

**REDEFINING PSYCHOLOGY IN A SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT:
FACILITATING EPISTEMOLOGICAL CURIOSITY**

by

JUSTIN GRAEME VERMEULEN

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SUPERVISOR: DR L. J. BALOYI

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Declaration

Student number: **3527-423-9**

I declare that **Redefining psychology in a South African context: Facilitating epistemological curiosity** is my own work and all sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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MR JUSTIN GRAEME VERMEULEN

20TH JULY 2011

DEDICATION

TO MY FATHER EDUAN JOHAN VERMEULEN, I FORGIVE YOU.

SUMMARY

Western psychology has in its current position and definition laid claim to the “psychology” landscape, despite being the construction of one epistemology. This imposition allows western psychology to dominate and control the “psychology” landscape, to the detriment of other equally valid and “scientific” “psychologies”.

We argue for redefinition of western psychology in terms of lived experience or soul, so that it can co-exist with other “psychologies”. This should co-facilitate the process of repositioning western psychology into a dialogically equal relationship with indigenous african psychology.

Redefinition of western psychology is dependant on psychologist’s appreciation of the relativity of epistemological frameworks and ability to challenge their own subjectivities. This in turn requires epistemological curiosity.

This study adopts a conceptual, autoethnographic approach and methodology. *Our* aim is not to provide answers, but rather create a context for dialogue.

Key words: psychology, science, reality, epistemology, epistemological curiosity, mind, soul, lived experience, relativity, co-existence.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

I recently visited my local Chinese take-away and restaurant to indulge my love of Asian food and in particular Chinese food. The restaurant is beautifully decorated with paper lanterns, water features and various Asian curios. The menus are written in broken English, much to the amusement of the western patrons. It is just as well that the situation is not reversed as the Chinese alphabet has hundreds of characters!

I placed my order and sat down behind the Sushi bar. While sitting there I struck up a conversation with the owner, a Chinese woman who came to South Africa a few years ago. I asked her why she felt the need to serve Sushi in a Chinese restaurant; my understanding is that Sushi is actually Japanese in origin. She explained that most of her customers (mostly westerners) were unaware of this and insist on ordering it. They somehow assume that anyone with Asian features must be capable of serving the currently trendy “Sushi”. I couldn’t help but feel that this was insulting and insensitive to her culture. I had also noticed that the supposed “Sushi” was all cooked! Now as far as I know all Sushi is raw fish? So I asked her why this was the case? She indicated that her patrons were nervous of raw fish and would only eat the “pseudo Sushi” if it was pre-cooked.

I was astonished at the insensitivity of this western context. The customers wanted to experience the “exotic” but only if it conformed to their standards of acceptability. To offer authentic Chinese food was not enough, it had to be supplemented with Japanese, and as I later discovered Thai, Malay and even Vietnamese food; to meet the western fetishes and requirements.

(Narrative by researcher)

CLARIFICATION OF TERMINOLOGY

Before attempting to discuss the current study, and given the potential for misunderstandings, it is necessary first to clarify the choice and rationale underlying the use of certain words and terminology. It is common practice in “psychology” literature to see the use of the term mainstream psychology, to refer to the currently dominant, western psychology and its various subdivisions. For the purposes of this study *we* argue for the use of the term *western psychology* to represent the psychological experiences of people functioning within a western epistemology, and mainstream “psychology”, “to which all ‘psychologies’ should be equal contributors”, denoting the broader “psychology” landscape. *We* also argue for the use of the term *african “psychology”*, to denote african experiences in their own right, thus african epistemology, theory and methodology as independent, and a dialogical partner to other “psychologies”. *We* thus advocate the notion of western psychology and african “psychology” as two contributors to the mainstream, in an equal dialogical relationship with all other “psychologies” globally, that constitute the mainstream or total “psychology” landscape. *We* have thus written the terms *western* and *african* in lower case, to represent their equality. *We* have also used inverted commas when referring to african “psychology” and indigenous “psychology”, because non-western people are more than capable of describing their “psychology” in their own words. It is only for the sake of clarity that *we* use the term “psychology” in this study. For example, african “psychology” would probably be better referred to as *moya*, as proposed by Baloyi (2008). These terms are however still in the process of finding their unique voice and definition. Accordingly it is with humble reluctance that *we* have compromised and used the term “psychology”.

In addition to the aforementioned terminology, this study also refers to “we” instead of “I”. While it is true that this work is a reflection of the author’s personal process and development, it has also occurred in a community of people and other authors. Accordingly this study reflects their collective thoughts, experiences and aspirations as well. The work presented in this study is thus a reflection of the efforts by many dedicated people, who have endeavoured to give expression to the lived experiences of people on the periphery, through their commitment to humanity and equality. It is thus illogical to refer to “I”, when in fact there can only be “we”.

THESIS

The argument we present in this study, is that a similar situation to the one presented in the opening vignette plays itself out in western psychology, through a process of selective inclusion of indigenous or non-western knowledge into western psychology. Indigenous philosophical concepts, which are superficially congruent with a western epistemology, such as ubuntu, are selectively included into western psychology or are modified to become acceptable. Our experience and observation is that this form of “inclusion” is advocated as a desirable goal in western psychological literature and thinking. The question we raise is whether this “inclusion”, of indigenous knowledge systems into western psychology, should be the goal in the first place? In this study we argue for the co-existence of knowledge systems as dialogical equals. We therefore argue that, instead of including indigenous knowledge systems into western psychology that these knowledge systems should rather co-exist as dialogical equals, in a “psychology” and knowledge systems landscape. In such a context it is easier to facilitate a sense of curiosity about different epistemological frameworks and their “psychologies”. In order for these changes to be implemented, it is however essential that we redefine our current understanding of western psychology.

Furthermore, redefinition of our current understanding of western psychology is critical for ensuring a relevant, sustainable future for “psychology” as a field in South Africa. Redefinition is thus an opportunity to reflect on where western psychology is at present and how it should be positioned in the future. For western psychology to have a viable future in Africa it must establish itself into a dialogically equal relationship with indigenous african “psychologies”. The western psychological community should to this end foster a sense of curiosity in indigenous knowledge systems and their “psychology” equivalents. Doing so may make it easier to introduce the idea of “psychological” co-existence in a “psychology” landscape. Such co-existence of western psychology with its indigenous equivalents would greatly enhance “psychologists” ability to meet the “psychological” needs of their clients. Western psychology accordingly has the opportunity to contribute to remediation of the injustices of the past, moving beyond mere tolerance of difference or selective inclusion, to appreciation of “psychological” diversity.

Those who hold dominant “psychological” discourses may perceive redefinition of western psychology as being threatening and unwarranted. We however view redefinition of western

psychology as a way of addressing the local and global need for a relevant “psychology”. Our argument is that taking up the challenge of redefinition will help western psychology respond to developments by indigenous “psychologies”, thus broadening the “psychology” landscape.

Moreover the research conducted by Baloyi (2008) argues that indigenous knowledge systems must, and indeed are seeking definition in their own right. In addition to this it is clear that these knowledge systems are as legitimate as those generated in the west. Part of the thesis defended in the current study is that western psychology cannot ignore these facts and continue to practice in the same way as before in South Africa. This is because the political and knowledge landscapes have changed dramatically in the last decade. Western psychology should therefore respond, encourage, embrace and adapt itself to developments in self definition by indigenous “psychologies”, which were silenced under apartheid. Western psychology should thus help reposition itself as relative and equal to indigenous “psychology”, rather than imposing conditions for acceptability and legitimacy on African knowledge systems.

SITUATING WESTERN PSYCHOLOGY IN SOUTH AFRICA

Jordaan and Jordaan (1998) note that our understanding of what “psychology” is, and where it came from is usually in line with a western cultural perspective and epistemology. In other words the western term “*psychology*”, as constructed within a western history, culture and epistemology, is seen as representative of all “psychologies”. Within this narrow definition, “*psychology*” is thus understood to be a field that historically explored the relationship between body and mind, which could trace its origins back to ancient Greek philosophy. Today “*psychology*” is of course defined far more broadly and includes perspectives such as the ecosystemic approach, which focuses on patterns of meaning in context and peoples underlying epistemologies or ways of thinking and knowing (Moore, 2003). Despite this broader understanding and definition of what “*psychology*” is, it remains a western construction. It thus becomes problematic when we attempt to “find” indigenous “psychologies” that fit our current understanding of “*psychology*”.

Even more problematic is when attempts are made to apply dominant western psychology to indigenous people, who have their own historically subjugated and marginalised

“psychology”. Jordaan and Jordaan (1998) for example, acknowledge the flaw of trying to apply a western scientific approach to african “psychology”, in order to link stories, proverbs and rituals to human behaviour. Yet these authors seem to have difficulty moving beyond advocating this approach. The tendency thus remains to see a western scientific approach as all encompassing and superior to all other ways of knowing.

The assumption that knowledge can only be legitimate if it has been investigated by western rational, systematic, scientific means or approaches pervades most of the literature of western psychology. Knowledge generated in “unscientific” or non-western ways is rejected. This has resulted in a misfit for any human experience that contradicts western ways of thinking. Richards (1997, p. 297) argues that, “western psychology’s problem in this respect rests in large part on its desperate aspirations to the status of a natural science in quest of universal laws, and psychologists’ own self-images, as this kind of scientist.” Gergen, Gulerce, Lock and Misra (cited in Mkhize, 2004) argue that this attempt at replicating the natural sciences led to the construction of western psychology as a value free, objective and universal science. This of course means that ontologies, epistemologies and cultures which do not conform to this scientific communities thinking, are not seen as offering anything of value to the worlds knowledge landscape.

Dominant western knowledge systems and ways of knowing and doing, including western scientific psychology have thus served to silence and minimise the position of indigenous knowledge systems in South Africa (Baloyi, 2008). Baloyi further argues that western psychology has made universal claims to knowledge and experience, despite the fact that it is a western construction and thus inappropriate for describing the lived experiences of African indigenous people. Staeuble (2007, p. 89) voices a similar argument, noting that the, “...dominant mode of psychological knowledge production has effectively marginalised, subalternised, or even precluded alternative modes of knowing”. According to Baloyi (2008) the exclusion of indigenous knowledge, practices and “psychology” has resulted in the marginalising of African experiences and epistemologies. Equally problematic is the denial of the existence of such a situation or the impact of for example racism in maintaining this status quo. Foster (2004) indicates that those in dominant positions or those who function within a dominant framework, use denial as a way to justify a lack of action and in the process become blind to the situation. The fact that western psychology as a field continues to meet the needs of few South Africans and is perceived as an elitist science serving a chosen few is evidence of this situation (Wilson, Richter, Durrhein, Surendorff & Asafo-Agyei, 1999).

Clearly psychologists who were trained in western paradigms will have to re-examine the way in which they practice in a South African context and acknowledge their personal and training biases.

Psychologists thus need to be aware of their biases towards working within certain epistemological frameworks. Campbell (cited in Cecchin, Lane & Wendel, 1994) notes that if psychologists do not reflect on their prejudices, they cannot model open, explorative thinking for their clients, whose problems are often based on their own prejudices. Campbell goes on to point out the danger of seeing one worldview, or in the case of this study western scientific psychology, as superior to other ways of knowing and doing. In a multicultural society, such as that of South Africa, there is a need for integrative, contextually sensitive approaches that draw on knowledge from various worldviews. Western psychology should therefore develop openness to sharing and co-evolving knowledge and practices that will better meet the needs of all South Africans. Keeney (1986) calls for honesty in the western psychology community, even if at times this feels threatening, to not be afraid of letting go of absolute certainty in beliefs and assumptions. Keeney (1986) encourages psychologists to acknowledge their own epistemological beliefs and consider how these influence what they see and do, thus developing epistemological awareness. Keeney warns that failure to do so can result in approaches that are dehumanising for clients. Abuse of western psychology to enforce racist agendas in South Africa is evidence of one such dehumanising discourse. The tendency to trust in certain ways of knowing and doing, or what Keeney (1986) refers to as “closet worship”, typifies Eurocentric views of privileged knowledge or superior epistemologies.

Lappin (1983) argues that in addition to developing epistemological awareness, and directly related to it, psychologists need to become culturally conscious. This requires psychologists to approach clients from an almost anthropological stance, observing rules and rituals in the context of a particular culture and epistemological framework. Lappin (1983) suggests that part of the way to do this involves, firstly becoming more human, which requires joining and viewing people at the level of experience, rather than relying exclusively on a western scientific lens of observation, measurement and understanding. Secondly it requires risk and respect. *Risk*; in terms of western psychologists being courageous enough to ask people from other cultures to share and describe their epistemological and ontological realities, thus *respecting* a culture’s epistemology and ontology, even if it is different from how westerners understand the world. What Lappin (1983) does not consider, but does seem to imply is the requirement and development of a sense of curiosity in different cultures and epistemologies.

More specifically this implies epistemological curiosity, which Freire (1998) refers to as an advanced stage in the knowing process. It involves reaching a point where you can see knowledge generated from pure experience as being of great value, rather than relying on western scientific rigour alone. Epistemological curiosity occurs when you are able to remain curious, and are capable of self-criticism. In our view epistemological curiosity is a deep, reflective and honest desire to engage with epistemologies that differ from our own, allowing them to inform our thinking, to challenge our ways of knowing and inform our ways of being.

It is evident from the preceding literature and arguments that western psychology has failed to reflect and grow from indigenous contexts. Instead western psychology as part of the broader western scientific community has imposed itself on indigenous people, disregarding local knowledge and experiences and functioning as an all encompassing framework and knowledge landscape. This attitude of imposition and superiority has not worked and a new sustainable alternative is required.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Western psychology as a “science” functions within the epistemological limits of western thinking, which accordingly delineates what can constitute legitimate, normal and universal experiences. Western psychology thus reflects only a limited range of potential human experience and is inappropriate for describing the lived experiences of for example, African indigenous peoples. Baloyi (2008, p. 72) argues that, “the very use of the term “psychology” in many African communities and universities poses a serious problem... (as it is) conceived out of a foreign epistemology and ontology.” In its current definition, it is challenging to find equivalents to western psychology or indigenous “psychologies”, amongst non-western cultures. This also makes it difficult to place western psychology in a relative and equal position to indigenous “psychologies”, which helps keep western psychology in a position of dominance and imposition. A further complication is that the western understanding of “psyche” and “psychology” has become distorted and fragmented. For example, “*psyche*” means *soul*, yet western psychology focuses on the *mind*. This has served to disconnect the “psychology” field from being a way of understanding human experiences in their totality, to a focus on the single experiential fragment of “mind”. Typical of this is the definition of “psyche”, in the APA dictionary of psychology (VandenBos, 2006), which views “psyche” as

the mind in its totality, separate from the physical organism. When western psychologists undertake *cross-cultural* studies, using this dominant fragmented definition, they fail to find “psychology” anywhere except in the west. They then claim that “psychology” is a western invention.

Strodtbeck and Whiting (cited in Clark, 1998, p. 9) argue further that, “the very words *cross-cultural* have become alienating to mainstream psychologists... (Who) have become so focused on cross-cultural comparisons, universal generalizations, and methodological refinements that they have lost touch with advances in their own home countries.” This is true of the situation in South Africa as well, with the on-going emphasis on including indigenous knowledge and practices into western psychology, despite advances by African epistemologies that are finding a voice in their own right. Inclusion, understood here to be the tendency to simply include indigenous knowledge and practices into western scientific frameworks as opposed to co-existence of frameworks, is highly problematic. This is especially so when inclusion is selective or when indigenous knowledge and practices are manipulated to better fit with western standards and frameworks. Hammersmith (2007, p. 166) contends that, “when institutions limit their indigenous approaches to inclusion of indigenous content without recognising, supporting or facilitating inclusion of context and indigenous teaching and learning methods they go off track, because the most important elements are left out.” Baloyi (2008) argues that western psychology has laid claim to universal knowledge and experience, establishing itself as the norm for all human beings. In order to maintain this faulty status it is hardly surprising that western psychology should want to include those components of an African epistemology that confirm this all encompassing discourse. Batiste and Henderson (cited in Hammersmith, 2007, pp. 44-45) further this argument by pointing out the problem of, “cognitive imperialism devaluing indigenous knowledge and heritage while taking elements out of context and claiming them for itself.”

Hammersmith (2007) argues strongly for tolerance by western science of indigenous epistemologies. Yet tolerance in our opinion is problematic, as it implies selective inclusion of indigenous knowledge and an uncomfortable process of forced interest in difference. In the context of major social and political changes in South Africa, engendering a sense of tolerance of difference and knowledge system diversity is faulty. Tolerance equates to managing the legal imperative to allow indigenous knowledge and practices to infiltrate western psychology. Tolerance in the context of this study is thus an obstacle to equality between western psychology and indigenous “psychology”, as it reinforces selectively

inclusive practices. This study therefore in part challenges the notion of tolerance of diversity and instead argues for appreciation, which by contrast implies co-existence of dialogical equals. With this in mind we also argue for development of epistemological curiosity to facilitate a shift from tolerance, to appreciation of epistemological difference.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Mkhize (2004, p. 28) argues for, “a dynamic relationship of worldviews... (because) people are exposed to multiple perspectives, (and) once incorporated into people’s ways of thinking; these perspectives are capable of entering into a dynamic relationship with each other. This process may result in the emergence of new (knowledge) out of the old. It is this dialogue between perspectives that is of psychological significance.” In other words, an equal dialogical engagement between western psychology and indigenous “psychology” will create opportunities for the co-evolving of mutually beneficial ideas and solutions for the “psychological” needs of South Africans and the communities they create. This provides a context for knowledge system equality, while still preserving the unique identity of each perspective. It is in line with this image of equality that we put forth the following aims and objectives for this study.

AIMS

The broad aim of this study is to argue for the development of an equal dialogical relationship between western psychology and indigenous “psychology”, where western psychology is repositioned as relative and dialogically equal to indigenous “psychology”. We also aim to respond to the call by researchers such as Keeney (1983), for honesty, to question our beliefs and assumptions, and to promote this process of self reflection in the western psychology community.

Finally, this study aims to facilitate epistemological curiosity, by engaging in open minded inquiry, thus allowing new ideas to emerge from the research process, which contribute to the dialogue on diverse knowledge systems in South Africa.

OBJECTIVES

With these broad aims in mind the current study proposes the following objectives. The first objective being to investigate, how western psychology came to be defined as the “psychology” landscape. A further objective in this regard, is to investigate whether redefinition will facilitate a repositioning, of western psychology as relative and equal to indigenous “psychology”.

The second objective is to investigate the difference between the co-existence of “psychologies” versus the inclusion of indigenous “psychology”, into western psychology. This requires examination of the rationale underlying inclusion and a questioning of whether it should be a goal in the first place.

The third and final objective is to investigate the potential role played by epistemological curiosity in the western psychological redefinition process. The goal is to determine, whether epistemological curiosity can help psychologists shift from tolerance of epistemological difference to appreciation of epistemological diversity.

PARADIGMATIC PERSPECTIVE

This study is framed within a meta-theoretical perspective, based on our understanding of the relativity of the “psychologies” that inhabit a “psychology” landscape. This is similar, yet fundamentally different from a postmodern, social constructionist framework. Our argument in this regard is that social constructionism itself can only account for the existence of theories and paradigms generated within a western epistemology. Any “psychology” in the “psychology” landscape can thus only generalise information to itself. Furthermore, and for the sake of clarity, we can argue that an equivalent to “social constructionism” may be put

forth by any of the “psychologies” occupying the “psychology” landscape. This means that there would be a variety of “social constructionism” like perspectives. The point being that social constructionism can only explain the existence of all “psychologies”, when western psychology is falsely positioned as *the* “psychology” landscape, rather than *a* participant in the landscape. It is also worth noting then that because this study uses a meta-perspective it drifts into the territory of a “third order of cybernetics”, or stated differently taking a relative position on perspectives of relativity generated by different independent “psychologies”. However despite this, if this study does in fact cross into a “third order perspective” then it is definitely a product of western psychology and is limited as such by the challenges acknowledged here. Hence we cannot claim to objectively account for what we refer to as the “psychology” landscape, but merely give a western psychological description of it. This will help bring about equality between different “epistemologies” and their corresponding “psychologies”.

Social constructionism is thus in our opinion always a product of a western epistemology and cannot objectively explain, nor account for any other “psychologies”. Social constructionism cannot for example, account for African indigenous peoples “psychology”. While the social constructionist lens is useful for sensitising the western scientific psychology community to the relative nature of frameworks and perspectives, it should not be seen as an all encompassing, universal, culture transcending way of knowing. Despite this approach’s shortcomings, its ability to reflect how reality can be constructed in language is useful for westerners and facilitates the process of critiquing western psychology. We therefore give a brief overview of the social constructionist perspective which informed this study and the later development of our meta-perspective, but argue for it to be seen within the epistemological limits of western thinking.

THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONIST PERSPECTIVE

In the Postmodern, Social Constructionist perspective language is seen as the focus of investigation. According to Becvar and Becvar (2006, pp. 91-92), “... language is not a reporting device for our experience, or representationalism. Rather it is a defining framework. Thus, a change in language equals a change in the experience, for reality can only be

experienced, and the “reality” experienced is inseparable from the pre-packaged thoughts of society...” Accordingly the focus is on how we co-evolve shared understandings and meaning through language. Language is seen as a context within which we narrate or story reality. Durrheim, Kelly and Terre Blanche (2006, pp. 278-279) state that, “constructionism...holds that the human life-world is fundamentally constituted in language and that language itself should therefore be the object of study.” Durrheim et al. (2006) note that social constructionism does have an explicitly critical element, this is of value when pointing out failings by approaches such as positivism in claiming to be value neutral. Durrheim et al. (2006) do however warn that social constructionists can suffer from idealism in reducing everything to language and an over emphasis on relativism where all descriptions of reality are simply constructions. Thus any text or interpretation becomes equal, and notions such as colonisation become acceptable. Clearly even social constructionism can go too far, when dehumanising practices are seen as nothing more than constructions, and the very real human impact is overlooked and downplayed.

In line with our “third Order Cybernetic” approach, conceived out of a Postmodern, Social Constructionist framework, this study is to be conducted according to the following tenets which Becvar and Becvar (2006, p. 345) summarise as follows, “(1) A reality may exist independently of us, but we cannot know reality. (2) The reality that exists for us and the reality we can observe is relative to the theory we use as a metaphor for that reality. (3) What we can observe is a function of the means we use to measure the phenomena of interest and our theories, which suggest what might be “out there”. (4) Reality is a dynamic, evolving, changing entity. (5) To observe a phenomenon is to change the nature of the phenomenon observed. (6) Phenomena observed take on the characteristics of the theory or model used to guide and systematise the observations. (7) The appropriate unit of analysis is not elementary parts but relationships, which should be the basis of all definitions (including that of western psychology).”

Given the diversity of epistemological orientations in South Africa and internationally it makes sense, and is appropriate to deconstruct our understandings of “psychology”, inclusion and tolerance of epistemological difference in terms of the aforementioned perspective.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This study is conceptual (theoretical) in nature, but is complemented by a series of narratives and personal communications (unstructured conversations) with academics, healers and students. Participants were initially identified through convenience sampling, followed by a snowball method to gain additional participants. Participants were split into two groups, according to their potential contribution. The first group conversed with the researcher, in order to co-evolve the theoretical aspects of this study. The second group submitted narratives, which contributed to the collective, communal knowledge generation process employed in this study. Participation was voluntary and there was no perceivable risk of harm to participants. Participants were also given a consent form (appendix); indicating that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time. This information gathering process was done in conjunction with a focused literature review, which helped build the philosophical groundwork for our arguments.

In addition to the narratives, personal communications and focused literature review, we have included an autoethnographic research component. This was done in order to authentically represent the researcher's personal journey and inform the other methodological components. Autoethnography takes the personal experiences of the researcher and uses them as research data (Holman, 2008). In this study we thus included dialogues, poetry and narratives that complemented the "scientific" components through their aesthetic value and ability to reflect the researcher's personal lived experience.

This methodology is consistent with our proposed "third order cybernetic" paradigm and thus articulates part of our ontological and epistemological framework. It is within this paradigm that the research is framed and viewed. We applied our "third order cybernetic" approach to the current definition of western psychology, with an emphasis on investigating the ecological value of a new epistemologically and contextually sensitive definition of western psychology.

This study therefore amounts to a critical theoretical analysis of these western epistemological understandings from a meta-theoretical perspective. The Unisa guide to masters and doctoral studies in psychology (2009, p. 56) indicates that a theoretical study of this nature involves, "...a kind of philosophical analysis", and hence cannot stipulate a

specific design in advance as is the case with empirical studies. Accordingly we allowed time and space for unexpected opportunities and research developments.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

Chapter 1: Introduction, Rationale and overview.

Chapter 2: The history of western psychology.

Chapter 3: Psychology in context.

Chapter 4: Redefining western psychology in a South African context.

Chapter 5: Facilitating epistemological curiosity.

CHAPTER 2

INTRODUCTION

This “Psychology”

*Spirits talk in dreams to me,
how is this not Psychology?
Witchcraft lacks validity,
excluded without reliability!
Human experience... so called Psyche?
Why do you dismiss me?
Existential reality...
if not universal, it cannot be!
Ubuntu included selectively,
rituals afforded no legitimacy!
Fragmentation and hypocrisy,
Psychology has no place for me!*

*Disconnected in paradise,
why should we sacrifice ?...
the coloniser, the imperialist,
epistemology with a fist !!!
Academic and rational,
no place for the immeasurable!
Isolation in community,
do we deny our humanity?
Ignorance of ecology,
Science says, there is nothing to see!
Take me to Psychology...
the evidence for reality.*

*Adopt the language,
corrupt your mind!
A coloniser of another kind!
You place us in a double bind,
as if we have nothing left to find!
Psychology... so value free?
Psychology let it be!
Impose on me...
with legitimacy?
Impose on me,
this “Psychology”.*

(Poem by researcher)

This chapter will focus on the historical developments that shaped the western understanding of psychology, as well as the etymology (history) of the western terms *psyche* (soul and mind) and *psychology*, with reference to our contemporary understanding of these terms today. To do this, it is necessary to consider historical developments in the western conception of body, soul and mind, as they influence shifts in the etymology of *psyche* and *psychology*. Furthermore in order to effectively situate this study in a South African context the historical introduction of western psychology to Africa and specifically South Africa needs to be considered.

Literature on the history of western psychology typically proceeds with an account of ancient Greek philosophy, which is logical given that “psyche” is a Greek derivative. In most cases this is followed by a delineation of significant events and contributions by people over the centuries to western thinking, on issues relating to mind, soul and body. This process allows researchers to trace the term *psychology* back to its origins. The overview presented here by contrast is an attempt to critically examine developments in the use of the terms *psyche* and *psychology*, from their Greek origins to the present day, in the broader context of developments in western thinking.

The available literature also tends to implicitly show that western thinkers “discovered” “psychological” thought, falsely laying claim to something that is possibly older than modern humans themselves. Baloyi (2008) points out that this tendency of the west to claim certain philosophical concepts, while denying them to other cultures is common. Accordingly it is important to emphasise that what is investigated here is not “the” history of “psychology”, but rather the history of western psychology and the corresponding etymology of the western terms *psyche* and *psychology*.

CLARIFICATION OF THE TERM ETYMOLOGY

Etymology refers to, “the study of the origin and history of words and their meanings” (Hornby, 2000, p. 395). More specifically in the context of this study, the ‘etymology’ of words is an attempt to account for changes in their usage, and how words mean different things at different times in history. It is logical then that the particular language, culture and epistemology within which the words are formed, should also be examined.

PSYCHE AND PSYCHOLOGY: CLASSICAL GREEK ORIGINS

Greek religion and mythology were closely linked to the ancient western understanding of the world, and provided the context in which the Greeks formed their ideas on what it is to be a human being, that later led to the name psychology (Jordaan & Jordaan, 1998). Early Greek religion could be divided into two main streams, the Olympians who believed that there were many gods, who engaged in similar activities to wealthy Greeks and the Dionysiac-Orphics, who believed that the soul was a prisoner in the body that had a longing desire to be released, so that it could be amongst the gods again (Hergenhahn, 2005). People in both sects were considered to be under divine control; accordingly, minimal consideration was given to the notion of an individual, independent self and any explanations about reality or human existence, tended to be supernatural.

The first Greek philosophers departed from this way of thinking, emphasising natural, objective explanations instead of supernatural ones. They attempted to isolate the single primary element or *physis* from which everything else was made. Thales (636-545 BC) for example, claimed that water was the *physis*, from which everything else could be derived; this is often acknowledged as the first “scientific” statement. We would however argue that it was the first recorded, western scientific statement. For Heraclitus the *physis* was fire and for Pythagoras it was numbers (Hergenhahn, 2005). Pythagoras however differed from most early Greek philosophers, in that he believed in a separate mind and body or dualism, for him there was a clear separation between the physical and abstract, so a *physis*, would need to underlie both tangible and intangible matter. By contrast philosophers like Heraclitus were monists, making no distinction between body and mind. Pythagoras in addition to dualistic thinking reflected a number of epistemological characteristics that to this day underlie western thinking. For example, he argued that numbers could only be understood by the use of rationality and that sensory experience would inhibit the attainment of abstract knowledge. For Pythagoras human experience was thus not a legitimate source of knowledge. In the modern discipline of western psychology there is still an emphasis on rational, objective, systematic, “scientific” knowledge, reflecting the pervasiveness of this ancient western framework, which frequently seeks to de-legitimise any knowledge systems that do not conform to this way of knowing and doing.

In the fifth century BC, Empedocles and Hippocrates argued that there were four basic elements; earth, air, fire and water. In the ancient Greek framework human beings were now considered to be manifestations of these elements, for example: Bones and muscle tissue were seen as earth. Empedocles postulated that love combined these elements to create a whole, such as a human being, while strife, served to separate the elements. The only thing that did not represent one of these elements was the “mind” or “soul”, known as psyche; therefore there had to be something that existed beyond physical matter (Gentile and Miller, 2009). But why did the Greeks refer to this unobservable element as psyche?

The word psyche comes from the Greek legend of Psyche and Eros, where, “...Psyche is a personification of the soul in the form of a beautiful girl who, having lost her divine lover, Eros, is eventually reunited with him and made immortal” (Baloyi, 2008, p. 62). The process of becoming immortal meant that Psyche became a spirit; hence the word “psyche” came to represent the unobservable aspects of human beings. The Greeks did not however understand “psyche” as it is understood today in western contexts. For them it initially referred to an aspect of living things that was not part of the physical body. This is frequently translated as the mind in its totality and its various functions, or as the spirit or soul (O’Boyle, 2006). As far back as Homer in the ninth century BC, psyche was seen as vital force occupying the human body and departing it at death (Jordaan & Jordaan, 1998). Psyche was thus understood by the Greeks to be part of a biological process that sustained life and could literally be understood as meaning “to breathe”. Thales for example defined the psyche or soul as that which causes motion in objects, anything capable of independently moving then had “soul”. Soul could not continue to exist after death because the ability to initiate motion or sustain life was lost (O’Boyle, 2006). At this point in time psyche or soul was understood to have three parts; nous, thymos and menos, these translate as: reason, will and passion (Malone, 2009). Later translations viewed this three part “psyche” as the very essence of life, or energy that differentiates living organisms like animals and plants, from non-living substances such as stones or earth. Older English translations of “psyche” generally translate it as “soul”, namely that aspect of human beings which can transcend death and migrate to metaphysical realms, which departs significantly from the original Greek meaning (O’Boyle, 2006).

SHIFTS IN GREEK PHILOSOPHY

The shifts from supernatural ways of knowing to naturalistic perspectives resulted in factions within Greek philosophy and a relativity of perspectives, which impacted on understandings of knowledge and notions surrounding the function or composition of the psyche. The Sophist philosophers, for example, came to the conclusion that culture, beliefs, education and personal experiences, along with communication skills, determined whether arguments, would be accepted by others, and that this did not really bring you any closer to the truth. This was of course very similar to contemporary postmodernism (Hergenhahn, 2005). The philosopher Socrates was particularly interested in Sophist teachings, due to their focus on human affairs, ethics and epistemology (Malone, 2009). For Socrates, wisdom lay in knowledge of one's ignorance and the only way to be a good person and to make a meaningful contribution to society, was to be true to your culture, while being humble about your knowledge. As is evident from the Sophist thinking, some Greek philosophers were aware of the limitations of their thinking, that thinking was a function of their epistemology and that all people have their own epistemology. The obvious question then is how did the discipline of western psychology develop in such a way that it regularly makes universal claims to knowledge and experience, when even at its very roots, awareness of epistemological limitations existed? Another poignant Sophist notion is that unique human experiences and culture impact on what we understand to be true or real. It therefore seems that at its philosophical beginnings western thinking had the potential to become culturally sensitive. Socrates agreed with the sophist's belief that reality was subjective, but introduced the idea that by carefully reflecting on ones experiences you get around the subjectivity problem and find some concepts that were stable and knowable (Hergenhahn, 2005). Socrates laid the groundwork for another highly influential western thinker, Plato.

PLATO (427-347 BC)

Plato was one of Socrates students, whose influence on modern western thinking is referred to by Whitehead (cited in Leahey, 2000, p. 81) as follows: "The safest general characterisation of the whole western philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of

footnotes to Plato”. Plato’s aim was to find the eternal reality underlying everything, in what could be an early form of reductionist thinking. He took Socrates ideas further, but claimed that “ideas” or “forms” were the ultimate reality, had an independent existence and could be known only by reason (Hergenhahn, 2005). Plato used the analogy of *The Cave* to explain his reasoning. Objects outside the cave cast shadows on the inside, which an observer can see. These shadows are likened to our senses and how they capture an “image” of reality. The actual objects that are outside the cave beyond our sight are the “forms” or objective reality (Hothersall, 1995). If we follow Plato’s reasoning then the culture, epistemology and experiences of the observer invariably influence their perception of reality and no one perception can be more or less plausible. How can western psychology, as one perception of reality, then be seen as superior to indigenous “psychology”? Plato however believed, as so often does modern western science, that this problem of subjectivity could be overcome by using certain techniques that would reveal “truth”. This is very reminiscent of the tension between positivism and post-modernism today. Plato concluded that sensory experience breeds ignorance and should be avoided in favour of reasoned, deductive introspection and geometrical measurements. This reasoning created the context in which Plato formulated his ideas on the soul or psyche.

Plato revisited the concept of a mind and body dualism as proposed by Pythagoras. He argued that the soul or psyche existed in a realm of pure knowledge before being implanted in human beings; thus if you engaged in introspection you could retrieve that native or inborn knowledge. This is known as Plato’s reminiscence theory of knowledge (Hothersall, 1995). Part of this knowledge that could be retrieved was that of geometry, which Plato saw as true knowledge of the “forms” created by God. Plato argued that due to the perfect mind or psyche’s origin in a realm of purity, and separation from the evil body, it could live on in perfect form again after bodily death (Jordaan & Jordaan, 1998). This of course further solidified the notion of a mind or (soul) and body dualism and started a shift towards a broader immortal conception of the soul or psyche.

Plato, working from ancient Greek principles, described the soul or psyche’s constitution as being similar to that of a nation state in his writing *The Republic*. Malone, (2009) notes the striking similarities between Freud’s Psychodynamic theory and Plato’s theory of soul or personality. Plato spoke of the soul having rational, spirited and appetitive components, much like Freud’s Id, Ego and Superego. These components governed the individual in the same hierarchical way as a nation state. Psyche or soul, adjustment existed when there was a

balance between the three components. Two millennia after Plato, Freud “fathered” modern western psychology on very similar principles, yet spoke of the “mind”, a more acceptable term by that time. Plato was often accused of plagiarism from the ancients, which is interesting given that Freud was often accused of simply adapting Plato’s work (Malone, 2009). In our opinion they were both simply capturing fragmented ideas out of their broader contexts and ordering them in coherent ways. If however, as Freud claimed, his work was completely original, then perhaps he succeeded in rediscovering an ancient idea and we see western thinking going through a repeated cycle of reasoning. Either way western psychology cannot easily be separated from western philosophy. Furthermore modern western thinking and epistemology has ancient roots that continue to impact on its adherents in similar ways today, both enabling and limiting understandings of our lived experiences.

We also feel that Plato’s rejection of epistemology is significant, as it reflects a modern dilemma where western thinking is frequently purported to be universally applicable, culturally transcendent and better able to reflect “truth” Baloyi (2008) and Mkhize (2004). The irony is that in rejecting epistemology, Plato also rejected his own thinking and existence. The fact thus remains that western psychology is the product of a particular epistemological framework and only reflects “truth” within the corresponding limitations of that orientation. Plato’s work inspired many of his students to further his ideas, including one of the most influential western thinkers of the time, Aristotle.

ARISTOTLE (384-322 BC)

Aristotle was the first western philosopher who extensively investigated themes recognisable as the subject matter of western psychology, such as memory, sensation, dreams, geriatrics and learning (Hergenhahn, 2005). His book *De Anima* (On the soul) is generally seen as the first written psychology in the west. Brysbaert and Rastle, (2009) note that *De Anima* became central in teachings on western psychology from the renaissance, well into the eighteenth century, initially leading to tensions with the Roman Catholic Church, likely due to its notions on the soul. Like Plato, Aristotle believed that there was an underlying “truth” to everything. Unlike Plato, he felt that the most appropriate way to know these “truths” was not introspection, but was instead the study of nature. Aristotle’s approach to the soul was

distinctly biological, influenced in particular by his observations of plants and molluscs (Munger, 2003). Aristotle (cited in Leahey, 2000, p. 84) describes the soul as, “the form of a natural body having life potentially in it”. He believed, as is often the case in most modern western science, that if you investigate a phenomenon frequently and systematically you will eventually discover its essence.

For Aristotle the psyche or soul was that which gives life and accordingly any living thing must therefore possess a soul. Leahey (2000, p. 84) clarifies this by saying that for Aristotle, “All living things possess soul as their form, and thus it is a living thing’s soul that defines its nature, what it is to be that living thing. Soul is the actuality and the actualizing, directing force of any living organism, fulfilling the body’s potential *having of life*”. We argue that this is a description of life experienced in its totality or existential reality, as influenced by internal and external contexts. This is reminiscent of Carl Rogers’ formulation of experiential reality where, “The organism reacts to the field as it is experienced and perceived (based on culture, epistemology etc.), this perceptual field is, for the individual reality” (Rogers, 1987, p. 484). In other words Aristotle speaks of the soul as an actualising force, and Rogers speaks of the mind as the actualising force, revealing yet again the overlap between western psychology and philosophy. Our understanding then of Aristotle’s conceptualisation of soul or psyche is that it enables this actualising ability and that it is shaped by our unique experiences. The soul or psyche must then reflect the very essence of what it is to be a living, breathing, feeling human being.

Aristotle further argued that there were three types of soul or psyche, and the one which a living thing had would determine its potential or purpose (Hergenhahn, 2005). The first was a *vegetative* (nutritive) soul as found in plants that allows growth, taking in of sustenance and basic reproduction. The second was a *sensitive* soul, found in animals, allowing animals to respond to environmental stimuli and experience sensations, like pain or have memories. The third and final soul was that found in human beings, a *rational* soul, which allowed humans to not only have all the functions of the previous two souls but also the ability to think or be rational. Thus for Aristotle to be human, was to be rational. The impact of this western focus on rationality was evident during the later European colonisation of the world. When colonisers encountered indigenous people they were seen as “irrational” and accordingly non-human.

Aristotle, unlike Plato was a monist, arguing that the soul gives living organisms distinctive properties; hence any questioning about a mind and body dualism was futile. Barnes (cited in Hergenhahn, 2005, p. 47) argues as follows, “We can dismiss as unnecessary the question whether the soul and the body are one: it is as though we were to ask whether the wax and its shape (a candle) are one”. Barnes captures Aristotle’s argument succinctly in this metaphor and perhaps the essence of a debate that to this day serves to fuel heated debate in the discipline of western psychology, especially when epistemologically, ontologically and methodologically insensitive attempts are made to impose western psychology cross culturally.

If we consider the subject matter and approach employed by Aristotle; an intriguing question arises, was Aristotle a “psychologist”? Brock (2006, p. 237) argues that, “applying labels to distant historical figures may have the advantage of providing western psychology with distinguished ancestors, but it seems to involve a “presentism” of the worst kind: that is a projection of views from the present onto the past”. We feel that this critique is valid, but only if it is framed in terms of our current definition of a “psychologist” or in terms of a western scientific discipline that emerged in the mid nineteenth century. An example should clarify our argument. Let’s consider the role of traditional healers in South Africa or specifically sangoma’s, who in recent years have been recognised by the Health Professions Council and have received “scientific” recognition, albeit in terms of a western conception of legitimacy. How is it that these healers were called sangoma before and after their inclusion in the HPCSA, yet Aristotle and various other western philosophers of “the mind”, cannot be called psychologists, because the formal discipline of psychology was as yet non-existent. However later philosophical thinkers such as Freud, who as we have established developed work remarkably similar to that of Plato, is called a psychologist? If the separation between philosophy and psychology is as faulty as we have argued in this study, then surely Aristotle was in essence a psychologist. We should not forget that western psychology evolved out of western philosophy. Irrespective of the label we choose for Aristotle his contributions and those of other Greek philosophers were significant, they also coincided with a turning point in western history and the beginning of the end for the classical era.

IMPACT OF THE CLASSICAL ERA ON WESTERN CULTURE AND EPISTEMOLOGY

The classical world, and in particular Greek thinking, had a profound impact on early western culture, science and the understanding of “psychology” that followed. Hergenhahn (2005, p. 51), referring to the famous western scientific philosopher Popper, argues that, “science began when humans first questioned the stories they were told about themselves and the world”; the idea being that, more accurate “stories” could be produced. This is of course assuming that one story can ever be more accurate than another. From a social constructionist perspective this is highly doubtful, as any description of experiential reality is considered relative within this framework. Furthermore, Popper’s argument that science is the act of *humans* questioning their oral, written or other heritage is a highly problematic universalization, especially in the western psychology context, because of its implications for that which is viewed as “scientific”. If we allow ourselves to remain sensitive to the fact that what is seen as “scientific” varies from one culture to the next, then it is critical that we reframe statements such as those by Popper as being limited in generalizability to a western context. Stated differently Popper’s statement is valid provided it is not seen as a universal claim to what constitutes “science”. Thus if we amend Poppers statement, we might say, “western science began when the Greek philosophers began questioning the stories they were told about themselves and the world”, hence the significance of Greek thinking on western science, culture and epistemology. In this form Popper effectively sums up the contribution of the classical world to current western thinking.

In addition to questioning their epistemological and ontological understandings, the Greeks also modelled the idea of open, critical discussions or a dialogue between people who hold different perspectives and ideas. In the context of this study and our call for an open, equal dialogical engagement between western and indigenous “psychology” this is an important historical tradition, which at the level of epistemology has been disregarded. It is not sufficient to have dialogues within western psychology alone, but rather between “psychologies”. If the western scientific community is to remain true to its ancient roots, then such a dialogical platform is an imperative. Popper (cited in Hergenhahn, 2005, p. 52) comments on this Greek Tradition as follows, “...it broke with the dogmatic tradition that permitted only one true doctrine and allowed a plurality of doctrines”.

Perhaps the most significant realisation that emerges from investigating the role of the ancient Greeks in creating western psychology is that modern westerners share a similar worldview or epistemology with them. In fact many European languages as currently spoken are Greek and Latin derivatives (Hothersall, 1995). The implications of this are significant, as all western theories of “psychology” conform to this worldview, and cannot be generalised beyond adherents of western cultures. Hothersall (1995, p. 31) corroborates this argument noting how ancient Greek thinking informs and limits the efforts of modern western science in stating that, “Aristotle’s inductive method and Plato’s deductive approach are basic to modern science” The very fact that contemporary psychologists are still grappling with concepts familiar to the ancient Greeks and in similar ways is evidence of just how similar the ancient and modern western epistemologies really are. Western thinking cannot transcend itself, and in the context of theorising on the “mind” or any other existential matter, cannot make universal claims.

As is evident from the preceding discussion, there were constant disagreements surrounding the notion of a mind and body dualism vs. monism in ancient Greece and how to understand the soul or psyche. This debate would resurface many times throughout western history and is still salient in multicultural contexts today. The early Greek philosophers established a critical tradition that laid the groundwork for the development of western science, including the discipline of psychology. Hergenhahn, (2005) notes that this “Golden Age” of 300 years of Greek philosophy, ended at around the same time as Aristotle’s death in 322 B.C. and that it was only many centuries later during the renaissance that the critical tradition would be rediscovered and revived.

THE MIDDLE OR DARK AGES AND THE CONCEPT OF ONE REALITY

After Aristotle’s death Greece was invaded by the expanding Roman Empire, resulting in great hardships and times of strife. Complex abstract philosophy gave way to concern over everyday living and what constituted a good life. The resulting philosophies of the Skeptics, Cynics, Epicureans and Stoics dedicated little systematic effort to questions of the soul or mind. Jordaan and Jordaan, (1998) refer to the middle or dark ages as a latent period in the development of western psychology and while many ideas were proposed regarding mind, soul and body, few were done in systematic ways. Over time these moral philosophies, which

were frequently contradictory, gave way to a focus on religion. Westerners of the early middle ages initially adhered to a form of Neo-Platonism, which saw a person as having a material body and separate spiritual soul (O'Boyle, 2006). The world itself was viewed as an inferior copy of a perfect spiritual realm. The body was seen as nothing more than a temporary home for the soul, which travels to the spiritual realm after death. This version of Plato's original ideas mixed with emergent Christianity and various other influences was abandoned for, and replaced by, formalised Christianity in 313 A.D, when St. Paul claimed that Jesus was the son of God and Christianity was the one true religion. Emperor Constantine made Christianity tolerable in the Roman Empire and helped transform the various fragmented versions of Christianity into a standard set of beliefs (Hergenhahn, 2005). This act established the Roman Catholic Church, whose dominance and rigid dogmatic approach ensured that the enlightened inquiring spirit of the classical era was lost (Jordaan & Jordaan, 1998). Hergenhahn, (2005, p. 86) states that, "The church had absolute power, and any dissention was dealt with harshly. Clearly the spirit of the times was not conducive to open, objective inquiry". Brysbaert and Rastle, (2009, p. 25) point out that, "The main factor that is quoted for the decline of scientific advancement in Western Europe is the emergence and eventual dominance of Christian religion". In this context questions probing human nature were not seen as relevant, because it was assumed that human beings were simply Gods creation and thus had a clearly defined place within the hierarchy of existence. O'Boyle (2006, p. 55) comments on this hierarchy and relates it to the western Christian soul as follows: "Placing a transcendent and divine soul in man makes him qualitatively different from and superior to all other animals. This idea (continues) to influence western perspectives about the relationships between humans and nature, between humans and nonhuman animals, between males and females, (etc.)". It was during this time period that the first Christian philosopher of the early Middle Ages St. Augustine made his contribution to the western understanding of the soul.

ST.AUGUSTINE (354-430 A.D)

Augustine like other early theologian's had the goal of promoting the growth of Christianity and combining its various divergent forms into a single coherent faith. These ideas are significant with regards to western psychology, in that they shaped the epistemology of the

west for the next 1000 years and corresponding notions surrounding the soul, body, and mind. In fact one could go as far as to argue that Christianity itself became a worldview, with profound consequences for the later development of western psychology. (O'Boyle, 2006, p. 54) notes that, "Many of the assumptions made in the western world about thoughts, feelings and behaviours are based on early Christian doctrines". Augustine advocated a Christian ontology; where God is understood to have created everything and placed humans at the epicentre of all creation. Furthermore Augustine argued that the Greek love of research in the classical era was a waste of time and nothing more than human speculation and conjecture. He felt that the "Greek discoveries" were mere opinion and brought people no closer to certain knowledge. Augustine (cited in O'Boyle, 2006, p. 52) argues as follows: "For the Christian it is enough to believe that the cause of all created things, in heaven or on earth, whether visible or invisible, is none other than the goodness of the creator, who is the one and true God". While we agree with Augustine that knowledge can never be certain, it somehow did not occur to him that Christian knowledge was equally uncertain. It was this absolute belief in the superiority of Christianity and its related ideals of converting the people of the world to its dogma, that in our opinion drove western culture to impose itself globally as "the" epistemology, rather than "an" epistemology.

Having established the dogmatic context in which St. Augustine was operating, we can turn to his notions on the triad of mind, body and soul. Leahey, (2000, p. 103) argues that, "Augustine wanted only to know God and the soul, and he used faith to justify his belief". In other words all people needed to know about the physical world was that God had created it. Augustine also had no desire to undermine the dominant religious framework and worked well within its limits. At this time in western history people had moved away from a focus on the observable world, with all its pain and strife and turned their attention to heaven and the soul. To know the soul, was to know God and this was regarded as the ultimate form of knowledge. Augustine, like others of the time, believed that the soul could be known only by way of introspection, in the form of meditation. It is in this way that one could access divine "illumination" from God. The soul was thus a representation of God within the person. Thus introspection was not an attempt to study anything or understand oneself; it was a way to access God. Leahey, (2000, p. 103) argues that, "The medieval thinker did not want to understand the mind or the world in its own terms, but only as clues to the invisible reality of God in heaven. Science and philosophy as...the Greeks knew them (were) impossible in such a context".

For Augustine the spiritual human soul was part of the divine and the material human body was part of nature. The body seeks to do evil, but can be mediated by the soul to do good deeds. People who lived a good pure life would be rewarded with an afterlife and have internal feelings of virtue, while evildoers would suffer from guilt (O'Boyle, 2006). God could speak to individuals through their soul, but individuals could choose not to listen. Thus the soul both enabled good and evil, providing a sort of battleground for the opposing forces within the individual (Hergenhahn, 2005). The importance here is the introduction of thinking about consciousness, or the conscious ability to choose between right and wrong. Accordingly the immortal spiritual soul had a conscious mortal component called mind, which linked to earthly life. This additional fragmentation of the human being was particularly significant for future developments in western psychology, because the idea of a unique personal consciousness, would lead to the notion of the self (Jordaan & Jordaan, 1998). It would also lead to idea that in order to study soul, psyche and mind, one would need to focus on consciousness. The concept of a unique mind departed significantly from the work of philosophers like Plato, who saw psyche or "mind" in a very broad ontological sense. Augustine had thus essentially succeeded in splitting the soul into spirit and mind, in duality with body.

This sort of thinking did not go without opposition however, opponents such as Thomas Aquinas; who initially tried to revive Aristotle's monism, were labelled as heretics and effectively silenced by the church. The reason being that Aquinas's ideas meant that mind depended on body and vice versa for existence, much like a modern strictly neurobiological view, accordingly when you died so did your "consciousness". This was deemed unacceptable by the Roman Catholic Church (Jordaan & Jordaan, 1998). Aquinas in line with his theological beliefs and in line with Christian belief reworked his ideas and argued that mind also had to be immortal, because it was part of the soul. This helped cement a new version of Plato's essential and religiously necessary dualism in place. Aquinas then turned his attention to arguing for the validity of *reason*, as a way to know God and the soul.

Hergenhahn, (2005) argues that Augustine along with scholastic thinkers such as Aquinas, in time succeeded in convincing the church, that reason and faith were both legitimate ways of knowing God and the soul. O'Boyle, (2006, p. 71) points out that, "In the late 13th century, the study of nature through observation was sanctioned by the church, but only because nature revealed the supernatural". Aquinas thus managed to find a way to reconcile reason with religious belief, inadvertently contributing to the creation of a context which saw a

decline in church authority. This in conjunction with phenomena such as the Black Death (Bubonic plague), where Christians and non-believers died in equal numbers, gradually created cracks in the foundations of faith and helped bring about the Renaissance. This period would see a major shift in western epistemology and the start of modern western science and philosophy.

THE RENAISSANCE

The Renaissance (1450-1600 A.D) ushered in a new era that saw further advances in areas such as art, science, philosophy, anatomy and astronomy. There was a return to the open minded inquiry of early Greek philosophy. The focus went from God centred, to human centred, with an emphasis on the world in which western people lived (Hergenhahn, 2005). Under the guidance of the Italian poet and scholar Francesco Petrarch a new western discipline known as the humanities (*Studia Humanitatis*) was established, which had an emphasis on human dignity and glorifying of intellect (Jordaan & Jordaan, 1998). This reflected a broader cultural movement called Humanism and the spirit of the times. Humanism was of course not a western invention and is similar to the African way of being, as seen in the philosophy of ubuntu. O'Boyle (2006) calls humanism a shift from interest in the afterlife to a focus on the present; there was an intense curiosity about immediate human experience. As people were released from the restrictions of the middle ages they began to focus on being autonomous individuals, aware of the *self* as conscious, with an independent mind and will (Jordaan & Jordaan, 1998). With the renewed focus on science and desire for the objective study of phenomena, including human beings, the problem of how to study the soul or mind became once more salient. Perhaps the best known contributor to this area of inquiry from the time was the French mathematician, philosopher and scientist, Rene Descartes (1596-1650 A.D). Leahey (2000) notes that for better or worse western "psychology" as we know it began with Descartes.

Descartes was driven by the desire to unify science and find truth, by using the "power" of *reason* (Hothersall, 1995). Clearly Descartes had an emphasis on what came to be known as rationalism, which throughout the evolution of western thinking had become increasingly central, to western science and subsequently western psychology. Bateson (cited in Lubin & O' Connor, 1989) for example, notes that during times of crises or during large scale problem

solving in the west, there is a tendency to accept the solution that offers certainty, which is based on “rationally sound” thinking. Approaches that are ambiguous and do not offer quick fixes are viewed with suspicion. It is important to mention the belief in these notions of *truth*, *rationality* and *logic* as revealed by the contributors to western psychology, like Descartes. Today in western psychology there is still a tendency to view the knowledge products of indigenous “psychologies” globally, with the same suspicion because they do not use “rational approaches” to understanding their experiential realities. Bateson (cited in Lubin & O’ Connor, 1989) gives an example of this scepticism, when discussing the initial introduction of cybernetic thinking into western psychology. Westerners were accustomed to linear approaches and were discomforted by the implications of cybernetic thinking. “Psychological” knowledge that conforms to the western epistemological underpinnings is consistently seen as better and more appropriate, while indigenous “psychology” rooted in completely different epistemological frameworks is viewed with suspicion. Descartes desire for truth and reason therefore are typical of a western epistemology and his work on issues surrounding the soul or mind inevitably reflects this.

Descartes had an obsession with truth and finding objective ways to know it. This resulted in his own existential dilemma (Hothersall, 1995). He questioned the very existence of the world, and even himself. He eventually resolved this by concluding that the only thing he was certain of was that at a given moment in time, he was thinking about something, hence the famous, *I think, therefore I am*. Or put differently humans can think about their thinking. Descartes was thus convinced that by the fact that he was thinking, he must exist. Descartes had also proven *rationally* that something, beyond empirically observable matter, did exist, the soul or more specifically the mind. Hothersall, (1995, p. 47) notes then that if this is the case an inevitable problem arises, “If thinking is the final proof of our existence, it is important to know how and why we think”. Descartes now faced the problem of how to study the mind objectively. According to Jordaan and Jordaan (1998, p. 8), “Descartes’s solution was to make a clear distinction between the immortal, religious soul and the ephemeral mind (the thinking part of the soul)”. Descartes’s original formulation, (cited in O’Boyle, 2006, p. 106) lays out the following argument,

“Thus because probably men in the earliest times did not distinguish in us that principle in virtue of which we are nourished, grow, and perform all those operations

which are common to us with the brutes (animals) apart from any thought,...they called both by the single name soul. But I, perceiving that the principle by which we are nourished is wholly distinct from that by means of which we think, have declared that the name soul when used for both is equivocal (unclear/ambiguous); and I say that, when soul is taken to mean the primary actuality or chief essence of man, it must be understood to apply only to the principle by which we think, and I have called it by the name mind as often as possible in order to avoid ambiguity; for I consider the mind as not as part of the soul but as the whole of the soul which thinks”.

Descartes claimed that humans have a thinking mind which is an aspect or function of the soul, which lacks substance, unlike the body, which is limited, but has substance (Hothersall, 1995). This is a very distinct dualism, where the body is essentially mechanical, or a complex machine and can run many functions on its own such as digestion or respiration. He used the mechanisms of clocks as an analogy for how the body works and concluded that the human body was an incredibly complex machine, because it was created by God. The mind could also control some of the body and it was possession of a thinking mind or soul that could be aware of its self, which separated humans, from animals, which functioned predominantly mechanically. Animals could not think about their thinking and thus did not possess souls. Put differently the soul enabled higher order thinking. Descartes then faced the problem of explaining how the immaterial mind could influence the body and vice versa. The interaction of mind and body in humans according to Descartes, took place in the pineal gland. Descartes chose this structure as it was the only unitary brain structure he could isolate, so it seemed to fit with his ideas (Hothersall, 1995).

Descartes therefore used the term “soul”, in much the same way as we use the term mind in contemporary western psychology today. For Descartes however it also meant the functions of the brain in what we might see as neurobiological functioning today. He saw the mind as a representation of the soul. One need only consider the title of his book, *The passions of the soul* to clarify his understanding of “mind”. As far as ideas within the mind or thinking soul, Descartes identified inborn ideas, independent of experience, such as self, God, time and motion, as well as experience dependent ideas, which included memories (Gentile and Miller, 2009). This of course is similar to current approaches focusing on a nature vs. nurture orientation. Emotions or *Passions*, unlike ideas arose from within the body and were

passively interpreted by the mind. This also brought about an additional important distinction for Descartes between humans and animals. Animals do not possess a soul and hence do not have language, self awareness or emotions, Descartes used this to further his argument for a mind and body dualism.

Descartes had a significant impact on the philosophy, which led to the discipline of western psychology, by advocating what became known as a Cartesian dualism. This allowed for the construction of a model and paradigm, where the body and mind can function independently according to different laws or principles. Equally evident from Descartes's work is the progression towards a definition of "mind" or "thinking soul" that encompasses subject matter familiar to contemporary western psychologists. Descartes view of the soul; of which mind is a function, as immortal, made his conclusions similar to those of Thomas Aquinas in the Dark Ages. The difference is that he used reason to come to this understanding. O'Boyle (2006, p. 104) confirms this noting that, "Echoing Aquinas but using logical deduction to arrive at the same conclusion, Descartes argues that because God exists, is perfect, and would not deceive us, sensory experiences can usually be trusted. Even so sensory experiences must be clearly represented in consciousness to be considered certain...any discrepancy...should be resolved in favour of reason". The fundamental consequence of this for the discipline of western psychology as practiced today, was the supposed realisation that truth about "psychological" phenomena need not be observable or measurable, in order to be established rationally (O'Boyle, 2006).

The on-going fragmentation the human being for the purposes of objective study may have solved the issue of opening up an invisible aspect of human beings to scientific inquiry, while not affronting Christian beliefs, but also created new problems by laying the foundations for a discipline that would be highly specific to western culture. O'Boyle (2006, p. 106) also notes that from this point onwards, "the term mind is considered more appropriate than the term soul, when discussing psychological questions". In other words the term psyche was now firmly linked to the notion of mind, rather than soul. Descartes had effectively "discovered" the modern western consciousness or "mind". Leahey (2000, pp. 149-156) sums up Descartes's contribution by warning that, "The problems for Descartes's psychology, and therefore all later (western) psychologists, begin when we turn to the human soul, which Descartes as a Christian had to exempt from mechanistic explanation. Descartes's account is usually presented as clean and simple, but it is in fact slippery and illusive, a tortured attempt

to preserve a Christian soul in a mechanistic universe...it appears Descartes dug a hole from which (western) psychology is only now escaping”.

WESTERN PSYCHOLOGY: THE EMERGENT SCIENCE OF THE “MIND”

For some 200 years after Descartes, western psychology remained a subsection of philosophy, until a revival of the sciences in the mid 19th century. New discoveries, in particular with regards to the human nervous system fostered a renewed interest in the Cartesian dualism as proposed by Descartes (Jordaan & Jordaan, 1998). The idea that people could be objectively studied like natural phenomena became completely entrenched and the same methods developed for explaining the physical sciences were applied to human beings, based on this dualistic view of mind and body. Western psychology as the philosophical study of the soul was effectively a thing of the past, replaced by the science of the “mind”. This new science kept the name “psychology”, which paved the way for many problems and a great deal of confusion in the future. In 1879 Wilhelm Wundt (1832-1920 A.D) set up an experimental “psychology” laboratory in Leipzig, Germany and brought about what is generally seen as the formal beginning of western psychology as an independent science. From this time on various schools of western psychology developed including, structuralism, functionalism, behaviourism, Gestalt psychology and psychoanalysis. In terms of developments in the western conception of “mind”, the most noteworthy contributor of this period was Sigmund Freud (1870-1930 A.D) the “father” of modern western psychology.

Freud’s primary contribution in terms of the western conception of mind, psyche and psychology, within the context of this study, was the introduction of subconscious and unconscious aspects of the mind. In other words Freud took the mind, fragmented from the soul, in a Cartesian dualism, and then fragmented the mind, into conscious and unconscious aspects. According to Jordaan and Jordaan, (1998) the basic premise for Freud was that the mind, had an unconscious component, which was the primary determinant of human behaviour. Freud focused on how to gain access to this “unconscious” mind, for example, through dream analysis. He felt that his patients would be better able to manage their lives, if they were not driven by unconscious “psychic” drives. Freud thus developed psychoanalysis

as a therapeutic means for bringing unconscious material, into consciousness. This laid the groundwork for the “talking cure” or psychotherapy as practiced today.

Since Freud’s time, the western understanding of psychology and the “mind” has grown considerably. The problems of a mind and body dualism in the west are generally considered to have been resolved. Body is understood in terms of brain and mind in terms of consciousness. Mind then is a function of the brains electro-chemical activity. Jordaan and Jordaan (1998) argue that this is very much like the relationship between hardware and software in a computer. Jordaan and Jordaan do however point out that this “solution” is not without its critics. So even though the issue of duality of mind and body is generally seen as having been resolved, this may not be entirely true. As indigenous “psychologies” find their feet and voice there is no doubt that questions will emerge regarding the place for a soul or spirit in this modern western ontological solution. Even the validity of the notion “mind” is called into question when working cross culturally.

CURRENT EXAMPLES OF WESTERN TERMINOLOGY

Having considered the evolution of western conceptions of body, soul and mind we can turn to current western definitions of these concepts. The influence of western history, culture and epistemology is abundantly clear in these definitions making it impossible to apply them universally to all human beings.

The Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary of current English (OALD) (Hornby, 2000, p.745) for example defines the “mind” as the part of a person that makes them able to think and to feel; the conscious and subconscious mind. It also defines mind as the ability to think and reason; your intelligence; the particular way somebody thinks or their intellect. Here we see the influence of Rene Descartes in terms of his conceptualisation of “mind”, Sigmund Freud and the idea of an unconscious and the western “rational” logical way of thinking that stretches as far back as ancient Greece.

The OALD (Hornby, 2000, p. 1136) defines “soul” as the spiritual part of a person, believed to exist after death, the immortal soul. But it can also refer to a person’s inner character, containing their true thoughts and feelings. Finally it can refer to the moral and spiritual

qualities of humans in general, for example *the dark side of the human soul*. Here we arguably can see the influence of Christianity and the immortal religious soul, or a reference to deeper unconscious aspects of the mind, again reminiscent of Freud and finally links to the moral philosophies of the middle ages.

The OALD (Hornby, 2000, p. 1147) defines “spirit” as the part of the person that includes the mind, feelings and character or even as the soul as defined above. With spirit the possible difficulty of reconciling the above notions within a Christian framework becomes evident. In order for the holy spirit of Christian religion to have a place with mind and soul it must either house these notions or be equated to being one of them.

The importance of showing the influence of western history on the definition or understanding of these terms is threefold. First it raises epistemological awareness of the fact that the western constructions of mind, spirit, soul and self are impossible to detach from a western epistemology itself. Second it should be clear that non-western cultures, which have their own history, culture and epistemology, will have their own constructions, theories and terminology, equally dependant on their culture and history. Finally it should then also be clear that applying constructs of one culture directly to another is impossible. Every culture is more than capable of theorising about their ontological and epistemological realities in their own unique ways. Therefore any imposition of the imperialist western culture constitutes a moral injustice.

With such clarity established we must consider the introduction of western psychology to Africa and specifically South Africa.

“PSYCHOLOGY” COLONISES THE DARK CONTINENT

“Historians of Psychology had hardly started to inquire into the shaping of the discipline and profession in its Euro-American home countries when Psychology expanded rapidly outward, to Asia, Latin America and Africa.”

(Staeuble, 2006, p. 183)

Western psychology as it stands today is an import to Africa, a construction of the west, formed within the limits of a particular epistemology and imposed as universally applicable, in the form of a “science”. Western psychology can neither be disconnected from its colonial past nor from its contribution as a cultural imperialist. Bulhan (cited in Jordaan & Jordaan, 1998) argues that “psychological” research on the African continent has served the needs of the coloniser and seldom shown a real interest in Africans. Bulhan goes on to note the failures of western psychology, with regard to explicating the African “psyche”, due to a misfit of western frameworks, when used for understanding the African experience. He further notes the tendency of “westernising” African research and cites the work of Leonard Doob, who claims that western psychology contributes to the “civilising” of Africans into western epistemologies. Bulhan concludes that the development of a scientific Afrocentric “psychology” will require a creative process, which will be capable of capturing the African experience as it emerges from living reality, social relations, history, and material circumstances.

Jordaan and Jordaan (1998, p. 19) point out that the situation in South Africa reflects this by stating that, “The development of psychology in South Africa can be related...to typical colonisation patterns all over the world: a Euro-American body of psychological knowledge and expertise was imported without any real attempts to link it up with the indigenous folk psychology of ancient Africa”. Holdstock (cited in Jordaan & Jordaan) furthers this argument by saying, “like the missionaries of old, we are trying to convert Africa to psychological reasoning along the lines of western thought, and by doing so we naturally fail to acknowledge the “psychological” dimension of Africa”.

Mackenzie and Seedat (2008) argue that the development of “psychology” in South Africa was a triangulated process, which involves a legacy of race, scientific racism and professionalism. “Psychology” in South Africa, within this triad represents a continuation of the dominance by western psychology. The primary function of western scientific psychology was thus initially to further the agenda of the colonisers, in terms of converting the colonised to western civilization, and in due course to support and help justify apartheid. Mckenzie and Seedat (2008, pp. 86-87) note that this was part of a broader global process where, “Psychology offered rationalisations for the oppression of black people the world over, and helped to transform the mission of social science into an enterprise of acculturation, conquest and conversion”.

The early 1980s saw a gradual shift in western psychology, as applied in South Africa (Mackenzie & Seedat, 2008). The various changes, in line with political developments saw the establishment of democratic inclusive professional associations, such as PsySSA. Indigenous people were thus afforded access to western psychological services, without adequate recognition of their own “psychology”. Professional societies like PsySSA continue to operate predominantly within a western epistemology, meaning that psychology in South Africa continues to reflect the experiences of the west. Western psychology’s dominant position in the “psychology” landscape drives its misguided policy of inclusion and tolerance of indigenous “psychology”, without considering the fact that indigenous “psychology” should be able to exist in its own right, and not as a subdivision of western psychology.

CONCLUSION

As is evident from the above account, the western understandings of mind, soul, psyche and psychology, cannot possibly be disconnected from western history, experience, culture and epistemology. Western psychology, as a construction of the west, has imposed itself both globally and in a South African context, effectively silencing and minimising the position of indigenous “psychologies”. To position indigenous “psychologies” as a subdivision of western psychology, by way of selective inclusion thus amounts to faulty thinking and a moral injustice. Furthermore it serves to maintain an unsustainable position of dominance and control of the “psychology” landscape by the west.

The evolution of western psychology is filled with disagreement, fragmentation and contradiction, with repeated subjugation of knowledge systems by dominant hegemonies, such as Christianity, science, and politics. There is no moral or ethical basis for allowing western psychology to function in isolation, as if indigenous “psychology” does not exist or have anything of value to offer. The very history of western psychology itself and its imposition in South Africa, should prompt investigation into what “psychology” is, should be, and can be in the future, for all South Africans.

CHAPTER 3

INTRODUCTION

This work stinks of fiction!

*This work stinks of fiction,
were used to our restriction.
Frameworks of illusion,
feeding the delusion!
Domination feels right,
powerful and uptight.
Follow leaders like sheep!
Human beings so cheap?*

*This work stinks of fiction,
inaccurate in its depiction?
Make one more prediction,
engage with your addiction!
Pathologise the wicked,
follow as depicted.
Control is so appealing,
there's no need for feeling!*

*This work stinks of fiction,
conflicts with our decision.
A challenge is demeaning!
Hard work not appealing.
Resolute, not destitute,
the old evil bears fruit?
Even if we have to loot,
pillage, steal, then quickly scoot!*

(Poem by researcher)

In this chapter we argue that “psychology” should be understood in context. In other words “psychology” as it occurs within a particular cultural and epistemological framework. We start by examining western psychology, as it is currently defined and positioned. It is in this context that we question the relevance of western psychology in Africa and specifically South Africa.

In support of our argument that “psychology” should be understood in context, we differentiate “psychology” as a western construction, from “psychological” thought itself. We argue that psychological thought is the ability to experience, feel, think, theorise and act, as expressed within different cultural and epistemological contexts. Western psychology is thus merely one such expression.

On the basis of these understandings, we critically examine “psychology” as a “science” and accordingly advocate the expansion of western psychology’s range and methods of inquiry.

CONTEMPLATING WESTERN PSYCHOLOGY IN ITS CURRENT POSITION AND DEFINITION

Western psychology, as “the” scientific study of the mind, has in its current form and practice laid claim to the “psychology” landscape, making universal, value free and supposedly objective claims to knowledge and experience. This colonisation of the worlds “psychology” landscape has not however been without criticism and concern. Stevens and Wedding (2004) for example question the uncritical global application of western psychology, as well as the belief that objectivity can supersede culture and produce universally applicable methodologies or approaches.

Western psychologists frequently claim to be neutral in their pursuit of knowledge, yet this is a highly contestable notion. Owusu-Bempah (cited in Holdstock, 2000) for example points out the prospering nature of western psychology in Nazi Germany, as a case of “neutral science” being manipulated to serve immoral agendas. We don’t have to look far to find similar abuses in our own South African history, where under the apartheid regime psychologists contributed to the development of a system based on racial segregation. It is worth remembering that Hendrik Verwoerd, the father of apartheid, was a psychologist

(Louw, cited in Holdstock, 2000). Clearly there is a faulty separation between science and politics; if anything the two are reciprocally driven by each other, therefore maintaining a value free, objective and neutral stance in western science is not possible.

Western psychology as practiced in South Africa today, developed within the ideological context of colonialism and then apartheid. This is reflected in contributions to the “psychology” landscape today, where the psychology or “lived experiences” of the west are still dominant and are given preference, while the indigenous “psychologies”, which represent the majority of South Africans lived experiences, are silenced, delegitimised by western standards and effectively marginalised to the periphery of the mainstream.

A further consequence of the belief in objectivity by western psychologists is the faulty separation between the act of observation and the effects on the observed phenomenon (Stoljar, 2010). Despite the fact that this assumption has repeatedly been proven to be faulty, there is still an implicit trust in the positivistic paradigm in western science, including psychology. The fundamental problem with this objective, empirical, positivistic approach is the lack of epistemological and ecological awareness which it fosters in western psychologists. They are thus less aware of the constructed nature of their knowledge and their influence on that which they observe. There are of course exceptions; ecosystemic practitioners for example, focus on awareness of their own beliefs, assumptions, culture and epistemology, and the impact of these on what they observe. Within the ecological framework, the dialogical, reciprocal nature of relationships takes centre stage (Moore, 2003).

Unfortunately the vast majority of research in western psychology is still conducted within empirical, positivistic frameworks, leaving ecological, post-modern approaches to show their utility primarily in clinical contexts. Western psychology has consequently lost touch with advances in other disciplines, which have in many cases moved beyond classic Newtonian approaches, with their focus on distinct phenomena and clear boundaries (Holdstock, 2000). Our current global dilemmas, such as global warming reflect the dangers of modernistic, Newtonian based western thinking, which frequently fails to see the broader ecological impact of its actions. We cannot continue to hide behind notions like objectivity and use these beliefs to justify the universal claims of western science and psychology.

In addition to its universal scientific claims, contemporary western psychology is also characterised by disciplinary fragmentation. Crighton and Towl (2008) argue that regressive

fragmentation in western psychology fosters a mind-set of separateness, competition, and ultimately alienation from broader human concerns. This of course reflects the broader western epistemology, which separates the world into distinct, mutually exclusive entities that are believed to function independently in linear relationships. The primary problem that results from disunity and fragmentation in western psychology is that there is no unifying or underlying theme to the discipline. Watkins and Shulman (2008) argue that from the start of western psychology there has been disagreement about its appropriate focus, hence the numerous divisions and specialisations that constitute the “mainstream”. They further argue that as a result of this fragmentation, western psychology has ended up functioning in a void, disconnected from the very real conflicts and suffering in our society. With western psychology’s steadfast determination to be a “science” it ignores the contributions of people who succeed in making interdisciplinary connections and function in innovative, progressive, holistic ways.

Despite the seemingly inevitable focus on rational, systematic “scientific” knowledge, many people still express a longing for a “psychology” that can address the central existential concerns of their lives (Reed, 1997). These concerns, which include various spiritual and metaphysical components, are not addressed appropriately by western psychology in its current narrow, fragmented definition. The rich, diverse and incredibly complex nature of indigenous African “psychology” for example, cannot be authentically represented in separate parts. The links between aesthetic, spiritual, physical, philosophical, anthropological, sociological, theological and experiential as understood in the west simply do not apply in African contexts.

Increasing awareness of the faulty separation between western disciplines and paradigms, has led many researchers to call for removal of the walls dividing the western knowledge system (Eckensberger, (2000). This means that the barriers between art, science, language and many more need to be challenged.

In my own experience I have frequently been criticized for including poetry and other creative writings in “scientific” contexts, for using songs and music to relate and share my experiences, or using a painting to chart my personal processes and development.

How are these experiences not psychology? Or more specifically in the context of this study, why does western psychology fail to accommodate such experiences? By our understanding this is the direct result of the faulty separation between areas of inquiry such as language and

art. These separations are strange, given that western psychology for example, can be studied at most universities under a Bachelor of Arts or sciences degree. It is such contradictions that call into question the fragmentation within western psychology and western disciplines at large. Holdstock (2000) concludes that the real heart of the issue underlying the disunity and fragmentation in western psychology may come down to the irreconcilable separation between matter and spirit, estranging us from our bodies, our fellow human beings, science and the world we live in.

Western psychology, as characterised by faulty universal claims, beliefs in objectivity, disunity and fragmentation, functions within a broader sociocultural context, which includes racism.

WESTERN PSYCHOLOGY AND RACISM

Racism has accompanied most of the history of western psychology and is still with us today, serving to alienate the discipline from its own subject matter (Howitt & Owusu Bempah, 1994). Western psychology is of course a reflection of the society of which it is a part and the shifts we see in the presentation and form of racism in western psychology, resemble political and social shifts in local and global contexts. Phillips (2004) argues that western psychology is a microcosm of the larger world with its various conservative racist and progressive activist factions, which shift in relation to social changes. One of the most obvious of these is the shift from explicit to implicit racism. One might say that racism has gone underground, yet it continues to rear its ugly head from time to time. Baloyi (2008) for example points out that the composition of students and staff in clinical training programmes remains predominantly white, which given the ratio of white people to black in South Africa is nothing short of hypocrisy.

My own experiences in academic contexts have also led me to question the morality of western psychology; by openly associating with “the enemy” I have been labelled a traitor and frequently been treated accordingly. While applying for a training programme at a well respected South African university I was disappointed to have one of the staff talk to me about the “incompetence” of black applicants for their programme, she had assumed, given my surname, that it would be safe to expose her racial bias with me.

Another good example is that in most psychology departments; of previously white universities, psychological supervision continues to take place along cultural (racial) lines. Is it only a coincidence that supervisors and students are perfectly paired according to culture (race)?

Richards (2002) concludes that despite the removal of explicitly racist positions from western psychology, many of its assumptions are still based on racist Eurocentric discourses, meaning that the task of de-radicalizing is far from complete. Typical of this is the research by Winston (2004) who for example argues extensively against the injustices of racism in western psychology and that race is a construction, yet speaks of different races throughout the text. We prefer to speak of different cultures, and argue that there is only one race, the human race. If we continue along this trail of reasoning we also then realise that the use of the term racism may in itself be racist! As it assumes that “different races” are prejudiced towards each other, rather than different cultures, this perpetuates the belief that the human race can be sub-divided and allows room for judgment on the relative sophistication of each. Perhaps the real question then is what allows this situation to continue.

Howitt and Owusu Bempah (1994) argue that the basic mechanism that allows western psychology to continue doing its racist work is one of scientific detachment, where the assumption that psychologists are mostly ethical and free of racist beliefs is falsely maintained. This detachment results in the true extent of the problem being downplayed and overlooked. Howitt and Owusu Bempah (1994) argue that western psychology does not view racism as a serious part of the modern experience; rather it is seen as a benign rare occurrence in society and something that does not exist in western psychology itself. Thus while psychologists may study racism, it is not seen as a feature of the discipline. It would seem that by turning a blind eye western psychology does not aim to serve humanity, but rather the vested interests of its members. The current situation, as outlined here, is where racism gets its true power, through its ability to promote inaction, thus protecting the status quo.

In the course of formulating the ideas that I would eventually include in this study, I have repeatedly been told by colleagues that my efforts are redundant, that racism and inequalities between knowledge systems are gradually resolving themselves, and that no effort is required.

Yet colonisation, racism and apartheid were not normal, natural occurrences and the struggle to overthrow these immoral systems of oppression was by no means natural, automatic,

unassisted and passive. In other words these injustices did not resolve themselves! Furthermore if we consider the vast and increasing number of calls by authors such as Balyoi (2008), Mkhize (2004), Holdstock (2000), Foster (2004) to name but a few, for western psychology to re-examine its assumptions and acknowledge its role in the injustices of the past and present, then surely the “automatic” restoration has failed to take effect. Our conclusion is that the arguments for leaving this “natural process” alone are simply a justification for maintaining western psychology’s dominant and imposed status, with little if any real regard for the welfare of the people who require “psychological” services in South Africa.

Having considered western psychology in its current position and definition, in the context of racism, we reach a point where we can ask; how is western psychology relevant in an African context?

RELEVANCE OF WESTERN PSYCHOLOGY IN AFRICA

The question about the relevance of western knowledge; including psychological theories and frameworks, in African contexts has become salient in recent years, as indigenous people locally and globally, have started to argue for the right to define their knowledge in its own right and not in terms of existing western frameworks. This is a sentiment echoed by Wiredu (1992) who for example argues that african “philosophy” should reflect African lived experience, culture and epistemology. Western psychology is conceived within its own epistemology, and reflects the lived experiences of the west. Watkins and Shulman (2008) point out that it does not matter whether the focus of western psychology is individuals, families, society, or patterns of interaction, all of these western “mental” constructs are embedded within a particular epistemology. As we have already clarified in the preceding sections western psychology ignores this reality and continues to practice in universally applicable ways, due to its desperate aspirations to the status of being a “science”. If western psychology wants to be on a par with the western natural sciences, it must attempt to show its universal applicability; hence any notions of its relativity in the broader psychology landscape are dismissed. This has resulted in the reckless global expansion of western psychology, without adequate consideration of the potential for harm involved in doing so.

Therefore, one of the primary concerns we raise surrounding western psychology's relevance in Africa, is that of potential harm for indigenous people. Watkins and Shulman (2008, p. 275) argue that, "(We should) question the importation of dominant models of (western) psychology into oppressed communities, being mindful of the harm inflicted by both cultural invasion and concomitant neglect of knowledge from within indigenous and other marginalised communities". The vast majority of "psychological" training in South Africa is still conducted using western theories and frameworks, which continues the process of imperialism through the colonising of "minds". By forcing people to express themselves within the confines of a foreign "psychological" framework, indigenous people engage in what we refer to as *personal imperialism*. By this we mean that indigenous people are forced to internalise the dominant western perspective, resulting in them losing touch with their own cultural heritage and frameworks. A good example of personal imperialism came to us in the form of opposition to the arguments defended in this study by indigenous African people themselves. Our experience and such responses suggest that they have been convinced and coerced into believing that western psychology is the only "psychology".

Personal imperialism thus creates the potential of westernised economic and personal expansion, while damaging the potential for authentic self expression. Hook (2004) points out that this process of adopting western psychology results in difficulties with identity for people in post colonial contexts. While indigenous people are no longer subject to legitimised colonisation, they are still subject to subtle colonisation, in the form of psychological, cultural and epistemological influence from the former oppressors. Fanon (cited in Hook, 2004) argues that this post colonial context allows people to be estranged from themselves, from the people around them and their world. South Africa is typical of such a post colonial context and any consideration of the relevance of western psychology must take cognisance of this fact.

The question thus remains, what relevance does western psychology have in South Africa? As far as servicing the psychological needs of South Africans who function within a western epistemological framework, there is an obvious relevance to having psychology as practiced from the western perspective. Considering the unique South African context it is however unethical and insensitive to assume that western psychology can be directly imported and applied without first ensuring an appropriate fit. In the context of this study we envision the contribution of western psychology as an equal dialogical partner in the broader "psychology" landscape, instead of its current position of dominance and imposition. In an

equal dialogical relationship western psychology and African “psychology” would stand to gain and share a great deal of knowledge with each other. Finally, despite various misapplications, critical, liberation and community approaches have and continue to make valuable and arguably relevant contributions to the lives of all South Africans. These paradigms contribute to the articulation of critical concerns, facilitate the questioning of motivations and help foster engagement. It is of critical importance that the message of this study and related work is not misinterpreted as a call for the removal or replacement of western psychology, but is understood as a call for equality and mutual respect between epistemological frameworks. This will in our view create contexts of mutual respect and epistemological curiosity.

So far in this chapter we have critically examined contextual aspects of western psychology, including racism and western psychology’s relevance in a South African context. We now introduce arguments in favour of a shifting our understanding of what “psychology” actually is. The first step requires us to differentiate between the western constructions of “psychology” and “psychological” thought itself.

DIFFERENTIATING “PSYCHOLOGY” FROM “PSYCHOLOGICAL” THOUGHT

The origin of “psychological” thought is a prehistoric mystery, which predates 3000 years of written history (O’ Boyle, 2006). Therefore “psychological” thought predates the emergence of the western term and discipline of “psychology”. The critical question then is what constitutes this human feature? The vast majority of literature on the history of western psychology indicates that “psychological” thought constitutes people’s efforts at different times and in various places to understand the causes of thoughts, feelings and behaviours. This explanation is however unsatisfactory, and is simply a reflection of a western understanding of “psychological” thought and knowledge, being perceived as universally applicable. Parrinder (2003) argues for example that African “psychological” thought has an emphasis on soul, relatedness and being. This is very different from western psychological thought with its explanatory stance and focus on the mind.

O’ Boyle (2006) attempts to outline “universal” features of “psychological” thought such as common innate perceptual mechanisms, cognitive abilities such as abstract thinking and

emotions or feelings which accompany these purposeful abilities. The argument being, that all human beings have the basic mechanisms required for thinking, reasoning, feeling, describing and acting. These in turn are shaped in unique ways by language, epistemology, culture and socialising, to produce the various “psychologies”.

Basic “psychological” abilities even predate modern humans, O’Boyle (2006, p. 3) notes that even “Neanderthals possessed the ability to produce music and...express the fears, longings, and joys in their lives”. Something poignant emerges from this quote, Neanderthals were by no means trying to understand the cause of their thoughts, feelings and behaviours, yet they displayed mechanisms recognisable as “psychological” thought. The emerging question then is how do we define “psychological” thought and knowledge? Furthermore if the discipline of western psychology functions according to its understanding of what constitutes “psychological” thought or “psychology”, then what impact would redefinition of these constructs have?

Disentangling “psychological” thought from psychology as conceived in the west is by no means easy as is evident in the following statement by Gentile and Miller, (2009, p. xi), “By *psychological thought* we mean the questions that people have asked and their attempts to answer those questions about the mind”. Accordingly “psychological” thought is equated to theorising about the “mind”, which is in line with a western understanding of psychology. If we now work according to this factually and conceptually flawed understanding of what “psychological” thought is, and try to find an equivalent amongst for example, the indigenous cultures in South Africa, we fail to find “psychological” thought and knowledge. We succeed then in reaching the *reductio ad absurdum* conclusion that there is no “psychology” in indigenous South African cultures. Gentile and miller (2009) go on to contradict themselves a few lines later stating that, “...psychological thought precedes psychology...” Yet their definition of this “psychological” thought is wholly based on a western understanding of psychology as delineated in chapter two. If we conclude that “psychological thought” is an intrinsically human feature, then we must surely be able to find “psychology”, in all cultures, including those indigenous to South Africa

AFRICAN PSYCHOLOGY

Viljoen (2003, p. 529) asks the following question, "...Why did an indigenous African psychology not develop?" Viljoen argues that "mainstream" psychologists have to rely on information from the work of anthropologists, philosophers and theologians, who have studied the life, values, norms and cultures of Africans, in order to obtain knowledge about African psychological functioning. Viljoen's argument is however problematic on a number of levels. For a start he assumes that it is the task of western "mainstream" psychology to study and describe the essence of the African *psyche*, rather than considering the possibility of African people theorising and articulating their own lived experiences. Viljoen assumes that a western approach is most appropriate and that his conception of *psyche* is universally applicable. By asking why an African psychology does not exist, he also implies that African people do not possess "psychological thought" as outlined in the preceding section. Surely if all human beings are capable of "psychological thought", then African people must possess "psychology". Baloyi (2008, p. 94) states that, "If there is African experience and thought, there can be no doubt that there is African "psychology"". Clearly Viljoen is imposing his understanding of psychology, as being the study of the "mind", formulated within a western epistemological framework, onto the African context. Nsamenang (1995) warns that African epistemological frameworks differ significantly from those generated in the west and that applying western categorisations and concepts to the African lived experience is not feasible. Therefore the question Viljoen should ask is why African lived experiences continue to be marginalised from mainstream "psychology"

Baloyi (2008) argues that questioning the existence of an African "psychology", is a reflection of the broader tendency of the west to doubt African people's ability to conceptualise and theorise about their lived experiences. This would suggest that African people are incapable of authentically and "scientifically" describing their own experiences, unless they use existing western theories and frameworks.

Nsamenang (1995) and Baloyi (2008), both argue that the best sustainable option is to develop an indigenous African "psychology" in its own right, which is not simply a duplication of western psychology, nor an attempt to adapt western approaches to the African context. In other words there is a growing imperative for the development of an African "psychology", which is based on its own frameworks, theories and methodologies. If we

continue along this course of reasoning, then we must first confront an important stumbling block to the recognition of African “psychology” as a dialogical equal to western psychology; the question of what is “scientific”?

SCIENCE, “PSYCHOLOGY” AND ACCESS TO REALITY

To what degree and by which measure can we as human beings have access to an objective, true understanding of reality? Which methods and techniques are best suited to this process? For the majority of people who function within a western ontology and epistemology the answer is clear, the only objective way to interrogate reality is through rigorous “scientific” procedures that as a result of their systematic procedures produce reliable, valid, repeatable knowledge.

The fundamental weakness in this approach is that it assumes that human beings can see reality as it actually is, and that scientific procedures increase the accuracy of our observations. We must however remember that science is a human invention or way of knowing, and that any observation, conducted by any means is still interpreted by human beings using their senses. This interpretation cannot be divorced from culture and epistemology. Thus when psychologists claim to have evidence for a phenomenon, it does not mean that this evidence is necessarily objective. Teo (2005) expands on these arguments by focusing on the process of knowledge production and refers to the “problem of knowledge”. Accordingly he argues that over time subjective meanings, which are derived from consensus, are transformed into objective facts, for example through “science”. This “knowledge” is in due course assumed to be a reflection of reality. Teo (2005) thus concludes that western psychological concepts do not correspond to real, objective entities, but are in fact related to historical processes and meanings developed in a particular context, such as language. Gergen (2009) concurs with Teo’s position and points to the construction of emotions by western psychologists as an example. How emotions are constructed and even the range of potential emotions that exist varies from one culture to the next, with very little consensus between them. Thus “psychological” constructions are embedded in history, culture and epistemology. Becvar and Becvar (2006) offer a similar point of view and argue that we cannot transcend ourselves to get a Gods eye view of reality, to know what is “really”

real. So while we do not deny the existence of a tangible reality or truth or even absolute knowledge, we argue that human beings by way of their limited sensory and perceptual capacities, cannot have an objective access to it. Western psychology as a human construction cannot necessarily bring us closer to truth; it may simply help meet our needs as we experience them.

“The general quest for truth is to arrive at the bottom of things, but truth will always change. There cannot be certainty about truth when dealing with human beings due to their unpredictability. Different epistemologies and methodologies expose different truths in particular contexts.”

(Extract from conversation with L.J Baloyi, 2011)

PSYCHOLOGY AS A SCIENCE

Baloyi (2008, p. 82) asks the following question, “By what conception of “science” is the *psyche* susceptible to “scientific” study?” This question has implications at various levels and calls into question the universal application of the empirical, western approach to psychology that developed from the mid 19th century onwards. Western “scientific” psychology is modelled on the same approach as adopted by the west, when investigating natural phenomena. The object of inquiry is broken down into smaller parts, with the hope that the underlying laws by which the phenomenon occurs will be identifiable. This method of inquiry is guided by principles such as rationality, logic and objectivity. Reductionistic approaches of this nature are generally seen as “good science” in western contexts, thus the operationalizing of the *psyche* into observable instances such as behaviour or patterns of interaction is seen as appropriate. Brennan, (1998) offers a similar argument and suggests that many westerners equate science and empiricism as being one thing, and therefore struggle to imagine that science could be anything else. This thinking is important to identify because it is a reflection the broader western cultural experience and epistemology.

Brysbaert and Rastle (2009) argue that in order for western psychology to be recognised as a “science” like physics, it had to demonstrate its worthiness as a science, and the safest, most readily available way to achieve its desperate aspirations to the status of a natural “science”

was to adopt “the scientific method”. These authors go on to state that this is the reason why the founders of western psychology defined it as *the study of the “mind”*, by way of the “scientific method”. Of course the notion of “*the scientific method*” is in itself interesting as it precludes by definition, the existence of other truths or “scientific” approaches. In line with our argument for the recognition of indigenous “psychological methodology” we would argue for the use of a revised statement such as “the western scientific method”; a simple change, yet it serves to raise awareness of the existence of alternate interpretations of what can constitute “science”.

If “psychological” thought is a reflection of the human capacity for describing, conceptualising and constructing experience within a particular cultural and epistemological context, then western psychology is surely one form of “scientific” thinking, or the approach developed for understanding experience in a particular culture. If we subscribe to this notion, then the process of describing, conceptualising and constructing of experience, in all cultures, using a variety of epistemological underpinnings are all equally “scientific”. It would then also be epistemologically and methodologically inappropriate to enforce the use of frameworks, theories and requirements for acceptability of knowledge generated in the west, when working in indigenous African contexts. All “psychologies” have their own unique frameworks, theories and methodologies. In addition to this they have the right to construct these epistemological components in their own unique ways, to describe them using their own vernacular and develop their own standards and methods for determining what constitutes valid, reliable, legitimate, “scientific” knowledge (Baloyi, 2008).

One of the earliest critics of using “the scientific method” of the natural sciences in western psychology was Wilhelm Dilthey in the 1880s (cited in Brysbaert & Rastle, 2009). Dilthey argued that western psychology should be content based, with a focus on that which comprises the mind or peoples meaning structure. Accordingly, he argued that the subject matter of western psychology should be the human experience in its totality; he argued for the mind to be studied in its complete form and was opposed to the fragmenting of the human experience into smaller portions like emotions and cognition. Dilthey saw value in understanding the interplay of these functions as a coherent whole. He believed that people’s lives are embedded in their social, cultural, epistemological and historical contexts; hence it would not make sense to study people in isolation. Dilthey was convinced that the “scientific methods” of the natural sciences would not be able to capture the totality of the human experience, within its context.

Delthey's critique resonates with the challenge indigenous knowledge systems face in South Africa and across the globe. If western psychology cannot fully represent the experiences of people who function within a western epistemology, and can only by way of "the scientific method" capture fragment's of the total western experience, how can it possibly hope to authentically and adequately represent the lived experiences of indigenous people, who function within completely different epistemological frameworks? How could any western psychological approach, conceived within a fragmented conception of human beings, represent indigenous African experiences, where people are viewed as coherent wholes? The obvious conclusion in this regard is to allow indigenous African people to define for themselves, what constitutes "psychology", using their own methodology, theories and frameworks (Baloyi, 2008). Furthermore it requires a revised understanding of that which we understand to be "scientific".

“SCIENTIFIC” AFRICAN “PSYCHOLOGY”

We have argued in the preceding sections that all human beings, by way of living and experiencing, do in fact possess "psychological" thought and hence "psychology". Our understanding is that western psychology, as the "scientific" study of the mind, only represents a single fragment of the total lived experience or "psychology".

Furthermore we have argued that western science and specifically psychology are western constructions. While these constructions may serve the perceived needs of westerners, they do not bring humanity any closer to an objective understanding of reality, nor do they provide any certainty in terms of the knowledge they generate. In other words western psychologists claim to be certain of their knowledge and make universal claims because they have used the systematic methods of "science". But "science" itself is a human invention, thus one construction is used to prove the reality of another. Teo (2005) argues that because western science cannot legitimise its own activity in this way it relies on meta-narratives. Teo refers to two powerful meta-narratives, the first being the political narrative, which views scientific knowledge as freeing humanity from superstition and ignorance, so that we become agents of our own liberation. The second is the philosophical meta-narrative where progress in knowledge corresponds to advances in revealing truth. The rise of postmodernism has

reduced belief in meta-narratives, but there is still a tendency in the west to define “science” in terms of the myths of advancement and progress.

By our understanding, all human knowledge as constructions of reality is equally valid, whether it is produced by intuition or rationality, by science or séance. We cannot transcend ourselves, to know what is really real (Becvar & Becvar, 2006). Thus the knowledge constructed in one culture can be no more or less valid than the knowledge generated in another culture. This also means that the lived experience or “psychology” in one culture is just as valid as that generated in another.

If African lived experience is indeed “psychology” as we have argued here, then we must also argue that it is in fact “scientific” African “psychology”. African “psychology” is thus a perfectly legitimate contributor to the “psychology” landscape in its own right. African methodology, theories and frameworks, including equivalents to social constructionism, are thus scientific. African “science” then does not need to resemble western science to be recognised as such. We agree with Baloyi (2008) who calls for recognition of the scientific merit of indigenous “psychology” and argue that western psychology can expand its current range of inquiry to include methodologies from indigenous “psychologies”. Such expansion of western psychology may allow for a better representation of western lived experience in its totality.

EXPANDING THE RANGE OF WESTERN PSYCHOLOGY: RECONNECTING WITH THE SOUL

“The net consequence of (the western approach to psychology) is that psychological reality is reduced to that which can be codified, counted, and computed. In such a reduction, psychological reality is decontextualized, reified, and trivialised. The wish to attain scientific respectability forces a rigid adherence to count-measure rituals that compromise the salience of meaning and value in the human experience.”

(Bulhan, 1985, p. 68)

Given the arguments in favour of “psychology” being understood in context, and that “psychology” will take on very different forms or appearance, from one culture and epistemological framework to the next, it may be well justified to ask what these other “psychologies” could look like? And what this means for western psychology? At the start of this chapter we provided a brief critical description of western psychology in its current form, practice and definition. From this we could see that it is clearly rooted in a western scientific paradigm, including a variety of clinical, industrial, educational, and research applications. All of these falling within the consensual landscape of the “mind”, which as we have established is only a fragment of the human experience in its totality. This focus on mind in turn implies that the soul (or the totality of our experiences) does not require attention and can be divorced from our “mind” (De Chardin, 2003). The difference is that most, if not all other “psychologies” will have areas of inquiry and conceptions that extend far beyond the mind, human behaviour or systems thinking, which characterise western psychology (Naidu, 2002). This further means that the separation between “psychology”, art, philosophy, theology and science as seen in the west, does not apply to other “psychologies”.

Since its scientific inception in the mid 19th century, western psychology has gradually been moving away from being an art and form of philosophy to a focus on hard science (Varma, 2002). While this focus on the “scientific” is useful, offering predictable knowledge, it is also reductionistic, which limits our creativity and frustrates our attempts to work with lived experience or the soul as a whole (Moon, 2004). The difficulty with such a focus is that the mind does not own the soul and the vast majority of western psychology aims to bring us closer to the mind. Accordingly it is only a multidimensional approach; of which western science is one part, which will bring us closer to understanding the western soul.

Just as western science alone cannot explain the soul, it cannot explain art or why something has aesthetic value and beauty. The difference with art is that it does reflect soul, and may well be a direct expression of it. Thus we see the soul in creative, imaginative endeavours (Robinson, 2005). A further implication then is that art may also then serve a function in healing the soul, for example in rituals of inclusion amongst indigenous African people, where the reintegration of an alienated member of the community is done by way of ritualised (artistic) dancing. Moon (2004, p. vii) argues that, “the paintbrush, the guitar, the dancing body, the poets quill are tools of the soul and can therefore be tools of soul healing”.

RITUALS, ART AND WESTERN PSYCHOLOGY

Art rather than seeking to eliminate pain, discomfort and suffering, prompts people to explore their dark emotions, ideas and memories (Matravers, 2001). Exploring these aspects of the human experience allows them to be transformed into meaningful, life enriching parts of the self. Art gives expression to the lonely existential void of modern living, thus going beyond the restriction of impulses, erasing of symptoms, quantifying, analysing, pathologising and labelling (Moon, 2004).

Clearly then one way to reintegrate the soul into western psychology is by including art in the form of music, poetry, sculpture, dance, ritual and other appropriate mediums (McNiff, 2004). This will allow us to combine science as it is currently understood, with the science of the aesthetic, in order to more effectively and holistically express our humanity.

So what does this mean for western psychology? We argue that this suggests the need to re-examine the rationale by which we reduce the human experience to fragments, and broaden western psychology's boundaries of inquiry to better reflect the lived experiences of the west. Consider for example how indigenous people are able to reflect their experiences or "psychology" in poetry, songs, rituals and dance. Why should the same not apply to westerners? Expanding the range of western psychology in such a way plays a facilitative role in repositioning western psychology as relative to other "psychologies", by allowing it to have similar areas of inquiry and practice as part of its repertoire.

While it is beyond the scope of this study to discuss the specific contents of indigenous "psychologies", it is well worth considering some of the broader areas of the human experience and representation, beyond "the mind", which these may address. These include rituals, art in various forms, music, poetry, dance and oral traditions. In indigenous "psychologies" these are the "scientific" representations of the human experience. So if these experiences and practices are in fact "scientific", then could a "research" outcome for example be a carving, or the performance of a ritual recorded on camera? Could we envision a library with master's dissertations, side by side with "master's sculptures" as equals?

Recently I submitted a poem as a research product depicting the experiences of distance education students; my colleagues questioned my rationale for doing this, in place of submitting a journal article. My response was simple, how is a poem not psychology? And

more to the point how is it not scientific? Does it not authentically represent people's experiences?

Much like poetry, rituals are a misunderstood human phenomenon. Rituals are a normal part of every culture and serve a function in the community, yet rituals are not afforded any legitimacy in western psychology. This may be due to a fundamental misunderstanding about what a “ritual” actually is. The word ritual is equated to “primitive”, pre-scientific, magical thinking, yet every day people engage in ritualistic behaviour without realising it. Consider for example the ritual of drinking coffee, of knocking on a door before entering a room, or waiting to be told to take a seat. What about rituals in western psychology, the ritual of psychotherapy, for example. How is the throwing of bones by a traditional healer not a “diagnostic” tool or for that matter how is a DSM diagnosis is not a ritual? Both occur within a consensual domain, and a constructed reality.

Music, pottery and carvings are further examples of aesthetic tools for “scientifically” representing lived experiences. When taken in context these are representations of “psychology” in physical aesthetic form. The textures, sounds, tastes and smells of our soul.

The arguments in this chapter, suggest that it is conceivable to expand western psychology to include art, philosophy, theology, music and rituals. These are authentic expressions of self and lived experience in context, and as such have a “scientific” merit. Western psychology in its current definition is not open to aesthetic science or reflection on the soul. We see this as further affirmation of the need to redefine western psychology, to not only place it as relative to other “psychologies”, but also to demonstrate an openness to change and willingness to accommodate more of the western lived experience.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter we have critically argued for “psychology” to be understood in context. This requires a shift in how we view “science” and “psychology”, which are predominantly framed within a western epistemology and culture. Following from the position that knowledge is constructed within a particular, language, culture and epistemology, we argue that no form of knowing can objectively reflect reality. Western science and specifically

psychology are thus single interpretations of reality and are no more valid than any other cultures interpretation. It is in this context that we argue for the recognition of the “scientific” merit of all “psychologies” in the “psychology” landscape and acknowledgement of the fact that frameworks, standards, techniques, requirements, theories, and methodologies are unique to each “psychology”.

Finally we have argued that if all “psychologies” are equally “scientific”, then there is no reason why they cannot learn and grow from each other as dialogical equals. Accordingly western psychology can adopt aspects from other “psychologies”, allowing for an extended range of inquiry and better representation of the total western lived experience or soul. Western psychology as currently defined is not yet ready to become a dialogical equal to other “psychologies”. We thus examine possibilities for coherent redefinition of western psychology in the chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4

INTRODUCTION: PART ONE

Over the course of this year I have frequently been asked to present my research ideas at conferences and university functions. The opportunity to engage with people who have similar or at times very dissimilar points of view has served to inform my thinking and the direction of the current study. I have learned however that it is often the informal, unexpected moments, which present the greatest insights and have the most profound impact. One such experience seems relevant to this chapter;

PP (psychology professor): Hi Justin, we have split the presentations into quantitative and qualitative groups, both venues are down the corridor on the left.

Justin: I see, thank you, but I do not know which group to join?

PP: Well your research must surely be one or the other?

Justin: Are there only two types of study possible?

PP: Generally your study will be one or the other.

Justin: What about a conceptual (theoretical) Study?

PP: Oh, yes! I forgot about that; well simply join the Qualitative group then.

*This encounter with the western psychology professor got me thinking, what if I had wanted to do a study within an african epistemological framework, using african theories and african methodology? After all there was not even provision made for a conceptual study, a well established form of western scientific inquiry. Would I still have been expected to present my study as quantitative or qualitative, positivistic or postmodern? Are these not categories of western psychology? Would my peers believe me, if I told them that african theory exists? At this point in our shared history is it really still necessary to ask whether an african “psychology” exists? It is such questions that bring us to the idea of **redefining western psychology**.*

In this chapter we will focus on redefining western psychology in a South African context, on the basis of the arguments presented in the previous chapter and those presented in the following sections. We will however first need to address the challenges involved in the redefinition process.

There are of course various challenges and obstacles to championing an equal dialogical relationship between western psychology and african “psychology” in a South African context. Through our discussion of these factors in this chapter it should become clear that the difficulties in doing so extend far beyond our local contexts and are often lodged in global ecologies and power relations. To re-envision “psychology” is also to re-envision politics, economics, religion and our very humanity. That which takes place in the “psychology” landscape is a microcosm of the global situation, with just as many complexities and sensitivities.

CHALLENGES TO REDEFINING WESTERN PSYCHOLOGY IN A SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

POWER RELATIONS IN A GLOBAL CONTEXT

Hardly a day goes by without some sort of power struggle playing itself out in the global arena; people from different countries, cultures, religions, societies and epistemological backgrounds, all vying to get the upper hand, or a larger slice of the global pie. The various role players find themselves defined according to hegemonic orders, which define their status and position in the global sphere of activities including power, status and privilege (Foster, 2004). Each of these groups tends to want to forward their own agenda and usually has some sort of utopian image of the world where everyone is for example, a Christian or a Muslim. In addition to this, groups who have power and wealth such as the capitalist western nations find themselves having to fight to maintain their positions of power, while the poorer nations such as those in Africa or the East find themselves constantly fighting for equality and a fair share in the wealth.

The reasons for this situation are phenomenally complex and well beyond the scope of this study. There is however value in recognising the fact that even at a global level little consideration is given to the notion of an equal co-existence between different people, or dialogical engagement as equals (Kalouche, 2004). This is of critical importance when we start thinking about the “psychology” landscape and our call for an equal dialogical engagement between all the “psychologies” in it. There are at least two ways to look at this situation. The first may be to argue that if we cannot co-exist as equals in a global ecology, then it is unrealistic to think that we can have our “psychologies” co-exist. The second, and indeed the notion which we advocate, is to consider using the “psychology” landscape to model a different approach or way of being. A place where we can co-exist not despite our differences, but rather because we value them and realise the importance of co-evolving possibilities for the future. It is in this second scenario where we can work at changing the way we think, and after all it is the way we think that underlies how we interact, deal with problems and find meaningful ways to exist.

The current dominance by western psychology of the “psychology” landscape is thus a reflection of the current dominance by the west in general (Huygens, 2009). This seems to be a strange situation, given the shift in the latter part of the 20th century to more “democratic” ways of living across most of the globe. Perhaps democracy then is simply a way of maintaining broader global systems of power and its failure to bring about true equality is a reflection of this.

THE FAILURE OF DEMOCRACY AS REFLECTED BY THE “PSYCHOLOGY” LANDSCAPE

After sixteen peaceful years, South Africa could be considered one of the most successful democracies in post colonial Africa. Democracy is widely understood to be a moral imperative for Africa’s future and promises prosperity for those who adopt it (Ntalaja, 1997). But how egalitarian is our society?

One of the greatest barriers to equality generally and specifically amongst the “psychologies” is money. Western psychology has become, amongst other things, a money making enterprise. Anything that legally makes money in a capitalist dominated society is given

priority, is seen as being of great value and is maintained accordingly (Muir, 1973). To ask western psychology to be more humble, while genuinely putting healing and people's welfare first, is to threaten its lucrative positioning and control. Western psychologists may fear competition from indigenous "psychologies" and the implications of their independent co-existence. For example, psychometric testing of non-western populations such as mine workers or heavy machine operators may become a contestable issue, when these people are no longer forced to be "mentally fit" by western norms, measures and standards. We can further this argument by pointing out the use of the 16 personality factor test, which is so frequently used for the aforementioned purpose. This test reflects western culture and epistemology, yet is used to make assessments about non-western people's personality features. In such an instance western psychologists would lose business to people who develop relevant African tests, from within an african "psychology".

The role of money cannot be underestimated as a maintaining factor, when examining what it is that keeps western psychology in its elitist position (Onyegbula, 2004). Western psychology serves the needs of middle to upper class people, corporate business and industry, who all can pay handsomely for such "services". The idea of working with poorer communities challenges western psychologists to step out of their cushy practices and corporate jobs, to engage with people who are in desperate need of appropriate, relevant "psychological" services.

The prioritization of people according to money and the maintenance of western psychology's dominant position in the "psychology" landscape through economic power are by no means democratic. If anything this is a reflection of what Ramose (2010) refers to as timocracy or rule by money. Western psychology rules the "psychology" landscape by its access to money, which in a capitalist system gives it power. Ramose (2010) further argues that the ownership of wealth, or as is the case of western psychology the ability to generate wealth, becomes the defining characteristic for determining who has access to justice and power. This situation is perfectly reflected by the current "psychology" landscape. The result of which is the subordinating of human dignity and rights to what Ramose (2010) calls the sovereignty of money and the loss of democracy.

While colonisation and de-colonisation have been linked to the spread of democracy, timocracy has meant that even though people have been granted freedom in political domains, the colonisers have maintained control over indigenous people's economy,

knowledge systems and equally critically their “psychology”. We thus resonate strongly in this study with Ramose’s notion of *the death of democracy*, and argue here that the dominant position of western psychology is yet a further illustration of this process.

WESTERNISATION, MODERNITY AND THE WORSHIP OF TECHNOLOGY

The implicit or at times blatantly explicit assumption in developing countries is that rapid technological advancement or “westernisation” is required to resolve the socio-political and economic strife hampering their development. This despite the fact that the wealth and prosperity of developed nations; who are perceived to be role models, has by and large been produced at the expense of the very same developing nations (Lewis, 2008). The use of the term “developing” countries is in itself a problem. Consider for example how the various African nations were perfectly capable of living in self sustaining ways prior to western colonisation, imperialism and slavery. How can people who were capable of living in sustainable ways be seen as “underdeveloped”? Is the consumer mentality of the west a sign of further or higher development? The holy grail of our modern world has become sustainable living, yet we forget that indigenous people have lived in harmony with their environments for thousands of years. Gergen (2009) supports this argument, noting that the human population continues to expand, with an ever increasing appetite for industrial production and ever more effective technologies of control. This mind-set has alienated many from the myths of progress, profit and expansion, resulting in the realisation that sustainable living is the only viable and necessary alternative. Yet despite this, the indigenous ways of sustainable living are somehow ignored in favour of the mythology of adopting a “more advanced” western lifestyle in Africa. This phenomenon reflects a belief that the inevitable evolutionary path of all cultures and societies is a gradual progression towards the ways of living found in the west. Richards (2002) argues that evolution in the west is seen as inevitably progressive, reflecting a shift from organic evolution to social evolution, where savagery and barbarianism are replaced by modernism. This mythology rests on the discourse that westerners are further in their development and their “superior” knowledge and technology are reflections of this.

It is all too easy to imagine how people living in impoverished circumstances would crave the perceived comfort and convenience of the west, and why they may be tempted to adopt a western lifestyle and values. Imagine also the desire for approval and inclusion by people who have had to fight so hard for equal rights and access. In racist, oppressive systems, it can be very tempting to see western hegemonies as superior or better, especially when dominant discourses suggest that this is the case (Huysseune, 2006). It must also then be easy to become blind to the flaws of these grandiose western ways of being.

The rapid implementation of western lifestyles, medicine, technology and knowledge has primarily served to further divide the gap between the rich and the poor in Africa. Instead of offering a viable solution it has become an area of material separation and a moral imperative. The problem is that modernity or modernisation has two faces. Foster (2004) notes that the first is that of emancipation, progress and hope, while the second is that of racism, colonialism, large scale wars, genocide, imperialism and the economic exploitation so often linked to capitalism. McGuigan (2006) concurs with this argument and adds that the worst effects of modernity only become visible after some time. Foster (2004, p. 15) argues that, “While modernity may have spawned all sorts of discoveries and achievements, these very developments, for instance of science and technology, have also produced potential threats, environmental degradation, possibilities for mass human destruction, and risks of all sorts, leading some to argue that our contemporary social formation is a ‘risky society’”.

The preference for everything western extends into the “psychology” landscape as well, bringing with it problems such as alienation, insecurity, dehumanisation, internalised oppression (personal imperialism), anxieties, narcissism, addictions, dual consciousness, fear and depression (Foster, 2004). However these costs tend to be perceived as a “small” price to pay, for the “benefits” of using a predictable, “scientific”, western psychology. We have for example noted that very often resistance to the ideas defended in this study comes from non-western people, the same people whose knowledge we wish to see liberated from the constraints of imposed western knowledge systems. Why do these people defend the use of an alien, imposed “psychology”?

Western “scientific” psychology is a product of modernism, which has and continues to be complicit in its support of issues such as imperialism and racism (Foster, 2004). Despite this, the modernistic discourse offers a strong draw, as part of a world where people want the latest cars, cell phones and most “up to date” knowledge. Keeping up with the Joneses and

not appearing to be out of date and “backwards” seems to be more important than critically reflecting on whether these “advancements” are truly beneficial to human kind, the way to “keep up” appears to be through the adoption of western thinking, lifestyles, religion and thinking. Foster, (2004, p. 17) argues that, “(western) psychology almost by definition undermines critical social thinking, through its idea of the individual who is made the focus and source of all problems, allowing the social world itself to fade into the background”. Teo (2005) agrees with Foster arguing that modernity and modern western societies are dependant on the notion of the individual and thus view the concepts of group, community and society as being of lessor importance. In these individualistic contexts it is seldom beneficial to speak out against the hegemony of western practices, driving people to be silent, so as to simply survive, be promoted and so forth. This internalising and self imposed imperialism is what we have referred to as personal imperialism, which as part of western modernity offers a substantial obstacle to redefining and repositioning of western psychology.

INTERNALISING DOMINANT WESTERN DISCOURSES: CULTURE AND ACCULTURATION AS A FORM OF PERSONAL IMPERIALISM

“The most potent thing in the hands of the aggressor, is the mind of the oppressed”

(Biko, 1971)

One of the legacies of colonialism and apartheid is a tendency to view western culture and knowledge as somehow better than those of indigenous people, by both the former oppressors and the oppressed (Konrad, 2006). We use the term “former oppressors” loosely here, because as (Huyseune, 2006) argues, western culture is still oppressive and simply takes on modern forms such as globalisation, economic domination and subtle racism. It is also important when discussing culture and acculturation to mention both sides of the “coin” as it were, because both the beliefs of westerners and indigenous peoples serve to maintain the current dominance of western culture and specifically in this study western psychology.

Westerners, or at least people who identify themselves as western, are well represented in the “psychology” landscape. This is understandable given that western psychology functions

inappropriately as “the psychology landscape” itself. For most westerners there is little perceived need to challenge their psychology’s dominance or “rock the boat”, because their psychological needs are being met. Hollway (cited in Foster, 2004) argues that this tendency by westerners to not question their own psychology is as a result of psychological investment. In other words westerners are heavily invested their own subjectivities, and accordingly are resistant to questioning their thinking or considering change. Westerners are thus oppressed by their own knowledge system. The irony being that this is a representation of the dialogical nature of imperialism where both oppressor and oppressed are ultimately victims.

Indigenous experiences are by contrast poorly represented in the western dominated “psychology” landscape. While many do argue against this, there are those who simply accept that western knowledge is better and more “civilised” than their own. Perhaps this links to years of being forced to psychologically invest in alien languages, knowledge and ways of being, combined with a desperate desire for inclusion and acknowledgement. It may be hard for indigenous people to question internalised western understandings, especially given their dominance and “scientific” superiority. So, much like the former oppressors, the oppressed do not always effectively question the western status quo, which has been so heavily entrenched in our society. This may partially explain why oppressed people can become equally resistant to change.

The process of personalising oppression thus represents the ultimate form of imperialism, namely one which is self imposed, where the oppressed defend their own oppression (Fanon, 1986). We have mentioned before the resistance offered in response to some of the ideas put forward in this study by indigenous people, yet we argue here for recognition of their “psychology” and knowledge in its own right. This is very reminiscent of the stage theory proposed by Bulhan (cited in Hook, 2004), for identity development in oppressive contexts. *Stage one:* involves *capitulation*, where the oppressed identify with their aggressors as a form of defence, similar to Stockholm syndrome. People become alienated from their root cultures and take on the standards, values, and ways of knowing of the dominant culture. *Stage two:* involves *revitalisation*, which is an absolute rejection of the oppressive culture, in much the same way as their own cultures were rejected. At this point people celebrate their own culture, but their identity is still formed in terms of being at odds with the dominant culture. So while this is useful for reconnecting with one’s roots it is still defensive and does not bring about ways in which numerous cultures can co-exist. *Stage three:* which we attempt to represent in this study is *radicalisation*, where people are committed to social change in order

to bring about equality, fairness and justice. Here the former oppressors and oppressed find healthy ways to co-exist, to work together and start to truly heal the wounds of the past (Riikonen, 1999). It is here where we can envision new social realities.

The process of identity formation in oppressive contexts, and those which remain oppressive despite political emancipation, is critical to consider when arguing for redefinition and repositioning of western psychology. Westerners need to realise and acknowledge the limitations of their own psychology and develop an understanding of why we need many “psychologies” to represent different lived experiences. The challenge for non-western cultures is equally significant in that they not only need to let go of the notions of western superiority, but also need to reconnect with their cultural heritage, moving beyond capitulation and revitalisation to a point of radicalisation. If western psychology fails to shift its understandings for the sake of comfort, for fear of change or due to internalised forms of oppression, then it will be a complicit contributor to the unilateral globalisation of western knowledge, technology and psychology.

CURRENT TRENDS TOWARDS INTERNATIONALISING OR GLOBALISING OF WESTERN PSYCHOLOGY

Globalisation essentially represents a modern form of imperialism, perpetuating the economic and intellectual dominance of the world by western nations (Callinicos, 2007). Staeuble (2006, p. 184) argues that the, “European civilisation has established a superior position and remained the centre from which some of its achievements have spread to the ‘intellectual void’ in other parts of the world”. Accordingly the discipline of western psychology, as part of the broader western scientific discourse, that views “western knowledge” as superior to that of ingenious cultures, offers globalisation of western psychology as a solution, given the “lack” of indigenous “psychologies”.

Staeuble (2006) argues that western psychology’s global expansion has been particularly problematic, given its “hidden” western worldview. Consider for example, notions like individualism, which do not fit with indigenous conceptions of the person and world. Western constructs are perceived as components of a foreign epistemology that do not resonate with local experiences. Trask (2009) puts forward a similar argument and points out

that globalisation includes more than mere modernisation. Globalisation includes fundamental changes in the way people live and their ideologies. Globalisation usually links to a spreading of western concepts like individualism, rationalism and democracy around the world. This tends to be followed by a corresponding suppression of traditional values and indigenous “psychology” (Trask 2009).

Staeuble (2006) argues that the current trend in western academia of “internationalization” or “globalisation” of western psychology needs to be scrutinised, in terms of its concealment of the imbalance of international knowledge production, by western vs. non-western people. As Foster (2004) argues, globalisation is an uneven process which despite offering potential advantages, continues to suppress local customs and knowledge. Globalisation of western psychology is thus a part of the larger global expansion and domination by western culture, which has essentially become a modern form of imperialism (Huysseune, 2006). This situation is not however a deterministic double bind as Foster suggests, and depends on the form which globalisation takes.

Globalisation tends to take one of two forms. The first is unilateral, where globalization is based on the belief that one culture’s values and ideals are better than those of another, resulting in the imposing of a single, very often western norm, as the global standard (Kim & Park, 2007). The second according to Kim and Park (2007, p. 147) is, “Enlightened globalisation...based on understanding, dialogue, respect and integrating knowledge to foster cultural development.” This form recognises that each culture has its own values, beliefs, skills and resources that can be shared. Western psychology as it is currently defined tends towards unilateral globalisation, under the guise of superiority of western knowledge. From this position it is not possible to grow and develop through equal dialogical engagement with indigenous “psychologies”. The result is that western psychology has become stagnant, and devoid of fresh perspectives. All cultures, people and epistemological frameworks, can share and learn from each other, but only if they can engage as dialogical equals. If western psychology defines itself into isolation, through being the science of the “mind”, then how will it grow and develop in such an existential void? Globalisation, geared to the application of western psychology as the norm, adapted for local use and selectively adopting indigenous knowledge to do so, is not sustainable.

WESTERN PSYCHOLOGY AND THE SELECTIVE INCLUSION OF INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICES

“The discourse of power in (academia) has shifted in the past decade from exclusionary practice to one of selective inclusion”

(Behdad, 1993, p. 46)

Western psychology has come to dominate the “psychology” landscape as the absolute universal norm of human lived experience. Western psychologists justify this imbalance by claiming “scientific” superiority and authority, as discussed in chapter 3. It is from this dominant position that western psychology controls that which is included from other “psychologies” into its body of “scientific” knowledge. Thus western psychology is not considered to be a contributor to the “psychology” landscape, but rather is imposed as the landscape or framework, that can accommodate all other “psychologies”. Indigenous “psychologies” are thus denied an existence in their own right, and instead are relegated to the position of folk psychology or oral tradition, which can supposedly be understood from a western perspective (Holdstock, 2000). The question we pose in this regard is, should inclusion of indigenous “psychology”, into the supposed “mainstream”, as dominated by the west, be the goal in the first place?

The general consensus amongst western psychologists is that indigenous people need to be studied “scientifically” in order to generate an indigenous “psychology” which can then be included into the “mainstream”. The first problem here, as noted in chapter 3 is that mainstream and western psychology are equated, accordingly western psychology is seen as the landscape, rather than a contributor to the landscape. The second problem that then emerges from this situation is the attempt to use western theories, frameworks and methodologies, to describe the lived experiences of indigenous people, which due to their origin in a foreign epistemology, do not fit, nor resonate with local experiences (Baloyi, 2008). Indigenous people therefore have to adapt their experiences to fit with the pre-existing norms of western psychology, which makes authentic self and cultural expression impossible.

The third problem, related to the first two is that of selective inclusion (Behdad, 1993). As a result of the misfit of western frameworks, not all indigenous experiences can be adapted or manipulated to fit western theories, thus only certain elements of indigenous “psychologies” are included. For example ubuntu, which can be manipulated to superficially fit with humanistic western psychology and is thus included under the category of *african “psychology”*. Furthermore there is the inseparable link between epistemology, culture and values. By attempting to include indigenous “psychologies” into western psychology, a conflict of value systems is established. In other words western psychology reflects the social norms of the west, and works within these to determine what is acceptable for inclusion or not. Thus only those components of indigenous “psychologies” that reflect or do not contradict western values can be included in the “mainstream”, further driving the process of selective inclusion.

Finally, because western psychology provides “the” framework, for example social constructionism as a postmodern approach, the emphasis of inclusive practices becomes content. By including indigenous content, without an appropriate context or a larger framework to coherently organize the complexity of this knowledge, western psychology succeeds in omitting the most important aspects (Kim, Yang & Hwang, 2006). The very value of indigenous knowledge is its difference, but only if understood in its totality.

Inclusive thinking in this regard, be it complete or selective, is thus epistemologically problematic. While inclusive practices may appear to have an emancipatory function, they in fact continue to subjugate indigenous knowledge and practices. Inclusive thinking is thus about appearance, seeming to want input from new sources, but in actual fact merely tolerating it.

TOLERANCE VERSUS APPRECIATION OF DIVERSITY

It is all too common to hear calls by the western scientific community for tolerance of difference, when dealing with people who differ from themselves or when they attempt to understand epistemological viewpoints that seem irreconcilable with their own. Tolerance does however have some negative attributes. The primary flaw in tolerance revolves around power afforded to the tolerator versus the toleree. In other words someone or something; in this case a culture or epistemological framework, is subservient to something else, and is

accordingly allowed to make a carefully regulated contribution. Western psychology as the dominant “psychology” in the “psychology” landscape has through its illegitimate positioning, been allowed to tolerate selective input from indigenous “psychologies”. This is highly reminiscent of tokenism, where previously disadvantaged people receive political dispensation, and are thus integrated into the mainstream of society. Unfortunately, the underlying view is that these people are afforded access to western psychology, due to legal and political requirements. As a result there is no genuine interest in what they have to offer. Apart from the fact that tolerance serves to perpetuate a power imbalance between “psychologies” and the on-going subjugation of indigenous people, it also provides an avenue for the continuation of racism in western psychology. If anything tolerance and racism seem to be inseparable.

Howitt and Owusu-Bempah (1994) argue that changing western psychology, and finding a way to meet the needs of everyone rather than a privileged few requires more than simple tolerance. For them tolerance is an attitude that indicates a reluctance to change and the enduring of something unpleasant, forced and unwanted. In other words it is the putting up with something because you have to, and not because you actually want it around. Tolerance is inherently linked to the belief in one's superiority and the weakness or inferiority of anyone who is different from you. There cannot be any genuine understanding, or acceptance under such conditions. Owusu-Bempah (1994, p. 17) concludes that, “(western) psychology cannot afford mere...tolerance, that is the best that bigots can achieve”.

Appreciation departs significantly from tolerance as a mind-set and by contrast has the underlying notion of embracing difference. Strous (2003, p. 57) argues that, “Because human and cultural diversity are at the very core of psychology, a multicultural perspective might celebrate, rather than be threatened by cultural diversity”. Appreciation stems from a deep desire to learn from that which is new, different, unfamiliar and at times confusing. Many western scientists similarly argue that the best possible outcome of research is something verifiably inexplicable, because it is through our attempts to understand the phenomena that we learn more about ourselves. The knowledge generated by inquiry is thus a projection of the observer's features and “psychology”. By contrasting and sharing information between “psychologies”, “psychologists” both challenge and inform their own thinking.

Appreciation invokes difference as a resource for understanding and enriching our lived experiences. Hence we feel that difference is not something that needs to be *managed* or dealt

with, but rather embraced. People in multicultural contexts, such as South Africa, are very often under the impression that difference is a handicap, which inevitably drives disunity and cannot result in a harmonious co-existence of cultures and epistemologies. In truth this may be quite the opposite as Snyders (2000, p. 205) argues, “Far from being frightening and inhibiting, difference should be celebrated in a multicultural context, since difference and news of difference is the very stuff which fuels novelty, creativity and change”.

REDEFINING WESTERN PSYCHOLOGY IN A SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

INTRODUCTION: PART TWO

Having considered some of the challenges in bringing about equality in the “psychology” landscape, we can now turn our attention to redefinition and the corresponding repositioning of western psychology in a South African context.

In the preceding chapters and sections we focused on the emergence of western psychology, and how it has come to dominate what we have referred to as the “psychology” landscape. This has been to the detriment of the other “psychologies” in the landscape. We have also considered the meaning of “psychology” in context and have shown that, that which is “scientific” varies from one context, culture and epistemology to the next. “Psychology” is accordingly that which meets people’s experiential needs and is consensually agreed upon. This laid the required groundwork for our current call for an equal dialogical engagement between all the “psychologies” in the “psychology” landscape. This should be based on the principles of co-existence and mutual appreciation of epistemologies, as opposed to inclusion and tolerance by one dominant perspective.

In addition to the above, it has also become clear that western psychology in its current form and definition is not ready to become an equal dialogical partner in the “psychology” landscape. It should first be redefined in such a way that it plays a co-facilitative role in shifting itself from being “the landscape” to being a participant in it. The onus for redefinition falls on western psychology, because it has defined itself into isolation and accordingly a position of dominance in the “psychology” landscape. As other “psychologies” find their

voice and definition it would be short sighted for western psychology not to respond and adapt itself, lest it be left behind or rendered irrelevant in an African context. With this in mind we argue, first, for redefinition of western psychology, in terms of the *soul* or lived experience in its totality. Second we argue for a repositioning of western psychology in the lived experience landscape as an equal contributor and finally we consider the potential value of taking these steps.

WESTERN PSYCHOLOGY AS A REPRESENTATION OF LIVED EXPERIENCE IN CONTEXT

“The twentieth century legacy of (the) science of the mind is a discipline deeply divided against itself, split into a myriad of sub-disciplines. Some...focus on aspects of the mind, such as cognition or emotion; others on aspects of the body, such as neurotransmitters or reflexes; still others... focus on the unconscious...All of these are equally abstractions, drawing us away from living, breathing, acting and experiencing.”

(Reed, 1997, p. 220)

Lived experience is the totality of our experiential realities, also known by the term *human soul*. Bunyan (2008) thus argues that the soul is the whole of the human being. Bunyan further argues that one part of the soul is memory, which functions as the souls register. In other words past and present lived experiences are stored in memory and thus become part of the soul. Van Manen (1990) confirms this, arguing that lived experience *breathes* meaning into the soul. This links to early definitions of the soul or spirit that literally mean “to breathe” (Baloyi, 2008). Van Manen (1990) further maintains that lived experience is the totality of human life; it is what it is to be human as a whole. On the basis of similar arguments Holveck (2002) concludes that, the soul is embodied in lived experience, which simultaneously is expressed in each unique language, culture and epistemology.

In chapter 3 we argued that all living breathing human beings have lived experience or *soul* and by implication “psychology”. The significance of this argument being that we view the

totality of lived experiences, including the mind as being “psychology”. This means that there is “psychology” within every culture and epistemological framework, as each has lived experience or *soul*. The difficulty with advocating our viewpoint is that contemporary western psychology has lost touch with its past (chapter 2).

After the end of the classical era, western psychology began to gradually shift its focus from the *soul* or lived experience in its totality, to an emphasis on the *mind* (Reed, 1997). In the late 19th century a more rapid change occurred, when western psychology became a “science” and completely disconnected itself from the soul. Teichman (1974) argues that western psychology attempted to separate mind and soul, in order to deny the soul's existence, while maintaining the “reality” of the mind. This meant that in the future western psychology would be limited to a fragment of the western lived experience, namely mind (Bunyan, 2008). The discipline did however keep its original namesake “psyche”, which even today causes confusion, given that its meaning is soul, not mind. The net result of these shifts is that contemporary western psychology neglects a large part of the western lived experience, making it impossible to understand westerners as coherent wholes.

A further implication as discussed previously is the isolation of western psychology, relative to the other “psychologies”. Western psychology as the science of the mind is incomplete; it is missing the remaining components of lived experience, such as spiritual, metaphysical and aesthetic experiences. As Teichman (1974) argues, soul is much more than mind, mind is simply the soul's intellectual component. It is therefore not possible to authentically and adequately represent western lived experience by focusing on a single, largely intellectual fragment of the soul.

For western psychology to be effectively positioned as relative to other “psychologies” in the “psychology” landscape it needs to define itself out of isolation. This requires a shift in focus from the single fragment of lived experience namely *mind*, to lived experience in its totality i.e.: *soul* or *psyche*, of which mind is a part. This is thus an argument for coherently reuniting western psychology with the rest of the *soul* or *psyche*. Reed (1997) advances a similar argument and calls for a western psychology to become a science of the soul that represents lived experience in its totality. Reed justifies his call by arguing that western psychology has systematically substituted lived experience with phenomena such as stimuli, behaviour, patterns and responses. Consequently western psychology struggles to represent the everyday lived experiences of ordinary people. This also means that western psychology places severe

limits on itself as it is currently defined, by being at best a partial representation of the western *soul* or *psyche*. This again is the very same reason for western psychology's isolation and dismissive attitude towards other "psychologies".

Holdstock (2000) also emphasises that the human being needs to be considered in his or her totality, with due attention to how the parts make up the whole. This means we must move beyond our fragmented ways of thinking and acknowledge the extent of our connections and relatedness. Western psychology in its current definition reflects the failure of one epistemology and culture to adequately account for and represent the complexity of human existence and experience. By limiting its focus to the mind western psychology fails to authentically represent the experiences of the west and through its dominance of the "psychology" landscape denies other "psychologies" the opportunity to authentically represent themselves.

By allowing western psychology to be defined as "a" science of the soul or lived experience, we create the possibility of better representation of western people's experiences in their contexts and the meaning attached to these. We also then facilitate the understanding that if "psychology" is defined as lived experience, we will find "psychology" wherever we have a living, breathing, experiencing human beings. Therefore all people, in all cultures possess "psychology". To deny the existence of their "psychology" is to deny their existence at all (Baloyi, 2008).

"PSYCHOLOGIES" AS DIALOGICAL EQUALS: ADVOCATING CO-EXISTENCE

In chapter two we showed that western psychology is a construction of one particular culture and epistemology. In other words western psychology is uniquely western and is informed by the history and lived experiences of westerners. In chapter three we argued that that all constructions of experience, in all cultures are equally valid and "scientific". The implication being that knowledge generated in the west, despite being called "scientific", is no more accurate than that of knowledge generated elsewhere. We also introduced arguments for the recognition of indigenous "psychology" as scientific in chapter three, laying the groundwork for redefinition of western psychology, as argued for in the preceding section. It is on the

basis of these understandings that we argue for the co-existence of all the “psychologies”, in the lived experience landscape.

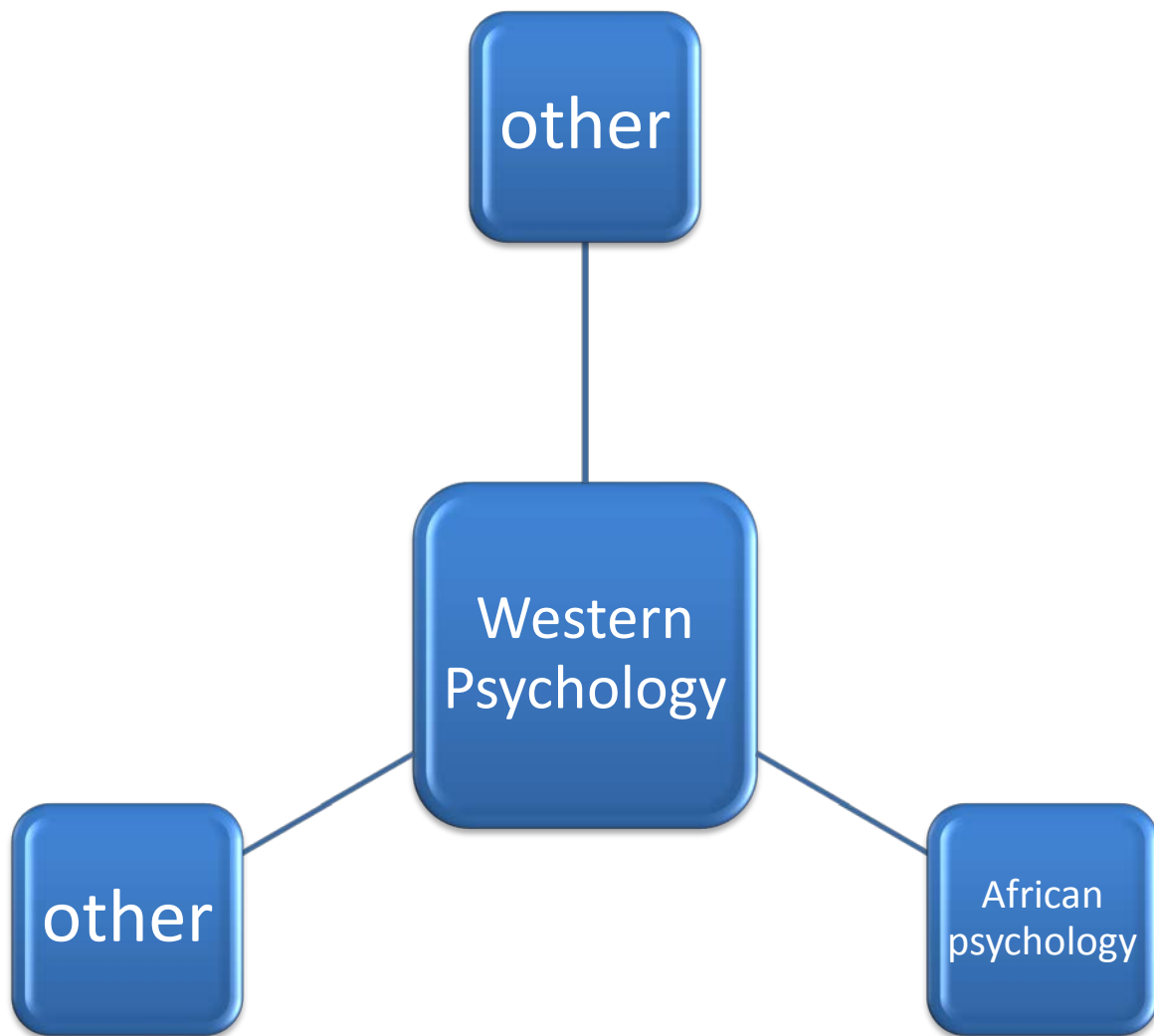


Figure 1: Psychology as it is currently defined, with western psychology acting as the “psychology” landscape, the centre from which all other “psychologies” emerge.

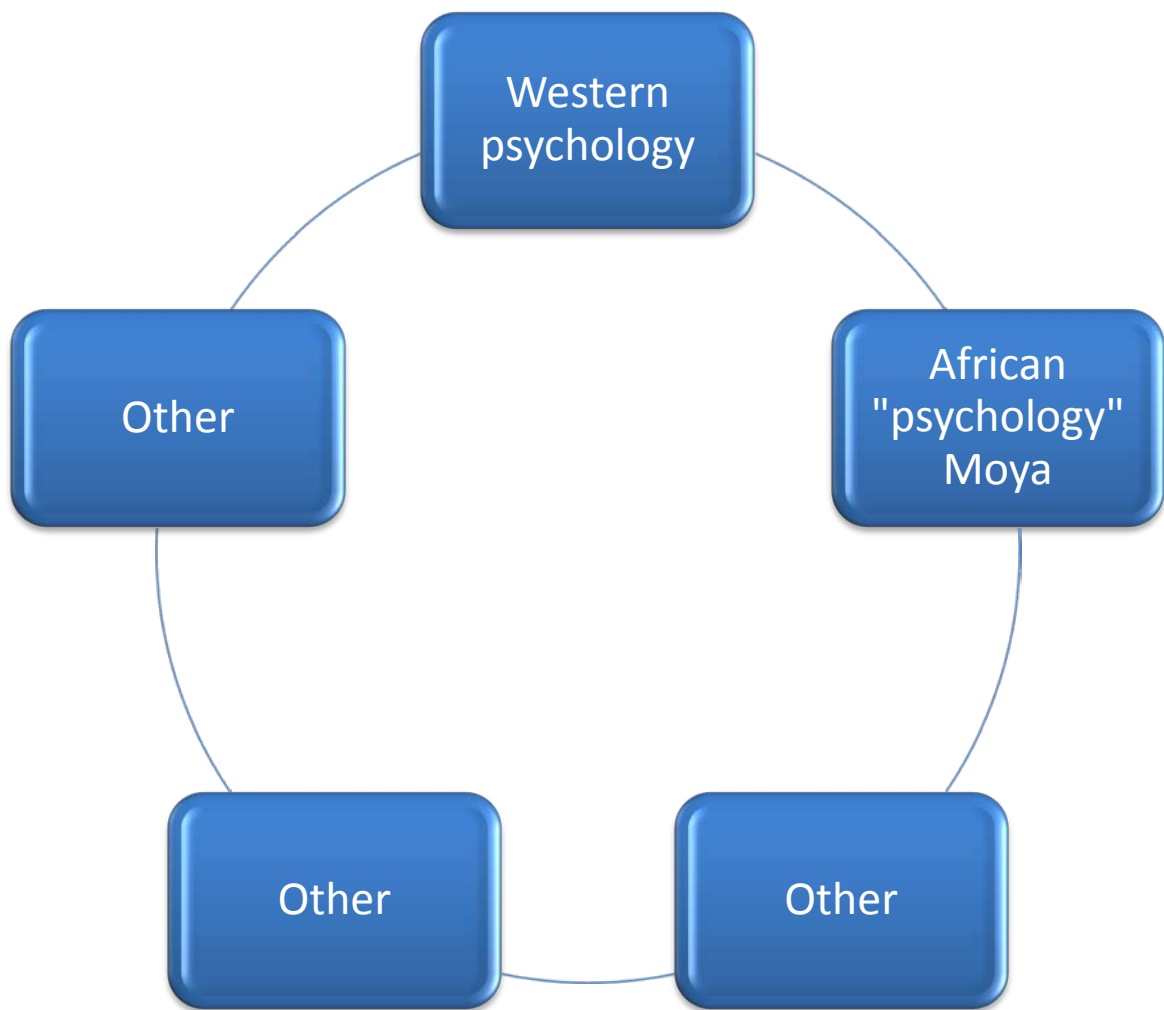


Figure 2: Western psychology as a participant in the lived experience landscape, with all “psychologies” functioning as dialogical equals.

The co-existence of “psychologies” opens up interesting, and perhaps challenging possibilities for the future of “psychology” as a discipline in South Africa. Psychology departments for example may need to allocate equal time and effort to both western and african “psychology”. The departments may also wish to rename themselves in a way that reflects the various “psychologies” of which they are comprised. They could for example be called *departments of lived experience*.

“Psychological” societies such as PsySSa would certainly be challenged to rethink their current western psychology basis and focus. Perhaps we could envision a “*lived experience society of South Africa*” in the future.

“Psychological” training programmes across the country would need to restructure their curriculum to have equal input from indigenous african and western “psychology”. This in itself would be complex, consider for example the possibilities of conducting research from two different epistemologies, using unique theories, frameworks and methodologies.

Clearly then the call for co-existence of “psychologies” is one that will be met with a number of challenges, which may seem insurmountable. One way to overcome these concerns may be to focus on the potential value of co-existence, as opposed to the current domination by one “psychology”.

THE VALUE OF EQUAL DIALOGICAL ENGAGEMENT BETWEEN EPISTEMOLOGICAL FRAMEWORKS

“Is there anything new in psychology?” This is the Question posed by (Hergenhahn, 2005, p. 603). By psychology Hergenhahn is of course referring to western psychology, and comes to the conclusion that when it comes to conceptual knowledge, rather than technological advances, western psychology is still asking the same questions as those posed by its various founders, for example, what is Human nature? Or how are mind and body related? So despite the changing emphasis over the decades, and availability of research tools, western psychology is still perplexed by certain questions. We would argue that part of the problem lies in being both enabled yet trapped by one’s epistemology (Becvar & Becvar, 2006). It is only through exposure to difference, that we can achieve a critical distance from our own

thinking or ask fresh questions. In other words questions asked in one “psychology” may be unique, due to the influence of culture and epistemology, these may in turn trigger new directions of inquiry in another “psychology”. For example a “psychologist” working within an african “psychology” framework may ask about the relationship between people and their ancestors in daily living. This could stimulate fresh research by a western psychologist on trans-generational or family scripts, where the possibility of family heritage on daily living could be investigated. The point here is that through interacting with each other, the various “psychologies” open up fresh areas of inquiry and curiosity. As far as the opening question above, there could then truly be new areas to investigate in western psychology. These new questions and areas of inquiry may also require openness to asking theological, philosophical and moral questions in western psychology, as noted previously.

Medawar (cited in Hergenhahn, 2005) argues that there are certain crucial questions that western science cannot answer, and these are more appropriately addressed to philosophy and theology. As is clear from the preceding chapter this may not apply to African indigenous “psychology”, where the focus may well be on questions of a philosophical and metaphysical importance. This is much like early philosophical western psychology, before it acquired the need to become a “science”. It is significant to take cognisance of this, in the context of equal dialogical engagement between the “psychologies”, because there needs to be flexibility towards inquiry beyond western psychological boundaries.

In a context of equal dialogical engagement there is also the potential for sharing information and the co-evolving of new ideas to better meet and represent the “psychological” needs of our multicultural society. In a diverse society it would be faulty thinking to try and find the best solution to a problem as offered by one group, culture or epistemology. We should rather work together, utilising our differences as a resource to find mutually beneficial solutions. Thus while we cannot, not have an epistemology, nor really transcend it (Keeney, 1983), we can be open to knowledge generated within other frameworks, which may serve to inform our own thinking, paving the way towards collaborative community oriented functioning. Collaborating to meet the “psychological” needs of our people means that rather than having one “psychology” trying to authentically represent everyone’s experiences, we should have a landscape of “psychologies”.

Co-existence is particularly valuable when one considers the bi-directional influence of acculturation. It is all too common to assume that this process is unilateral and thus refers to

the acculturating of “African” people into western ways. But we should not forget that people of Euro-American descent born in Africa are indeed Africans as well. These people are also cultured into African ways of being. Therefore the experiences of South Africans are likely to resonate with more than one “psychology”, especially in the future, *if* our society becomes more integrated, a landscape of “psychologies” will be required to meet and represent their experiences.

A clear advantage of this knowledge sharing process must surely then be reciprocal growth and development for all the “psychologies” within the “psychology” landscape. Instead of functioning in isolated, disconnected ways due to concerns about maintaining their individual identities, co-existence implies the possibility of not becoming stagnant from a lack of new input. The various “psychologies” could learn to live together like a family, each with its own identity, yet still part of and a reflection of the whole, each serving to enrich each other.

With a landscape of “psychologies” in dialogical interaction it seems logical that certain commonalities will be identified. Therefore it should be understood that we are not advocating that we work together despite of our differences, but rather because we recognise the value of difference, similarity and each other. This mutual context will reveal common ground from which potentially shared goals can emerge. All “psychologies” should have the welfare of the people whose lived experiences they represent at heart. However at a deeper level they should care for the “psychological” welfare of all human beings irrespective of their cultural or epistemological orientation. Creating an open “psychological” landscape, where all voices are equal, is the starting point for developing “psychology” into a truly empowering helping profession.

In the context of co-existence there is an opportunity for enhanced complexity, in place of the oversimplification common in reductionist western approaches. This complexity enables the tailoring of culturally and epistemologically sensitive approaches to “psychology” rather than compromised adaptations of western psychology, when approaching clinical, research and community based matters. This is an argument that finds support from researchers such as Gergen (2009) who speaks of knowledge as a form of co-creation, where knowledge produced in a relational dialogical context is used to transform the way in which we live together and solve our problems. This principle can easily be extended to an epistemological level, and equally so to the relationship between “psychologies”, where finding complex solutions to complex problems is a logical step forward.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter we have argued that western psychology has imposed itself as “the psychology” landscape, when in actuality it should be a participant in a “psychology” landscape, along with its dialogical partners. Accordingly western psychology has, and continues to function in isolation, while denying the existence of other equally valid realities.

We argue that western psychology in South Africa should define itself out of isolation and in the process facilitate a shift towards dialogical co-existence with indigenous African “psychologies”. This may in turn lay the groundwork for similar shifts in a global context, using similar notions of appreciation and co-existence, in place of selective inclusion and tolerance of indigenous knowledge and practices by dominant western perspectives.

The call for redefinition and corresponding repositioning of western psychology is however complex and challenging. Factors such as globalisation will ultimately impact on whether the call for redefinition is taken seriously and put in practice. Perhaps what we need to do is facilitate a sense of curiosity in diversity, or more specifically epistemological curiosity.

CHAPTER 5

INTRODUCTION

I grew up in a fairly average middle class white home, with its fair share of divorce, alcoholism and emotional negligence. I remember being told in no uncertain terms that I would be disowned if I should ever bring home a girl who was not white, and that to do so would bring shame to the family. Perhaps my family had sensed early on that I had certain “dangerous”, liberal ideas that needed to be pre-empted.

By my late teens I had dropped out of school and ended up making a living as a labourer. In the mornings myself and the other “black” labourers or “handlangers” would huddle around a fire while waiting for the permanent staff factory workers to arrive and open the gates. Our Baas (Boss) would wait in his car, keeping an eye on us so that we could not steal or break anything. In due course the day would start and the Baas would call on his repertoire of helpful instructions to ensure we did a good job of holding, carrying and most important of all playing the role of scapegoat when things went wrong. Is julle dom? (Are you all stupid?) Moenie so lui wees nie! (Don’t be so lazy) Ek betaal julle nie om rond te staan nie! (I don’t pay you to stand around) Hey is jy stupid? (Hey are you stupid?) Kom word wakker! (Wake up) Julle is almal useless! (You’re all useless) Jy is net so dom soos hulle! (You are as dumb as they are).

It was a dehumanising and interesting situation, given that I was the only white labourer. It seemed to make the factory workers and managers very uncomfortable to see me working and sharing meals with the other labourers. As for me things were somewhat different. The other labourers accepted me, perhaps even more so than in my own family or culture. We shared stories and looked out for each other. We offered each other comfort when the Baas belittled us and always shared things equally. I had somehow stumbled into humanity in its most painfully raw form; these people were just like me!

Eventually I found my way back to education through a series of fortunate events and after getting a matric obtained a bachelor’s degree in western psychology. This would

lead to a job as a psychometric assistant. I soon discovered however that separating psychometrics from the money and greed of the company was very difficult. It always struck me as strange that we would do testing on people who at times only had a grade 1 education or who were seeing a computer for the first time. I couldn't help but wonder how these tests could possibly be culturally sensitive? I still clearly remember testing a candidate and writing on his report "must not work on heights", he fell to his death from a crane two weeks later! I wondered how "this psychology" of ours had helped him.

While studying my honours degree in 2008 I found that I needed a break from Johannesburg, which seemed to be rather dehumanising, stressful and harsh, like any big city. So I volunteered at a school for children with severe mental and physical handicaps in a township near Vryheid in KwaZulu Natal. Nothing, could have prepared me for what I saw and felt; all my "psychology" theories could not help. These children only wanted to be acknowledged, to get a hug, to have a hand be held and the right to exist, the right to live! I was an emotional wreck after day one; it was overwhelming to see humanity so raw and stripped to the core. The feelings rushed over me, it was like a cathartic vomiting of emotions. One case will never leave me as long as I live, a beautiful little Zulu girl who was raped at 4 months old! The whole experience changed my perspective on life and what is really important in life.

*By the time I got to masters level studies in western psychology I had developed a deep desire to work with my experiences and somehow use them to inform my thinking. It was in this context that I could progressively demonstrate my **epistemological curiosity**.*

This opening vignette reveals a number of interesting autoethnographic themes relating to my personal life journey. These include tensions with my culture of origin and exposure to people who were different, yet fundamentally similar to me. Being exposed to difference and diversity served to increase my epistemological awareness and sensitivity, which would later be refined through formal education or pedagogy. My childhood curiosity had thus turned into cultural curiosity, which ultimately evolved into epistemological curiosity. My various life experiences had essentially facilitated the process by which I developed epistemological

curiosity. It was epistemological curiosity that in part allowed me to formulate the ideas presented in this study.

In this chapter we will therefore examine epistemological curiosity and its potential facilitative role in redefining western psychology. We also consider how epistemological curiosity contributes to our appreciation of diversity and whether it informs our desire to see knowledge systems co-existing as dialogical equals. Finally we consider various ways of embracing diversity, which may contribute to the development of epistemological curiosity and a sense of community.

WHAT IS EPISTEMOLOGICAL CURIOSITY?

Early in life epistemological perceptions are undifferentiated, as children grow they are however influenced by parents, peers, culture and education. Children thus learn to distinguish between different aspects of knowledge and form perceptions on the certainty of knowledge, its sources and its structure (Hofer & Pintrich, 2004). We carry these perceptions forward into the rest of our educational journey and seldom question their validity, unless we study within a framework such as postmodernism. This in itself is however still insufficient, as postmodernism is a product of a particular culture and epistemology, which falsely claims to be able to universally explain the construction of knowledge by all human beings. Accordingly the certainty of western presuppositions and epistemology is not effectively challenged.

Epistemology then, as we understand it in this study, is a unique set of perceptions and assumptions about the nature of knowledge and that which can be known; held by all cultures, which both informs and limits their thinking (Becvar & Becvar, 2006). If this is what we understand as epistemology, then what is epistemological curiosity?

First we need to clarify what we mean by curiosity. The Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary (OALD) (2000) defines curiosity as, “A strong desire to know about something”. The OALD also indicates by way of example that curiosity can take various forms, such as *intellectual* or *idle* curiosity. Furthermore the OALD indicates that certain phenomena can become curiosities, or something that temporarily draws our attention and offers some form

of amusement. In the context of this study such a definition is limited in its applicability and restrictive if used as is. We therefore need to expand our understanding of curiosity to encompass its developmental, creative and aesthetic aspects before going any further.

Dischler (2010) argues for example that creativity and curiosity are intrinsically linked, and that together they facilitate such activities as problem solving. To take this notion a step further, we can also for example argue that curiosity is a vital component in art and aesthetics, which are derived from creativity. Dischler (2010, p. 61) argues that, “We begin by trying something new (creativity) and then test it to see what happens (curiosity)”. The opposite can also be true where we use our curiosity to find information or ideas and then creatively apply this knowledge. In this study it was our curiosity about different epistemological frameworks that led to a creative idea, namely advocating the co-existence of epistemologies and their respective “psychologies”. Dishler (2010) thus argues that curiosity can drive the development of new things or ideas.

Whitworth, Sandahl, Kinsey-House and Kinsey-House (2007) focus on different aspects of curiosity such as introspection. Whitwoth et al. (2007) argue that curiosity encourages people to engage in introspection and find answers within themselves. Accordingly curiosity yields deeper more authentic information about feelings and motivations. Crisp, Fernes and Swanson (2000) offer a similar argument, maintaining that curiosity is more than a state of mind or an inherited trait, it also represents an interest in the self. Clearly people who are curious about themselves and the way they think, have better resources for understanding self and others. It is this very same curiosity that may underlie the development of cultural curiosity.

CULTURAL CURIOSITY

When correctly understood, cultural curiosity represents the first major step beyond the everyday or naive curiosity which we have discussed thus far. Flint (2008) argues that cultural curiosity in its weakest form is something of an amusement. This could be likened to the “freak shows” of old, where people went to see freakish curiosities on display. Flint points to the example of the “cultural curiosity” of white settlers in Africa who marvelled at the African “witchdoctors” who captured their imagination and provoked their sensitivities.

We believe that this sort of “curiosity” is not of any value and merely indulges the immature mind. When we start to look at other cultures and use what we have learned to inform our thinking and critically challenge our own cultural assumptions, we succeed in demonstrating true cultural curiosity. Crisp et al. (2000) argue that when other cultures become curious or curiosities it means we are on the threshold of challenging our stable subjectivities. Crossing this threshold takes us into the realm of epistemological curiosity.

EPISTEMOLOGICAL CURIOSITY

Epistemological curiosity is generally associated with pedagogy in current research literature and notably the work of Paulo Freire. Freire (1997) argues that epistemological curiosity is developed from, and is the result of having a more critical knowledge of consciousness and experience. Epistemological curiosity occurs when people adopt a reflective-critical position on their subjectivities, thus when the spontaneous curiosity of everyday living becomes a tool for critical thinking, it has transformed into epistemological curiosity. This is an argument supported by Pahl (2008) who argues that epistemological curiosity is revealed when people are able to be self critical; it is a bold, critical and adventurous form of curiosity. Freire (1997) goes on to argue that we should strive to shift and develop our curiosity to the point where it becomes epistemological. Epistemological curiosity thus has the potential for overcoming naive or spontaneous curiosity, leading to a life journey characterised by the quest for epistemological understanding.

Gorlitz and Wohlwill (1987) focus on similar aspects of epistemological curiosity, arguing that epistemological curiosity is a mode of exploratory behaviour. More specifically epistemological curiosity denotes an interest in exploring how we symbolically represent knowledge and experience, it is thus far more advanced than mere perceptive curiosity.

Epistemological curiosity as we understand it is an extension of the forms of curiosity mentioned in the preceding sections. In this study we would like to define epistemological curiosity as, the development of a sense of relativity with regards to our own epistemology, as one of many equally valid systems for representing knowledge and experience. Furthermore we view epistemological curiosity as a deep desire to understand how people from different cultures and epistemologies represent their knowledge and experiences as

noted by (Gorlitz & Wohlwill, 1987). By contrast we extend this curiosity into a desire to understand how different epistemologies and their “psychologies” are understood in an “epistemological” landscape. This view of epistemological curiosity implies that it is an interest in how knowledge and experience can be co-evolved between epistemological viewpoints and the value of such dialogue. Freire (2000) argues that this dialogue helps construct knowledge, and understanding this process at the level of epistemology requires curiosity. In this context we agree with Freire (1997) that epistemological curiosity can become a tool for critical thinking, because people possessing epistemological curiosity appreciate the need for a balance between knowledge systems and are more likely to seek equality amongst knowledge systems and their “psychologies”. We also agree with Freire (2000) that the foundations of epistemological curiosity are laid in a pedagogical or educational context.

PEDAGOGY AND THE FACILITATION OF EPISTEMOLOGICAL CURIOSITY

Pedagogy or education is widely considered to be one of the greatest challenges to social development in Africa. Developing educational capacity and ensuring that people have access to primary, secondary and tertiary education has become a critical part of the African renaissance. Therefore the questions we address in this section and in relation to this study are; first, whether this “education”; which still primarily reflects western knowledge and experience, creates a distorted image of the world’s knowledge systems or landscape? Second, what impact does this have on the development of epistemological curiosity? And third, what role do educational contexts play in facilitating the development of epistemological curiosity?

When we consider the education which children receive, it is clear that despite being able to study their own native language, art and culture there is still a strong emphasis on maths, sciences, languages, economics and so forth, presented as western discourses. While these are clearly not western inventions, they are strongly associated with the western cultures, which created these fragmented categories and named them as such. This emphasis on western knowledge as an educational basis may be somewhat justified for preparing young people to enter modern capitalistic societies and is thus logical, but it also makes it seem as if western

knowledge is of greater value than that of other knowledge systems. As we have eluded to in the preceding sections this sort of distortion further contributes to the perceived superiority of everything that is western.

By the time young adults get to university they take for granted that western knowledge is the basis for all knowledge and that its fields, disciplines, categories, theories, frameworks and paradigms are all encompassing and universal. Padilla and Montiel (1998) for example argue that there has been a collapse of epistemological “space” at universities, so that knowing is restricted to a single dimension, namely the technical and supposedly objective ways of the west. The study of “psychology” is a good case in point. Students at some universities study african “psychology” as a subdivision of the universal objective field of western psychology. The assumption being that the discipline as conceived in the west can have african “psychology” as a subdivision. African “psychology” is thus included in the landscape created by the west. This situation then implicitly denies the existence of an African “psychology” in its own right. Such a situation is epistemologically unjustifiable. The problem is that students lack epistemological sensitivity or awareness and therefore do not question the knowledge status quo. This means that sensitivity to epistemology and critical thinking remain underdeveloped during the school years. This is contrary to the critical thinking and stimulation that educational institutions, such as universities should instil.

Gergen (2009) thus argues that appropriate knowledge and education are crucial for the development of enlightenment and critical thinking. In other words a diversity of knowledge is needed, to free us from dogma. Education based on this knowledge is in turn needed to transmit our understandings across generations. Contrary to this, knowledge can also function oppressively, as is often evident in our current education system, which is dominated by western perspectives. What we need then is an educational context that allows for dialogical engagement.

For Gergen (2009) it is in the classroom, where the notion of dialogical engagement can be taught. It is a context where dialogue between equals, who at times have different viewpoints, can be modelled. Freire (1997) argues that the appropriate context for developing epistemological curiosity is a theoretical one, which is provided and shaped through dialogue. This sort of engagement then facilitates the beginnings of epistemological curiosity. This in turn connects with notions of dialogue between different cultures and epistemological

viewpoints. Epistemological curiosity therefore requires appreciation of the process of dialogue as part of the broader process of knowing and learning.

Leach (2006) by the same token argues that epistemological curiosity facilitates the process of learning and knowing. Leach goes on to warn that it is very hard to model any form of dialogical education process, without a sense of epistemological curiosity. Without epistemological curiosity students cannot learn to truly engage in theoretical dialogue, while holding different, yet equally valid positions. Leach (2006) further argues that critically minded educators should utilise multiple varied approaches that stimulate this sort of dialogue. It is in these contexts of complexity, that the pedagogical space for epistemological curiosity emerges. Gorlitz and Wohlwill (1987) put forward a similar argument, indicating that pedagogical diversity and complexity illicit uncertainty, which stimulates epistemological curiosity.

Clearly there is a need to integrate epistemological curiosity into education. This can be done in various ways. The first step may be to lay the groundwork for epistemological curiosity, by developing everyday curiosity and cultural curiosity during primary and middle school years. Clegg, Miller and Vanderhoof (1995) argue that teachers can do this by introducing educational activities that allow for the development of understanding and appreciation of different cultures.

It is disappointing that the current outcomes based education does not stimulate curiosity and creativity, but rather guides learners down predetermined paths of inquiry (Dischler, 2010). Whitworth et al. (2007) therefore argue for the development of a curious climate in learning contexts, with a sense of playfulness and unconditionality. This allows for exploration and discovery in learning contexts, with space for adventure and unexpected outcomes. We need to develop learners who are explorers of their subjectivities and constructed realities.

A further problem is the tendency to view curiosity in children as misbehaviour. Bright children tend to be naturally curious and are frequently labelled as troublesome.

My own experiences with thinking differently resonate with this, as I have often been labelled a trouble maker, for asking “inappropriate” questions. Questioning western psychology seems to constitute one such form of “inappropriate” behaviour.

Dischler (2010) argues that integrating information from all our senses and using it in creative ways requires curiosity about the world and an inquiring mind. It is thus harmful to

suppress curious questioning by learners and may require a sense of humility by educators regarding the limitations of their knowledge. Dischler (2010) further recommends that we read children good stories that stretch their viewpoints in order to facilitate their curiosity. Children should also then be encouraged to share their stories, much as we have done with the narratives, poetry and dialogues in this study.

In the final years of high school the emphasis could begin to shift towards a greater theoretical level, where epistemological thinking can be introduced. Gorlitz and Wohlwill (1987) argue that educators should encourage learners to ask questions, which in itself is an expression of epistemological curiosity. Such questions need to cover areas such as the certainty of knowledge and the differences between knowledge generated in different cultures and epistemologies. Leach (2006) argues that this questioning stimulates intellectual growth, the immaturity of which is often typical of a lack of epistemological curiosity. Dischler (2010) argues that asking questions is a sign of creativity that should be encouraged. This is important for allowing curiosity in children to evolve beyond what they know, to what they can imagine, thus linking with the creative process. Whitworth et al. (2007) also call for the use of “powerful questions” that open up possibilities and invite introspection, creativity and insight. If learners have to put effort into their answers to a question on a topic, such as epistemology, then it is likely to have been in response to a “powerful question”. Whitworth et al. (2007) further argue that one of the best ways of teaching this sort of curiosity is through modelling of authentic being and genuine connection with others. This sort of relational context allows learners the opportunity to safely explore the complex questions that surround culture and epistemology.

Clearly pedagogical contexts need to play a central role in the facilitation of epistemological curiosity. Understanding of cultural diversity relies both on knowledge of others as well as the group to which we belong, generated in a climate of curiosity (Unesco world report, 2009). Pedagogy that recognises this process and invests in epistemological dialogue will ultimately contribute to our ability to live together.

EXPOSURE TO DIFFERENCE AND DIVERSITY

“The acquisition of genuine cultural values includes the instilling within the individual, of respect for difference and diversity”

(Bailey & Smithka, 2002, p. 198)

In the opening vignette at the start of this chapter I shared my own experiences of being exposed to people from a different cultural background. These experiences changed the way in which I perceived people who were different from myself, and resonate with countless similar stories of people, who after spending time with cultures that differ from their own, see themselves and their own culture in a new light.

In this section we explore the value of cultural exposure and its potential contribution to the development and facilitation of epistemological curiosity.

Cultural diversity is frequently framed as a sensitive problem that requires careful *management*, to allow for the peaceful co-existence of multicultural societies. Crisp (2010) for example argues that diversity has political, economic and institutional aspects that make for profound challenges in a multicultural world. Crisp (2010) further argues for the careful management of diversity, in order to resolve misunderstandings and avoid conflict. While such desires are understandable, they also implicitly frame diversity as a “curse” or a “problem” that cannot be fixed and hence is managed. This situation however misses a crucial point which is that, multicultural contexts provide an opportunity to learn, grow and develop from interaction with those who differ from us culturally and epistemologically. This leads Bailey and Smithka (2002) to the conclusion that the health of any ecological community (society) depends on a balance of diversity. Consequently cultural health is damaged by a lack of cultural diversity. Attempting to *manage* diversity does not facilitate authentic cross cultural interaction and instead creates a breeding ground for ignorance and sterility.

Bailey and Smithka (2002) argue that cultural ignorance arises from a lack of exposure to cultural difference. If people spend time with representatives of a different culture, sharing their food, participating in rituals and learning their ways of living, then fairly soon the

commonalities in the human experience start to become evident. Furthermore the differences, which from an outsider's perspective may at first seem strange, gradually start to make sense within their own context. Thus the fears or apprehension caused by ignorance is replaced with an appreciation for the meaning of cultural practices, language and values in context. Bailey and Smithka (2002) accordingly argue that people who are exposed to cultural diversity in non-threatening ways are inoculated against fears of difference. This is a sentiment shared by Yanoov (1999) who argues that it is well worth the time and effort to get to know your cultural "neighbours" as it will allow you to develop an enlightened understanding of culture and difference. This very same informed understanding will facilitate appreciation of "psychological" difference and its value, as part of each culture.

Apart from its enlightening effects, exposure to difference is also useful for differentiating self and identity. These in turn facilitate an interest in others and that which makes them unique. Crisp (2010) therefore argues that exposure to social and cultural diversity can have significant implications for how you view yourself and others. Diversity thus defines the self and one's identity, in relation to others. Experiencing cultural and epistemological diversity can by extension then also stimulate curiosity in the way we think, and how people who are different from us think, in other words epistemological curiosity.

Exposure to different cultures creates the opportunity for dialogue between people who function within unique frameworks. This sort of dialogue is the essential element in generating equitable cultural relations, both requiring and generating trust (Pratt, Manley and Bassnett, 2004). The European Councils white paper on intercultural dialogue (2010, p. 44) puts forth a similar argument, proposing that, "Intercultural dialogue helps overcome the sterile juxtapositions and stereotypes that may flow from a worldview (such as that of the west) that emphasises...a global environment, marked by (factors such as migration, superiority, capitalism and uniformity)". Intercultural dialogue thus enhances diversity, while sustaining social cohesion and development. Dialogue as part of exposure to difference and diversity paves the way for epistemological awareness and sensitivity.

DEVELOPMENT OF EPISTEMOLOGICAL AWARENESS AND SENSITIVITY

In the preceding sections we have focused on the development of everyday curiosity, cultural curiosity by way of formal education and the informative benefits of exposure to people who are different from ourselves. Furthermore we considered the link between these simple forms of curiosity and the development of a deeper epistemological curiosity. Now we will examine two key areas that both contribute to, and develop from epistemological curiosity, namely epistemological awareness and sensitivity.

Awareness of culture and difference sets in motion a process whereby people gradually develop awareness of diversity, as it occurs at the level of epistemology (Kincheloe, 2003). This parallels a shift in focus from looking at difference at the level of ethnicity and culture, to a focus on how difference and culture are constructed, within broader frameworks of meaning and language. Epistemological awareness is thus the degree to which people are aware that their conceptions of knowledge and experience. It is an awareness that helps people to be more attuned to different underlying ways of experiencing and knowing. Kincheloe (2003) argues that awareness of the socially constructed nature of knowledge moves us to higher levels of reasoning about peoples thinking. In other words it moves us into the realm of thinking about our thinking. It is this very same process that we have demonstrated in redefining or rethinking our understanding of western psychology and its position in the “psychology” landscape. The title of this study in itself acknowledges the inseparability of epistemological knowledge, in the form of curiosity, from the process of redefining our current understanding of “psychology”. We are therefore arguing that epistemological curiosity; of which epistemological awareness is a part, is an essential element in the redefinition process. This is so because it allows for a critical appreciation of the relativity of knowledge generated within different epistemologies and the realisation that no one form of knowledge can be superior. In this context of reasoning our call for an equal dialogical relationship between the “psychologies” is logical. Kincheleo (2003) argues that epistemological awareness allows people to better understand the collision of civilisations which is confusing when viewed at the level of culture alone.

Essentially what we are advocating here is the development of a complex epistemological awareness that contributes to the seeking out of forms of knowledge production, that result from the inputs of multiple dialogical partners in a balanced knowledge landscape. This sort

of endeavour generates respect for knowledge diversity and drives epistemological curiosity. Downing (2000) argues that “psychology” or what we have referred to as the “psychology” landscape, is moving towards epistemological eclecticism, where different frames of reference are used to find areas of agreement. This shift is occurring as a result of an ever increasing epistemological awareness within western psychology and its dialogical equals. It is this emerging eclecticism that Downing argues will move western psychology beyond its current dichotomous thinking. Bowald (2007) comments on this shift noting that post-modernism in itself creates greater epistemological awareness. With the growing acceptance of a post-modern stance in western psychology it is conceivable that there will be an increase in epistemological awareness.

Related to epistemological awareness as a co-development is the notion of epistemological sensitivity. The term as we use it here relates primarily to sensitivity to epistemological context or the ability to see knowledge in context, much as we have done in chapter 3 (Psychology in context). Battaly (2010) similarly argues that sensitivity to context is an important element in developing a sense of epistemic contextualism. Williams (2004) comments on people who possess this skill, arguing that epistemological contextualists share a common attribute, in that they are sensitive to context, seeing context as variable rather than fixed. Understanding that lived experience is unique within a particular epistemological context and that such lived experience is indeed “psychology” is a reflection of contextual sensitivity. Without epistemological sensitivity there is little room left for appreciation of knowledge diversity and even less for epistemological curiosity. Such insensitivity is repeatedly demonstrated by western psychology’s domination of the “psychology” landscape and on-going dismissal of indigenous knowledge as “unscientific”.

Battaly (2010) further argues that we can extend our epistemic sensitivity by rethinking social roles, turning moral values, into epistemic virtues. Therefore we can choose epistemic roles, in much the same way as we choose values to live by. So for example, consider the introduction of a new form of psychotherapy that would be seen as moral within a western cultural and epistemological context. When this same form of psychotherapy is used out of context, it is the person who is contextually and epistemologically sensitive, who realises that its use has not only become inappropriate, but also epistemologically immoral. This sensitivity to epistemological context in turn facilitates the development of epistemological curiosity, which is partly based on the desire find morally justifiable ways for knowledge systems to co-exist without dominance and imposition by one framework.

EMBRACING EPISTEMOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

Cooper (2004) argues that we should rethink equality and the value of difference, so that we can start to *celebrate* diversity. While it is common to see such usage of the term *celebrate* in research literature, we prefer to speak of *embracing* diversity. But what exactly does this mean at the level of epistemology and how does it relate to epistemological curiosity?

Nash (1997) argues that we learn to embrace diversity by consciously putting effort into learning other people's traditions, customs and beliefs. If applied at an epistemological level, this would mean that we try to learn about the ways in which people from cultures other than our own, think and construct meaning. We thus embrace diversity by showing epistemological curiosity or an interest in other epistemological frameworks. This in turn fosters a sense of appreciation for diversity and stimulates further curiosity in a reciprocal cycle.

Nash (1997) further argues that we can embrace diversity by choosing to interact and live with others in racial harmony, by doing so we implicitly reject stereotypes and prejudice. Nash (1997) does however warn that this requires a strong sense of identity and a willingness to defy societies constructed norms. This of course requires a degree of epistemological awareness and sensitivity as mentioned before. Nash (1997) adds that a healthy self-esteem, a strong will and maturity, also help people not to relate at the level of race and to rather make decisions for themselves.

Clearly then the approach that people use towards diversity is very important. Price, Boettler and Davis (2009) argue that most people consider themselves to be open minded to valuing diversity, but tend to do so at a cognitive rather than affective level. Therefore it is one thing to teach people about other cultures and epistemological viewpoints on paper, and an entirely different matter to actually get them to explore that diversity. It is much easier to speak of diversity at a distance, rather than trying other culture's foods, talking to those culture's representatives or spending time learning to interact with them. To impact people on an affective level requires opportunities for experiential learning, as these create a context for transforming thinking and beliefs (Price et al. 2009). This process lays the groundwork needed for diversity to be seen in a positive way and embraced accordingly, which stimulates epistemological curiosity. Psychologists can for example facilitate group work sessions in

culturally diverse contexts, with activities that challenge stereotypes and safely explore difference. Such activities can involve rituals, movies, dance, art and music to mention a few, all of which allow for experiential learning and personal growth. The variety of activities that can be used hint at the complexity involved when trying to understand another culture or epistemology and that to do so effectively requires consideration diversity.

Cornelius (1999) argues that embracing of diversity can only occur when we understand other cultures as a whole, including their epistemology, rather than focusing on specific elements, which encourages faulty cultural comparisons. Cornelius (1999) further argues that in order to do so we need to move away from hierarchical ranking of cultures, shifting our thinking into circular frameworks that explore the multiple facets of each culture in its own right. Thinking holistically about cultural diversity helps us move towards a more complete understanding of difference and its value, increasing the likelihood that we will want to embrace diversity, instead of attempting to manage it out of existence.

Embracing diversity means that we value each culture and knowledge system, acknowledging that they have their own worldview and dynamically complex culture. Cornelius (1999) gives three guidelines for initiating an embracing stance towards cultural diversity. First we should acknowledge the existence of indigenous people's intelligence, realising that their knowledge is meaningful and of value in the modern world. Second we should encourage and respect indigenous peoples self definition. Finally we should value the distinctiveness of diversity in a multicultural reality as a resource. Clearly the underlying idea here is coexistence of diverse cultures, living *in community* with mutual respect, curiosity and appreciation.

BECOMING COMMUNITY

One of the greatest resources for embracing diversity is *community*. Despite the connotations of the word *community*, which has somehow come to mean poor impoverished settlements, we use the term here to refer to the human community. In other words, the term *community* is recognition of our relatedness as human beings. Manning, Curtis and Mcmillen (1999) argue that one of the best ways to embrace and value diversity is through building community. We can do this by showing respect for all human beings, for example by greeting people; friends and strangers alike. We can learn people's names and greet them by name.

I frequently ask people who I see in passing what their names are, I only need to greet them by name a few times before they ask for my name in return. Eventually we form a relationship and in the process build community.

It is in these relationships where the uncertainties and fears of difference are challenged and our relatedness within diversity is embraced. Manning and Curtis et al. (1999) conclude that in order to embrace diversity, we need to adopt a more human approach to life, developing our interpersonal skills, encouraging communication and advocating teamwork. In short we are all in community and our diversity makes it so. Embracing this complexity and stimulating our epistemological curiosity is both our gift and our challenge.

OUR COMMUNITY

This study has been a reflection of our community, our work, colleagues, friends and collective family. We function together as human beings, working in harmony, complexity and diversity. We choose this, we want it and we need it! Every day we demonstrate our curiosity and live our community.

We humbly invite you to join us.

“Being part of a community is having a sense of belonging. It is about being able to interact with other people in such a way in that a unique connection is made with others and within myself.”

(Jessica Morolong)

“My engagement in community psychology has touched me deeper than any of the psychology books I have ever read. It often amazes me that while I go to a community with the aim to give, I receive so much more from them in return. It continues to stretch me in areas of personal growth, as I continue to learn about the basic principles of human connectedness. I know I will be a better Clinical Psychologist

because of the special community experiences I have had. I view these experiences as a privilege.”

(Chanelle de Beer)

“Entering the space and slowly becoming part of the community which is not situated far from my home, has been a special, heart warming experience! Feeling the rhythm and getting to know the heartbeat of who we can be together, is exciting! I pray that in our togetherness each one of us will find something valuable to accompany us when the time comes to continue on our separate life journeys. May we stay connected forever through our shared experiences.”

(Tobie Muller)

"Entering the community space taught me to silence my own mind and become receptive to my environment. I learnt that by joining a community that I had to become humble. Through humility I sensed connection, not only with the children, but with my colleagues and others as well. Our connections became more meaningful.”

(Karmen de Beer)

META CONCLUSION

In this chapter we have argued that epistemological curiosity is a higher order form of inquiry and reflection, which mirrors personal growth and development. Epistemological curiosity thus follows from the foundations of everyday (naive) and cultural curiosity. We have also argued that epistemological curiosity has a key facilitative role to play in redefining western psychology and calling for equality in the “psychology” landscape. Epistemological curiosity may help psychologists realise that the history of psychology as they know it (chapter two) is

merely the history of psychology in the west. Epistemological curiosity therefore facilitates the appreciation of “psychology” in context (chapter three).

From this study our understanding is that people with epistemological curiosity are more likely to appreciate the relativity of knowledge generated in different cultures and the corresponding need for equality between the participants in knowledge landscapes (chapter four). On this basis we investigated possible ways to facilitate the development of epistemological curiosity in this chapter.

We argued that in order for curiosity to become “epistemological”, it must be facilitated in multidimensional ways. Such facilitation may be active, involving formal education or passive in the form of exposure to cultural and epistemological difference. Furthermore there is a need to facilitate development of epistemological awareness and sensitivity in “psychologists”, as these components are crucial to the development of epistemological curiosity. In our opinion it is thus inconceivable that the current training contexts for psychologists can facilitate epistemological curiosity, when they continue to function within a single homogeneous epistemology and ontology. Such contexts do not adequately develop epistemological awareness and sensitivity.

Finally we argued for an embracing of diversity, at the levels of culture, “psychology” and epistemology. Embracing difference and diversity as we have done in this study is at the heart of *becoming community* and finding peaceful and respectful ways for our “psychologies” to co-exist.

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APPENDIX

Research consent form (sample)

My name is Justin; I am a master's student in psychology at the University of South Africa. I am conducting a study on how "psychology" is understood and the recognition of indigenous "psychology" in South Africa.

You have been selected as a potential participant, because you form part my research community and therefore have relevant knowledge and experience.

Please note that your participation is entirely voluntary and you can withdraw from the study at any time. If you do not wish to participate you will not be prejudiced in any way.

Your name and personal details will be held in the strictest confidence, and will not appear in any of the research without your permission and acknowledgement.

I would like to conduct an informal conversation with you that will not last longer than one hour, at your convenience. During this time I would like to take notes, which will help me develop ideas for the study.

Participants with relevant community psychology experience will be asked to submit autoethnographic narratives at their own discretion. Again the option to do so is entirely voluntary. The narratives should include no more than a short paragraph, which will not take more than half an hour to write.

Your contribution is of great value to the research and will add to the dialogue on different knowledge systems on South Africa. Your contribution will thus directly add to the future of diverse knowledge systems in South Africa.

Thank you for your time, if you have any further questions please feel free to ask me in person or by email: Justinrcsolutions@gmail.com.

I _____ hereby agree to participate in research on how "psychology" is understood and the recognition of indigenous "psychology" in South Africa. I understand that my participation is voluntary and I can stop participating at any point, without being affected negatively. I understand the purpose of the research and know who to contact for further information.

Participant

Date

