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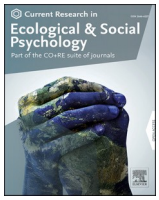

Toward a decolonial Africa-centering ecological and social psychology☆

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ABSTRACT

As collaborators on projects with epistemic foundations in the diverse everyday realities of different African settings, we respect and endorse the goal of the special issue (SI) to expand "psychological science to include the Middle East and Africa." In this *Short Communications* article, we draw on a central insight of Africa-centering perspectives—namely, a healthy vigilance about the coloniality of knowledge in hegemonic whitestream science—to engage the goal of the SI via a critical reading of its call for papers around a contrast between *imperialist* and *decolonial* forms of inclusion. Although inclusion of research in African settings addresses issues of epistemic exclusion, imperialist forms of inclusion that assimilate African cases to whitestream science can reproduce forms of *epistemic extractivism, epistemic imposition*, and *epistemological violence*. In contrast, decolonial forms of inclusion draw on African epistemic resources to denaturalize accounts of the modern present that researchers represent, typically without reference to the coloniality that constitutes modernity, as something akin to natural facts. Rather than assimilate African cases to whitestream science, the goal of decolonial inclusion is an ecological and social psychology that takes African experience—and especially unflinching awareness of the coloniality of modernity—as an epistemic foundation for a global science.

Critics have increasingly raised concerns about the extent to which hegemonic psychological science—including ecological and social psychology (E&SP)—has a narrow empirical basis in research from the US (Thalmayer et al., 2021) or, more generally, settings that are WEIRD (Henrich et al., 2010; Roberts et al., 2020).[1] Researchers often generalize theoretical models, samples, and empirical findings from overrepresented WEIRD settings to the underrepresented Majority World without adequate attention to structural (e.g., national political economy) and value (e.g., religion) contexts (Diener et al., 2022; Rozin, 2001; Yarkoni, 2022). In response, there have been increasing calls to decolonize psychology (Adams et al., 2015; Barnes and Siswana, 2018; Bhatia, 2017)—to replace limited, Eurocentric accounts with insights about mind and being that center experiences of people in the marginalized Majority World.[2] Against this background of systematic epistemic exclusion (Settles et al., 2020), this special issue (SI) on "Globalizing Psychological Science to Include the Middle East and Africa" is an important step toward a more representative science of mind and being.

An Africa-centering psychology: what is it?

As collaborators on projects with epistemic foundations in the diverse everyday realities of different African settings, we respect and share the goal of the SI to showcase knowledge production in African worlds. Our approach to this project is to elaborate an *Africa-centering*

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[1] Although the authors who coined this useful acronym render its source as "Western, educated, industrial, rich, and democratic" (Henrich et al., 2010), an emphasis on the coloniality of modernity and the role of racial power in constituting the Eurocentric colonial present (including the Anthropocene) lead us to render it as "white, educated, industrial, rich, and (supposedly) democratic." We elaborate this idea in a subsequent section.

[2] Many of today's efforts to decolonize psychology build on the pioneering work of Frantz Fanon (e.g., Fanon, 1963, 1967, 2018). In moving away from methodological fidelity, Fanon sought to engender within psychological work a decolonial attitude that challenges colonial knowledges, power, and ways of being, thereby ushering into psychology a decolonial turn (Maldonado-Torres, 2017).

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psychology: situated knowledge and practice, informed by African ecologies, that considers how "the world looks … from here" (Ratele, 2019, p. 8). The broad (meta-)theoretical contribution of this approach is not to essential features of a monolithic African psychology, which would be a questionable enterprise given the dynamic and diverse character of African realities. Instead, the more fundamental contribution is to provide an epistemic standpoint from which to re-think standard knowledge of hegemonic psychology. Stated otherwise, the project is to create a general (and in the present context, an ecological and social) psychology *for* and *from* African realities rather than a general psychology from a Euro-American standpoint that merely produces knowledge *on* or *about* an African object (Decolonial Psychology Editorial Collective, 2021); seeking to define, manage, and/or control such an object through Euro-American epistemic frames (see Said, 1978).

Conceived in this way, an Africa-centering psychology resonates with a substantial body of research in E&SP. Both emphasize the extent to which standard patterns that constitute the knowledge base of hegemonic psychology are not simply the outgrowth of some internal blueprint, but instead are the product of engagement with particular, euromodern[3] individualist lifeways. A key area where an Africa-centering psychology diverges from typical perspectives of E&SP is in its attempts at understanding the origins and implications of euromodern individualist lifeways. Typical understandings of Eurocentric global modernity associate it with Enlightenment, freedom, and progress. In contrast, the view from African settings compels us to consider Eurocentric global modernity and its associated lifeways in light of both the colonial violence that constituted them and the ongoing *coloniality*—habits of mind and ways of being that have their roots in colonial violence and persist after the end of formal colonial rule (see Maldonado-Torres, 2017)—with which they remain implicated.

Competing constructions of globalization and inclusion

An Africa-centering perspective affords critical consciousness about the coloniality of hegemonic standards not only with respect to ways of being, but also with respect to ways of knowing. In this *Short Communications* article, we draw on this framework to illuminate and discuss the potential for scientific imperialism and other manifestations of the *coloniality of knowledge* (see Bhambra, 2014; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2021; Quijano, 2007; Readsura Decolonial Editorial Collective, 2022) via a critical reading of the SI call for papers (CFP). At the outset, we think it important to dispel any notion that we provide a neutral account of some objective meaning of the CFP based on a supposed view from nowhere. Constructions of rigor in terms of neutrality, objectivity, and balance reflect an analytical distance that Smith (1999), in her classic work on decolonizing methodologies, referred to as "research through imperial eyes … imbued with an 'attitude' and a 'spirit' which assumes a certain ownership of the entire world" (p. 56′ see also Abo-Zena et al., 2022; Decolonial Psychology Editorial Collective, 2021). Instead, we readily acknowledge that ours is a particularly positioned reading—one among many possible others—rooted in and centering on our engagement with African settings. Similarly, we are reasonably certain that the SI editors did not intend the meanings that we attribute to the CFP. However, our purpose is not to infer authorial intention, but instead to illuminate traces of the coloniality of knowledge implicit in the text, independent of author intentions or understandings. Again, rather than claim an objective or singularly accurate reading of the CFP, our purpose is to turn the analytic gaze back on the CFP from African epistemic locations to illuminate different manifestations of the coloniality of knowledge that are common in standard approaches to E&SP. By doing so, we hope to promote an E&SP that takes African and Majority World experience and contexts as epistemic foundations for a globally informed science.

We begin with a consideration of the title of the project. What does it mean to "*globaliz*[e] psychological science?" What does it mean "to *include* the Middle East and Africa"? Answers to this question illuminate competing constructions of epistemic *globalization* and *inclusion*.[4]

Imperialist globalization/inclusion

Most evident in the CFP is what one might refer to as *imperialist* forms of epistemic globalization or inclusion (Adams, 2019). Applied to the present case, the basic feature of imperialist globalization or inclusion is assimilation or digestion of African cases into hegemonic whitestream psychological science (cf. Malherbe and Dlamini, 2020). Associated with this imperialist form of epistemic inclusion are several forms of epistemic violence (Readsura Decolonial Editorial Collective, 2022).

Epistemic extractivism

In the present context, epistemic extractivism refers to the mining of data from African settings to fuel research production on questions of interest in WEIRD centers of hegemonic psychological science. We see the specter of epistemic extractivism in CFP statements that "the unique contexts in this region vis-à-vis that of the West provides [sic] invaluable opportunities for evaluating, extending, and creating psychological theories," and that "submitted papers may … provide replications of previous work in ecological and social psychology with samples in the region." Both statements emphasize the value of research in African settings for advancing goals of WEIRD science rather than engaging with concerns that arise more organically from African settings themselves.[5] In other words, research turns away from the material, psychological, ecological, spiritual, social, and political needs of those living in specific African contexts to prioritize disciplinary orthodoxy.

In many African settings, the idea of epistemic extractivism conjures visions of foreign researchers who contract from a distance with African collaborators to collect data for analysis outside the context of the research, the results of which they subsequently publish with little or no involvement of those African collaborators.[6] Even where there is co-authorship on publications, the work is primarily intended for readers in Global North settings and less so for those in the Majority World. Beyond issues of fairness and the appropriation of collaborators' work, such practices entail more conceptual varieties of harm related to the epistemic distance between sites of collection and analysis.

[3] We use this word throughout the document as a shorthand for the particular reigning version of modernity associated with Euro-American global domination. It emphasizes the connection of global modernity to Euro-American imperialism and settler colonialism, while implying the possibility of other, non-Eurocentric expressions of modernity.

[4] A more extended critique of the CFP would problematize the label, "Middle East" as a straightforward case of Orientalism (Said, 1978): the monolithic construction of "Oriental" or Eastern others against a European standard. More specifically, the Southwest Asia region is only "near" or "middle" east relative to a European standard located to its west.

[5] This self-referential engagement with African settings is a key manifestation of *disciplinary decadence* (Gordon, 2014): a solipsistic death spiral in which a field turns increasingly inward—for example, from engagement with empirical reality to thrice-removed investigations of laboratory phenomena or heated debates about methodological orthodoxy—until it collapses from its own density and implodes.

[6] Although our focus here is external actors, we do not deny African complicitly in processes of extraction and imposition. As an anonymous reviewer reminded us, there are Africa-based researchers who frequently (and often eagerly) enable epistemic extraction for their own professional gain, just as there are governments in Africa that enable intellectual imposition through their failure to provide funding for alternative research agendas. Consistent with the situationist epistemology of E&SP, our broader point is not to apportion individual blame for perpetration of epistemic violence, but instead to emphasize its source in structural realities of enduring coloniality that constitute the already-there ecologies of everyday life in the euromodern global order.

Imperialist imposition

Imperialist imposition occurs when researchers and practitioners take conclusions from observations in WEIRD settings and impose them as a general standard of knowledge and practice, regardless of their fit with local circumstances. One can readily understand the motivation for the SI as a response to this form of epistemic violence. The SI emerges at a time of racial reckoning, when psychologists in many corners of the field have reflected on the ongoing epistemic exclusion (Malherbe et al., 2022; Settles et al., 2020) of Majority World voices, resulting in a default imposition of WEIRD standards (Buchanan et al., 2021; Roberts and Rizzo, 2021). Against this background, we applaud the SI for its aspiration to include more African cases in the project of E&SP.

Beyond the imperialist imposition associated with epistemic exclusion, though, is a more insidious form of imposition related to the ideas of epistemic extractivism and epistemic distance that we discussed above. In particular, the extraction of data as raw material to fuel advances in hegemonic science is tantamount to the imposition of an external epistemic agenda that consumes information about Africa for whitestream knowledge purposes. Again, this form of harm is evident in a SI (or any other project) to the extent that the inclusion of African cases amounts to the assimilation of data about African settings for consumption in epistemically distant contexts for epistemically distant agendas.

We find the specter of imperialist imposition especially apparent in the call for papers that "report intervention science that is being done in the region." Although the project of intervention science is one that has great prestige in E&SP, especially in corners of the field that emphasize applied research, it typically coincides with an imperialistic attitude. In many African settings that have been frequent targets of such projects, the idea of intervention science conjures images of the context-insensitive foreign expert who presumes to know better than local inhabitants and imposes a one-size-fits-all treatment that has been designed in an epistemically distant, insulated neocolonial thinktank. In relatively benign cases, the harm from such instances of bold intervention may be limited to the waste of scarce resources on ineffective interventions. In more malignant cases, the practice of bold intervention can expose people to more harm than they would otherwise experience.

Epistemological violence

Another consequence of epistemic distance is to increase the likelihood of what Teo (2010) refers to as *epistemological violence*: the interpretation of empirical results in ways that "implicitly or explicitly construct the Other as inferior or problematic, despite the fact that alternative interpretations, equally viable based on the data, are available" (Teo, 2010, p. 298). Pathological characterizations of African settings are difficult to escape in contemporary global discourse, including scientific work. It is perhaps then not surprising that we find them in the CFP. Already in the third sentence, the CFP informs the reader that, in addition to their large and fastest-growing populations, these regions are also characterized by high levels of political instability, economic fragility, armed conflict as well as a wide variety of environmental stressors that include water scarcity, arable land depletion, and air pollution.

Given this distinctive significance, the CFP notes among its five examples of relevant topics that submitted papers may … explore how climate, the presence of natural resources as well as natural and human stressors (e.g., pathogens, disasters, conflict, poverty) in the region may affect the cognition, emotion, and behavior of the region's inhabitants.

We anticipate objections that the CFP is merely stating facts. Many African settings are indeed "characterized by … a wide variety of environmental stressors". Again, though, the issue of epistemological violence is one of interpretation. The statements imply an essentialist account in which these pathologies are inherent characteristics or just natural features of African settings. They neglect a viable alternative explanation—one that better aligns not only with an Africa-centering appreciation for the coloniality of euromodernity, but also (and somewhat ironically) with an E&SP-aligned understanding of everyday ecology as a culturally constituted product of human activity (e.g., Adams and Kurtiş, 2018). It is to this alternative that we now turn.

Decolonial globalization/inclusion

In contrast to the imperialist forms of epistemic inclusion that typically characterize whitestream academic encounters with African settings, an Africa-centering psychology proposes *decolonial* forms of inclusion. Decolonial forms of epistemic inclusion move beyond mere visibility or silent presence to denote participation and power. These forms of inclusion entail a willingness to alter the very form and substance of the entity which admits inclusions. Rather than knowledge about African settings from a hegemonic WEIRD standpoint, decolonial forms of epistemic globalization or inclusion shift the geography of knowledge and "turn the analytic lens" (Adams and Salter, 2007, p. 542) to consider psychology in general from the epistemic perspective of African experience (i.e., how the world looks from here; Ratele, 2019).

One important contribution of this epistemic shift is to directly confront epistemological violence: that is, to draw on place-based knowledges to provide locally informed alternatives to the pathologizing accounts of African settings that are typical in hegemonic whitestream science. An arguably more important contribution for present purposes is to "denaturalize" white-washed accounts of psychological functioning in the modern/colonial present that researchers represent, without reference to colonial violence, as something akin to natural facts. In this respect, decolonial varieties of epistemic inclusion resonate with a defining emphasis in varieties of E&SP associated with cultural psychology (Adams and Kurtiş, 2018): specifically, the mutual constitution of cultural realities and psychological tendencies. In one direction, an emphasis on the *psychological constitution of cultural reality* provides a conceptual foundation for denaturalizing everyday ecology. Everyday ecology is less a just natural environment than it is a culturally constituted product of human activity. In the other direction, an emphasis on the *cultural constitution of psychological tendencies* provides a conceptual foundation for denaturalizing apparently standard patterns. Rather than the just natural outgrowth of essential qualities, standard patterns of psychological functioning documented in whitestream psychological science reflect particular, historically contingent affordances.

Denaturalizing ecology

A decolonial Africa-centering standpoint insists that environments are not just natural; instead, they are shaped by human action and particularly (the legacy of) colonial violence (see Sultana, 2022). European imperialist globalization was inextricably linked to colonization of African lands and lifeworlds, and the consequences of these world-shaping events persist in (neo)colonial modes of existence, governance, and knowledge (e.g., Bulhan, 2015; Nkrumah, 1965; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015, 2021). The CFP discussion of African "environmental stressors" without reference to coloniality—an omission that is particularly remarkable in light of its reference to the mutually constituting relationship between ecology/structure and culture/agency—naturalizes this violence.

Beyond African environments, and in keeping with the idea of turning the lens back on standard knowledge, it is important to extend the emphasis on coloniality to the WEIRD environments that disproportionately inform hegemonic psychological science. A decolonial Africa-centering standpoint compels recognition that the characteristic wealth of these settings—the R (for *rich*) in the acronym WEIRD—is not the innocent product of cultural development. Instead, this wealth is an inheritance from colonial appropriation (e.g., of land and labor) and systematic underdevelopment of colonies and former colonies (Rodney, 1972; Acemoglu and Robinson, 2013). Such colonial appropriation financed the material infrastructure for mobility and the energy for the supposed achievements and progress associated with modern/colonial individualist lifeways, with transformational consequences for our

shared planet associated with the advent of the Anthropocene.

Denaturalizing psychological tendencies

The cultural psychology perspective evident in the CFP has been critically important for re-thinking the concept of human nature in psychology. It has illuminated how tendencies that the field has typically regarded as "naturally" good or standard are instead a reflection of the basis of the field in a WEIRD set of cultural ecologies. People who inhabit these settings acquire euromodern individualist habits of mind—and culturally developed systems which selectively build realities that shape these habits of mind—because they are adaptive or optimal for individual experience within the high mobility, open-system ecologies that characterize euromodernity.

A decolonial Africa-centering standpoint extends these ideas in important ways by emphasizing the coloniality of euromodernity. With respect to E&SP, this means re-framing the "W" in WEIRD as "white" instead of "Western". Euromodernity and associated individualist lifeways are not an innocent product of cultural development (i.e., the "W" as "Western") divorced from political economy. Instead, the high mobility, open-system ecologies that make possible euromodern individualist lifeways require colonial violence and racial domination (the "W" as "white") to maintain the gated community enclaves of affluence as their condition of possibility. In other words, racism and coloniality constitute the inseparable dark side of the euromodern individualist lifeways that hegemonic psychology elevates to the status of just-natural standard (Readsura Decolonial Editorial Collective, 2022).

Decolonial Africa-centering research: an example

It bears repeating that the purpose of this article is not to deny the contributions of empirical research in African settings. Although we have emphasized how E&SP research in African settings often takes an imperialist form—imposing interventions derived from WEIRD conceptual bases or extracting data to inform WEIRD preoccupations rather than making knowledge that is more relevant for African concerns—there are cases of research in E&SP that move in the direction of a decolonial Africa-centering approach. To offer an example, we describe a project comprising three studies about the conception and experience of well-being across diverse Ghanaian settings (Osei-Tutu, 2023; Osei-Tutu et al., 2020, 2022).

In a first study (Osei-Tutu et al., 2020), researchers interviewed religious leaders (practitioners of Christianity, Islam, and African Traditional Religion) in four different cultural regions of Ghana using the language associated with each region. They asked these participants to nominate words or phrases in those languages that they would use to convey the meaning of the English-language concept, *well-being*. Responses included words and phrases that resemble standard conceptions of well-being in hegemonic whitestream psychology (e.g., referring to *good health* and *positive affective states*). However, they also provided evidence for what the authors referred to as a sustainability orientation to well-being via words and phrases that refer to *material sufficiency, proper relationality,* and *peace of mind*.

In a second study (Osei-Tutu et al., 2022), the researchers asked participants to describe situations in which their well-being increased and decreased. Of particular interest was a comparison between two groups. One group was a community sample of people from the same four regions as the first study, who reported situations in the context of a face-to-face interview that the researcher conducted in the corresponding local language. The other group consisted of students at the University of Ghana, who reported situations in the context of a paper-and-pencil questionnaire written in English. An analysis of the content of responses again revealed an emphasis on sustainability or prevention-oriented themes of material sufficiency, proper relationality, and peace of mind as opposed to growth or promotion-oriented themes of psychologization and high-arousal positive affect (Tsai, 2017). However, this emphasis on sustainability themes was attenuated or reversed among the university student sample (relative to the community sample), a pattern that is consistent with their greater engagement in settings that promote modern individualist lifeways.

In a third study (Osei-Tutu, 2023), the researchers randomly selected 96 situations from the pool of responses in the second study (plus similar responses from US participants) and presented them to a new set of Ghanaian and US participants. For each situation, participants rated how their well-being would change in that situation, as well as how the situation would affect them along dimensions of high-arousal positive affect (HAP, with anchors of *sad* and *happy*), peace of mind (POM, with anchors of *anxious* and *calm*), and social validation (SV, with anchors of *humiliated* and *respected*). The researchers then conducted multiple regression analyses for each situation, separately among Ghanaian and US samples, to explore which anticipated changes along different dimensions of well-being would predict anticipated changes in well-being judgments. Results among US participants revealed patterns that one might expect from theory and research in hegemonic psychological science; specifically, SV ratings mattered relatively little for well-being judgments, and HAP ratings were better predictors than POM ratings. In contrast, results among Ghanaian participants not only revealed stronger associations between SV ratings and WB judgments than were evident among US participants, but also—and consistent with an emphasis on sufficiency and sustainability—revealed that POM ratings were better than HAP ratings as predictors of well-being. Finally, the researchers observed a similar difference as a function of situation valence regardless of research setting. HAP was stronger than POM as a predictor of well-being in increase or enhancement situations (resembling the pattern for US participants), but POM was stronger than HAP as a predictor of well-being in decrease or constraint situations (resembling the pattern for Ghanaian participants).

How does this research instantiate or contribute to an Africa-centering decolonial perspective that counteracts the forms of epistemic violence that we noted earlier? Perhaps most obviously, the project responds to prevailing tendencies of epistemic exclusion by drawing upon research in a variety of Ghanaian settings to illuminate sustainability models of well-being, implicit in local-language vocabulary and descriptions of situations, that emphasize material sufficiency, proper relationality, and the peace of mind that comes from the satisfaction of obligations and expectations.

In addition, the research counteracts epistemological violence of standard explanations by emphasizing the adaptive value of African patterns that whitestream perspectives portray as immature or pathological. Rather than sub-optimal forms, the research suggests that these sustainability or prevention-oriented models of well-being may be particularly adaptive for situations of constraint, even in WEIRD settings characterized by excessive abundance, providing optimal pathways for viable existence given our global reality of interdependence. As the fact of anthropogenic climate changes makes clear, we do not inhabit a world of unlimited possibility; instead, we share—unequally, to be sure—interdependent fates on our solitary planet. Rather than suboptimal forms that require imperialist intervention, sustainability-oriented models reflect important insights about the human condition—insights that are worthy of emulation even in hegemonic psychology.

Finally, and resonating with the idea of decolonial inclusion, the most important way in which the research instantiates a decolonial Africa-centering perspective is by counteracting the violence associated with naturalization of modernity/coloniality. In particular, the research project suggests that the promotion-oriented whitestream emphasis on psychological growth and personal fulfillment is not a just-natural pattern, but instead reflects the particular affordances of modern/colonial lifeways and the cultural ecologies of material affluence that enable these lifeways. Although this whitestream model might sometimes be conducive to optimal well-being, an emphasis on the coloniality of its euromodern individualist roots directs attention to some of its darker consequences. We return to this idea in our conclusion.

Given the preceding discussion and prevalent pre-conceptions about

decolonial work, our choice of this example may surprise some readers. Support for the project came from a center of Interdisciplinary African Studies at a German university and two Europe-based foundations. Although the principal investigator and several of collaborating researchers were based at the University of Ghana, the project was the work of a multinational research team that included researchers based in the US. Such international connections raise valid concerns about the potential for forms of epistemic violence (e.g., extractivism and imposition) that we discussed in previous sections.

Although a decolonial attitude to research certainly requires that researchers reflect on the potential for such epistemic violence, we emphasize that a decolonial Africa-centering perspective does not prohibit collaboration with external funders or researchers. An Africa-centering approach is not an exclusionary turn inward to focus narrowly on Africa or African settings as the object of knowledge. Instead, it centers African realities and experience not only as a privileged approach for African ecological and social contexts, but also as an equally legitimate standpoint for looking outward to consider questions of global or general interest. Such an epistemic orientation is imperative for understanding the coloniality of the euromodern order, offering insights that are perhaps especially important for pushing back against those in WEIRD settings who disproportionately hold power to decide the fate of the global majority.

Similarly, we anticipate that this example may fall short of the standard that some colleagues hold for decolonial work in psychology, especially in fields like counseling or community psychology where the goal is to work more directly and concretely with people or collectives toward healing and liberation. When such colleagues do conduct research, they typically use qualitative techniques and collaborative or participatory action methods that integrate community members into all aspects of the research process and blur boundaries between researcher and respondent. In contrast, researchers in our example case did not consult community members at all stages of the project, and they performed quantitative analyses that risk the sort of abstraction from context that we associate in a subsequent section with zero-point epistemology. In these and other respects, our example case is not necessarily a model of decolonial work, especially as considered from the perspective of counseling or community psychology.

With all due respect to our colleagues and without denying the importance of reflexivity about the coloniality of knowledge implicit in research methods (Readsura Decolonial Editorial Collective, 2022), our concern in the present paper is the possibility of a decolonial Africa-centering approach to research in E&SP. The issue for such an approach to research is neither the (non-)African identities of partners nor strict adherence to methodological orthodoxy, even of radical alternative approaches. Instead, we propose that the more fundamental consideration is the attitude with which one conducts the research.

Promoting a decolonial attitude to research

The chief editor of the present journal directed us "to offer guidelines for researchers seeking to improve their research agendas" from a decolonial perspective. As we comply with this directive, we recall the words of Atallah and Dutta (2022) who note that, "disciplinary criteria and standards of academic excellence [often] work to silence critical questionings by colonized people" (p. 436). In concurrence with them, "we do not enumerate questions to be asked, nor do we prescribe guidelines/standards for a comprehensive decolonial approach" (Atallah and Dutta, 2022, p. 436). Rather than a recipe-like checklist abstracted from research contexts, the guidelines that we offer are more like components of "decolonial attitude" (e.g., Maldonado-Torres, 2017) to knowledge and research.

Critical reflexivity

The defining aspect of decolonial attitude for an Africa-centering E&SP is critical reflexivity about *locus of enunciation*: the recognition that one speaks and makes observations from a particular epistemic standpoint. Beyond the concern with locus of enunciation, a decolonial attitude to research requires critical reflexivity about one's complicity in systems of racial domination as a participant in the modern/colonial order. This critical reflexivity goes beyond the occasional practice of positionality statements; instead, it requires that researchers do the work to cultivate habitual attention to the ways in which everyday features of their modern existence—not only home and land ownership, possession of a cell-phone, or citizenship in nation-state; but also travel to academic conferences and other features of professional life as a researcher—are inextricably implicated in coloniality. It requires that researchers sit with the unsettling discomfort about their unavoidable complicity in modern/colonial violence and refuse the seductive narrative that their scientific research and intellectual work necessarily grants them some form of innocence (Tuck and Yang, 2012).

Epistemic humility

A decolonial attitude of critical reflexivity about locus of enunciation stands in direct contrast to "the hubris of the zero point" characteristic of hegemonic forms of E&SP. The hubris of this standpoint not only refers to "the grandiose delusion about the possibility of position-less observation unconstrained by the limitations of any particular standpoint," but also involves "the belief that because one is not standing anywhere in particular, one can impose one's ideas or claim intimate knowledge of everywhere in general" (Decolonial Psychology Editorial Collective, 2021, pp. 349–350).

In contrast to the hubris of the zero point, a second aspect of decolonial attitude to research is *epistemic humility* (Medina, 2013; see also Teo, 2019, on epistemic modesty) about the limitations of one's particular perspective. This epistemic humility contrasts with the attitude of bold intervention (often resembling imperialist imposition) that informs dominant threads of experimental E&SP. It entails refusal (Ahmed, 2017; Simpson, 2007; Tuck and Yang, 2014; see also Atallah and Dutta, 2022; Coultas, 2022; Silva et al., 2022) of the role of the expert, especially constructions of scientific expertise that require the disproportionate occupation of representational space (e.g., in journals, at conferences, on social media, and other professional settings).

Epistemic freedom/disobedience

A turn to critical reflexivity and therefore delinking from zero-point epistemology is not, by itself, enough to redress power asymmetries in psychological research or to correct the imperialist imposition of alien (and alienating) psychological models. To counter these forms of violence requires a third aspect of decolonial attitude to research: the practice of *epistemic freedom* to write "unencumbered by Eurocentrism" (see Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2021). This aspect of decolonial attitude entails a willingness to engage in *epistemic disobedience* (Mignolo, 2011) particularly when disciplinary dictates about conceptual orthodoxy and methodological rigor would reproduce forms of epistemic violence. The practice of epistemic freedom not only challenges the over-representation of euromodern lifeways and thought, but also democratizes knowledge via recognition of multiple knowledge systems beyond the (false) euromodern center. It requires engagement with pluriversal psychologies (Sonn et al., 2022; Reddy and Amer, 2023) both on their own terms and as a standpoint for provincializing euromodern thought (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1986; Chakrabarty, 2000).

Engagement with knowledge otherwise

The freedom to pursue pluriversal psychologies is one sense of a fourth aspect of decolonial attitude: *engagement with knowledge otherwise*. In this sense, a decolonial attitude toward research requires respectful engagement with suppressed knowledge traditions of colonial

Others—traditions that hegemonic forms of psychology have historically regarded in pathologizing terms as harmful or primitive.

African languages as repositories of knowledge and ways of being

In most African settings, colonial languages (e.g., English, French, and Portuguese) remain in use as the official medium of governance and knowledge-making. Such languages continue to constitute the standard for psychological training, practice, assessment, research, writing, and critique (Dlamini, 2020; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2021; Ratele, 2018). The decision to conduct and disseminate research in colonial languages may be more or less appropriate with university-educated samples, and it can make academic work available to a broader global audience. Even so, it is important to recognize how the conduct of research in colonial languages can constitute forms of epistemic exclusion. In the first place, this practice excludes effective participation of the multitudes of people who do not have advanced proficiency in colonial languages, especially when research requires them to access or articulate complex features of subjective experience. More profoundly, this practice excludes forms of knowledge and experience embedded in the meaning systems of African languages, even among participants who are otherwise able to communicate this experience effectively in English. Accordingly, a decolonial attitude of engagement with knowledge otherwise requires research practices that extend beyond the mere translation of imported instruments and their underlying concepts from English to African linguistic codes. Rather, it requires the more complex task of engaging the ways of knowing and being that African languages carry within them (see Dlamini, 2020).

Other sites of knowledge and ways of being

A decolonial attitude of *engagement with knowledge otherwise* refers not only to the content of knowledge traditions, but also to the sites where such knowledge resides. Researchers in African settings who rely exclusively on verbal responses of individual participants may miss important manifestations of psychological experience expressed in forms of artistic production. Similarly, researchers in African settings who look only in universities, research centers, academic journals, books, and conferences may find standard forms of knowledge that are easily assimilable within hegemonic forms of E&SP, but they may miss repositories of knowledge in land, associated with histories of habitation in relation to particular places, that inform ways of knowing and being in many African settings (similar to many Indigenous Peoples across the globe; e.g., Bang et al., 2018; Smith, 1999; Tuck and McKenzie, 2014). In this and many other ways, an Africa-centering perspective provides foundations for a decolonial E&SP that not only reflects African experience, but also provides unique insights into a topic—the mutual constitution of mind and ecological context—that is a core theme of E&SP.

Toward decolonial Africa-centering global psychology

Rather than a critical review of existing research, our goal in this article has been to draw on an Africa-centering approach to E&SP to illuminate insights about the coloniality of knowledge via a critical analysis of the CFP. The ingredients for this more decolonial form of epistemic globalization/inclusion are not entirely absent from the CFP. One can see a glimmer of this idea in the hope that "studying psychological processes in the [Africa] region will not only contribute to our understanding of these regions, but also have the potential to provide new insights" about theory/humans in general. Foremost among these, we argue, are a set of potential insights related to questions about the colonial dark side of euromodern individualist lifeways. By way of examples, we discuss two sets of questions.

First, an emphasis on the coloniality of euromodern individualist lifeways prompts questions about their appropriateness as prescriptive standards. What if the focus on personal exploration, expression, expansion, growth, and fulfillment associated with these lifeways requires a level of individual or collective affluence that is available only within gated-community enclaves (whether at the level of neighborhood, country, or continent)? More pointedly, what if the creation and maintenance of the cultural ecologies that support these lifeways actively requires or increases the disempowerment and suffering of the majority who exist outside those gated-community enclaves? Even if we accept the highly dubious premise that euromodern individualist lifeways afford superior productivity, optimal well-being, more passionate relationships, or more blissful happiness, a decolonial Africa-centering standpoint bids us to reconsider whether it is appropriate to elevate these modern/colonial forms as prescriptive standards and to design institutions devoted to their proliferation if they can only ever benefit a privileged few at the expense of the marginalized majority.

Second, an emphasis on the coloniality of euromodern individualist lifeways prompts a related set of questions about the appropriate unit of analysis in the psychological study of well-being. It is almost a defining characteristic that psychology–including hegemonic articulations of social psychology (e.g., Allport, 1924; see Ratele, 2003)—takes individual experience as its unit of analysis. With respect to the science of well-being, this characteristic emphasis leads practitioners to conceptualize and measure well-being as individual experience (e.g., of self-acceptance, autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, sense of purpose, and satisfaction with relationships or with life in general; Diener et al., 1985; Ryff et al., 1995). What if the pursuit of individually optimal experience is at odds with forms of well-being that are more sustainable either across the individual life course or across broad collectives? What if an emphasis on self-expansion and personal fulfillment undermines ways of being predicated on a healthy appreciation for embeddedness and constraint in the human condition that offer a more secure and more liberated basis for livable futures for all inhabitants of our shared planet? Rather than take as an article of faith that one serves the greatest good by scaling pursuit of self-expansion and personal fulfillment for mass adoption, a decolonial Africa-centering standpoint bids us to reconsider how an emphasis on optimal individual experience may be antithetical to broader, long-term and collective well-being.

We offer these ideas not as definitive conclusions, but instead as provocations that illustrate how an Africa-centering epistemic standpoint takes what might appear to be unremarkable or familiar truths and renders them remarkable or worthy of analytic attention. We do not have any illusions that such provocations, in and of themselves, are sufficient to "decolonize" psychological science, let alone society in general (see, e.g., Tuck and Yang, 2012). Still, we suspect that many readers of this article endorse constructivist forms of psychology that assert the importance of imagination in the (re)production of everyday realities. In this regard, "Coloniality is always already a decolonial concept" (Mignolo, 2011, p.20)—a tool for understanding the modern present as an extension of the colonial past so as to better illuminate decolonial futures. Especially within gated-community enclaves of whitestream society, where cultural institutions suppress awareness of the coloniality that constitutes euromodernity, the superiority of euromodern individualist lifeways can have the feel of something like self-evident truth. Against this background of white ignorance (see Mills, 2007) about the coloniality of euromodernity, the promise of a decolonial Africa-centering psychology—one that includes African perspectives at the center of general theory—is to raise such ideas for broad and urgent consideration.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Data availability

No data was used for the research described in the article.

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