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The third mental health revolution: Themes, values and methods of Community Psychology and its relevance in Zimbabwean and African cultural contexts

Abstract

Psychology like other progressive scientific disciplines endures constant transformation, with one scientific revolution replacing or superseding another. The nascent field of community psychology represents a paradigm shift, and indeed a mental health revolution in psychology. The paper seeks to illuminate the themes, values, and methods of community psychology. Effort will be made to underscore how the discipline does not attempt to hide behind a "scientific" value free cloak but rather highlight the critical role values play in shaping and informing praxis in psychology and community psychology in particular. The paper also seeks to emphasise that the discipline is relevant in African cultural contexts given the synchronicity between its core values and African cultural values. Finally, an endeavour will be made to examine community psychology in the Zimbabwean context.

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Community psychology is about understanding people within their worlds and using this understanding to improve people's wellbeing. Heralded as the "third mental health revolution", (Hobbs, 1964; Korchin, 1976), the field which is somewhat emergent in Zimbabwe is a radical change in praxis as was wrought in earlier times by Pinel when he struck the chains from the "insane" [*sic*], or by Freud, when he showed that neurosis is psychologically determined and can be treated through therapeutic interventions (Korchin, 1976). The thrust of the third mental health revolution lies in the quest for prevention of emotional disorders through social and

community intervention focusing on their socio-ecological determinants. Indeed, it adopts a contextualist and perpectivist worldview that is firmly rooted in the ecological paradigm (Lewin, 1936; Kelly, 1986; Orford, 2008; Tricket, 2009; Prilleltensky, 2012; Tebes, 2016; Arcidiacon, 2017).

According to (Hersch, 1968) community psychology emerged to some extent, out of a "discontent explosion" among clinicians. There was disenchantment with psychotherapy and traditional psychology's overarching emphasis on subject-psychotechnics (to use the language of the 1920s) which involved locating pathology in the individual while negating the role of the socio-ecological context (Moede, 1924). It was the pervasiveness of an individualistic ideology in psychology that made it difficult to conceptualise psychological phenomena from a collectivist perspective resulting in a narrow and reductionist view to mental health. With community psychology came a heightened awareness in psychology of socio-ecological determinants of emotional distress in the individual's milieu and the unequal distribution and inadequacy of psychological services to certain communities (Bond, Keys & Serrano-Garcia, 2016).

Every field of enquiry has epistemological foundations which shape and inform what is deemed important and the consequent intervention strategies. Community psychology is overtly value based (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010). The work of a community psychologist is best understood in terms of the complementary core values that guide action and interaction with others. Thus to understand the roles of community psychology is to understand the underlying principles and values that govern how situations are construed. The following is a discussion of the themes, methods, and values of community psychology and how they fit in African and Zimbabwean cultural values. We contend that with its emphasis on transversal (Mignolo, 2011; Arcidiacon, 2017) and indigenous knowledge(s) (Mkhize, 2004) community psychology avoids the "context minimisation error" (Shinn & Toohey, 2003) characteristic of majority world psychology which has led to flawed interventions or inferences.

Themes in community psychology

Kloos et al (2012: 12) define community psychology as field "concerned with the relationships of individuals with communities and societies. By integrating research with action, it seeks to understand and enhance quality of life for individuals, communities, and societies". It is concerned with addressing the expressed needs of communities, while being sensitive to local cultural norms and traditions and developing programmes in consultation with community residents and organisations. The emergent theme is that socio- ecological factors are critically important in determining and changing behaviours. Emphasis is shifted from intra-individual

factors whether psychodynamic or biological towards greater attention to the social and institutional determinants of human functioning and disorders.

Ecological metaphor

Community psychology represents a "public health" rather than a "treatment" approach to mental problems. Consequently, there is greater concern with populations than with individuals and cure. Bond et al (2016) noted that community psychology is more a way of thinking than an explicit set of principles and practices. The public health approach of community psychology spans a spectrum of interventions ranging from those close to the waiting mode to those of social action. In surveying a number of public health and community-oriented programmes Schon (1968) noted four groups: (1) those which extend existing practice, aiming at populations for whom treatment has been relatively inaccessible; (2) those which focus on identifying mentally ill individuals before their illness has reached crisis proportions; (3) those which aim to influence the mental health climate of a community through consultation with key institutions such as schools and courts; and (4) those in which the unit of treatment itself shifts from individuals or families to the community itself. Thus the public health approach shifts from focusing on distress in individuals to the 'sicknesses' of communities.

Seeking mode

One of the implications of the basic community psychology way of thinking in that the practitioner is bound to reach out beyond individual psychological difficulties (Orford, 2008). This proactive stance has been referred to as a seeking mode of working in contrast to a reactive mode of waiting (Rappaport, 1977). Thus working with a community psychology orientation, the practitioner is not to wait for individuals to make contact, but rather endeavours to understand how problems have been generated in the community to find out what needs exist and which of them are currently being met. Thus community psychology draws heavily upon epidemiology and needs assessment. Population surveys of mental health, pathways to care and the geographical distribution of distress are characteristics of the seeking mode.

Assets based approach

Another critical theme that permeates the community psychology world view is its orientation towards positive psychology and the assets based approach. Mainstream psychology operates within a deficit model. While humanistic psychology had traces of this approach, it was still steeped towards the deficit model. Pathology was viewed inherently as a manifestation of individual deficiency and dysfunction, which to some extent is "negative psychology". Jorge-Monteiro et al (2014) suggests that the typical assessment process practised by mental health professionals can have a depressing effect on individual's motivation simply through their emphasis on the negative aspects

of personal circumstances. They suggest that "presently, mental health and rehabilitation programs in the community still follow institutional-medical intervention approaches that perpetuate the separation of people who experience mental illness, from the rest of the population" (Jorge-Monteiro et al, 2014: 1). This tends to emphasis maladaptation, problems, weaknesses and deficits instead of resources currently available to the client. Community psychology seeks to underscore the significance of strengths and hence capacity building. It entails the study of strengths and virtues that enable individuals and communities to thrive such as justice, civility, tolerance, teamwork and resilience.

Prevention

Ex post facto reconstruction approaches have proven inadequate to the task of reducing crushing levels of social and mental health problems confronting people. In prevention the immediate goal and focus of intervention is the modification of those processes that lead to the emergence of (mal)adaptation so as to reduce the onset of target problems. Applied psychological practice has in the past over-concentrated upon existing disorder to the virtual exclusion of attempts to prevent disorders occurring in the first place or at least minimising them.

The typology which is still most frequently referred to is the one put forward by Caplan (1964) in the context of preventative psychiatry. The model starts with the basic premise that all human beings need "supplies" appropriate to their levels of development. Deficiencies in these supplies can lead to psychological disorder. Caplan (1964) labels these supplies physical (food, shelter), psychological (love, affection, emotional stimulation) and socio-cultural (social forces that determine the status of the individual). He separated preventative activities into those which he termed primary, secondary and tertiary. What is central about prevention is its future orientation in a seeking rather than waiting mode. The aim is to prevent something which has not yet occurred (primary prevention), the continuation and worsening of a disorder (secondary prevention) and degeneration into disability or handicap (tertiary prevention). Prevention should not be construed as a competitor to treatment but simply as the opposite sides of the same coin.

Values of community psychology

Values are generally viewed as things that matter. Ideas and beliefs we hold as special. Dzidic et al (2013) and Baier (1973) conceptualise values of community psychology as principles and practices that confer benefits to individuals and communities. Values are context bound and always evolving. Every field has a lens which is tinted by its core values and accordingly characterises what is considered legitimate for study. Community psychology has a number of mainstay values that shape and inform its principles and practices. The following is a discussion of key values integral to community psychology.

Social justice

A fundamental value of community psychology is seeking social justice through research and action. Community psychologists often advocate for equality and policies that allow for the wellbeing of all people, particularly marginalised populations. Community psychologists focus on the rights people are entitled and how they afford them the privilege to effect change towards a more equitable allocation of resources. More equal access increases citizen participation (nothing for us without us) which ultimately makes for communities that are empowered to improve their quality of life. Privilege is a special advantage, immunity, permission, or benefit granted or enjoyed by an individual, class or cast. Privilege is in effect a social resource and community members have varying amounts of it. Thus community psychology aims to uplift and afford privileges to marginalised groups. Other values such as equality, respect, democracy, autonomy, and peace are linked to justice.

Disenchantment with psychotherapy has shaken the faith of many clinicians in both the efficiency and effectiveness of traditional psychotherapies (Korchin, 1976). It is costly in time effort and money and hence mostly available to the affluent. Furthermore, during the lifetime of a professional clinician, they can only see a limited number of people. Freud predicted at the Fifth International Congress of Psychoanalysis, in 1918 that the time had arrived for the "conscience of the community" to awaken to the fact that "the poor man has just as much right to help for his mind as he now has to the surgeon's means of life saving. The task will arise for us to adapt our techniques to the new conditions". (cited in Galdston, 1971: 10)

One incontrovertible fact in the field of mental health today is that there is a serious gap between manpower resources and public needs. When one looks at the conditions of the poor and minorities, the need for mental health services comes into sharp focus. According to Murali & Oyebode (2010) the life conditions of the poor are pathogenic and the overall picture of greater incidence and prevalence of both gross pathology and lessened psychological competence in a culture of poverty is too well established. Not only are there greater needs but there are also greater inequalities in the delivery of services to the poor and marginalised.

Hollingshead and Redlich (1958) showed in their classic study that the poor tended to end up in custodial hospitals while the well to do are treated in private psychotherapy. In Zimbabwe the major provincial hospitals have psychiatric units but ironically only two of the ten have trained clinicians manning them. The second largest psychiatric hospital by bed number (800) in Southern Africa, Ingutsheni, only has one trained clinical psychologist who is an expatriate (Sithole, 2010). Thus it is the poor that are being short changed and to this end, community psychology seeks to extend mental health services

to the poor to fulfil its social justice mandate. Indeed, the poor Zimbabwean has greater unmet mental health needs.

Empowerment and liberation

Empowerment is both a value orientation for working in the community and a theoretical model for understanding the process and consequence of effort to exert control and influence over decisions that affect one's life (Zimmerman, 2000). Zimmerman (2000) refers to three basic aspects of empowerment: participation, control, and critical awareness. It may be seen as a process where individuals learn to see a closer correspondence between their goals and a sense of how to achieve them, (Mechanic, 1991). Rappaport (1984) defines it as the mechanism by which people, organisations and communities gain mastery over their lives.

Empowerment suggests a distinct approach for developing interventions and creating social change by drawing attention towards health, adaptation and natural helping systems. It includes the perspective that many social problems exist due to unequal distribution of and access to resources (Zimmerman, 2000). It is an approach that focuses on the positives and enhancing wellbeing instead of cataloguing risk correlates. Accordingly, the professional becomes a collaborator, not an expert through enhancing the discovery of indigenous resources and the likelihood of people helping themselves and each other. This ultimately transfers power back to communities and individuals who become independent and not rely wholly on professionals. It is akin to the aphorism, "don't give me fish, but rather teach me how to fish".

Kelly (1971) describes several qualities of community psychology that are consistent with an empowerment orientation. These include sharing psychology, coping effectively with varied resources and creating an eco-identity (identifying with the community). By identifying resources in the community, community participants have an active role in the change process not only for implementing the project but also setting the agenda. Consequently, focusing on strengths and competency building shifts attention away from pathology.

Psychological sense of community

Many psychologists believe that the defining problem in western society is the alienation and loneliness that comes with the individualism that characterises these societies (Sanborne, 2002). Sense of community is a powerful and emotional force that increases quality of life and is critical to both individual and collective wellbeing. Sarason (1974) introduced the concept of psychological sense of community and proposed that it becomes the conceptual centre for community psychology asserting that it is the major basis for self-definition. McMillan and Chavis (1986) define sense of community as

a feeling that members have to one another and to the group and a shared faith that member's needs will be met through their commitment together.

McMillan and Chavis (1986) propose that a sense of community is composed of four elements: membership, influence, integration and fulfilment of needs, and shared emotional connection. The influence in a community is bidirectional. Members of a group must feel empowered to have influence over what the group does and group cohesiveness depends upon the group having some influence over its members. Thus members are attracted to communities in which they feel influential, share commonly held ideas that can be pursued through involvement in the community and sense of belonging.

Respect for diversity

Community psychology adopts a particular ideological orientation towards the concept of diversity. Diversity occupies an important place in the history and future of community psychology and in this regard demarcates it from mainstream psychology (Kagan et.al, 2006). It views difference positively and finds a valued place for the "other" that has been marginalised in the past. Thus the motif is to view diversity within a community as an asset. Multiple views to a state of affairs will be holistic and comprehensive. This implies dismantling of the neoliberal individualist way of being to create conditions for a "new humanity" in which the Euro-American worldview ceases to be the default or natural standard. Instead it will produce a counter narrative that accepts and respects the hitherto denigrated and awfulised other.

Community psychological research

The way knowledge is advanced is fundamental to a discipline. Arcidiacon (2017: 3) notes that, "Community Psychology concerns the relationships of individuals with communities and societies at the intra-psychic, interpersonal, organizational, cultural, and political levels. Therefore, Community Psychology is based on neither the individual nor the community but on their linkage". With its roots in perspectivism (ecological paradigm) (Tebes, 2016), community psychology finds more use for some methods more than others in its quest for transversal knowledge (Arcidiacon, 2017) and epistemic diversity (Mbembe, 2015).

Philosophical foundations

Community psychology's quest for transversal and indigenous knowledge and epistemic disobedience (Mignolo, 2009) implies that there is no single paradigm that can, in isolation, fully *emic-ise* research in the field. As a result the field embraces a number of overlapping epistemologies such as pragmatism, perspectivism, constructivism and critical theory (Tebes, 2016) as well as post-positivism (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010). Each

of these paradigms suggest a move away from logical empiricism and the hegemony of the laboratory-experimental paradigm that is emphasised in traditional psychology. In traditional psychology research is viewed as "value free" and reality is classified as objective or absolute. Community psychology acknowledges our humanity and values and indeed objective reality or absolute truths are figments of imagination (Kelly, 1955).

The pragmatist research paradigm provides a basis for praxis informed research and does not subscribe to the incommensurability thesis (Howe, 1988) which views qualitative and quantitative research approaches as mutually exclusive binaries. As Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004: 17) succinctly put it, "we reject an incompatibilist, either/or approach to paradigm selection and we recommend a more pluralistic or compatibilist approach". Instead, the primacy of the research objective(s) or question(s) is emphasised. The researcher collects data utilising whichever methods that will best address the research objectives or questions. Perspectivism implies an ecological focus on the person-in-context. Community psychology takes seriously Lewin's (1951) famous equation, B = *f* (P, E), that is, behaviour is a function of the person, the environment and the transactions between the two. It is this ecological focus and the complexities involved that renders inappropriate some of the traditional, relatively highly controlled research designs.

Constructivism and critical theory are decidedly antifoundational emphasising the salience of multiple constructed realities and adopting the subjectivist-transactional epistemological position. These paradigms are a form of epistemic disobedience (Mignolo, 2009) that vehemently reject the pathologising character of "majority" world systems and the asymmetrical power relations and structures that produce perpetuate isms such racism, sexism, ableism and ethnicism. This allows the authentic voices of the marginalised to be heard in the struggle for social justice. This is encapsulated by Nelson and Prilleltensky (2010: 360) who write, "Foucault (1980) was critical of dominant 'totalising' discourses that reflect the power of one group to dominate another group. For Foucault, knowledge is inseparable, and socially constructed knowledge by those in power is used to for the purposes of exclusion and control".

While there are some similarities between positivism and post-positivism, the latter is a softened and modest version of the former that *sometimes* informs community psychological research. Unlike positivism which adopts the naïve realist ontological position that holds that there is a single, tangible and comprehendible reality; post-positivism adopts the critical realist ontological position assuming an objective reality that can only be imperfectly or probabilistically comprehended (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Unlike positivism which assumes that research is "value neutral", adopting the dualist-objectivist epistemological position; post-positivism is instead "value cognisant"

(Krauss, 2005: 6), conscious of the values of human systems and of researchers as well as the influence of the researcher and the researched.

Methodology and methods

In line the pragmatist orientation that characterises community psychology, what the best research methods are for community psychology is guided by research "fit for purpose" criterion. Research with an emphasis on social justice and collaboration tend to be action oriented, focusing on social innovation, change and evaluation. The term "action research" was introduced by Kurt Lewin in the 1940s as a general approach towards solving some of the problems of society such as poverty, inter-group conflict and minority issues. Rapoport (1970: 499) notes, "Action research aims to contribute both to the practical concerns of people in an immediate problematic situation and to the goals of social science by joint collaboration within a mutually acceptable ethical framework".

Implicit in this orientation is the interdependent relationship between participants and action researchers. The participatory action research process which can be either qualitative or quantitative is influenced by the needs of participants at all stages (Arango, 2006). This close collaboration in problem identification, the methods used and the conclusions drawn is participant driven and not imposed by the researcher. This produces what Adams et al., (2015) refer to as 'decolonisation by accompaniment' which results in the authentic voices of the disenfranchised being heard in the struggle for social justice.

Similarly research from the standpoint of the critical paradigm tends to be dialectical, calling for activist scholarship and transformational research that also speaks to the core values of community participation, collaboration and social justice via grassroots knowledge production (Adams et al, 2015). Both quantitative and qualitative methods can be utilised depending on the research question or objective. Grassroots knowledge production calls for decolonial knowledge production to disrupt dominant conceptualisations and produce counter narratives with the othered. Activist scholars can utilise methods such as photo voice (Wang & Burris, 1997; LaPorter et al., 2014) and appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987; LaPorter et al, 2014) which are methods of consciousness raising that allow the voice of marginalised groups to be heard.

Researches informed by the constructivist paradigm tend to be "more phenomenological, interpretive, holistic and humanistic" (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010: 370). The focus is on the "lifeworld" of the participants and the meanings they make of their socio-ecological contexts. These social constructions are generated

through reflexivity and dialogue and consequently qualitative methods that produce thick descriptions and textual primary data are used more often than not. The world is therefore subjectively interpreted and experienced in unique phenomenological ways producing idiographic emic statements of reality. These methods help to access and understand African cosmology and indigenous ways of knowledge generation (Mkhize & Ndimande-Hlongwa, 2014; Nwoye, 2015).

Research from the post-positivist paradigm uses a variety of tools such as methods surveys for estimating the extent of a problem within a community (incidence, prevalence and needs assessments); quasi-experimental designs (pre-test post-test designs, cohort designs and time series designs); programme evaluation (block environmental inventory), and social impact assessments. Qualitative methods can also be used to generate hypotheses and as a method of triangulation.

Relevance of community psychology in Zimbabwean and African cultural contexts

Community psychology represents a paradigm shift in psychology. Psychology has in general been inclined towards the individualistic ideology. Focus has predominantly been with the subject principle, focusing on altering and rehabilitating the individual deemed to be (mal)adaptive. It is this focus that has generally led to the apparent invisibility of psychology in African and more so in Zimbabwean contexts. This individualistic focus is incongruent with African values.

Of ivory tower professionalism

The history of mainstream psychology in Zimbabwe has not been a very proud one. Psychology has remained elitist far detached from our local realities and invisible (seemingly irrelevant) to the ordinary Zimbabwean. When psychology was launched in the then Rhodesia, it was classified as a "white" profession. It was only after independence that an attempt was made to reintegrate the hitherto alienated discipline with the generality. The first black African students enrolled into the programme in the 1980s at the University of Zimbabwe and there was a ray of hope for the discipline. Today it has largely become a black profession but ironically the discipline has failed reach out to the ordinary Zimbabwean and thus remained inconspicuous.

One of reasons for this failure lies in the values of mainstream psychology with its overarching focus on the individual. Mainstream psychology focuses on subject-psychotechnics (adjusting the individual to the environment). Pathology and maladaptation are deemed to be located in the individual and thus it is the individual who must be "treated". This is tantamount to blaming the victim. Community psychology in contrast "offers a framework for working with those marginalised by the social system

that leads to self-aware change with an emphasis on value-based participatory work and the forging of alliances. It is a way of working that is pragmatic and reflexive, whilst not wedded to any particular orthodoxy of method." (Burton, Boyle, Harris & Kagan, 2007: 219). As such community psychology is one alternative to the dominant individualistic psychology practised in most countries. It is this orientation that makes the discipline relevant in African contexts.

Community psychology and the African worldview

The individualistic focus of mainstream psychology is incongruous with African values whose hallmark is a sense of community and collectivism. Collectivism and individualism represent diametrical sets of values, norms, assumptions and ideologies that vary across cultures and are expressed in social behaviour. Individualism is associated with independence, autonomy, and emotional detachment from others (Triandis, 1989). Collectivism involves cooperation, emotional attachment to others, concern with opinion and attention to family and relatives. In individualistic cultures, most people's social behaviour is largely determined by personal goals that overlap only slightly with goals of collectives such as family, work group and tribe. In collective cultures social behaviour is determined largely by goals shared with some collectives. Values of community psychology such as a sense of community dovetail with the collectivist values typical of African contexts.

African scholars regard African concepts of the individual and self to be almost totally dependent on and subordinate to social entities and cultural processes. Mbiti (1969) believes that the individual has little latitude for self-determination outside the context of the traditional family and community. He writes: "whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole group, and whatever happens to the whole group happens to the individual. The individual can only say: '*I am because we are and since we are therefore I am*'" (Mbiti,1969: 109; emphases added). This is cardinal to understanding the African world view. When we juxtapose this inclination with community psychology's ecological and contextual perspective it makes discipline germane in African contexts.

Nyasani (1997) refers to what he calls the "African mind". He believes that "in the same way reference is made to the Greek and Roman civilisation, it must be quite appropriate and legitimate to refer to a particular strand of mind that is quite peculiar to Africa and which shapes the prevailing conditions and permits itself to adapt to those conditions" (Nyasani, 1997: 51). African, Asian and European minds are products of unique cultural edifices and cultural streams that arose from environmental conditioning and long standing cultural traditions. Within the African cultural stream, Nyasani (1997) claims are psychological and moral characteristics pertaining to African identity, personality and dignity.

Mkhize and Ndimande-Hlongwa (2014) and Nwoye (2015) point out that throughout the African Diaspora people of African descent are linked by shared values that are fundamental features of African identity and culture. These for example include hospitality, friendliness, the consensus and common framework seeking principle, *Ubuntu,* and the emphasis on community rather than the individual. These features typically underpin the variations of African culture and identity everywhere. Thus the existence of African identity is not in doubt. The community orientation and consensus seeking principle is in line with community psychology's inclination towards citizen participation and collaboration. Community psychology is concerned with how people feel, think, experience and act as they work together.

South African philosophy professor Shutte (1993), citing the xhosa proverb *"umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu"* (a person is a person through persons) notes that this proverb "is a xhosa expression of a notion common to all African languages and traditional culture" (Shutte, 1993: 46). Indeed, the Shona culture (in Zimbabwe) is replete with synonymous proverbs such as *"rume rimwe harikombi churu"* (no man is an island). What can be deduced from these proverbs is the peculiar sense interdependence of persons on others for the exercise, development and fulfilment of their goals that is recognised in African traditional thought. It is the feature of communitarianism.

Writing about community psychology in Cameroon, Nsamenang, Fru and Brown (2007: 393) note that "the nascent field of community psychology is an intervention in Cameroon, par excellence; because the communitarian spirit of efforts that are indigenous to a community to improve individual and collective destiny existed before the service sectors that manifests elements of community psychology". In this sense community psychology is a new label for a set of African practices in agricultural productivity, group hunting, collective defence and child protection. Thus the sense of community is endemic in African communities which make community psychology very relevant and applicable in these contexts.

Masolo (1995) and Mkabela (2015) identify and discuss sociality, patience, tolerance, sympathy, and acceptance as areas in which the African mind seems to reveal itself in a dramatic way. It reveals itself through what may be rightly called a congenital trait of sociality or sociability. This further reveals itself as an endowment of patience and tolerance and a disposition for mutual sympathy and acceptance. Shona idioms in Zimbabwe such as *"murombo munh"* (the poor deserve respect) or *"seka urema wafa"* (you can only shun the disabled when you are dead) epitomise the tolerance and acceptance that is characteristic of African society. These key traits are the bedrock for a key theme that permeates discourse in community psychology: diversity. Community psychology adopts a particular ideological orientation towards the concept of diversity.

Diversity occupies an important place in the history and future of community psychology and in this regard demarcates it from mainstream psychology.

Senghor (1966), in comparing Africans and Europeans argues that there is a unique African world view on what he describes as "being" and "life forces". He writes:

> *"The African has always and everywhere presented a concept of the world that is diametrically opposed to the traditional philosophy of Europe. The latter is essentially static, objective and dichotomous in that it makes an absolute distinction between body and soul, matter and spirit ... The African on the other hand, conceives the world beyond the diversity of its forms as a fundamentally mobile yet unique reality that seeks synthesis ... This reality is being, in the ontological sense of the word, the life force" (Senghor, 1966: 4).s*

Thus human beings continuously influence each other, either directly or indirectly by way of transcendental forces through collective consciousness (Shutte, 1993).

Community Psychology as a contextualist psychology

Community psychology emphasises multiple levels of analysis and intervention that take into account the individual and his or her immediate interpersonal context. The influence of life forces is acknowledged in community psychology. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory of developments-in-context or the ecology of human developments highlights a number of forces that influence people-in-context. When African philosophers talk about "life forces" and ancestors, Bronfenbrenner expounds on exo- and macro level systems. By including exo- and macro-systems in his theory, Bronfenbrenner recognised the influence upon human behaviour and development of the wider environment and of higher order systems. A macro-system consists of the wider pattern of ideology or culture to which the person belongs. This systems perspective is not alien in African contexts. Life in African communities is viewed as subject to other forces that predate the individual and some which are outside conscious experience (Mkhize, 2004b). Thus for one to have a holistic understanding of individuals in this context one needs an expanded gestalt view emphasising multi-level analysis; a view which is typical of community psychology.

The biomedical orientation of mainstream psychology gives credence to the deficit model of human functioning based on the dismissal of and beliefs in the individual's incapability to help themselves (Nsamenang, Fru & Browne, 2007). Community psychology is steeped towards positive psychology and the asset based approach. It is an orientation that emphasises capacity building. When one looks at the colonial imprint on Africa, one comes to the conclusion that colonialists unleashed unsolicited social Darwinism on Africa. Colonial experts and successors had inaccurate

assumptions about African knowledge systems and indigenous community processes. The coloniser promoted the theory (based on the deficit model) that the African was incompetent and armed with such a mindset they arrogated to themselves the "burden" to solve Africa's problems by bringing "development" to the Dark continent (Nsamenang, Fru & Browne, 2007).

Richards (1985) highlights how the Western experts who were sent to "redeem" Africa were more ignorant of how Africans faced the problems they were called upon tackle. Because they were blinded by Darwinian theorisation they failed to notice any worth in African collaborative ways and supportive spirit. In consequence they introduced deficit models and "a cure that turned to be worse than the disease" (Scott, 1998: 280). This is what essentially makes community psychology relevant in our context given that for centuries the voice of the African has been subverted. Community psychology praxis does not assume that communities are blank slates but rather communities are seen as the experts with practitioners acting as collaborators. Community psychologists explore the nature of oppression in partnership with hitherto marginalised communities. Crucially it is the communities that decide their own destiny.

A look at the socio-ecological landscape of Africa reveals a plethora of "development" initiatives instigated at the behest of multi-lateral agencies and donors. While the purpose of these endeavours is seemingly noble, they bypass Africa's indigenous social capital. Such strategies sideline the vast majority of Africans. The pervasive paternalism in donor generosity and helping attitudes towards Africans stems from the perception of the African as a "desperate beggar imprisoned by evolution and incapable of any achievement" (Nsamenang, 2005: 282). It smacks of benevolent bigotry.

There is no doubt that African social thought and practises contain many clues from which from which "experts", donors and psychologists might benefit. Unfortunately, like colonial expert of yesteryear today's budding African psychologists still do not expect "backward" Africans to work out any relevant solutions to their problems nor possess any lessons for them as purveyors of modernity and progress (Nsamenang, Fru & Browne, 2007). However, community psychology seeks to live up to the social justice and empowerment dictum "nothing for us without us". Miller (1999) classically conceives social justice as to each his or her due. Community psychology besides being value driven makes praxis oriented efforts to overcome social injustice through social action in partnership with marginalised and disenfranchised communities. This leitmotif makes the discipline relevant in Africa and Zimbabwe.

Mainstream psychology has remained conspicuously inconspicuous in Africa. Where it was conspicuous as in South Africa some practitioners are known to have supported the

apartheid system. Whether they did so in their individual capacity or as psychologists is neither here nor there. In Zimbabwe most practitioners are contently tucked in private practice far detached from the lives of the ordinary. Community psychologists seek to "give away" psychology, and to share knowledge with communities to make the discipline more relevant in African contexts. They recognise that there are many other community practitioners who share some or all of the values and principles of community psychology. For instance: "It is therefore not necessary, to be a psychologist, to work community psychologically" (Kagan, Lawthom, Duckett & Burton, 2006: 175). The field seeks to reactivate dormant psycho-social systems that typified African societies but have since been abandoned. It is these systems that need to be (re)membered (wa Thiong'o, 2012) to bring back sociality and meaning in African communities. Village heads, religious leaders, elders and community leaders need to be equipped to ensure the mainstreaming of psychology.

However, despite the fact that community psychology appears to be more at home in Africa than in European contexts which emphasis individualism, a word of caution is necessary. Community psychologists in Africa need to "walk the walk" circumspectly. African societies are by no means homogenous. Africans because of colonialism and globalisation (especially in urbanites) have a hybrid cultural character. This is what we like to refer to as an ephemeral personality; a classic example of identity crisis. The core values of Africans have for decades been denigrated and Africans are vulnerable individuals with lives full of contradiction, vacillating between "modernity" and tradition. Thus solutions cannot be proffered through armchair theorisation. A learning posture or discovery mode is what is required. Community psychologists "would do well to perceive their role as first and always a learner" (Ngaujah, 2003: 9). This brings with it an understanding that every community is unique and what worked in another community cannot be transplanted onto another community.

Conclusion

This paper discussed the themes, values, and methods of community psychology and showed how they fit in African and Zimbabwean cultural values and worldviews. We contended that community psychology with its emphasis on transversal knowledge and epistemic diversity (Mbembe, 2015) is germane to Zimbabwean and African contexts. The values and principles of community psychology such as a sense of community, empowerment, citizen participation, social justice, diversity, collaboration and community strengths are compatible with African values.

Thus notwithstanding its Euro-American genesis, the discipline is very relevant within the African context and is far from being an ivory tower. As such, it would not be anathema to suggest that it is in the "cradle of humanity", Africa, where community

psychology will eventually find its perfect resting place. If practitioners will approach communities with a counter hegemonic agenda as collaborators and not experts; there is a world of unlimited possibilities for community psychology in Africa. What is essential is to view Africans not as a tabula rasa but as people who do have values and indigenous knowledge systems which only need to be (re)-membered (wa Thiong'o, 2012) and "(re)-inscribed in the present towards the future" (Mignolo, 2011: 49) and not changed. There is a critical need for context-sensitive practitioners who will not necessarily seek to "solve" Africa's problems but would rather seek to help communities attain existential realities and community psychologists are the practitioners.

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