on these reflections, we discuss the implications for teaching, research and practice, as well as the importance of forging spaces for networking and support for contextualised approaches to community psychology.

Keywords: community psychology, curriculum, reflection, criticality, decoloniality

1.   Introduction

The 6th International Conference on Community Psychology[1] (ICCP) was held in the city of Durban in South Africa in June 2016. It was the first time the ICCP has taken place on African soil. The conference theme 'Global Dialogues on Critical Knowledges, Liberation and Community' reflected South Africa's current political struggle for transformation and the connection to issues of social and economic inequality internationally. The specific aims of the

---

[*] Victoria University, Australia ✉
[1] For conference programme, see: http://iccp2016.co.za/programme/ICCP2016conferenceprogramme.pdf

conference were to create a dialogical space to illuminate, challenge, and disrupt dominant forms of knowledge and hegemonic influences inherent in the discipline of community psychology.

The overall theme of the conference was explored in four constituent thematic tracks. Track one, 'Knowledge Production and Contestation in Community Psychology', provided a space to examine forms of knowledge produced as community psychology and "the contestation for representation and authority" (ICCP, 2016a, *Knowledge production and contestation in community psychology,* para 2). Track two, 'Decoloniality, Power and Epistemic Justice', explored theories and practices of decoloniality. Decoloniality represents the hope of, "remaking the world such that the enslaved, colonised, and exploited peoples can regain their ontological density, voice, land, history, knowledge and power" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015, p. 23). This track sought to show how epistemologies from the Global South can contribute to "reshaping the identities and representational forms of community psychology" (ICCP, 2016a, *Decoloniality, power and epistemic justice,* para 2). 'Community Psychology in Context' was track three, which sought to promote debates and conversations on the diverse enactments of community psychology across different contexts and topics. Track four titled 'Teaching and Learning in Community Psychology' invited presentations that analysed the teaching and learning traditions in community psychology, including issues related to the professionalisation of the discipline.

A fifth track, Track X, organically emerged through discussions among a number of delegates who expressed a common interest to 'playfully' unsettle the formality around the conference program and create an informal space for dialogue. At the opening ceremony, the conference organisers had invited delegates to leave their academic egos at the door, and to engage in playful seriousness, and generative disruption. Track X was encouraged and celebrated by the conference organisers and, as a result, evolved into a space where conference attendees could express their experiences, reactions, and thoughts that arose during the conference on sheets of paper using coloured whiteboard markers but also through informal conversations with other attendees (i.e., Track X organisers). Delegates' reflections were posted on pillars at the conference venue, an impromptu installation.

2.   The Current Paper

We are a group of staff and students from Victoria University, Australia, who attended this conference. Based on informal discussions following the conference, we realised that the conference experience was meaningful to each of us for different reasons, which prompted us to explore our reflections and the implications for our respective areas of research, teaching, and practice. Each of us had been inspired, challenged, and enriched— invited to deepen our commitment to contributing to relevant community psychology in our various substantive areas.

We invited each person to write a personal reflection that was to form a basis for a collective narrative. In the following section, we present short personal reflections written by the different authors, who share some of what the conference experience meant to them. In reading the different stories, we noted that Sam's and Romana's pieces highlight what they saw as limitations, constraints, and challenges of psychology teaching and training in the Australian context. Their stories serve as a contextualisation to understand why the conference was an affirming experience for all of us. We start with these two stories, which are followed by reflections from Amy, Lutfiye, Alison, and Chris. These last four pieces illustrate different

aspects of the conference the authors found affirming. The pieces highlight shared commitments to social justice and transformation, the importance of criticality, and the need for solidarity and communality in continuing to build community psychology that can contribute to the challenges of oppression, inequality, and coloniality.

3. 'Discipling the Discipline'" Limitation and Constraints of Psychology Teaching and Training

In reflecting on the conference, the perceived limitations and constraints that characterise the context within which we teach, research, and practice psychology, were illuminated. In our conversations during and after the conference, we discussed the implications of the dominant approaches to psychology in Australia for the ways in which we teach, learn, and practice psychology. And while much of the conference represented an affirmation of many of the values and contributions of community psychology, it also made us acutely aware of the relatively small, and precarious, corner community psychology holds as a discipline in Australia. In his reflection, Sam discusses some of the tensions involved in the notion of expertise within the psychology discipline and profession, and implications associated with the marketisation of psychology.

1.1 *Sam*

As a Master's of Psychology student, teacher, and provisional psychologist, I am coming to terms with a number of tensions. These tensions are produced by the highly regulated, reified psychological knowledge that is administered, accredited and bureaucratised in Australia, which supposedly gives us expertise in others' lives, but often also serves to exclude non-professional and lay-people, from being 'experts' of their own psychology. During my time at the conference, I found myself constantly referring back to these tensions and wondering, what sort of psychology is produced in Australia? And where does this place me and my knowledge? This was also the basis of my presentation there, which sought to explicate some of the constraints faced by those teaching psychology in Australia.

What was reflected back to me during the conference was the extent to which the 'politics of knowledge' are rarely considered with regard to how we deliver psychology education in Australia. In our Western system, education is often presumed to be simply the delivery of neutral knowledge to students, with 'good' education marketed as that which fills the students with 'good' knowledge to get a 'good job', and achieves this as efficiently as possible (Apple, 2006). This approach fails to acknowledge the inextricable relationship between knowledge and power, and thus "marginalizes the politics of knowledge but also offers little agency to students, teachers, and community members" (p. 5).

In contrast, presenters at the conference where seeking to elucidate the ways in which politics should be made a central concern of knowledge production. A number of presenters from both Africa and Latin America spoke of decolonial psychology and of ways to redress power asymmetries. This affirmed for me the importance and possibility of more criticality in and around psychology education. Particularly community psychology education, which endeavours

to address issues of social justice, yet is often hampered by the dominant epistemologies required by our system.

At the same time, because this was the first time I had been exposed to an international network of community psychology, I was mindful of, the possibility that I was creating a kind of fetishized social reality. That in fact the very culture of positivism that draws my critique, was informing how I perceived 'other' psychologies at the conference. This was really the greatest source of conflict for me during my time in Durban. When I thought about the intentions of the conference to, "disrupt dominant hegemonic influences" (ICCP, 2016b, Conference theme, para. 3), and to, "challenge colonial and other dominant epistemologies and asymmetrical power relations" (ICCP, 2016b, Conference theme, para. 3), it gave me an uncomfortable sense that I was a part of a system of education which was the antithesis of this. While I was able to justify to myself the importance of being exposed to other psychologies, the twinge of guilt that I was in some way part of a dominant, Western psychological knowledge was never far away.

The stronghold on psychological knowledge was so aptly described at the conference by keynote speaker Nelson Maldonado-Torres as 'disciplining the discipline' (e.g., Maldonado-Torres, 2007). He spoke of the intersection of political ideologies (neo-liberalism and liberalism) and their disciplining influence, which affirmed for me the reality of what Maldonado-Torres referred to as 'global-north-centric thinking'. Maldonado-Torre's speech affirmed that in Australia, psychology is deeply invested in the disciplining of the discipline through an overly rigid and narrow accreditation system. While I am not suggesting that we radically detach from all values and standards, it did make me wonder, as a teacher, how complicit in the narrow reproduction of this type of psychology I am. How much am I a part of a system that seeks to discipline and control knowledge? At the same time, I was questioning the very knowledge that affords me the title psychologist, and the power inferred by that title. The conference highlighted the cultural relativity of psychological knowledge and the narrow construction of the role of psychologist, prompting me to question, what is it that I know? Given the increasingly culturally complex issues facing Australia, I also asked myself, what do I want to do with psychology, or perhaps more accurately, what can I do with psychology? What does this make me professionally? This was not simply trying to sort out in my head what I would call myself, or what job description I preferred, but rather what sort of relationship I want with psychology; a question I still have not settled an answer for.

While many of the experiences in Durban made me reflect on the conflicts already mentioned, there were also times where I felt a kind of affirming jubilance at the stories of students 'un-disciplining' and 'bringing decolonization' to their higher education work, and of researchers seeking to disrupt and decolonise psychology. Hearing people working toward shaking off the global-north-centric aspects of psychology in their own countries gave me a sense that there are ways of developing a psychology, which embraces the complexity of intersubjectivities. It highlighted for me that pursuing a psychology, which seeks to place people in their sociopolitical and cultural realities, is of value. It affirmed that psychology can, and in fact should be, psychologies, plural, and that perhaps psychology is not only the domain of psychologists.

A number of impassioned people spoke of the psychological work they were doing, such as helping young trauma survivors despite not being what might generally be regarded as a psychologist. People spoke of culturally complex, politically volatile, and sometimes disturbing situations that were being navigated therapeutically through art, spoken word, activism, and song. This very much affirmed for me that psychology need not be a singular, rigid, marketised

profession, but that it can also be a buoyant, community driven, sociopolitical venture that deeply empowers people, thus broadening the role of 'psychologist'.

1.2   *Romana*

Like Sam, Romana's thoughts during the conference were around the often-narrow focus of training in psychology, and how a dominant, individualised psychology does not adequately prepare students to understand broader issues and interventions beyond the individual level.

When reflecting on my experiences of attending and presenting at the 6th International Conference on Community Psychology I cannot help drawing comparisons between this conference and a large scale Psychology conference that I attended in 2015. At the conference in 2015, I presented on my PhD, which is in developmental psychology. The papers within my session were also in this field of psychology. I found the papers interesting but I cannot say that I was overly engaged or challenged by what was being presented. I was familiar with the concepts and methodologies being presented but this familiarity did not engender a sense of connection. In comparison, in South Africa, I felt both challenged and connected. Challenged by socio-political praxes, which sought to disrupt many of the dominant ways of thinking about psychology, yet connected to the values that informed many of the presentations I attended. Values, which sought to give voice to histories of injustice, to understand people in an ecological way, and to empower people in their lives.

The challenges arose from feeling that I was 'overreaching' and that my training in psychology, which I can say was fairly traditional 'rats and stats,' was going to show me up. It could be argued that my training in psychology is reflective of many psychology graduates in Australia. The core theoretical areas and graduate standards as outlined in the accreditation standards for psychology courses were covered. However, once I graduated from my Masters course, and started to work as a psychologist and academic I started to realise how particular my training was, and the limits of it. After graduating, I was employed as a sessional academic teaching developmental psychology to early childhood education students. Teaching these courses was my first exposure to ecological models of development and qualitative methodologies, both approaches that emphasise context and culture. I feel fortunate for this experience as it challenged my preconceptions about developmental psychology and research methodologies. The challenges continued when I was employed as a full time academic at Victoria University and was first exposed to community psychology. For me community psychology presented a critical point of comparison to my training in psychology, which has informed the focus of my teaching.

At the conference I presented a paper that outlined our students' experiences of an Intercultural Psychology unit. Whiteness studies and cultural safety frameworks inform the pedagogy of this unit. It was designed to foster students' awareness of the history and well-being of Indigenous Australians, whiteness and privilege and the experiences of refugees and migrants. Our findings indicated that students' appeared to show an increased awareness of a number of critical issues in relation to cultural diversity and psychology. However, some students stated that we needed to more clearly articulate how the concepts being presented related to psychology. Many students were challenged by the concept of white privilege but felt that learning about white privilege was transformative in terms of how they viewed their own privilege. Some students were 'resistant' to the concepts being presented. They felt that the

material was biased and some said that they felt silenced – that they could not truly express how they were feeling. When reflecting on our experiences of teaching this unit, silencing of students is a real tension for us. How do we provide a space for students to express their views even when these views make us and other students uncomfortable? As Lindquist (1994) stated if we label students' reactions as resistant it is difficult to interrogate and benefit from what they may be saying. The theme of critical pedagogy and opportunities for students to critically think about psychology, and community psychology, was echoed by many presenters at the conference.

Providing opportunities for students to reflect upon and interrogate their own cultural understandings and more generally to reflect on the underpinning values and assumptions of psychology is critical for psychology training. However, I believe there is limited opportunity to do so in the curriculum. I feel challenged by this. Yet, in my capacity as program coordinator, I have created spaces in a very regulated and tight curriculum for students to engage with course material and pedagogical practices to build on their critical capacities. The intercultural curriculum mentioned above is one example of how students are learning and critique the theories, models and methodologies they have been taught. The conference provided a similar critical space on a larger scale for me. I had the opportunity to engage, and be challenged by what I was hearing and reflect on how I might incorporate what I had learnt into my teaching and research.

4. Critical and Contextualised Approaches to Community Psychologies

In our discussions, we reflected on the value of criticality for community psychologists and Community Psychology praxis, and the ways in which the conference challenged us. Amy reflects on how she sometimes feels as though she is not really doing psychology, as traditionally (and often narrowly) defined. Given this, Amy found the approach to doing psychology centred at the conference affirming, and recognised the commitment to criticality, as central to this way of working with communities.

4.1 Amy

With its focus on coloniality, decolonisation, and approaches to liberation, the theme of the conference was exciting and affirming of the community psychology I want to contribute to. Represented and centered at the conference was a particular approach to 'doing' psychology and specifically community psychology— enactments of liberation oriented community psychologies, which remain marginal within the broader discipline of psychology (and community psychology). Throughout my studies at Victoria University, I have been fortunate to be exposed to this approach to doing psychology, which I see as particularly important in the Australian context given the longer history of colonisation and ongoing forms of structural and cultural violence.

The conference organisers invited us to engage in an 'epistemic revolution'—reflecting the need to rethink processes of knowledge production within psychology. The focus was firmly on the role that community psychologists can and must play in social change efforts, rather than merely focusing on ameliorating the symptoms of oppressive social systems, in an

individualising, reductionist, and reactive manner. The approach advocated was an explicitly political approach to doing psychology in and with communities, whilst critically reflecting upon our own positionalities. Foregrounded at the conference was the role of critical or liberation oriented community psychologists in amplifying the voices of those who have been historically marginalised from power, facilitating opportunities for those voices to be heard, as well as making explicit and seeking to disrupt ongoing relations of domination/subordination. This requires an epistemic shift, and new ways of working. The conference provided opportunities to engage in discussions about the challenges and tensions of this work, of meeting the needs of community groups as well as the academy, and of navigating constraints of neoliberalism, the pull of scientism, and individualistic approaches that fail to recognise the complexity of individual psyches and the interconnectedness between structure and lives.

Often I feel, or am made to feel, as though I am not really doing psychology. As different authors have highlighted, the policing of borders and a siloing of disciplines can prevent interdisciplinary work, and limit our potential to understand the critical psychosocial subject (Galtung, 2010). So it was affirming to be in a space with so many people doing similar work— work that rethinks the role of psychologist, and is concerned with producing a psychology that is socially responsible and responsive. Central to this approach to doing psychology is attention to history, power, culture as always in the making, and the consideration of ethics at a broader societal level (Serrano-García, 1994). For example, the symposium that I presented in at the conference was 'Resisting post-colonising legacies of alterity: Critical community psychology praxis in India, Australia, Jamaica, and South Africa' (see Dutta, Sonn, & Lykes, 2016). While structural violence is not typically thought of as the domain of psychologists, the mechanisms of (re)production, its impacts, and the responses by individuals and communities, are psychosocial, and thus are and should be of concern for community psychology. This was very clear in this session on 'resisting post-colonising legacies', which highlighted how symbolic violence is embodied in individual life stories, and the opportunities for contesting structural violence through the mobilisation of counter-stories and counter-storytelling.

As a white woman exploring the stories of Aboriginal Elders as part of a community arts project, I have been particularly concerned with developing and enacting ways of working with communities (and Aboriginal people specifically) in ways that avoid re-colonising. Conscious of the power, privilege and normativity of whiteness, this has involved some trepidation, uncertainty, and discomfort. One of the standout moments at the conference for me was when a community representative spoke at the closing plenary. The key messages she conveyed was for community engaged researchers to work with them; that they value the resources, knowledge, and skills we have, but also the need for us, as researchers (and/or practitioners) to share our stories: to not write ourselves out of the research/collaboration, and to recognise the knowledge that communities have. This for me, related back to the task set by the conference organisers at the opening to reconstitute the very identity of community psychology/psychologist. Part of this is about recognising and understanding the expertise acquired through our training and how this can be shared in relational work in and with communities. It is not about sidelining all we have learnt, but sharing our knowledge, skills, and resources as part of a relational practice in collaborative community-based work. It is also about recognising the messiness and complexity of community based collaboration, and making it part of the research story.

Following my presentation, I began to think about how in some ways, I wrote myself out of it by presenting in the usual way— the context, the problem, the methodology,the findings. While we expect our research participants to be vulnerable, we are less willing to make ourselves

vulnerable (Behar, 1996) and part of the research stories. In retrospect, I can see that in this space, I should have taken the opportunity to speak about my role as a white researcher representing the stories of Aboriginal people, and the tensions involved. The difference in the style of presentation of community practitioners (not psychologists) and academics really stood out for me. I particularly enjoyed those presentations where discussion of the groundwork that needs to be done, the relationship stuff was prioritised, as opposed to the theoretical framework that was used—which I came to feel that I was hiding behind. However, this is not to dismiss the importance and necessity of theory, but to acknowledge and value other modes of knowing and knowledge, which have often been downplayed in efforts to produce an objective value free psychological science, a constant concern for many community psychologists (e.g., Cattaneo, Calton, & Brodsky, 2015).

Therefore, while the conference was mostly an affirming experience for me, it was also disruptive, which is important because we should always be questioning and thinking critically about what we are doing, what our intentions are, who is benefitting, what are the gaps, what are the dangers (despite our good intentions, and the nice feelings that we might get from doing this work). We need to look for these spaces for ongoing questioning and disruption.

4.2   Lutfiye

Lutfiye also valued the sociohistorical approach to psychological research, which was centred at the conference. For Lutfiye, the conference was also disruptive and encouraged her to reflect on the need for further work in decolonising and gendering the psychology curriculum.

The first ICCP conference that I attended was the "2nd International Conference on Community Psychology: Building Participative, Empowering and Diverse Communities – Visioning Community Psychology in a Worldwide Perspective" which was held in Lisbon, Portugal in 2008. Although I did not complete a Masters in Community Psychology, I attended this conference thinking it would be an appropriate forum to present my research —that it was a good fit (a home) for my research.

The approach I have been drawn to, for doing psychology largely focuses on the psychosocial in a broader political context informed by current and historical relations of power. My approach to research is largely born out of exposure to knowledge and my experiences of oppression and marginality. Drawing on postmodern and Third World feminist theory, I conceptualised the identity of Muslim women as diverse, multiple and intersecting with other discursively constructed identity locations and embedded in local, global and historical power relations. Similar to Amy, although it feels right, I am never quite sure of where I fit within psychology.

From the conference (in Portugal), I came back thinking that while my understandings of the principles underlying community psychology were perhaps reflected in some presentations, it definitely was not reflected in the way in which the conference was organised. In particular, I was surprised to observe some exclusionary practices embedded in the way the conference was organised. For example, at this conference, as with other conferences, certain markers were used to differentiate delegates, whom I am assuming to be important figures, and seemingly afforded them differential access to resources and events at the conference. Perhaps the conference organising was more of a reflection of how academia is organised in Portugal, or even the status afforded to academics in different cultural contexts, however this experience challenged my

understanding of community psychology. Is the discipline committed to tackling hierarchies? Does it always take a critical lens and seek to deconstruct hegemonies and oppressive relations of power that marginalise people and communities? I understood these themes as pivotal to the community psychology discipline and practice. These understandings are also central to my research exploring intersections of identity locations among Australian Muslim women. I came away questioning if community psychology was an area of psychology that I could call home. At the time, I had not encountered the range of critical community psychologies within the field and was not aware of how the field has been nurtured within different social historical context and discourses (Fryer & Laing, 2008).

When I read the call for abstracts for the 6th ICCP, the first thing I noticed was its focus on 'disrupting' hegemonic relations of power and knowledges and immediately knew the conference theme was very aligned with my research and my understandings of community psychology, which reflecting my exposure to community psychology at Victoria University, so happened to be critical liberation approaches to community psychology. I felt it was a place where my work on subjectivities of Muslim women would be well received and understood in that I did not need to explain and qualify the language, methodologies and theories informing my research and how it was related to psychology. Although being a Cypriot, Turkish Australian Muslim woman often means occupying spaces of marginality and otherness, presenting my work at a conference where my methodological, theoretical, and research focus were positioned as central, was a validating experience at that time. Being in this space and listening to presentations, which positioned these aforementioned counter approaches to psychosocial research as central, along with the informal conversations, affirmed my approach to exploring identity and subjectivity.

My experience at the conference was also disruptive in that it foregrounded the disconnect between my teaching and research interests including critical forms of inquiry into identity, particularly gendered identities, and my own focus and lived experiences. I have been fortunate in that I have had the opportunity to contribute to a second year unit mentioned by Romana. Although in this unit we have carved a space for socially, historically and politically contextualised understandings of psychology that looks at notions around power, culture and race, and ethnicity, gender is not a main focus. This is largely because accreditation requirements and curriculum and course structures leave little space for this type of content to be included and covered in any depth.

In writing this reflective piece, it has come to my attention that the silencing of gender in the psychology curricula is pervasive in Australian psychology and other contexts too. The ways in which sexism has been perpetuated within the psychology discipline has been well-documented (e.g. Angelique & Culley, 2003; Bond & Mulvey, 2000; Bohan, 1990; Campbell & Wasco, 2000; Mulvey, 1988; Riger, 1992; Tavris, 1992; Wilkinson, 1997; Yoder & Kahn, 1993). Despite the significant developments in theoretical and methodological approaches to gendered subjectivities (e.g. Burman, 1998; Gavey, 1989; Henriques, Hollway, Urwin, Venn & Walkerdine, 1984; Mama, 1995; Shefer, Boonzaier & Kiguwa, 2006; Walkerdine, 1997; Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 1995), it continues to be largely invisible in psychology programs in Australia. Instead, modernist understandings of gender continue to hold the fort in psychology curricula. Ignoring the social, historical and political dimensions to gendered subjectivities, gender continues to be treated largely as a unitary, ahistorical social category and often used as a grouping variable within many of the psychology units. The Australian psychology discipline's commitment to modernist knowledges and positivist methodologies has and continues to largely silence these critical epistemologies and knowledges from the Australian Psychology Accreditation Council

(APAC) accredited undergraduate psychology programs in Australia. My experience of the conference has encouraged me to think about the scope that I have in disrupting hegemonic approaches and understandings of psychology in my teaching of developmental psychology in other disciplines and in research networks such as Community, Identity and Displacement Research Network (CIDRN).

4.3 Alison

Alison's reflection on the conference focuses on notions around race, belonging, identity, and place in the collaborative project 'Sound Portraits' that she, with Chris, presented at the conference as part of the innovative sessions. Given that this project focused on the stories of the South African diaspora in Australia, Alison also discusses the personal significance of being in South Africa following immersing herself in South African peoples' memories and stories of home, and their experience of displacement following migration.

This conference was perfectly placed. In coming to African soil the ICCP conference brought a different worldview, providing a special space for our discipline to grow. For me, coming to South Africa felt very significant. For the past two years we have been working on a research project about South Africans' experiences migrating to Australia, post-Apartheid. For this project, I worked with the research team, including Chris Sonn to document how participants' lives are shaped by their experience of migration, particularly their sense of home, belonging and identity. As part of this project, we had hoped to develop a public element, with the idea of 'translating' our research to a wider audience. We ended up with Sound Portraits, which were short audio pieces featuring black and 'coloured' South Africans speaking about their lived experiences across home and host lands. Our final collective sound portrait involved the creation of a sound piece where multiple participants' voices, as well as soundscapes, were woven together.

My role in that project was to develop the sound portraits and in doing this, I spent hundreds of hours listening and re-listening to the interviews. There were many times it felt peculiar and unfitting to be handling these stories because not only was I not a South African, but also because I am white and did not have firsthand experience of the Apartheid regime or lived experience of racialised oppression. However, before I arrived in South Africa, I felt as though I had already made several journeys there, through our participants' stories. Makagon and Neumann (2009) describe the 'theatre of the mind', something that is created when we are immersed in sound. Immersion in these sound stories featuring both voices and other local sounds brought me some understanding about what South Africa has been like in the past. Through these listening journeys, I related to the 'tear' caused by migration and felt complete despair as our participants described everyday living and working conditions under the Apartheid system. I felt the joys too, the wonder and curiosity sparked when you arrive in a new place – 'the honeymoon period'. I heard the music and the people, who come together to make 'little South Africas' in Australia, creating a sense of community and home through gatherings. With this audible picture in my mind, we travelled to Durban to take these sound portraits 'home'.

Carrying these stories, I had a particular lens with which I understood South Africa. I wondered what this place was like so many years after Apartheid was 'dismantled'. Was there

ongoing animosity between different racialised groups? What were the day-to-day interactions and dynamics like close to fifty years later?

The International Conference of Community Psychology afforded us a great opportunity to share our sound narrative in the 90-minute innovative presentation format. We were able to both present the research project and then re-create a listening collective and follow it with dialogue with conference attendees. Being able to present this creative research piece in its entirety and facilitate discussions about it was an invaluable experience. In line with the conference theme, the organisers emphasised the importance of bringing about opportunities to decolonise community psychology by disrupting the traditional modes of presentation as well as breaking down barriers related to academic formalities. The incorporation of songs, poems, videos and innovative presentation formats and a range of speakers doing both activist and academic work, reflects a strong need to pull our discipline back towards its roots in the community. The combination of these experiences, reified for me, the value of a performative psychology (Gergen & Gergen, 2011) and the ongoing need to engage in praxis. Similarly, these different mediums and expressions were also a reflection of a shift in our discipline, one that acknowledges multiple ways of knowing. And it was not limited to the content delivered, the creation of "Track X" – an alternative track developed by some conference participants to encourage dialogue - highlighted that people had strong feelings and an appreciation for the space this conference provided.

In the days after the conference we travelled to Johannesburg. There we toured the city, visiting Constitution Hill, Soweto and the Apartheid Museum. And there, as in Durban, we witnessed the racialised inequality that exists every day. Black and coloured people are still living within a system that maintains racialised inequality. It wasn't until the Apartheid Museum that many of the things we had seen since we arrived and heard previously in our sound portraits were put into context. Walking through exhibits you are confronted with the insidious way the Apartheid system was developed and implemented. How simple everyday freedoms were monitored, controlled and denied. The images of white people enjoying lives of luxury were contrasted with black and coloured people being subjected to living and working conditions aimed at dehumanising them. The exhibits covered decades, capturing oppression and resistance throughout the Apartheid era.

For me the combination of these experiences gives me a sense of urgency in relation to understanding my multiple social positions, in particular gender, race, professional identities, and the importance of understanding the privileges afforded to me. Such positions can hamper border crossing and forming alliances; unless we constantly engage with and put in place practices to unpack how coloniality is expressed in matrices of power and how they can play out in our research and action. In this context, it is clear that in South Africa and our respective localities that we as community psychologists have much work to do in the struggle for equality, transformation and liberation. These insights are about vigilance and finding ways of continuing the journey of critically engaging with and contributing to transformation of my/our own discipline. I have since continued to develop up the intersections of arts and social change, but focusing in particular on action and change with young people in Australia. This conference, with such a strong focus on decolonisation, has sowed the seeds of continued change for community psychology by calling for approaches that respond to the complex issues.

4.4 Chris

For Chris, going back home for a conference, was invigorating for his work on community, oppression, and marginalisation.

Going home, to South Africa, is always enjoyable and reinvigorating. It is invigorating in many ways including in terms of connecting with familiar sounds, sights, people, and places. Going back to attend the ICCP2016, did this of course, but added another layer of reward because of the conference. I always return from these conferences with a boost in terms of my understanding about the role of universities and, specifically my discipline of community psychology, in contributing to tackling various forms of oppression and marginalisation. I am sure this is the case for many other delegates who attended from other parts of the world, because there seems to be a shared disturbing narrative about the corrosive ways in which the ideology of neoliberalism and global capitalism is expressing itself in the everyday lives of people, including in academia, government and non-government organisations. The conference, in part, set out to reconfigure community psychology in the local context where, following the histories of colonialism and Apartheid, the ongoing struggles for liberation is playing out in university spaces with calls for action to decolonise the university. The historical legacy and how it continues to shape the lives of different communities is central to the scholarly activist work being generated in South Africa, and Africa, and to the call to engage in reimagining the discipline. All of these aspects contributed to a very exciting space to examine and imagine community psychology research, teaching and action, and there were many contributions that made me think about our work in Australia, and its connections with CP in a global context.

The foregrounding of Africa and African scholarship set the tone for the conference for me. Images of Biko, Fanon, and excerpts from their critical writing on colonialism and its impact on colonised groups and a map of the African continent were projected onto the screen of the central auditorium. This scholarship and activism is as relevant today as it was in the 60s and 70s when they wrote about colonialism. Excerpts included Biko's (1978/2004) words: "The most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed" (p. 74). The keynote speakers spoke directly to this topic of coloniality and racism in terms of their respective fields and countries; Puerto Rico (Maldonado Torres), South Africa (Kessi), and Palestine (Makkawi) and illustrating how, through critical and decolonial scholarship anchored in the writing of Fanon and others, they are retrieving these resources and rearticulating them in current contexts to build critical activist scholarship. A highlight in relation to this theme was a letter to Bob Marley from Deanne Bell. This was a very moving and affirming contribution elevating Marley as a vernacular intellectual and his powerful contribution in fostering hope and post racial humanism through his music. The presentation was also a highlight because of the ways in which it was delivered, a reading combined with Marley's music – pulling on the power of aesthetics.

The theme of race and racism was significant at the conference. I presented in one session focused on exploring "Underneath Blackness". Some of the questions we set for the session: What does Blackness mean, how is it lived, under what conditions does it become significant, and what are the links between blackness and market forces, cultural production? The different presenters offered short papers and invited others to contribute. Two stories offered by members of the audience stood out for me along with our own reflection that in talking about blackness we focused on whiteness. Both stories shared by the audience pointed to the politics of black identities, reflected in the ways in which authenticity is used to regulate black identities and the

intersections with class (i.e., Western education) and space (rural versus urban) and the 'civilising process' or hidden curriculum that diminishes black experiences through education. This is a familiar story in Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa, and also central to the calls for decolonising methodologies, Indigenous and Indigenist research, and for decolonising the university, thereby firmly bringing the concerns and contributions of the so-called Global South to the centre.

Another theme at the conference related more specifically to community psychology research and practice and key concepts such as community and participation. There was solid representation of papers exploring creative and arts based methodologies as tools for enacting social justice goals of community psychology. Participants reported on digital storytelling and how it can be used to document struggles and foster empowerment for individuals and communities. Some wrestled with issues of power, representation, and coloniality in crossing various boundaries such as community and university, black and white. However, as noted in the final plenary (Urmitapa Dutta), terms such as community can still hamper our efforts because how we use these terms can be viewed as a form of boundary construction, of creating an 'other' to partner, be an ally to, and this is an expression of power. Decolonial work as I understand seeks to challenge these taken for granted concepts, to engage with them critically in context, and to understand how best to utilize them in order to support groups seeking to improve their lives. A broader set of questions were also raised by others about what is being displaced and replaced in the CP vocabulary and what does it mean for CP? Where is sense of community and empowerment? I guess in the end this is part of the reimaging CP and new disciplinary alliances -- that things will be deconstructed, displaced, as part of the process of reconstructing our theoretical, methodological, and practice resources in the current conditions, conditions that are seeing psychology as profession being shaped by individual centred interventions pushed by the evidence based movement (Trickett, 2015).

5.   Summary and Conclusion: Moving Forward

For many of us, it is evident that we are seeking to find or forge a home within psychology/community psychology. And because the ways in which we understand psychology, or want to do psychology or be psychologists, does not necessarily fit the traditional conception of what psychology is, we continue to work towards creating that 'place'. At the same time, it is clear that we do not necessarily want to 'fit' within a narrowly defined individualistic and decontextualised mainstream psychology, in part given the recognition of its marketisation and by extension the perpetuation of coloniality and social inequities. While the critiques herein are largely focussed on mainstream psychology and psychology education within Australia, we are also aware that some of these critiques also sit within those more broadly of Western / Global North psychology. It should also be specified that community psychology in Australia is not immune from the criticisms raised here. Partly due to the overarching constraints of the system in which it sits, but also due to some of the residual epistemic influence from other Western community psychology cultures.

Through our reflections we have highlighted some of the important ways in which community psychology is expressed in different contexts and how it is reconnecting with its radical roots and pursuing the goals of liberation, social justice, and wellbeing in the current global reality, and in

diverse contexts. Our reflections on the conference highlighted several themes about expressions of community psychology in different contexts. These themes include; the explicit framing of issues impacting individuals and communities in terms of structural and cultural forms of violence, the focus on critically interrogating and disrupting processes of knowledge production including the through the curriculum, and the efforts being made to elevate different ways of knowing, being, and doing (Smith, 1999). In the section below, we summarise some of the key points we take away from the reflections on our conference experiences.

5.1   *Creating Relevant and Responsive Psychologies*

One thread common to each of our reflections was the focus on the ways in which psychology is being enacted across diverse contexts and the intersections with related fields (i.e. community development, public health) in response to local and global issues, including coloniality, poverty, gender-based violence, migration and displacement and the changing landscape of higher education. The approaches centered at the conference embraced alternative methods, methodologies and theories, and thus different ways of working. Central to each of our reflections is the importance of criticality. This necessitates broadening our repertoire of knowledge to take an interdisciplinary approach to understanding the psychosocial subject, including our own positionalities and subjectivity. With this wider lens, the opportunities for more nuanced, culturally complex interventions in the sphere of meaning making become possible. Enacting a critical community psychology requires awareness and commitment to letting go of the expert role and embracing the vulnerability associated with the unknown. As emphasised by the conference organisers, this awareness and commitment can potentially mean change, creativity, and generative disruption of "epistemologies, ideologies, and worldviews (that) tend to perpetuate exclusionary forms of scholarship, research and practice…" (ICCPb, *Conference theme*, para. 2).

5.2   *Psychology Training and Curriculum*

The need to make more explicit the relationship between psychology, capital and the market and to interrogate what this means for the type of psychology being taught and types of psychologists that are being produced, including the limitations of such training in responding to broader social issues, was also highlighted across our reflections. In the current context, in Australian Universities there is seemingly limited room in the psychology curricula to facilitate generative disruptions of dominant understandings and ways of doing psychology. Psychology, in addition to being governed by Australian Psychology Accreditation Council requirements, is moving towards narrow forms of professional training, as it is responding to and is shaped by political and economic and government initiatives. Particularly since the implementation of the Australian Governments' initiative "GP Mental Health Treatment Plan" that enables those trained as clinical psychologists to provide service under Medicare (Commonwealth funded health insurance scheme) permitting patients/clients to claim a rebate for services rendered (Australian Psychological Society [APS], 2015). There also seems to be reinvestment in certainty

through conservative understandings of positivist scientific research in the push towards traditional understandings of evidence-based research (Trickett, 2015).

As emphasised in our reflections, there is a need for disruptions into the curriculum so that students have an opportunity to think critically about the underlying assumptions of traditional psychology, and contextualise its development historically and culturally. It is particularly important that these foundations are built early in student's training, encouraging ongoing critical reflection about the interrelationship of power, context, and knowledge and their own positionality, which can be taken through their studies in psychology. It is also important that students are exposed to other approaches to psychology (i.e., clinical psychology that privileges cognitive behavioural approaches is not the only option), which they perceive as attractive, relevant, and valuable. As researchers and educators, we also recognise the need to create opportunities for critical reflection and dialogue on the challenges of engaging in and teaching about, critical, contextualised approaches within community psychology.

5.3 Creating Social Settings: Networking, Collaboration, and Support

The conference was a space where we could share and listen to the diverse voices of people who, in different ways, are enacting the social justice goals of community psychology. We connected with international colleagues, shared theories, methodologies, and epistemologies from the margins, and engaged in critique of mainstream and dominant forms of knowledge, as well as exploration of alternative approaches that are being enacted, and the new challenges and tensions that arise. A common theme across our reflections and informal discussions was the experience of validation and the value of tacit understanding and shared knowledge of theories, methodologies, and the values, principles, and aspirations driving our work and (re)commitment to do more. Whilst the conference offered a temporary space, we are building enduring institutional structures such as our local research network (CIDRN), which has become an important site for support, collegiality, and critical work. This interdisciplinary space provides opportunities for critical dialogue in the increasingly rocky terrain of higher education institutions. Such alternative interdisciplinary spaces are where the narrowing of psychology can be resisted, in our efforts towards enacting a critical, contextualised approach to community psychology.

Acknowledgement

References

Angelique, H. L., & Culley, M. R. (2003). Feminism found: An examination of gender consciousness in community psychology. *Journal of Community Psychology, 31*(3), 189-209. doi: 10.1002/jcop.10050

Apple, M. W. (2006). *Educating the "right" way: Markets, standards, god, and inequality*. New York, NY: Routledge.

APS (2015). APS Fact Sheet: Medicare rebates for mental health services provided by psychologists. Retrieved 16 of January, 2016, from https://www.psychology.org.au/Assets/Files/2013-Medicare-fact-sheet-mental-health-rebates.pdf

Behar, R. (1996). *The vulnerable observer.* Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Biko, S. (2004). *I write what I like.* Johannesburg, GT: Picador Africa. (Original work published 1978).

Bohan, I. S. (1990). Contextual history: A framework for re-placing women in the history of psychology. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 14,* 213-227. doi: 10.1111/j.1471-6402.1990.tb00015.x

Bond, M. A., & Mulvey, A. (2000). A history of women and feminist perspectives in community psychology. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, *28*(5), 599-630. doi: 10.1023/A:1005141619462

Burman, E. (1998). *Deconstructing Feminist Psychology*. London, England: Sage.

Cattaneo, L. B., Calton, J. & Brodsky, A. E. (2015). Status quo versus status quake: Putting the power back in empowerment. *Journal of Community Psychology, 42(*4), 433-446. doi: 10.1002/jcop.21619

Campbell, R., & Wasco, S. M. (2000). Feminist approaches to social science: Epistemological and methodological tenets. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, *28*(6), 773-791. doi: 10.1023/A:1005159716099

Dutta, U., Sonn, C. C., & Lykes, M. B. (2016). Situating and contesting structural violence in community-based research and action. *Community Psychology in Global Perspective*, *2*(2), 1-20. doi: 10.1285/i24212113v2i2p1

Fraser, N. (1990). Rethinking the public sphere: A contribution to the critique of actually existing democracy. *Social Text, 25/26,* 56-80. doi:10.2307/466240

Fryer, D. & Laing, A. (2008). Community psychologies: What are they? What could they be? Why does it matter? A critical community psychology approach. *Australian Community Psychologist, 20*(2), 7-15.

Galtung, J. (2010). Peace studies and conflict resolution: The need for transdisciplinarity. *Transcultrual Psychiatry, 47*(1), 20-32. doi: 10.1177/1363461510362041

Gavey, N. (1989). Feminist poststructuralism and discourse analysis: Contributions to feminist psychology. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 13,* 459-475. doi: 10.1111/j.1471-6402.1989.tb01014.x

Gergen, M. M., & Gergen, K. J. (2011). Performative social science and psychology. *Historical Social Research/Historische Sozialforschung,* 36(4), 291-299.

Harrell, S. P., & Bond, M. A. (2006). Listening to diversity stories: Principles for practice in community research and action. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, *37*(3-4), 365-376. doi: 10.1007/s10464-006-9042-7

Henriques, J., Hollway, W., Urwin, C., Venn, C., & Walkerdine, V. (1984). Introduction to section 3: Theorising subjectivity. In J. Henriques, W. Hollway, C. Urwin, C. Venn & V. Walkerdine (Eds.), *Changing the subject: Psychology, social regulation & subjectivity* (pp. 203-226). London, England: Methuen & Co.

International Conference on Community Psychology. (2016a). *Thematic tracks:* Retrieved from: http://iccp2016.co.za/index.php/thematic-tracks/

International Conference on Community Psychology. (2016b). *Conference theme: Global dialogues on critical knowledges liberation, and community.* Retrieved from: http://iccp2016.co.za/#

Lindquist (1994). Beyond student resistance: A pedagogy of possibility. *Teaching Education, 6*, 1-8. doi:10.1080/ 1047621940060203

Makagon, D., & Neumann, M. (2009). *Recording culture: Audio documentary and the ethnographic experience*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Mama, A. (1995). *Beyond the masks: Race, gender & subjectivity*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Maldonado-Torres, N. (2007). On the coloniality of being: Contributions to the development of a concept. *Cultural Studies*, *21*(2-3), 240-270. doi: 10.1080/09502380601162548

Mulvey, A. (1988). Community psychology and feminism: Tensions and commonalities. *Journal of Community Psychology*, *16*(1), 70-83. doi: 10.1002/1520-6629(198801)16:1<70::AID-JCOP2290160109>3.0.CO;2-3

Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S. J. (2015). Decoloniality in Africa: A continuing search for a new world order. *Australasian Review of African Studies*, *36*(2), 22–50.

Perry, L. B., & Southwell, L. (2014). Access to academic curriculum in Australian secondary schools: A case study of a highly marketised education system. *Journal of Education Policy, 29*(4), 467–485. doi: 10.1080/02680939.2013.846414

Riger, S. (1992). Epistemological debates, feminist voices: Science, social values, and the study of women. *American Psychologist*, *47*(6), 730-740. doi: 10.1037/0003-066X.47.6.730

Serrano-García, I. (1994). The ethics of the powerful and the power of ethics. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, *22*(1), 1-20.

Shefer, T., Boonzaier, F., & Kiguwa, P. (Eds.) (2006). *The gender of psychology.* Cape Town, South Africa: UCT Press.

Smith, L. T. (1999). *Decolonising methodologies: Research and Indigenous peoples*. London, England: Zed Books.

Tavris, C. (1992). *The mismeasure of woman: Why women are not the better sex, the inferior sex, or the opposite sex.* New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.

Trickett, E. J. (2015). Seymour Sarason remembered: "Plus c¸a change…", ''Psychology misdirected'', and ''Community Psychology and the anarchist insight''. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 56,* 197–204. doi: 10.1007/s10464-015-9744-9

Walkerdine, V. (1997). *Daddy's girl: Young girls & popular culture*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Wilkinson, S. (1997). Feminist psychology. In D. Fox & I. Prilleltensky (Eds). *Critical psychology: An introduction* (pp. 247-264). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Wilkinson, S., & Kitzinger, C. (1995). Introduction. In S. Wilkinson & C. Kitzinger (Eds.), *Feminism and discourse: Psychological perspectives* (pp. 1-9). London, England: Sage.

Yoder, J. D., & Kahn, A. S. (1993). Working toward an inclusive psychology of women. *American Psychologist, 48,* 846-850.