

## Special Thematic Section on "Decolonizing Psychological Science"

### Decolonizing Psychological Science: Introduction to the Special Thematic Section

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#### Abstract

Despite unprecedented access to information and diffusion of knowledge across the globe, the bulk of work in mainstream psychological science still reflects and promotes the interests of a privileged minority of people in affluent centers of the modern global order. Compared to other social science disciplines, there are few critical voices who reflect on the Euro-American colonial character of psychological science, particularly its relationship to ongoing processes of domination that facilitate growth for a privileged minority but undermine sustainability for the global majority. Moved by mounting concerns about ongoing forms of multiple oppression (including racialized violence, economic injustice, unsustainable over-development, and ecological damage), we proposed a special thematic section and issued a call for papers devoted to the topic of "decolonizing psychological science". In this introduction to the special section, we first discuss two perspectives—liberation psychology and cultural psychology—that have informed our approach to the topic. We then discuss manifestations of coloniality in psychological science and describe three approaches to decolonization—indigenization, accompaniment, and denaturalization—that emerge from contributions to the special section. We conclude with an invitation to readers to submit their own original contributions to an ongoing effort to create an online collection of digitally linked articles on the topic of decolonizing psychological science.

*Keywords:* coloniality, decolonial theory, epistemic violence, cultural psychology, liberation psychology, indigenization, accompaniment, denaturalization, colonial mentality

#### Resumen

A pesar de acceso sin precedentes a la información y difusión del conocimiento en todo el mundo, la mayor parte del trabajo en la ciencia psicológica hegemónica todavía refleja y promueve los intereses de una minoría privilegiada de personas en centros ricos del orden mundial moderno. En comparación con otras disciplinas de las ciencias sociales, hay pocas voces críticas que reflexionan sobre el carácter colonial Euro-Americano (nordocéntrico) de la ciencia psicológica, y en particular su relación con los procesos de dominación que facilitan el crecimiento de una minoría privilegiada, pero socavan la sostenibilidad de la mayoría global. Movido por preocupaciones sobre las múltiples formas actuales de la opresión (incluida la violencia racializada, la injusticia económica, el desarrollo insostenible y daño ecológico), propusimos una sección temática especial y emitimos una convocatoria para recibir artículos reflexivos dedicados al tema de la descolonización de la ciencia psicológica. En esta introducción a la sección especial, primero discutimos dos perspectivas—psicología de la liberación y psicología cultural—que han fundamentado nuestro acercamiento al tema. A continuación discutimos manifestaciones de la colonialidad en la ciencia psicológica y describimos tres enfoques para la descolonización—indigenización, acompañamiento y desnaturalización—que surgen de las contribuciones a la sección especial. Concluimos con una invitación a las/os/xs lectores a enviar sus propias contribuciones originales a este esfuerzo en movimiento para crear y continuar una colección electrónica de artículos digitales sobre el tema de la descolonización de la ciencia psicológica.

*Palabras Clave:* colonialidad, giro decolonial, opción decolonial, violencia epistémica, Psicología Cultural, Psicología de la Liberación, indigenización, acompañamiento, desnaturalización, mentalidad colonial

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*So, comrades, let us not pay tribute to Europe by creating states, institutions and societies which draw their inspiration from her. Humanity is waiting for something other from us than such an imitation, which would be almost an obscene caricature. ... But if we want humanity to advance a step farther, if we want to bring it up to a different level than that which Europe has shown it, then we must invent and we must make discoveries. ... For Europe, for ourselves and for humanity, comrades, we must turn over a new leaf, we must work out new concepts, and try to set afoot a new [hu]man. (Fanon, 1961/1965, p. 316)*

In these last lines from the last chapter of his last book, revolutionary psychologist Franz Fanon (1961/1965) famously challenged researchers and practitioners with the critical task of decolonizing mainstream intellectual production as a crucial step toward broader decolonization and global revolution. Noting how prevailing understandings in mainstream academic spaces tended to reflect and promote interests of domination, Fanon called on scholars to articulate alternative understandings that were more conducive to human liberation.

Assessing intellectual progress in the half-century since Fanon's classic work, one might easily conclude that mainstream psychology—increasingly re-cast as psychological or brain science—has largely ignored his challenge or discredited it as political activism outside the bounds of proper scientific activity. The bulk of work in mainstream psychology still reflects and promotes the interests of a privileged minority of people in Western, Educated, Industrial, Rich, Democratic (a.k.a. WEIRD; Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010) settings. Moreover, even when genuinely concerned researchers do look outside WEIRD settings and direct attention to experience of people in the “Majority World” (Kağıtçıbaşı, 1996), they tend to do so in light of concepts, methods, and beliefs about normality that are rooted in the WEIRD realities that inform scientific and epistemic imagination. Compared to neighboring disciplines, there is relatively little attention to the ways in which the science can work as a primary site for the expression and reproduction of domination (e.g., via ideologies of individualism; see Becker & Marecek, 2008; Kurtiş & Adams, 2015, this section). Even those of us who identify as social or political psychologists typically proceed with academic business as usual with few opportunities to reflect on our participation (as both intellectuals and citizens) in ongoing processes of domination that promote exploration, expansion, and growth for a privileged few but undermine sustainable well-being for the vast majority of humanity.

Moved by the 50th anniversary of Fanon's book—as well as mounting concern about ongoing forms of multiple oppression including racialized violence, economic injustice and unsustainable overdevelopment with its inevitable ecological repercussions—the editorial team for the special thematic section proposed the theme of *Decolonizing Psychological Science* as an overdue response to Fanon's revolutionary challenge. The idea for the special section had its origins in a series of intellectual exchanges between present and former members of the Cultural Psychology Research Group at the University of Kansas and the Costa Rican Liberation Psychology Collective (whose

members include professors and researchers from both the University of Costa Rica and the National University in Costa Rica). The common thread that motivated the exchanges (and the resulting special section) was our respective experience working in marginalized settings of the Majority World, outside the WEIRD settings that typically inform mainstream or hegemonic forms of social and political psychology.<sup>1</sup>

Scholars and researchers who work in the ivory-tower universities of affluent societies are typically insulated from the deprivation and violence of the (post)colonial realities that characterize everyday life, not only in marginalized settings of the Majority World, but also in communities of racialized Others hidden in plain sight within WEIRD settings (cf. Arnett, 2008). Even researchers in less affluent societies of the Global South tend to practice a sort of “scientific mimicry” (Martín-Baró, 1994, p. 20) as they orient their work toward intellectual debates in academic centers of the Global North and away from realities of poverty that shape everyday life for the majority of people in their own societies (Martín-Baró, 1986). To work in such settings, psychologists have evolved methodological practices of “unknowing” (Geissler, 2013) and “epistemologies of ignorance” (e.g., Mills, 2007; cf. de Sousa Santos, 2007, 2009)—especially the tendency to imagine and study psychological experience as the self-contained product of individual organisms abstracted from historical and social context—that enable them to proceed with academic business-as-usual as if questions of colonial violence were problems of the distant past that need not impact “basic” scientific work.

In many cases, scholars and researchers who work in majority-world spaces and racially marginalized communities do not have this luxury of unknowing. For these researchers, everyday life is filled with constant reminders of what, following decolonial theorists (e.g., Grosfoguel, 2002; Mignolo, 2007, 2009, 2011; Quijano, 2000), we refer to as the *coloniality* of the modern global order. In contrast to the idea of the modern global order as the leading edge of intellectual progress and pinnacle of human development, references to coloniality emphasize the extent to which the modern global order—and the ways of being or habits of mind that are attuned to it—are the product of racialized power that continues to reproduce violence. From the epistemological standpoint of Majority World communities, the tendency to produce knowledge without reference to the coloniality of everyday life obscures more than it reveals about the “basic” psychological tendencies that modern science proposes as natural standards for human experience. Instead, the situation of everyday life makes understanding colonial violence—and its relationship to mainstream or hegemonic psychological science—a matter of critical importance.

## Conceptual Resources for Decolonizing Psychological Science: Two Examples

Although mainstream intellectual production in hegemonic psychology has typically failed to appreciate how modern realities and associated ways of being are colonial products (let alone to provide a foundation for intellectual decolonization), there are bodies of work that provide conceptual resources for this purpose. In this introduction to the special thematic section, we discuss the conceptual resources from two such bodies of work—theoretical perspectives of liberation psychology and cultural psychology—that inform the editorial team’s approach to the topic.

## Perspectives of Liberation Psychology: A Brief Introduction

Theoretical perspectives of liberation psychology are one set of conceptual resources that inform our approach to decolonizing psychological science. Various articulations of liberation psychology have emerged over the last 50 years as one of the most influential meta-theoretical perspectives in Latin American psychology (e.g., see [Burton & Kagan, 2005](#)). The Latin American character of the perspective is evident not simply as a description of its geographic distribution, but more profoundly as an “indigenous” or identity-conscious body of knowledge that emerges from local understandings and associated everyday realities that reflect the ongoing legacy of colonial violence.

There is vigorous debate between various liberation psychology perspectives, within and beyond Latin American settings, and it is beyond our scope here to review the variation in perspectives that go by the name (see [Barrero, 2012](#); [Burton & Gómez Ordóñez, 2015](#); [Dobles, Baltodano, & Leandro Zúniga, 2007](#); [Lacerda & Dobles, 2015](#); [Lykes & Moane, 2009](#); [Montero & Sonn, 2009](#); [Shulman & Watkins, 2008](#)). Rather than claim a definitive vision of liberation psychology, we focus on the particular articulation that emerges from work of Ignacio [Martín-Baró \(1994\)](#), who trained as a social psychologist at the University of Chicago and taught at the University of Central America (in San Salvador, El Salvador) until his assassination in 1989 by the U.S.-trained Atlacatl Battalion (a right-wing death squad; [Commission on the Truth for El Salvador, 1993](#)). In addition to his identity as a social psychologist, Martín-Baró was also a Jesuit priest who worked among impoverished communities in El Salvador. His articulation of liberation psychology results from the intersection of these identities: an application of social-psychological methods and insights toward the goal of social justice.

In the formulation of [Martín-Baró \(1994\)](#), one finds a recurring emphasis on core or definitional features of the liberation psychology perspective. One core feature is a way of knowing that privileges the epistemological position of people in oppressed or marginalized conditions. Another core feature is a participatory research ethos that emphasizes praxis over sterilized theory. These features bear the clear influence of Martín-Baró’s training as a Jesuit priest and the liberation theology perspectives that were circulating in the contexts where he worked ([Dussel, 1972](#); [Gutiérrez, 1971](#); [Sobrino, 1989](#)), especially the idea of a preferential option for the poor: that is, a commitment to treat the perspectives and interests of oppressed and impoverished communities as a primary source of insight about everyday truth and social reality. These features also bear the clear influence of contemporaneous Latin American scholarship such as Paulo [Freire’s \(1970/1993\) \*Pedagogy of the Oppressed\*](#) and Orlando Fals-Borda’s ([1987, 1981](#)) work on critically engaged, participatory action research (PAR) methodologies.<sup>ii</sup>

Just as it is beyond our scope here to catalog different approaches to liberation psychology, it is likewise beyond our scope to review the work of Martín-Baró. Instead, we focus on a particular commentary in which [Martín-Baró \(1994, pp. 30-31\)](#) identified three urgent tasks for a liberation psychology.

### De-Ideologizing Everyday Realities

A first urgent task is to reveal and disrupt the ideology of everyday realities. A liberation psychology perspective emphasizes that conventional representations of everyday events and experience are neither the neutral reflection of objective truth nor a “natural” reality. Instead they represent particular constructions of reality that reflect and serve the interests of the powerful. From this perspective, researchers can advance the cause of liberation by conducting research that exposes and counteracts the constructed, ideological nature of supposedly neutral or natural concepts.

One of the most important sites for this work of de-ideologization is within academic institutions and, in our case, challenging hegemonic perspectives of psychological science. Contrary to the rhetoric of scientific inquiry, scientific institutions and practices are not a transcendent or neutral enterprise disembedded from culture, politics, and power. Instead, science is a positioned form of knowledge that reflects the understandings and interests of people in positions of dominance (e.g., what is worthy of study, what counts as basic theory or narrow application, etc.). The production and reproduction of some understandings (and simultaneous silencing of others) is not a simple triumph of truth over ignorance, but often reflects the agenda of funding agencies and demands of various consumers of the scientific product. Moreover, the understandings that emerge from the knowledge-production process are not inert end-products, but typically direct subsequent activity towards ends consistent with the motivations for their original selection.

Although perspectives of liberation psychology critique the role of ideology and power in dominant institutions, including scientific production, one can also see in Martín-Baró's articulation the commitment to use empirical research as a liberatory tool. Rather than abandon science as a hopelessly tainted activity of the powerful, the call to de-ideologize everyday realities entails the use of empirical inquiry to collaborate with people to reveal the everyday truth of their experience. Indeed, Martín-Baró's own work (e.g., [Martín-Baró, 1985](#))—especially the creation of the University Institute of Public Opinion in the midst of the Salvadoran civil war ([Bollinger, 1990](#); [Dobles, 1990](#))—provides examples of empirical research as a tool for de-ideologizing conventional understandings of everyday realities, re-imagining societal arrangements, and resisting domination.

### Recovering Historical Memory

An important mechanism of colonial domination has been forms of epistemic violence associated with the repression of local representations of history and identity and their replacement by imposition of colonizer understandings.<sup>iii</sup> Drawing on the work of Orlando [Fals-Borda \(2013\)](#), a second urgent task for a liberation psychology has therefore been recovery of repressed historical memory. As [Martín-Baró \(1994, p. 30\)](#) put it,

The prevailing discourse puts forth an apparently natural and ahistorical reality, structuring it in such a way as to cause it to be accepted without question. This makes it impossible to derive lessons from experience and, more important, makes it impossible to find the roots of one's own identity, which is as much needed for interpreting one's sense of the present as for glimpsing possible alternatives that might exist ... The recovery of historical memory supposes the reconstruction of models of identification that, instead of chaining and caging the people, open up the horizon for them, toward their liberation and fulfillment.

Prevailing representations of history portray the modern global order as the product of cultural progress rather than colonial violence; portray WEIRD societies as vanguards of human development rather than accomplices in ongoing plunder (e.g., [Mattei & Nader, 2008](#)); and portray marginalized communities of the Majority World as abnormal or backward in relation to WEIRD standards. The recovery of historical memory counteracts institutional denial or collective forgetting of historical violence; raises awareness of viable alternatives to the colonial violence of the modern global order; and promotes constructions of identity that provide a sense of unity and purpose around these alternative understandings of history and progress.

### Privileging Marginalized Perspectives

A third pressing task of a liberation psychology is a deliberate attempt to understand reality from the perspective of the oppressed, an ethical and political stance that resonates clearly with the liberation theology tenet of a preferential option for the poor.<sup>iv</sup> A liberation psychology perspective emphasizes the deceptively simple point that authoritative discourses—whether economic policy, development theory, religious doctrine, or mainstream scientific production—generally emanate from positions of authority. These accounts tend to marginalize or pathologize the majority of the world's people who live their lives largely outside the contexts that give authoritative discourses their authority. The task of privileging or centering marginalized perspectives provides a mindful corrective to conventional practice and enables a more adequate analysis of events. It does so not only by emphasizing the humanity and dignity of marginalized Others, but also by illuminating the racialized colonial standpoint of authoritative forms of knowledge that practitioners and consumers typically regard as context-independent truth.

The task of privileging marginalized perspectives resonates well with Fanon's call to "work out new concepts, and try to set afoot a new [hu]man" (Fanon, 1961/1965, p. 316). Noting a tendency in colonized settings for imperialist imposition or local appropriation of problematic European American concepts and practices, Fanon urged revolutionary intellectuals to look elsewhere for foundations of a pan-human psychology adequate for the task of broad liberation. In similar fashion, Martín-Baró urged psychologists to recognize the epistemological value of marginalized perspectives as a tool for de-ideologizing conventional knowledge and providing a firmer conceptual basis for liberatory action. This emphasis on local knowledge as an epistemological tool for counteracting universalizing discourses of hegemonic science is something that a liberation psychology perspective shares with perspectives of cultural psychology.

### Cultural Psychology: What Is It?

Theoretical perspectives of cultural psychology are another set of conceptual resources that inform our approach to decolonizing psychological science. Although approaches vary, cultural psychology perspectives generally consider the dynamic relationship of mutual constitution by which culture and mind "make each other up" (Shweder, 1990; cf. Adams, 2012). One direction of this relationship concerns the *sociocultural constitution of psychological experience*: the extent to which species-typical, human tendencies do not emerge "just naturally", but instead require engagement with the particular affordances of different cultural ecologies. The other direction of this relationship concerns the *psychological constitution of sociocultural reality*: the extent to which everyday ecologies likewise are not "just natural", but instead are a historical product of human activity. As people make sense of events according to their own context-informed inclinations, they reproduce constructions of reality into which they inscribe their understandings of what is right and good.

How do cultural psychology perspectives respond to Fanon's (1961/1965) call to work out new concepts for a decolonial psychology? Conventional perspectives of cultural psychology have typically shied away from exploring issues of power and domination. This reluctance is likely a function of an ironically political desire to appear apolitical—a desire that, in turn, reflects and reproduces the dominance of positivist epistemology in mainstream psychological science (see Denzin & Lincoln, 2012). The reluctance to address issues of power also reflects the privileged position of researchers who constitute the field. For many proponents, perspectives of cultural psychology offer tools to combat prejudice, promote multicultural tolerance, and encouraging respect for Other traditions—all of which are almost certainly improvements on ethnocentric business as usual. However, this emphasis on prejudice



reduction and peaceful co-existence can serve the interests of domination to the extent that it dampens moral outrage about injustice and encourages peaceful toleration of an unjust status quo (Dixon, Tropp, Durrheim, & Tredoux, 2010; Hammack, 2011; Wright & Lubensky, 2008).

In contrast, the version of cultural psychology analysis that informs our approach to the theme of decolonizing psychological science reflects an engagement with majority-world settings and such identity-conscious knowledge perspectives as African Studies (e.g., Bates, Mudimbe, & O'Barr, 1993; see also Adams, 2014), Critical Race Theory (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995; see also Adams & Salter, 2011) and decolonial feminisms (e.g., Mohanty, 1988; see also Kurtiş & Adams, 2015, this section). An inescapable feature of work in these contexts is a concern with forms of epistemic violence by which global institutions forcefully impose understandings and practices from powerful geopolitical centers to relatively powerless peripheries in ways that maintain systems of exploitation and domination (Bulhan, 1985; Fanon, 1961/1965). The intersection of cultural psychology perspectives with the epistemological standpoint of communities in the Global South offers a platform that critically conscious scholars and scientists might apply to reveal and resist these forms of epistemic violence. As Fanon, Martín-Baró, and other psychologists working in majority-world spaces have noted (e.g., Enriquez, 1992; Nsamenang & Dawes, 1998), the positioning of conventional scientific wisdom in WEIRD experience often results in mischaracterization and counterproductive interventions when applied to Majority World experience. As an antidote to such neocolonialism in science, a cultural psychology analysis proposes two decolonizing strategies (cf. Adams & Salter, 2007).

### Normalizing Other Experience

The first decolonizing strategy is to provide a *normalizing* account of patterns in Majority World or other marginalized spaces that mainstream approaches portray as abnormal. Rather than regard such patterns as “suboptimal” expressions of ignorance awaiting foreign enlightenment, a cultural psychology analysis suggests that researchers and practitioners attempt to view them from a more context-sensitive perspective informed by longstanding engagement with and understanding of local realities. This strategy serves the interest of decolonization to the extent that it affirms the intellect and humanity of people in marginalized spaces. Resonating clearly with the liberation psychology idea of privileging marginalized perspectives, this strategy (and basic principle of PAR; Arango, 2006) regards local understandings as a reservoir of time-tested wisdom about the human condition—a reservoir from which researchers and practitioners might fruitfully learn if they approach it with sufficient humility to listen. Rather than ignorant victims in need of enlightenment, this strategy takes the perspective of people in marginalized, majority-world spaces as an epistemological base from which one can not only reconsider interventions into those spaces, but also re-think concepts and practices that inform mainstream theory and research (cf. Comaroff & Comaroff, 2012; Connell, 2007; de Sousa Santos, 2014).

### Denaturalizing Conventional (Scientific) Wisdom

An exclusive focus on normalizing accounts of marginalized settings is incomplete to the extent that it treats WEIRD patterns that inform conventional scientific wisdom as natural standards that do not require explanation. Accordingly, the second decolonizing strategy of a cultural psychology analysis is to *denaturalize* standards of thought and feeling that hegemonic perspectives propose as natural standards. Rather than straightforward accounts of natural facts, a cultural psychology analysis emphasizes that conventional scientific wisdom both reflects and promotes the perspectives and interests of people in affluent WEIRD spaces. This strategy resonates clearly with Martín-Baró's (1994) call to de-ideologize official accounts of everyday reality. By denaturalizing or de-ideologizing mainstream accounts, one not only provides a more adequate and less paternalistic account of Other experience,

but also provides a more adequate account of people in general—one that answers Fanon’s call for a new psychology.

The best work in cultural psychology has contributed to denaturalizing conventional scientific wisdom by locating its foundations in what Hazel Markus and her colleagues (Markus, Mullally, & Kitayama, 1997) referred to as independent selfways: that is, particular constructions of reality that promote understanding of the social world as a contractual arrangement of inherently separate actors abstracted from social and historical context. However, when this work has considered historical roots of independent selfways, it has tended to emphasize ideational or conceptual underpinnings (e.g., in Cartesian dualism and Lockean social philosophy) to the relative neglect of structural or material underpinnings. This neglect of structural or material manifestations tends to obscure the extent to which the independent selfways that inform psychological science have their foundation in the unprecedented material affluence of North American settings. Equally important, this neglect also obscures the historical origins of that material affluence in violent colonial appropriation.

In contrast, the intersection of cultural psychology with epistemological perspectives of African Studies and similar intellectual formations affords consideration of the historical forces that created and maintain the material affluence of Euro-American worlds. In particular, these perspectives note how this material affluence developed and persists through relationships of exploitation and extraction. These relationships of domination have enriched a privileged minority of people (both people who occupy global centers of power and postcolonial elites in formerly colonized societies) at the expense of the global majority of people in marginalized communities of the Global South. The important implication is that the emergence of independent selfways in European traditions was not simply an intellectual development divorced from political-economic events. Rather, independent selfways have existed in a relationship of mutual constitution with a history of resource extraction and ongoing economic domination.

One concept with potential to unite conceptual and material foundations of independent selfways under one phrase is the idea of *neoliberal individualism*. Briefly stated, neoliberal individualism refers to an understanding of self and society in terms of a “free market” of “free agents” who are at liberty to engage in social relations (or not) based on some more-or-less rational calculation of costs and benefits. This phrase makes explicit the relationship between individualist understandings of self (and society) and the neoliberal economic foundations of the modern global order evident in economic deregulation, labor exploitation, gutting of social welfare programs, constriction of the public sphere, growing social inequality, and widespread ecological damage associated with overconsumption (Connell & Dados, 2014). An important direction for decolonizing psychology is to consider the extent to which conventional scientific wisdom and professional practice reflect and reproduce ideologies of neoliberal individualism and its associated violence (cf. Adams & Stocks, 2008; Becker & Marecek, 2008; Denzin, 2009; Tomlinson & Lipsitz, 2013).

## Contributions to the Special Thematic Section

We received roughly 40 proposals in response to the call for papers for the special thematic section. Each member of the 5-person editorial team independently rated the potential contribution of the proposals. We then met (virtually) as a team and arrived at a unanimous, collective decision to invite authors of 17 proposals to submit papers for further consideration. We solicited external reviews for the papers through the normal *JSP* editorial process,



and then met again as a team to make unanimous collective decisions about rejection, invitation to revise and resubmit, or acceptance of each manuscript.

This process resulted in the selection of the eight articles that appear as the special thematic section on decolonizing psychological science in this issue of *JSPP*. As an indication of the diversity of perspectives, the articles feature authors and research from ten countries and all inhabited continents. They include perspectives from clinical and counseling psychology, community psychology, critical psychology, cultural psychology, experimental social psychology, feminist psychology, liberation psychology, and PAR (among others). Even so, we emphasize at the outset that these eight articles do not provide anything close to a comprehensive treatment of the topic; indeed, the articles raise as many questions as they answer, and they illuminate as many gaps as they fill. Rather than a definitive statement, the purpose of these eight articles is to provide an introduction to the topic of (de)colonization and put it on the intellectual agenda of social and political psychology.

In the remainder of this article, we briefly introduce the contributions to the special thematic section. The purpose here is not to summarize—we encourage readers to consult individual abstracts for that purpose—but instead to locate each article within the broader project of decolonizing psychological science that emerges from the collection as a whole. We organize our discussion in terms of four sections, and in each section, we introduce a pair of articles. The first section is a pair of articles that consider how discussions of coloniality and colonial processes intersect with concerns of psychological science. The remaining sections (and pairs of articles) consider the three approaches to decolonizing psychological science—indigenization, accompaniment, and denaturalization—that emerged from the collection.

## Coloniality and Psychological Science

Implicit in the call for decolonization is a claim that psychological science bears some relation to processes of colonization. How is psychological science a colonial form, such that it requires decolonization?

### Coloniality of Being: Metacolonialism

The intersection of colonialism and psychology is a topic that has occupied the career of Hussein Bulhan (see especially his influential book, *Franz Fanon and the psychology of oppression*; Bulhan, 1985). In his article for the special thematic section, Bulhan (2015, this section) emphasizes that colonial violence is not limited to “occupation of land” and control over material resources, but also extends to “occupation of being” or control over psychological resources (i.e., mental colonization; see Ngūgĩ wa Thiong’o, 1986). He then discusses stages in the colonial occupation of being, culminating in what he refers to as “metacolonialism” (Bulhan, 2015, this section, p. 244): the hegemony of Euro-American understandings in defining modern global realities. He ends with a call to decolonize psychology by turning its focus from promotion of individual happiness to cultivation of collective well-being; from a concern with instinct to promotion of human needs; from prescriptions for adjustment to affordances for empowerment; from treatment of passive victims to creation of self-determining actors; and from globalizing, top-down approaches to context-sensitive, bottom-up approaches.

Bulhan’s reference to “occupation of being” provides a useful way to understand how manifestations of coloniality impact psychological experience. Most work on the colonial occupation of being focuses on processes whereby people in colonized settings come to experience life in terms of colonizer concepts and standards. In pronounced forms, this occupation of being constitutes *colonial mentality*: “internalized oppression, characterized by a perception of ethnic or cultural inferiority ... that involves an automatic and uncritical rejection of [colonized ways of being]

and uncritical preference for [colonizer ways of being]" (David & Okazaki, 2006, p. 241; cf. Fanon, 1952/1967; Memmi, 1965). However, even when people explicitly oppose colonial domination and resist colonial mentality, they can still experience a more insidious occupation of being as they engage with practices and institutions—including schools (Rogoff, 2003), market economy (Greenfield, Maynard, & Marti, 2009), and entertainment media (Arnett, 2002; Ferguson & Bornstein, 2012)—that promote habits of thinking and feeling associated with Euro-American foundations of the modern global order.<sup>v</sup>

Moreover, processes associated with the colonial occupation of being are evident not only among people in marginalized settings of the global periphery, but also among people in dominant centers (cf. Fanon, 1952/1967; Memmi, 1965). Indeed, the high-energy lifestyles and modes of existence that characterize the modern global order are primary manifestations of what decolonial theorists (e.g., Maldonado-Torres, 2007) refer to as the *coloniality of being*. These ways of being intersect with colonial processes in at least two senses. In one sense of *colonial*, these ways of being are not simple facts of human nature, but instead reflect the occupation of being by forces of neoliberal individualism via engagement with structures of the modern global order. In another sense of *colonial*, these ways of being are not politically innocent products of cultural development, but instead developed and remain possible through the appropriation of wealth and human productivity associated with colonial violence.

### Coloniality of Knowledge: Orientalism

Whereas the coloniality of being refers to ways in which everyday habits of mind reflect processes of colonization, the *coloniality of knowledge* (e.g., Lander, 2000) extends this analysis from everyday habits of mind to authoritative practices and understandings. Hegemonic psychological science and other authoritative bodies of knowledge observe the neoliberal individualist ways of being associated with the modern global order, interpret these ways of being as essential components of human nature abstracted from historical context, and then elevate these ways of being to the status of normative standard for all humanity. This elevation of a dominant particular as a universal standard is a form of epistemic violence that masks the problematic history of the standard and imposes it without regard for local context.

A primary manifestation of the coloniality of knowledge in hegemonic psychological science is the typically unremarked dominance of neoliberal individualism, a topic that Bulhan (1985) considered at length in his classic work on the psychology of oppression and revisits here (see also Martín-Baró, 1986; Phillips, Adams, & Salter, 2015, this section). Although neoliberal individualism affords an understanding of well-being as life satisfaction or personal happiness, the ways of being that maximize short-term individual satisfaction (e.g., promotion-oriented accumulation and high-arousal happiness) are not necessarily those that maximize long-term individual or collective well-being. Indeed, pursuit of narrow, individual satisfaction can even be antithetical to broader, collective well-being to the extent that it leads people to focus on personal adjustment rather than transformation of unjust social realities, to repress memory and outrage about past violence in exchange for peaceful tolerance and multicultural harmony, to overclaim scarce resources, to avoid costly obligations to care for others, or to resist calls to reduce unjust social arrangements from which they benefit (cf. Becker & Marecek, 2008; Dixon et al., 2010; Hammack, 2011; Wright & Lubensky, 2008).

Another framework for understanding the coloniality of knowledge in psychological science is Said's (1978) discussion of *Orientalism*: a set of discursive resources by which European powers created a sense of cultural superiority and justified colonial domination by constructing an image of Asian societies as backward or deficient Others in need of (European) civilization. Manifestations of Orientalism in psychological science are the focus of

the contribution to the special thematic section from [Natasha Bharj and Peter Hegarty \(2015, this section\)](#), who conducted an experiment to investigate psychological consequences that follow when writers use *harem* analogies to describe mating behavior in non-human animal species. In a restricted sense, *harem* refers to a domestic arrangement in particular cultural settings whereby powerful men enforced seclusion of wives and female sexual partners to insulate them from contact with other men. Appropriated into Orientalist thought and fantasy, the concept of harem came to have connotations of sex-starved women who provided eager access upon the dominant man's demand for their sexual services. Psychological scientists have appropriated the concept of harem to refer to mating habits of non-human animal species: specifically, to male control and guarding of multiple female mates. [Bharj and Hegarty \(2015, this section\)](#) consider whether this appropriation not only misrepresents non-human animal behavior via anthropomorphic projection (e.g., male concerns about female purity), but also reproduces Orientalist stereotypes that associate Asian ways of being with less developed stages of cultural evolution.

Besides consideration of Orientalism in the psychological science of mating behavior, [Bharj and Hegarty \(2015, this section\)](#) make a broader contribution to the special thematic section as an example of experimental methods as politics ([Spears & Smith, 2001](#)). Given the place of experimental methods in ultra-scientific articulations of the field, one might propose that the over-reliance on such methods should be a primary site for the work of decolonizing psychological science ([Denzin & Lincoln, 2012](#)). Without denying limitations of the method, [Bharj and Hegarty \(2015, this section\)](#) show how one might nevertheless deploy experiments in reflexive fashion as a tool for decolonizing psychological science (cf. [Adams & Stocks, 2008](#)).

## Decolonization as Indigenization

To summarize the preceding section in [Bulhan's \(2015, this section\)](#) terms, the violence of colonialism is not limited to the direct or material forms associated with the occupation of land and control of physical resources, but also extends to epistemic forms associated with the occupation of being and control of symbolic resources. These forms of epistemic violence include collective tools for making sense of everyday reality and standard forms of knowledge in hegemonic psychological science. How might concerned psychologists go about decolonizing the field? What are some approaches for dismantling these forms of epistemic violence? One set of approaches that was evident in submissions to the special thematic section is what we refer to as "decolonization by indigenization": a strategy whereby locally grounded researchers and practitioners re-claim local or Indigenous wisdom to produce forms of knowledge that resonate with local realities and better serve local communities.

### Indigenizing Health: Social-Emotional Well-Being

A paradigmatic example of this approach is the contribution to the special thematic section by [Patricia Dudgeon and Roz Walker \(2015, this section\)](#), who propose the concept of socio-emotional well-being (SEWB) as an Indigenous Australian concept upon which to build a psychological science that is adequate for use among Indigenous Australian and Torres Islander communities. The focus of hegemonic psychological science on the growth and happiness of individuals abstracted from social context is problematic when applied to Indigenous Australian settings, where conceptions and everyday experience of well-being emphasize connections to family and kin, broader community, culture, land, spirit, and ancestors. [Dudgeon and Walker \(2015, this section\)](#) propose concepts and practices based on SEWB as parallel tools that both Indigenous and non-Indigenous practitioners alike can use in therapeutic work with Indigenous communities.

The particular strength of indigenization approaches to decolonization is the valorization of local understandings as a source of time-tested wisdom that is adapted to local conditions and well suited to the needs of local communities. The tendency in mainstream psychological science is to treat Indigenous conceptions of health and well-being as a form of ethnopsychology: that is, mere folk belief based on local cosmology, rather than scientific truth based on empirical evidence. In response to this portrayal, indigenization approaches to decolonization perform a version of the cultural psychology strategy of *normalization*: treating as legitimate the Indigenous forms of knowledge and practice that mainstream science devalues or treats as illegitimate. Rather than folk belief or superstition, local conceptions of health and well-being might produce more effective responses to trauma and stress than do imported prescriptions of mainstream science.

Another strength of indigenization approaches to decolonization is to reveal how the methods, knowledge, and prescriptions of mainstream science assume everyday realities—including varieties of family, forms of residence, resource availability, and many other features—that do not characterize life in the Majority World (or most human societies across time and space). Because theorists and practitioners in mainstream psychological science often work at a distance from everyday lived realities in marginalized communities, they are generally unaware of the mismatch between lived realities and scientific imagination, let alone its implications for official knowledge, methods, and prescriptions. The unwitting imposition of these conventional forms, despite the poor fit, can do considerable harm. Indigenous forms of psychology provide a potential antidote to this violence by illuminating forms of intervention and ways of being that are better suited to local history and ecological conditions.

Despite these important strengths, indigenization approaches to decolonization are not without corresponding limitations. One set of limitations is the flipside of the emphasis on local understanding that otherwise constitutes a strength. Because the goal of indigenization approaches is often to serve particular marginalized communities, the resulting local knowledge does not necessarily generalize to other marginalized communities or speak back to hegemonic psychological science as a whole. For example, it is not clear whether [Dudgeon and Walker \(2015, this section\)](#) consider the concept of SEWB and practices of intervention built around it to be appropriate for application in cultural settings associated with other marginalized communities. Moreover, it is unclear what implications SEWB might have as an antidote for the coloniality of knowledge and being in hegemonic psychological science or the WEIRD settings that disproportionately constitute it.

Another set of limitations concerns problems of cultural essentialism and reification: elevation of fluid, flexible, ecologically responsive patterns into fixed, rigid, timeless essences of different cultural entities.<sup>vi</sup> One problem with reification and cultural essentialism is that they afford authenticity policing. Internal debates about which ways of being are the “true” cultural forms can lead to a sort of cultural conservatism that views innovation and healthy adaptation to changing circumstances as a form of inauthentic assimilation rather than a normal feature of human cultural life. Another problem with reification and cultural essentialism is a tendency to romanticize local or Indigenous forms, overlook or act as apologist for potentially problematic practices, and avoid subjecting them to critical scrutiny. Indeed, what passes for local tradition is often a relatively arbitrary arrangement that local elites create or impose to maintain their privileges and reproduce local forms of oppression.

As a counterpoint to these concerns, [Dudgeon and Walker \(2015, this section\)](#) make the important observation that anxious obsession about reification and essentialism has its own problems. Conceptually, such concerns reflect the coloniality of knowledge to the extent that they impose particular, Eurocentric notions regarding ontological priority of individuals abstracted from social and historical context. Practically, such concerns contribute to

oppression by denying people the opportunity to imagine and construct communities that might serve as a useful basis for collective action. Without denying dangers of a rigid essentialism, [Dudgeon and Walker \(2015, this section\)](#) emphasize the liberatory potential of *strategic essentialism* ([Spivak, 1988](#)): goal-oriented deployment of politicized imaginations of community that provide people in marginalized settings with a firm foundation for action and legitimate basis for collective claims.

### **Indigenizing the Revolution: From Psychology in Cuba to Cuban Psychology**

A different version of the indigenization approach is evident in the contribution to the special thematic section by Fernando [Lacerda \(2015, this section\)](#), who considers how the work of social decolonization after the Cuban revolution stimulated efforts at theoretical decolonization. In the aftermath of the revolution, there was a conscious effort to build a psychology suited to Cuban society, rather than an imported discipline oriented toward concerns of affluent foreign societies. On one hand, the goal was a psychology that was suitable for the global socialist experience in which Cubans were now partners. On the other hand, the goal was also a psychology that derived from (and was responsive to) local realities of Cuban settings. Resonating with [Martín-Baró's \(1994, p. 30\)](#) discussion of historical memory as a tool for liberatory models of identification, an important component of this effort was the development of social consciousness or imaginations of community that would mobilize people for revolutionary action.

An interesting feature of [Lacerda's \(2015, this section\)](#) case study is its consideration of two manifestations of colonization and corresponding moments of decolonization. The first moment of decolonization occurred in the immediate post-revolution period, which afforded opportunities for liberating Cuban psychology from the (neo)colonialism of the modern global order. In this post-revolution period, Cuban psychologists drew common cause and inspiration from the Soviet model and its concern with a revolutionary psychology that was (1) based on Marxist intellectual principles (e.g., materialism and social foundations of experience) and (2) dedicated to the practical project of societal transformation. In this moment of decolonization, revolutionary intellectuals defined Cuban psychology against the dominant forms of Latin American psychology that they regarded as problematic imitations of dominant neoliberal forms (cf. [Martín-Baró, 1986](#)).

The second moment of decolonization occurred when circumstances again motivated Cuban psychologists to look beyond foreign influence, this time in the form of Soviet paradigms. In this moment of decolonization, Cuban psychologists drew common cause and inspiration from their Latin American neighbors to articulate a more indigenous science and practice attuned to pressing local issues rather than distant intellectual struggles. This moment of decolonization is ongoing, as psychologists in Cuban and other Latin American settings continue to “work out new concepts” ([Fanon, 1961/1965, p. 361](#)) for a psychology oriented toward global humanity.

### **Decolonization as Accompaniment**

A typical instance of the indigenization approach to decolonization is the case of a community insider who works to promote well-being in situations of colonial and racial oppression, notes how hegemonic psychological science participates in or is ineffective as a response to colonial or racial violence, and articulates alternative regimes of knowledge and practice better suited to local circumstances. Beyond its clear relevance for scientists and practitioners who apply hegemonic psychological science in work with racially marginalized communities, one may wonder: Does the project of decolonization have any relevance for psychological scientists who benefit from racial and colonial privilege and live and work in the WEIRD settings? Are people who work in racially privileged spaces



absolved from responsibility to pursue decolonization? If not, then how can they best participate in the project of decolonization?

One answer to that question is the second approach that we observed in submissions to the special thematic section: *decolonization as accompaniment*. In this approach, “global expert” researchers from mainstream academic settings travel to colonized, racialized, or otherwise marginal communities to lend expertise and work alongside local inhabitants in struggles for social justice. This approach of decolonization is prominent in the field of community psychology, among practitioners of PAR, or in other cases where academically trained scholars and researchers leave the comfort of the ivory tower to participate more directly in efforts at social change. This approach seeks to decolonize psychological science not so much in its content as in the uses to which it is put and the communities that it serves. Rather than promote growth and increase happiness of people in privileged spaces, this approach decolonizes the attention of psychological scientists and directs it toward liberation of the marginalized majority of humanity who inhabit situations of colonial and racialized oppression.

### Accompaniment in Healing

One contribution to the special thematic section that illustrates the accompaniment approach to decolonization is by Mary Watkins (2015, this section), who proposes the practice of psychosocial accompaniment within a liberation psychology framework as a radical shift in the orientation of psychologists doing work with oppressed communities. Psychology practitioners typically assume the role of academic authority or knowledge experts who travel to a field site, impart their wisdom or prescribe solutions for local communities, and then return to produce knowledge about the encounter from the insulated comfort of the ivory tower. In contrast, the practice of psychosocial accompaniment requires that practitioners exchange the attitude of detached authority for one of engaged humility as they walk alongside and learn from people in the oppressed communities where they work.

Watkins (2015, this section) devotes considerable space to the phenomenology of accompaniment and its contributions to the development of the accompanying practitioner. The practice of accompaniment can have clear benefits for the professional and ethical development of the accompanying psychologist and for the science as a whole. Whether the practice yields benefits for people whom the psychologist accompanies depends on the extent to which the accompanying psychologist is able to enter into engagement with critical communities devoted to social transformation. The process is not one of an expert vanguard illuminating the path to liberation for oppressed Others, but instead the transformation of unjust systems by the joint effort of systemic victims and their allies. The emphasis of accompaniment efforts in the liberation philosophy (e.g., Dussel, 1998) and liberation psychology (see Dobles, 1986) traditions is not on individual enlightenment, but instead on societal transformation.

### Accompaniment in Research

Another contribution to the special thematic section that illustrates the accompaniment approach to decolonization is a multi-vocal article by Puleng Segalo, Einat Manoff, and Michelle Fine (2015, this section). Segalo describes research in which she collaborated with women in a South African embroidery collective “to carve an alternative narrative (through making of personal embroideries) that highlights Black South African women’s experiences of growing up during apartheid and theorize how they define their citizenship within a newly democratized country” (Segalo, Manoff, & Fine, 2015, this section, p. 345). Manoff describes a PAR project in which she collaborated with Israeli and Palestinian peace activists to re-imagine the organization of space and society through “Counter-Mapping Return” of displaced Palestinians to land and homes now occupied by Israeli settlers.



As Fine notes in her concluding overview of the article (Segalo et al., 2015, this section), these projects perform the work of decolonization in several important ways. They decolonize knowledge content by directing attention away from the settings and issues that dominate hegemonic psychological science and centering the concerns of people in marginalized communities of the Majority World. They decolonize knowledge practice by incorporating work of locally grounded researchers who disrupt dominant conceptions of methodological rigor—especially the emphasis on sanitized observations abstracted from context (see Shweder, 1990)—by drawing upon personal, embodied knowledge gained from long-term engagement with particularities of place. These projects decolonize knowledge by considering a broader range of products—not only written texts, but also embroideries and maps—by which people in marginalized spaces articulate their imaginations of reality. The counter-narratives made material in these embroideries and maps decolonize knowledge through recovery of historical memory (Martín-Baró, 1994); that is, they give tangible and enduring form to alternative imaginations of the past that denaturalize the unjust status quo, challenge dominant constructions of reality, and provide a sense of direction to a more just future. Finally, these alternative imaginations decolonize scientific knowledge by illuminating or provoking consideration of worlds that might become rather than documenting (and legitimizing via naturalization) worlds as they appear from a particular, over-privileged standpoint (cf. Watkins, 2015, this section, p. 327, who cites Freire, 2000, on “annunciation”).

The strength of these accompaniment approaches to decolonization is the emphasis, shared with PAR perspectives (e.g., Fals-Borda, 1985, 1987), on activism and social change rather than on “basic” research or “pure” knowledge abstracted from social and historical context. The coloniality of knowledge is evident in ideologies of positivism and scientism (e.g., Denzin & Lincoln, 2012) that afford and even mandate cool detachment from societal struggles as the purest form of intellectual inquiry. In contrast, the accompaniment approach to decolonization proposes that one comes closest to truth when one participates alongside marginalized communities in the context of everyday struggles, rather than contemplate reality from the insulated and sterilized space of the academy.

Potential weaknesses of accompaniment approaches to decolonization arise from the psychologist’s position as an outside expert who periodically sojourns in marginalized communities before returning to the relative privilege and insulated comfort of mainstream university centers. The psychologist’s position of relative power and privilege can enable colonial practices (see Smith, 1999), whereby researchers and practitioners appropriate or distort marginalized voices for their own professional agenda. A related issue is what Cole (2012) referred to as “The White-Savior Industrial Complex”: that is, a neocolonial belief that problems of global poverty and injustice require the benevolent intervention of altruistic outsiders who will heroically step forward to lead oppressed Others to liberation. Whether the primary purpose of a sojourner’s work is research, community facilitation, or activism, an important consideration for the success of accompaniment approaches is the extent to which the accompanying outsider participates alongside (or even follows) rather than leads. Especially when the focus of the work is knowledge about or an effect in the marginalized target community, one must consider what qualifies the sojourning outsider rather than local inhabitants to take a leading or even supporting role. In some cases, the answer to this question might be that the outside researcher has access to audience, networks, or modes of representation to which people in marginalized or colonized communities do not. In other cases, the answer is not clear.

## Decolonization as Denaturalization

Although the indigenization and accompaniment approaches differ in the extent to which they rely upon local insider or empathetic outsider perspectives, they have in common a conception of decolonization as something that one

does in colonized or marginalized settings outside the affluent spaces that most psychologists inhabit. In the best exemplars of these approaches, one can see how the work decolonizes hegemonic psychological science by promoting participatory and democratic methods or by directing attention toward problems in marginalized communities—poverty, disease, hunger, violence, and oppression—that researchers in the mainstream of the discipline might otherwise prefer to ignore. Still, the focus of these approaches is the use of psychological science to dismantle oppressive forces as they act in situations of colonization. What remains less clear is how these approaches perform decolonization with respect to the standard regimes of knowledge in hegemonic psychological science (i.e., the coloniality of knowledge) or the psychological habits of the people in the typically WEIRD settings that inform scientific imagination (i.e., the coloniality of being). In contrast, the denaturalization approach to decolonization proceeds from the understanding that researchers must “turn the analytic lens” (e.g., Adams & Salter, 2007) from exclusive consideration of oppression in colonized societies to re-think the ways of being that masquerade as natural standards in WEIRD settings and hegemonic psychological science.

### **Coping With Oppression: Conscious Transformation Versus Colorblind Adaptation**

The denaturalization approach to decolonization is evident in the discussion of coping with oppression that [Nia Phillips, Glenn Adams, and Phia Salter \(2015, this section\)](#) contribute to the special thematic section. Theory and research in hegemonic psychological science have typically advocated individual-oriented strategies for coping with oppression that provide individual relief from oppressive circumstances but do little to address the broader context of racism that generates the oppressive circumstances. Similarly, researchers tend to emphasize how consciousness about ([Pinel, 1999](#)) or sensitivity to ([Mendoza-Denton, Downey, Purdie, Davis, & Pietrzak, 2002](#)) societal racism is associated with negative outcomes for health and well-being of people in subordinate groups, with the implication that people might fare better if they adopted habits of presumptive colorblindness that make them less conscious or sensitive to racism. The coloniality of knowledge is evident in these standard accounts in (at least) two forms. First, the coloniality of knowledge is evident in the White epistemological standpoint of presumptive colorblindness that these standard accounts reflect. This colorblind standpoint de-emphasizes colonial history and portrays racism and its consequences as a phenomenon of atomistic individuals abstracted from historical context (cf. [Adams, Biernat, Branscombe, Crandall, & Wrightsman, 2008](#)). Second, the coloniality of knowledge is evident in the interests that these standard accounts promote: namely, a tendency to preserve racial power by advocating individual adjustment to, rather than transformation of, the racialized violence of the status quo.

As a response to this example of the coloniality of knowledge, [Phillips and her colleagues \(2015, this section\)](#) consider identity-conscious perspectives of people in racially oppressed groups as a privileged epistemological standpoint for re-thinking the idea of coping with oppression. On one hand, this epistemological standpoint provides a conceptual foundation to normalize the tendencies of racism perception that hegemonic perspectives of psychological science portray as abnormal. Rather than hypersensitivity or some other pathological deviation from normative perception, this approach holds that the tendency for people in oppressed groups to perceive societal racism is a manifestation of critical consciousness that reflects superior attunement to reality (e.g., historical knowledge of racism; [Nelson, Adams, & Salter, 2013](#)). Rather than a risk factor that undermines well-being, this perspective suggests that critical consciousness about racism is protective of well-being to the extent that it affords “models of identification” ([Martín-Baró, 1994, p. 316](#)) that provide a basis for collective action ([Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999](#); [Dixon et al., 2010](#); [Wright & Lubensky, 2008](#)). On the other hand, the epistemological standpoint of people from racially oppressed minority groups provides a conceptual foundation to denaturalize

the tendencies of presumptive colorblindness that hegemonic perspectives portray as an objective standard (Adams & Salter, 2011). Rather than the relatively unbiased judgment about natural reality, these perspectives reflect processes of motivated denial (e.g., Adams, Thomas Tormala, & O'Brien, 2006) and cultivated ignorance (Nelson et al., 2013) about the racism and colonial violence that produced and maintain the modern global order.

### **Decolonizing Love: From Growth to Sustainability**

The denaturalization approach to decolonization is also evident in the article that Tuğçe Kurtiş and Glenn Adams (2015, this section) contribute to the special thematic section. Kurtiş and Adams contrast implications of two perspectives—feminist psychology and cultural psychology—that provide resources for decolonizing psychological science. These perspectives share a commitment to articulation of marginalized knowledge bases as epistemic standpoints from which to reveal androcentric and ethnocentric influences on knowledge production of mainstream psychological science. A particularly important point of convergence is a critique of neoliberal-individualist ontological assumptions of mainstream psychological science and the articulation of more relational alternatives to this dominant model that resonate with women's ways of being (cf. Gilligan, 1982).

Despite these points of convergence, perspectives of feminist and cultural psychology often diverge in their consideration of relational practices that appear to place constraints on the pursuit of growth and happiness among women in marginalized communities of the Majority World. In these cases, mainstream perspectives of feminist psychology follow hegemonic psychological science in valorizing growth-oriented forms of relationality characterized by the pursuit of personal satisfaction and a construction of love as emotion-rich intimacy. Judged against this normative standard, hegemonic perspectives of feminist and mainstream psychology are inclined to look with suspicion at patterns in many Majority World settings, where women appear to sacrifice personal growth and intimacy—either by caring for others or choosing to remain silent about disagreements—in order to maintain harmony in situations of relational embeddedness.

In response to this pathologizing characterization of Majority World patterns, Kurtiş and Adams (2015, this section) draw upon decolonial perspectives of transnational feminism (e.g., Mohanty, 2003; Narayan, 1989) that regard the perspective of women in marginalized settings as a privileged epistemological standpoint. On one hand, this epistemological standpoint provides a conceptual foundation to normalize tendencies (i.e., of apparent silence and sacrifice) that hegemonic perspectives perceive in Majority World spaces and portray as abnormal. Rather than deficient expressions of growth-oriented relationality, Kurtiş and Adams suggest that one might better understand these patterns as praiseworthy forms of sustainable or maintenance-oriented relationality that are well-adapted to the situations of embeddedness that characterize everyday life in many settings of the Majority World. On the other hand, this epistemological standpoint provides a conceptual foundation to denaturalize the apparently “liberatory” patterns of growth-oriented relationality that inform standards of hegemonic psychological science. Rather than optimal expressions of human nature, this standpoint illuminates the possibility that patterns of growth-oriented relationality require and reproduce the neoliberal individualist sense of abstraction from context and freedom from constraint associated with the coloniality of being. Although these ways of being may liberate well-positioned women to enjoy similar access as men to the pursuit of personal growth and satisfaction, the embrace of neoliberal individualist lifestyles comes at the cost of a commitment to broader liberation and social justice.

As these examples illustrate, the primary strength of denaturalization approaches to decolonization is to disrupt oppressive ways of being and forms of knowledge that masquerade as natural standards in hegemonic psychological science. Rather than context-independent tendencies rooted in basic human nature, colorblind obliviousness

to racism or patterns of growth-oriented relationality are manifestations of the coloniality of knowledge and the grounding of scientific imagination in a Euro-American colonial standpoint. When psychologists adopt colorblind modes of perception or growth-oriented relationality as prescriptive standards, they reproduce acts of epistemic violence. The primary goal of the denaturalization approach to decolonization is to disrupt these forms of epistemic violence and to illuminate alternative ways of being—critical consciousness of racism versus colorblind ignorance, sustainable relationality versus the pursuit of growth—that reflect epistemological perspectives of the oppressed and resonate with Fanon's call to develop new concepts as a foundation for a more human(e) psychology.

The same focus on epistemic violence that is a primary strength of denaturalization approaches is also a primary weakness. For psychologists accompanying people in marginalized communities in struggles against material violence, the focus on epistemic violence via mainstream research from the insulated security of ivory-tower institutions may be precisely the sort of sanitized, business-as-usual approach to hegemonic psychological science that requires decolonization.

Perhaps this is a good moment to emphasize that our discussion of decolonization approaches as separate categories is somewhat artificial. Our intent is not to suggest mutually exclusive or incompatible approaches, but instead to illuminate different possibilities for decolonization in hegemonic psychological science. Each of the approaches is likely to bear the most useful fruit when it incorporates elements of the others, and successful efforts to decolonize psychological science are likely to incorporate elements of each approach. Although indigenization or accompaniment approaches to decolonization properly emphasize local understanding, these approaches are most effective when they draw upon this epistemological resource to illuminate, disrupt, and counteract the coloniality of knowledge in hegemonic psychological science. In similar fashion, denaturalization approaches to decolonization are typically most effective when they take inspiration from a history of engagement with everyday life in marginalized settings. Indeed, the unifying theme across all these decolonization approaches is the value of engagement with epistemological perspectives of particular marginalized communities, whether through training in perspectives of identity-conscious knowledge (e.g., Adams, 2014) or accompaniment in the course of everyday activity with people in marginalized communities (Martín-Baró, 1994; Watkins, 2015, this section). Engagement with these epistemological perspectives provides training in habits of perception that enable scientists and practitioners to notice, document, and counteract everyday forms of coloniality and epistemic violence that are typically hidden in plain sight.

## Invitation: Toward a Decolonial Psychology

The articles that appear as the special thematic section in this issue of *JSPP* constitute provisional attempts to consider the topic of decolonizing psychological science. The editors of the special section hope that these initial observations provoke you, the reader, to add your own contributions. In order to facilitate such contributions, the editors of the special section (and *JSPP*) will continue to invite submissions on the topic of decolonizing psychological science beyond this current issue. Submissions that reach the threshold for publication will appear in *JSPP* as any other article (i.e., not alongside other papers in a separate, special section). To connect future articles to the special section, we will tag them as a contribution to the decolonizing psychological science project and use the affordances of internet publication to link all such contributions across different issues together on a single webpage. The result will be an online collection of digitally linked articles on decolonizing psychological science that researchers and educators can conveniently access as a resource for teaching and scholarship. Whether

you wish to build on the present foundation, to provide an alternative foundation, or to challenge the entire project, we encourage you to submit your work for consideration. Given the preliminary state of the field, there is certainly much work to do.

## Notes

i) By *hegemonic*, we mean particular understandings and ways of being that originally derived from European (American) experience but, by projection of colonial power, have become the default or natural standard for global humanity and mainstream academic work.

ii) Two points are noteworthy here. First, Martín-Baró's work (e.g., 1987) also shows the influence of Fanon (e.g., 1963). Second, although scholars typically read Fanon in the context of anti-colonial African struggles, one can also claim Fanon in the tradition of Latin American psychologists, especially given his birth and early life in Martinique.

iii) Epistemic violence refers to ongoing processes by which people in powerful centers of the modern global order understand their particular traditions of knowing (and being) as the pinnacle of human development, present these traditions as universal standards for all humanity, impose these standards on colonized Other societies, and subjugate Other traditions of knowing (and being) in the process (cf. Spivak, 1988). Our use of the term includes the idea of epistemological violence: "a practice [whereby] theoretical interpretations regarding empirical results implicitly or explicitly construct the Other as inferior or problematic, despite the fact that alternative interpretations, equally viable based on the data are available (Teo, 2010, p. 298):

The *epistemological* [or *epistemic*] part in this concept suggests that these theoretical interpretations are framed as knowledge about the Other when in reality they are interpretations regarding data. The term *violence* denotes that this 'knowledge' has a negative impact on the Other or that the theoretical interpretations are produced to the detriment of the Other. The negative impact can range from misrepresentations and distortions to a neglect of the voices of the Other, to propositions of inferiority, and to the recommendations of adverse practices or infringements concerning the Other.

Regardless of whether knowledge professionals or practitioners intend to cause harm, they can nevertheless produce epistemic violence if their acts of knowledge creation, interpretation, or application have a negative impact on the colonized Other.

iv) Martín-Baró referred to this task as "potenciar las virtudes de nuestros pueblos" (1986, p. 230). Although Adrienne Aron translated this phrase as "utilizing the people's virtues" (p. 31) in the 1994 English edition of Martín-Baró's work, the general sense of the phrase is to enhance, to maximize, or to realize (i.e., to make evident in material reality) the perspectives and interests of ordinary people.

v) A primary force for mental colonization that deserves special mention is language. The imposition of colonial languages (especially English) as the primary medium of communication in the modern global order institutionalizes worldviews and tools for perception embedded in dominant languages while silencing or obliterating the tools for perception associated with non-dominant languages (see Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1986). Even though people in marginal settings may prefer to interact in local or indigenous languages, the imposition of colonizer languages as official media (e.g., of education, business, government, and public institutions) affords habitual tendencies to make sense of life in terms of the colonizer's language.

This dynamic is clearly evident in the field of psychological science, for which the vast majority of publication occurs via the medium of English. Reasons for concern about this linguistic imperialism in science are not limited to issues of social justice (e.g., equality of opportunity for publication, equality of access to products) but also—and more profoundly—include issues of validity or fidelity to the empirical phenomena under investigation. Although the consequences of this linguistic imperialism in psychological science remain unclear, the example illustrates the broader point about the epistemic violence associated with the colonial occupation of being, as well as its implications for the coloniality of knowledge.

vi) Many concerns about cultural essentialism arose as a response to various forms of Orientalist discourse which portrayed diverse peoples and ways of being as an overly monolithic and barbaric Other against whom to define Western or modern self. Such concerns are laudable to the extent that they disrupt Orientalist discourse about such diverse constructions as



“third-world women” (e.g., Mohanty, 1988) or “African” (Mudimbe, 1988). Indeed, critiques of Orientalist reification are themselves a decolonizing strategy to the extent that they make visible ways of knowing and being that look like an undifferentiated mass when viewed from the homogenizing colonial standpoint of mainstream science (for discussions of these ideas in psychological science, see Adams & Markus, 2004; Gjerde, 2004; Hermans & Kempen, 1998; Okazaki, David, & Abelmann, 2008).

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