

Four (African) psychologies

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Abstract

In “What is African psychology the psychology of?,” Augustine Nwoye asks a question that continues to trouble those with an interest in psychology in relation to African societies. This question, in various semblances, is not entirely new. And, to be sure, it is far from unique to Africa but instead tends to worry many socially conscious psychologists in countries in the global South. The effort Nwoye makes toward advancing African psychology warrants an extended response. In broad terms, I agree with the argument to advance an African psychology. However, there are differences between how we conceive of African psychology. Thus, this article asserts that the growth of Africa(n)-centred psychology is hindered by the view that it is singular and static instead of composed of dynamic and manifold orientations. The article presents four orientations to psychology in Africa, namely, psychology *in* Africa, cultural African psychology, critical African psychology, and psychological African Studies.

Keywords

Africa(n)-centred psychology, cultural African psychology, critical African psychology, psychology in Africa, psychological African Studies

In “What is African Psychology the Psychology of?” Augustine Nwoye (2015, p. 96) asks a question that continues to trouble those with interest in theories, research, teaching, activism, and professional practice in or through psychology in relation to African societies. This question, in various semblances, is not entirely new. And, to be sure, it is far from unique to Africa but instead tends to worry many socially conscious psychologists in countries in the global South (Jing, 1994; Misra, Prakash, & Verma, 1999; Nunez, 1993). Since it challenges the imperial and colonial foundations of a body of knowledge, but also those who would, for example, teach psychology, this question—about what kind of “thing” the discipline is as it leaves its place of birth and gets taken up outside of

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the West; concerning what its substance is; regarding what is the most appropriate or least alienating form psychology might take in ex-colonies and the global peripheries—calls for ongoing engagement. Hence, the effort Nwoye makes toward advancing African psychology, an effort to be seen as part of making psychology less western and more transnational, is one that warrants an extended response.

In broad terms, Nwoye's (2015) contribution is one I support. More specifically, I unreservedly agree with the argument to advance an African psychology. Related to this, I wish to reinforce the call to develop an Africa(n)-centred psychology not only for African countries but also one informed by the goal of being taken up in universities and other spaces in Europe, North America, and other parts of the world. As Nwoye (2015) suggests, extending the "external frontiers for the study of African Psychology" (p. 113) is desirable. And the question of what precisely is African psychology—his main question, besides several other thought-provoking ones he puts forward (p. 97)—holds an enduring interest for a number of psychologists.

However, there are crucial disagreements between how I conceive of African psychology (or rather psychologies) and Nwoye's (2015) conceptualization. The main disagreement is that I see African psychology as less monochromatic and more assorted than does Nwoye. As a result, a different problematic, a counter-question, one that further problematizes how we think of African psychology, lies at the centre of the present contribution. That question is: Why is all of psychology in African countries *not* African psychology? Stated differently, is it not odd that there is this need for African psychology *in* Africa; how might we understand the curious struggle for an African psychology in African countries, with specific interest in African psychology in South Africa (SA); and how does such a psychology complement or redesign African psychology developed by African Americans? This question, in its different guises, is used to focus the present contribution and towards how we frame African psychology in and from Africa, with specific reference to SA.

This article begins by noting some of the arguments made in Nwoye's (2015) paper. It then inserts a caveat regarding "African psychology" and related terms before making two assertions and a proposal to move forward the debate. Next it delineates the four orientations in African psychology. In elaborating on these orientations the intent of the article is to clarify how we might understand African psychology so that we (meaning psychologists working and psychology students within African countries) might begin to illuminate, primarily for ourselves but also others interested in psychology in Africa, how we relate with our (received) discipline and (dis)identify with our continent or countries in our work. Additionally, it is hoped that this effort will help African psychologists to more confidently situate themselves in approaching whatever topic they study, teach, or in which they specialize (e.g., cognition, trauma, intergroup relations, marriage), better relate to each other's work as African psychologists, and accurately communicate with the world about psychology conducted in Africa.

The call for African psychology from, for, and within Africa

Nwoye's (2015) main objective is to contribute to the need for "improved understanding, image, and advancement of African Psychology in African universities and to

modify any prevailing limited conceptions of its meaning and promise in the minds of colleagues within and outside Africa” (p. 97). Part of that contribution recognizes that the “early efforts to entrench African Psychology as an academic discipline in African universities” have thus far been “severely frustrated” (p. 96). The article presents a number of influences Nwoye regards as shaping the need for and emergence of African psychology, among which are included: “the need for a corrective counter-discourse aimed at interrogating the highly partial and self-serving negative images of Africa found scattered in Western scholarship” (p. 98); the determination “to interrogate and challenge the meaningful relevance of American and European theories and practice for African contexts” (p. 98); “the recognition that previous efforts by some Western-educated African academics in psychology were largely imitative of, or essentially patterned after the contributions of Western psychological theorists and practitioners” (p. 99); the fact that the “inclusion of African psychology in our university curriculum holds enormous potential for enriching and extending the contributions of the discipline of psychology and a means of breaking away from the spells of colonialism and white-centredness in the study of psychology in Africa” (p. 100). Following on this, he sees

the emergence of the study of African psychology in African universities [as] a product of the deeply felt inadequacy of our reliance on mainstream, Euro-American psychology, as the sole means of achieving effective understanding of the psychological properties of African peoples and their cultures. (p. 101)

Although there is a need for African psychology it can be seen as odd that anyone would pose the questions asked by Nwoye given that, at least since the 1960s, African American psychologists have grappled with similar questions. African psychology, even one born in and focused on African countries, therefore cannot be reflected on without taking into account the efforts by African American scholars to develop African and/or black psychology in the United States of America (U.S.).

As a more or less coherent body of work, African psychology first emerged with the aim of understanding the influences, struggles, conditions, costs, and achievements of African people in the U.S. (Jamison, 2008). Black American psychologists must be credited for recognizing and producing psychological knowledge that would not only differ from white Euro-American psychology but opposed the latter’s assumptions, theories, and research conclusions on black people’s behaviours, feelings, and thoughts. Out of this effort sprouts the distinctive area of interest that comes to be known as African psychology (Clark, McGee, Nobles, & Weems, 1975). As a more or less distinct field then, African psychology was first developed in America by African American psychologists, a point underlined by Cross (2009) in defining African psychology as

an invention hammered out by Black intellectuals in the Americas ... a formulation derived from the imagination of Blacks living outside Africa – descendants of slaves lacking direct contact with Africa for over 100 years – who are looking “back” to Africa for solutions to predicaments, problems, and dilemmas enveloping Blacks throughout the Diaspora and especially United States. (p. xi)

Against this background Nwoye's (2015) contribution can be seen as dismissive of decades of substantial work by black scholars in the U.S. around the same questions and to develop African psychology. However, Nwoye (2015) may also be understood as arguing that the *raison d'être*, status, and delineation of African psychology *from, for, and within* African countries should be better articulated. Although African psychology was shaped in, for, and by African realities and may have commonalities with African psychology conceived by African Americans (Baldwin, 1986; Bandawe, 2005; Jamison, 2008; Kwate, 2005; Nsamenang, 2007), there are bound to be dissimilarities. While silent on the particular question of the origins of African psychology as an academic field that originated in the U.S., Nwoye contends that African psychology is not to be taken as synonymous with Black psychology or African Indigenous Psychology. In this regard, Nwoye (2015) offers his own definition of African psychology that contests some of the definitions offered by black American psychologists. According to Nwoye, "African Psychology can be taken to refer to the systematic and informed study of the complexities of human mental life, culture and experience in the pre- and post-colonial African world" (2015, p. 104). While this definition demands further interrogation, there seems to be some concurrence between Nwoye and myself. As it will become clearer, in the framework I propose, black psychology, indigenous African psychology, and culturally oriented psychology can only be part of a larger umbrella of African psychology.

A caveat regarding "African Psychology" and related terms

Two issues have to be clarified when grappling with and employing terms such as African psychology. So far, I have contributed to the lack of clarity. The first issue is the conceptual distinction to be made between the term African psychology and what I refer to as Africa(n)-centred. The former ought to be taken as referring to a broad category of the body of knowledge and practices that encompasses all of what psychologists in, or in relation to, Africa do. The latter is a small part of the former. The distinction is about orientation towards "African" and psychology. Nwoye (2015) regards African psychology as singular and therefore the need to make a distinction does not arise. However, this differentiation is of serious import and a key point of divergence with Nwoye. I elaborate on this later. For the moment it suffices to underscore that African psychology indicates all psychology in Africa, while Africa(n)-centred psychology is a distinctive orientation within and towards psychology and Africa (see also Nobles, 2015). Africa(n)-centred psychology is distinguished from all of psychology conducted in Africa but also from African psychology that might focus on Africa and Africans yet originates outside of Africa.

The second issue is the apparent contradiction in the title of this article, conveyed by the parentheses. The appellation *African* psychology to refer to the project of building psychological knowledge that originates from and centres on Africa is both problematic yet necessary. Thus, *African* in the phrase African psychology has to be in parentheses as a signal to the fact that the objective is to contribute towards all psychological knowledge produced in Africa or about "African" and Africans; and more specifically, to produce Africa(n)-centred knowledge that is at home in Africa as well as within global psychology. In other words, it is vital that Africa(n)-centred psychology is not provincial or

essentialized—if psychological theory, research, and tools for the world that take Africa as their birth place and location of enunciation are to flourish. In order to thrive, Africa(n)-centred psychology will have to be clear about its aims, meaning, substance, and borders, but also always be open to being challenged and enrich itself with other “foreign” influences. Above all, Africa(n)-centred psychology must question itself even as psychological work centred in Africa must be nourished in order to flourish. And yet, African psychologists do not want “double names” (Ratele, 2003, p. 46). Having reconciled that they are psychologists *and* are experientially, culturally, and materially located in Africa, part of the task is to redefine the relation between psychology and Africa, locating Africa within psychology and psychology as unalienatingly African. All the same, it is important to retain the term “African” to qualify psychology for the sake of charting the terrain that needs to be described. The term *African psychology* is thus strategically employed to sort out what it means to orient ourselves as psychologists and psychology students from and in Africa, as well as Africans within global psychology; meaning it is strategically necessary to retain “African” in front of psychology while we work out specifically what it means to do an African psychology that takes full and fearless recognition of the historical, economic, and political moments through which this body of knowledge and experiences has developed in SA.

Two assertions and a proposal

I wish to make two main assertions and a proposal which, to a lesser or greater extent, challenges some of Nwoye’s (2015) claims. First, it is contended that whereas African psychology is the umbrella term that *can* be given to the broad terrain of work conducted by psychologists in Africa, that territory is in fact divided into different episteme, approaches, perspectives, and orientations towards two principal objects: psychology and Africa. African psychology is polyvocal, multilingual, multicultural, and pluriversal. Nwoye (2015) anticipates this criticism: that African psychology is not a singular body of knowledge. African Psychology ought to “be designated in the singular,” Nwoye contends, because it “is grounded on the assumptions of a common African worldview and the Africentric paradigm” (2015, p. 97). This claim is based on a wish rather than any systematic evidence. It is a claim that is also contradicted by Nwoye (2015) when he indicates that present African cultures are hybrid and complex, encompassing blacks, whites, and Indians (and one should add, Arabs, those who identify as South African “coloured,” those of mixed descent, and other categories of Africans) as its subjects. However, it is true that not all of African psychology is oriented towards or identifies with Africa, although African psychology is all psychological work taught, published, practised, and studied in Africa. A psychology that identifies with Africa is perhaps what Nwoye (2015) implies when he says African psychology has a common worldview and paradigmatic scope. The psychology that identifies with Africa, to which is reserved the term Africa(n)-centred psychology, is, however, as yet a small part of the broad terrain of African psychology.

Second, the conceptual foundations upon which Africa(n)-centred psychology is (being) built remain unstable and ongoing work is required to strengthen them. The objects, definition, status, and boundaries as to what precisely is Africa(n)-centred

psychology—one distinguishable from the larger body of psychology in Africa, as well from that which emerges out of the U.S.—can use better elucidation. However, I would like to argue that the growth of Africa(n)-birthed and -focused psychology, distinct from the fortunes of African psychology as a whole, is hindered by the view that African psychology is a singular body of knowledge. It is contended that Africa(n)-centred psychology is a set of multiple, contesting orientations, and that these contestations are not only necessary but have to be nourished if psychology that identifies with Africa is to flourish.

The proposal I wish to make is of a framework to comprehend African psychology. The proposed framework ought to be regarded as a provisional heuristic, but it indicates how we might think of African psychology in theory-making, empirical research, university teaching, sociopolitical activism, and therapy. It is proposed that there is no one psychology, but rather four African psychologies, namely: African psychology as psychology *in* Africa; as a culturally, metaphysically, or spiritually inclined Africa(n)-centred psychology (which will be referred to as cultural African psychology); as a materially, politically, or critically focused African psychology (shortened to critical African psychology); and what we can refer to as psychological African Studies.

Delineating the four African psychologies

Effectively, there are, in my appraisal, four African psychologies. These psychologies are differentiated by the way the ideas of Africa and psychology are implicitly or explicitly understood and approached by different researchers, teachers, and therapists. These psychologies can be considered to be not entire fields unto themselves but rather orientations, approaches, or stances to Africa and psychology. This means that they are ways psychology teachers, researchers, clinicians, and counsellors orient themselves to Africa and African objects or subjects of knowledge; identify with Africa and psychology; allocate meaning to Africa, or its absence, in psychology; conceive of psychology's role in Africa, including the discipline's place in relation to other disciplines that study Africa and Africans; apprehend their own identities as experts; and interpret the (received) discipline of psychology's effect on their research, teaching, and practice.

The four psychologies are not subdisciplines. They do not map onto the established subdisciplines of psychology, such as psychopathology, cognitive, developmental, personality, social, philosophical, or theoretical psychology. They also do not correspond to categories of registration or divisions of the professional associations of psychologists such as clinical, counselling, industrial, educational, neuropsychology, or forensic psychology. Instead, different African psychologies will be found *within* the subdisciplines, *within* registration categories, and *within* the divisions of the professional association. Some subdisciplines, registration categories, and divisions more than others, simply because of the sheer numbers involved in a particular context, will evidence more debates on African psychology.

Three of the four orientations are transdisciplinary. Since they have to go outside of received psychology to find and situate themselves in Africa and psychology, those who espouse Africa(n)-centred psychology are, per definition, informed by other disciplines. Some of the disciplines from which Africa(n)-centred psychologists have tended to

Table 1. Four orientations within African psychology.

Orientation	What is at the centre of the orientation?
Psychology in Africa	Universal psychology
Cultural African psychology	Metaphysics, spirituality, culture
Critical African psychology	Politics, economy, material power
Psychological African Studies	Psychological perspectives on Africa as an object of study

borrow include African philosophy, religion, literature, history, and politics. Other sources of knowledge are lived experiences and realities of existing in Africa.

The four African psychologies are African psychology (a) as psychology *in* Africa; (b) as a culturally, metaphysically, or spiritually inclined African psychology; (c) as a materially, politically, or critically inclined African psychology; and (d) as psychological African Studies (Table 1). We shall refer to them as psychology *in* Africa, cultural African psychology, or critical African psychology and, of course, psychological African Studies.

African psychology as psychology in Africa

The first orientation is African psychology understood as (western) psychology *in* Africa. This is the psychology that dominates nearly all theoretical explanations, frames what is taught, influences what is published and the research approaches and analyses, and underpins what the majority of therapists and counsellors apply in their work.

The psychology in Africa orientation is fundamentally informed by the belief that the discipline of psychology is universal. And even though there is acceptance that psychology was born in Europe, dominated by U.S. interests, and has historically supported the dehumanization of Africans, the field is considered to be scientific. Psychology from this perspective is also considered to be objective, value-free, and apolitical. It is also conservative—in the sense of conserving the “nature” of psychology. This approach to African psychology entails asking the same questions, asked by others elsewhere in the world, in Africa.

The advantages of African psychology as psychology *in* Africa is that it fits in perfectly with psychology as understood in mainstream psychology in the U.S., Europe, and other parts of the world. Psychologists who subscribe to this view of psychology do not have to reinvent the wheel. They can simply do what everybody else is doing wherever they may be in the world.

Criticisms against African psychology as psychology *in* Africa are that in addition to the desire for universality, replicating findings and theories from around the world, especially when coupled with claims for objectivism, value-neutrality, and apolitical science, this form of psychology can be colonialist and supportive of the status quo. Cooper (2013) refers to this form of psychology when he criticizes it as “a pathetic clone” of hegemonic psychology from the United States and Western Europe. This orientation to psychology cannot be viewed as Africa(n)-centred psychology as it does not centre Africa. Africa is merely a setting or backdrop for questions and theories generated elsewhere.

This orientation can always become an Africa(n)-centred psychology if it starts to take seriously and situates itself within the existing social, political, and economic *realities* in Africa. To become Africa(n)-centred would not mean tweaking theories and methods of psychology to Africa, but instead reformulating psychological theories and methods from the bottom up. It would involve developing a new approach and conducting studies informed by existing conditions and concrete practices of subjects in Africa.

Cultural African psychology

The second orientation conceives of African psychology as the study of persons as relay points of metaphysical, spiritual, or cultural phenomena. This appears to be the African psychology embedded in Nwoye's (2015) conception of African psychology. Culture and spirituality are mentioned several times in his paper. For instance, he states: "One additional theme in African Psychology that illustrates its African roots is the recognition given to the influence of spirituality in the life of African clients" (2015, p. 112). A cultural African psychology is the orientation for those who regard African psychology as concerned with spiritual, cultural, or metaphysical phenomena, including interests in elements such as the importance of shared African language, values, beliefs, worldviews, philosophies, and knowledge. Mkhize (2004) has asserted that an African psychology "should begin with an examination of the philosophies, languages, and worldviews through which they experience the world" (p. 4.7). In effect, then, this orientation is what occasions what ought to be described as cultural African psychology. Cultural African psychology understands psychology as a vehicle that organizes the way people see, speak, and understand the subjects of psychology as inherently cultural subjects. Psychology is part of culture, intensifies cultural traditions. It is not something that sits outside of culture. As such cultural African psychology freights a culturally centred critique of the discipline. The problem that confronts African psychologists, that pushes them to make culture visible, is precisely how to be part of this disciplinary culture, to be able to regard themselves as professionals equal in every way to psychologists in the western metropolises, without becoming western in direct proportion to their mastery of the discipline. To be a psychologist is to take on a culture of ideas: the greater the mastery one has over western psychology as a cultural tool, the richer the rewards in a world dominated by western ideas. Obviously, this is an elaboration of Fanon's observation that the black person "will come closer to being a real human being—in direct ratio to his mastery of the French language" (1952/2008, p. 8). Cultural African psychology is an attempt to reject cultural domination in and via psychology as a way to reaffirm the humanness of the black person.

Colonialism figures prominently in African psychology as culturally centred psychology. Cooper avers that "the colonial nexus is noticeable everywhere in SA and permeates sociocultural expression" (2013, p. 212). Colonialism refers to the structure and policies by which a foreign country acquires control over a country, sometimes occupying it with settlers, always exploiting it economically, and in the process subjugating, misrecognizing, and pathologizing the cultures of the colonized. Colonialism begins at the moment whereby a party such as a nation uses violence, coercion, or other mechanisms to invade and seize the land and resources of others, and culminates in the invaders establishing

political, economic, social, and cultural control over the indigenous people. Colonial structures, and their further entrenchment and elaboration of racially and ethnically oppressive apartheid schema, have meant that hegemonic western cultural traditions remain prevalent in all spheres of post-apartheid South African society and psychology (Cooper, 2013; Cooper & Nicholas, 2012).

African cultural psychologists are interested in all forms of colonial domination that have effects on psychology. However, per definition, they are especially concerned with colonization of the cultural world of the indigenous people. The prominence of colonialism in culturally centred African psychology arises from the impact of colonialism on culture—what Mkhize refers to as “cultural colonization” (2004, p. 4.2). Cultural colonization in turn is seen as having influence on cognitions, affect, and behaviour that deserves ongoing study. African cultural psychology is thus also distinguished from cultural psychology in the United States and other places precisely by this emphasis on cultural colonization.

African psychologists who orient work within this stance contend that there are particularities about Africa and its people that need to be taken into account in studies, therapies, and community engagement. There is something radical about this form of African psychology as it criticizes European- and U.S.-centric psychologies. African psychology as cultural psychology will link with other indigenous and indigenizing psychologies from around the world. Black psychology, African American psychology, cultural psychology, and critical psychology may also be seen as allies against mainstream psychology.

There are many well-known scholars, writers, and teachers from whom African psychologists working from this stance draw or can draw. Some are from outside Africa and others are from the continent. A few examples of interesting African-born thinkers outside of psychology include Leopold Senghor, John Mbiti, Mamadou Diouf, and Francis Nyamnjoh. Cultural studies as espoused by scholars like Edward Said, Stuart Hall, and Homi Bhabha also form a central part of the cultural African psychology library.

A criticism against such a form of Africa psychology is that it often views Africans as exceptional. It is hampered by a metaphysical search for an ahistorical Africa. It tends to treat Africa like a village, where everyone knows most people and everybody tends toward consensus. That is, conflict and contestations are minimized. It is not critical enough of prevalent and injurious African cultural practices.

As a response, Mkhize, who has argued for an African metaphysics, has said that “to say that there is an African worldview does not mean every member of a culture should subscribe to it, in the same manner that not every European subscribes to individualism as a way of life (2004, p. 4.12). At the same time, Mkhize also regards African psychology as part of critical psychology.

There are several strengths of African psychology as a cultural psychology. Cultural particularity and ways of knowing are taken seriously. The context in which psychology is produced and disseminated is seen as important. African cultural psychology seeks to ground itself in people’s worldviews instead of favouring western presuppositions and values. Lived experience is a key notion. It seeks to indigenize psychology. And it considers personhood or *botho/buntu* as understood in “traditional” African thought as important in doing psychology in the context of Africa (Mkhize, 2004).

Critical African psychology

African psychology as materialist, political, or critical psychology starts by posing questions about the workings of power and knowledge and what they—power as knowledge as well as knowledge as power—make possible in relation to Africa and its people as well as within psychology. Questions of power, privilege, oppression, and alienation, in their various manifestations (such as political, economic, intellectual, gender, professional, as well as cultural power) would be regarded as central (e.g., Hook, 2004). The work of African feminist psychologists would fit under critical African psychology (e.g., Shefer, Boonzaier, & Kiguwa, 2006).

While it recognizes culture (alongside politics, economics, and other configurations of power) as an important element in psychological theories, methodologies, and explanations, it is distinguished from African cultural psychology in its focus on historical and contemporary contestations around culture—contestations between the western and African frameworks, and amongst Africans. African psychology as materialist, political, or critically oriented psychology is also self-critical in light of the understanding that African psychology often fails to question “its status as—and desire to be—psychology” and “the notion of the ‘African’ itself” (Painter, Kiguwa, & Böhmke, 2013, p. 856).

African psychology as critical psychology has an affinity with African cultural psychology by also having colonization as important element in understanding contemporary Africa. A focus on colonialism implies that this African psychology aims to decolonize mainstream psychology and radicalize postcolonial African societies (Ratele, 2014). As a critical, radical, postcolonial, or decolonial psychology this African psychology is political in the sense of taking positions. Painter et al. (2013) might have had this orientation in mind when they argued that African psychology

is clearly a form of critical psychology: it critiques and rejects (much of) the ontological assumptions and value systems it perceives to be at the core of “Western” psychology, and seeks instead to found its psychology on a different, uniquely *African* metaphysics. As such African psychology is not only an ally, but a potential vantage point from where the “Eurocentric” tendencies evident also in *critical* psychology—which includes not only an overreliance on Western (or Northern) theory, but also a tendency to engage African theorists only once they had been endorsed by and re-imported from Northern universities—may be interrogated. (p. 855)

Interestingly, the kind of African psychology for which Mkhize (2004) strives is also critical psychology since it opposes the hegemony of the values of western psychology. Indeed Mkhize suggests that an African critical psychology

should not only be concerned with the way in which cultural and institutional practices shape individual development: it should produce research that furthers the needs of developing societies. This includes research into poverty, illiteracy and alienation caused by globalization, among other things. (2004, p. 4.10)

A political, materialist, or critically oriented African psychology has relied on or will borrow from critical western psychologists, critical western thought, and critical African

thought. In all cases there are too many authors to enumerate (see Hook, 2004), but Fanon would feature prominently here. Another person to mention is Steve Biko (1996), the South African political activist who used psychological register to develop his thought on black consciousness. The South African psychologist Noel Chabani Manganyi (1973, 1979, 1981) is another author upon whom critical African psychologists would rely.

The hurdles to overcome here are several. Ultimately, though, they boil down to the fact that much work needs to be done to theorize and undertake empirical work from an Africa(n)-centred critical psychological perspective that recognizes the pervasiveness and impact of questions of political and economic power in Africa on psychological thought on the one hand, and on the other, of the powers, possibilities, and effects of psychological discourse in political and socio-economic life in Africa.

Psychological African Studies

The fourth way to conceptualize African psychology is as psychologically or psychoanalytically inclined African Studies (referred to as psychological African Studies). African Studies here simply means those studies whose object is Africa; and African psychology as psychologically oriented studies of Africa suggests a psychology and psychoanalysis aimed at integrating the theories, tools, and insights of the field into studies of Africa.

An appreciation of the potential contribution and development of psychological and psychoanalytical African Studies begins with understanding that psychology or psychoanalysis was never one of the core disciplines in African Studies. Colonial, missionary anthropology formed a tendentious nucleus of the first generation of African Studies which sought to

build an understanding of Africans and the African world in an elaborate but misguided exercise at seeking to know the “native” Other who was defined from the outset as being “tribal” and, therefore, fundamentally different and consigned to the lower rungs of the ladder of human progress. (Olukoshi, 2012, p. 26)

The anthropological stereotypes of Africans in early African Studies were part of the motivation for Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of Ghana, when he exhorted scholars of Africa who met in Ghana in 1962 to move from anthropology to sociology (Garuba, 2012). Thus, after World War II, when struggles to end colonial domination gathered momentum, in addition to radical anticolonial African and Africanist scholars in the disciplines of anthropology and sociology, scholars in history, economics, politics, culture, languages, and religion began to question and rewrite the study of Africa that had been taught in European and American universities (Olukoshi, 2012). The fact that psychology did not form part of African Studies does not imply that psychology was not part of the disciplines that regarded Africa and Africans as backward and in need of European civilization or, since the Cold War, U.S. assistance to develop. It also does not suggest that psychology has made strides towards decolonizing itself so as to understand Africans from their own perspectives and the meaningfulness of their lives, instead of understanding Africa as “the Other” of the West. Psychology was deeply implicated in creating and

supporting colonial and racist stereotyping of black people and Africans. Psychological African Studies, as an emergent approach aligned with broad critical African and non-African thought, can be useful as an approach to how psychology can be useful as part of studies of Africa and Africans, and how African Studies can be infused in psychological studies.

It is perhaps necessary to point out that, in contrast to the (western) psychology in Africa orientation which is prevalent in Africa, there is in fact very little of what is referred to as psychologically inclined African Studies. And yet even while psychological African Studies does not yet exist as a coherent enterprise within African psychology, it is a potentially exciting growth area for African psychology as well as global psychology. Of course, there are psychologists in Africa and elsewhere whose work reveals a non-colonizing interest in Africa as an object of study (e.g., Cooper, 2013; Nobles, 2015; Nsamenang, 2007), who have laid some groundwork for this enterprise. There is also existing work by non-psychologists that uses psychological or psychoanalytic concepts upon which this could be established (e.g., Biko, 1996; Fanon, 1952/2008; Mbembe, 2001). Although his main concern is how postcolonial thought in the work of people like Biko may be used to transcend the orthodoxy of much of psychology, Hook (2005) gives an indication of how psychologists and non-psychologists might appropriate a range of existing theoretical resources in psychology to study postcolonial conditions, which includes conditions in the African postcolony.

African psychology as part of African Studies therefore means using psychological and psychoanalytical methods, theories, tools, and insights *within* African Studies. Psychological African Studies puts psychological processes at the centre of its enquiries, and yet may not necessarily put the individual in the way conceived of in much of psychology at the centre of the world. This form of African psychology borrows or would borrow from the theories of psychology but probably, if it is going to feel at home in African Studies, takes seriously non-psychological studies on societies, histories, politics, cultures, languages, and religions in Africa. This would have to entail African psychologists engaging in or deepening dialogue with the works of writers such as Chinua Achebe, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Alex La Guma, Wole Soyinka, Zakes Mda, and Bessie Head, who might feature prominently in the work of some African psychologists working from this stance. Additionally, scholars and teachers in other disciplines like African history, African politics, African philosophy, African art, and increasingly African gender studies, will be unavoidable interlocutors. The development of psychological African Studies therefore will become a recognizable body of knowledge within African Studies if psychologists read and interact with those writers, scholars, and teachers in disciplines which have gone further than psychology in developing a body of knowledge in studies of Africa. African psychologists as part of African Studies would have to enter in dialogue with African scholarly, literary, and other creative work outside of psychology.

There are several challenges to developing African psychology as psychological studies of Africa, and here are two. First, the development of psychological African Studies can be hampered by and has to overcome the fact that disciplines *come with* and often *are* the theories and tools. This applies to all the humanities and social sciences: the disciplines teach how to understand the world. Much of western psychology in particular,

sees the world as comprised of essentially separate individuals. Even social psychology is fundamentally directed towards studying the individual in society. Is it possible then for a discipline that is founded on the idea of people as primarily individuals to conceive of subjects as primarily part of *others*, as some cultures are wont to? Therefore, to enable the development of situated psychological African Studies, there would be a need to unlearn *some* of the ways in which the discipline of psychology understands people.

African psychology as part of African Studies can further be inhibited by, as suggested earlier, the perception that African Studies tends to be dominated by historical, political, economic, sociological, cultural studies, and literary studies' perspectives. The implication here is that African Studies can be experienced by psychologists as inhospitable to insights and tools of psychoanalysts and psychologists. And because such scholars are not abundant at African Studies forums, it means that those psychologists who dare work from this position may have to work hard to develop dialogues with other Africans and Africanists, on the way to making the claim for the place of psychology in the study of Africa and Africans.

Travelling across the boundaries of the four African psychologies

There is nothing prohibiting teachers of psychology, researchers, psychotherapists, and counsellors from travelling across different orientations, approaches, or stances. For example, the work of Nhlanhla Mkhize exemplifies the movement between all the orientations (e.g., see the differences in Mkhize, 2004, 2005). The differentiation assists to strengthen the foundations upon which African psychology is built, and to more precisely delineate the aims, definition, and disciplinary coordinates of African psychology. The boundaries between the four psychologies are certainly permeable. It is more likely that individual psychologists will, at different points in time, orientate themselves in more than one way with regard to Africans and psychology.

The movement between orientations is not only because when working with others one is required to compromise and step outside of one's preferred orientation. It is also developmental—because one is taught by teachers who define psychology in their own ways, one might, for instance, begin her/his journey from a *psychology in Africa* position and only later find a *culturally oriented African psychology* orientation more suitable. Furthermore, it is more likely that at one point in time a psychologist might approach a topic from an *African cultural psychological* stance, yet at another point use tools from American or European-centred psychology, meaning approach her or his topic from a *psychology in Africa* position. Many psychologists are indeed not totally faithful to one set of values in their work, one theoretical explanation, or one research approach to their topic.

Conclusion

This article engaged with the contribution by Nwoye (2015) on African psychology. In response to his question: What is African psychology the psychology of? I posed a counter-question to focus my contribution to the debate: Why is all psychology in

Africa not African psychology? While I support and wish to reinforce the call for an Africa(n)-centred psychology, in contrast to Nwoye, I see African psychology as a heterogeneous terrain. Thus, this article sought to illuminate and create space for different ways of locatedness on this terrain. Four different psychologies were delineated. The four psychologies are African psychology as psychology *in* Africa; as a culturally, metaphysically, or spiritually inclined African psychology (labelled cultural African psychology); as a materially, politically, or critically inclined African psychology (critical African psychology); and as psychological African Studies. In demarcating the different orientations within African psychology and detailing the historical development of Africa(n)-centred psychology within SA, it is hoped that it makes it possible for psychologists and students in Africa and beyond to gain a better understanding of psychology in Africa, but also to have some clarity about their situatedness within or in relation to psychology *and* Africa.

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