

Special Thematic Section on "Decolonizing Psychological Science"

The Cultural Psychology Research Group at the University of Kansas in collaboration with members of the Liberation Psychology Collective at the University of Costa Rica announce a call for papers on the theme of "**Decolonizing Psychological Science**" to appear as a special thematic section of the Journal of Social and Political Psychology (JSPP). We welcome contributions not just from perspectives of cultural psychology, liberation psychology, or social and political psychology, but also from such related perspectives as community psychology, critical psychology, communication studies, feminist studies, postcolonial studies, and regional or international studies (to name only a few). Regardless of particular perspective, the key criterion for inclusion is that each contribution must engage the central theme of "decolonizing psychological science." A more detailed elaboration of this theme can be found below.

JSPP is a newly launched, peer-reviewed open-access journal. For more information about the unique vision of JSPP, please see the journal website (<http://jspp.psychopen.eu>). As with all submissions to JSPP, contributions to the special issue can take the form of theoretical articles, review articles, original research reports, commentaries, replications and refinements, or action teaching reports.

For consideration in the special issue, potential contributors should submit a 1-page summary of their planned contribution by 31 January 2013. The editorial team for the special issue will then make an initial selection and invite submission of full-length manuscripts for peer review. The deadline for submission of invited manuscripts is 01 July 2013. All submissions may be made via the journal's online system: <http://jspp.psychopen.eu/author/submit/1>. (Note: you have to register with the online system as an "author" to be able to submit; when submitting, please choose the option "Special Thematic Section on Decolonizing Psychological Science" from the dropdown menu and disregard the submission checklist in this initial stage.)

Important Dates:

- 31 January 2013: 1-page summary of proposed contribution due
- 01 March 2013: Invitations for full submissions
- 01 July 2013: Full submissions due

For more information, please do not hesitate to contact Ludwin Molina via email at ludwin@ku.edu.

Sincerely,

Glenn Adams, Tuğçe Kurtiş, and Ludwin Molina, University of Kansas
Ignacio Dobles Oropeza, Universidad de Costa Rica

Decolonizing Psychological Science

In the last lines from the last chapter of his last (and posthumously published) book, revolutionary scholar and psychologist Franz Fanon (1963) famously challenged researchers and practitioners with the critical task of decolonizing mainstream intellectual production. 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 broad human liberation: "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" (p. 316).

Assessing intellectual progress in the half-century since Fanon's classic work, one might easily conclude that mainstream psychological science has largely ignored his challenge. The bulk of work in mainstream psychological science 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. Compared to neighboring disciplines, there are few critical voices in psychological science who challenge dominant societal discourses. Even those of us who identify as "social" or "political" psychologists typically proceed with academic business as usual without reflecting much on our participation (as both intellectuals and citizens) in ongoing processes of domination—processes that facilitate growth for a privileged minority but undermine sustainability for the vast majority of global humanity.

Moved by the 50th anniversary of Fanon's book, we propose a special issue of JSPP devoted to the topic of *Decolonizing Psychological Science*. The roots of this initiative lie in a series of intellectual exchanges between the Cultural Psychology Research Group at the University of Kansas and members of the Costa Rican Liberation Psychology Collective (at the University of Costa Rica and other Costa Rican institutions). Although mainstream intellectual production in Euro-American psychology has typically proven inadequate to the task of decolonization, there are bodies of work that provide conceptual resources for this task. Two such bodies of work are theoretical perspectives of liberation psychology and cultural psychology.

Among several different articulations of the **liberation psychology** perspective, one influential statement comes from work of Ignacio Martín-Baró, who received his Ph.D. in social psychology from the University of Chicago and taught at the University of Central America in El Salvador until right-wing death squads assassinated him in 1989. In addition to his identity as social psychologist, Martín-Baró was a Jesuit priest who served an impoverished parish near San Salvador. Inspired by the Liberation Theology movement of Latin American Catholicism (and its principle of a "preferential option for the poor"), Martín-Baró (1994) proposed a social psychology of liberation that draws upon everyday understandings of people in marginalized spaces to accomplish two pressing tasks: (1) to reveal the ideological character of everyday experience, and (2) to suggest "models of identification" that promote liberatory outcomes.

Among various articulations of **cultural psychology**, the version that informs our work reflects an engagement with epistemological perspectives of African and Postcolonial Studies (e.g., Appiah, 1992; Hook, 2012; Said, 1978). An inescapable feature of work in these contexts is a concern with neocolonialism: forceful imposition of ideas and practices from powerful geopolitical centers to relatively powerless peripheries in ways that maintain systems of exploitation and domination. As an antidote to tendencies of neocolonialism in mainstream knowledge production, a CP analysis emphasizes two decolonizing strategies: (1) provide a *normalizing* account of patterns in marginalized spaces that mainstream discourse portrays as abnormal, and (2) *denaturalize* the patterns that mainstream discourse imposes as "natural" or "neutral" standards for human experience. Together, these decolonizing strategies emphasize the extent to which conventional scientific wisdom and mainstream intellectual discourse both reflect and promote the perspectives and interests of people in positions of global dominance.

Although the foundation for this special issue lies in the intellectual exchange between a Liberation Psychology Collective and a Cultural Psychology Research Group, the editors invite contributions from any area of psychology or related fields. The key criterion for inclusion is that each contribution must engage the central theme of "decolonizing psychological science." A preliminary list of questions includes these:

- In what sense does psychological science carry the residue of past domination and reproduce present domination?
- Do theory, research, and practice in mainstream psychology contribute to oppression and constriction of life chances among people in marginalized communities?
- In what ways do theory, research, and practice of mainstream psychology (and related disciplines) reflect and promote interests of power and privilege?
- Can research within marginalized communities illuminate alternative bases for a psychological science that promotes sustainable well-being for global humanity?
- What is the appropriate balance of theory and praxis for a decolonization psychology?
- Is there a place for psychology in the broader set of fields that consider decolonization and global social justice?

- How can psychologists help to decolonize psychological science and other global institutions (e.g., economic order, human rights regimes, international development practice, etc.)?
- Does psychology offer tools for decolonizing knowledge/consciousness?
- What is colonial mentality, and how does one oppose it?

This is not an exhaustive list. We present it here to stimulate ideas about the topic, and we welcome contributions that consider relevant questions beyond this list.

References

Appiah, K. A. (1992). *In my father's house: Africa in the philosophy of culture*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Fanon, F. (1963). *The wretched of the earth*. New York: Présence Africaine.

Henrich, J., Heine, S. J., & Norenzayan, A. (2010). The weirdest people in the world? *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, *33*, 61-83, 111-135.

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