

## RE-POLITICIZING RACE IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: USING POSTCOLONIAL PSYCHOLOGY AND PHOTOVOICE METHODS FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

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### Abstract.

*How far can community development lead to transformative social change within the context of global north-south development agendas? Drawing on the works of Frantz Fanon and Steve Biko, this article explores the possibilities of postcolonial psychology for community-based change. Findings from a youth intervention based on Photovoice methods and involving 51 young people from four urban communities in Sub-Saharan Africa reveal that racial identity, self-determination, and social inequality remain key concerns. The paper discusses the advantages and limitations of postcolonial psychology for mobilising communities towards change and the role of participatory action research methods such as Photovoice for marginalised communities to gain widespread recognition and promote transformative action in a globalised context.*

**Keywords:** *development, race, community mobilisation, postcolonial psychology, Photovoice*

### INTRODUCTION.

Psychological research into community development has moved away from the limited impact of individualised solutions to behaviour change towards interventions focusing on the social context. Community mobilisation is one such strategy that encourages the involvement of communities in creating the enabling contexts in which change can take place (Campbell & Cornish, 2010). Despite the important contributions that community mobilisation has made, communities and nations in the southern hemisphere are still considered “underdeveloped” in the global development paradigm. This situation demands further investigations into the possibilities and challenges of community mobilisation. Researchers have found that mobilising communities towards social change can have the ambivalent effect of making them complicit in the socio-political structures or beliefs that perpetuate their marginalization (Blankenship, Biradavolu, Jena, & George, 2010). These structures are indicative of ambiguous political environments that limit the potential of development efforts. Studies have exposed the hidden agendas of powerful development actors who advocate a community development approach yet exercise ever-increasing control in the internal affairs of developing countries (Mosse & Lewis, 2005) and in the way of life of communities

(Aveling, 2010; Campbell, 2010). In this paper, I argue for a re-politicization of community development interventions, locating race as a key mediator in development discourses and practices and mobilising communities to deconstruct their own internalized beliefs and the agendas of powerful development actors. The ideas presented are based on the results of a community development project that took place in multiple sites in two countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and inspired by a postcolonial approach to social change.

### **A POSTCOLONIAL APPROACH.**

Postcolonial theory is fitting for this analysis as it arose largely in response to the development era, as a form of political critique to development discourse and practice. Postcolonial analyses are said to have demonstrated the link between colonial rule and international development (Kothari, 2006). The postcolonial author Homi Bhabha describes the aim of postcolonial theory as "... [intervening] in those ideological discourses of modernity that attempt to give a hegemonic 'normality' to the uneven development and the differential, often disadvantaged histories of nations, races, communities, peoples" (Bhabha, 1994: 171). Other critics have compared development to a mythical project that serves to conceal the continued exploitation of the global south by the global north post-independence (Rodney, 1972; Ngugi, 2002), one that fixes people as underdeveloped through representational and identification processes (Said, 1978; Escobar, 1995), and sustained by racialising images of global poverty and underdevelopment (Dogra, 2007, 2012; Kessi, 2011). These images continue to be used in psychological research to justify international differences in development levels (De-Graft Aikins & Marks, 2007).

### **Ideological and identity concerns in postcolonial development.**

In much development theory and practice, what is often missing is a critical understanding of the meaning behind the discourses and practices of community mobilisation. Robert Chambers' paper, *Ideas for development*, discusses the vocabulary of current international development discourses that are central to community mobilisation and points to terms that are particularly ambivalent, such as "empowerment", "ownership", "partnership", and "participation" (2004: 28). All of these are aimed at radicalising community development by addressing power dynamics in north-south development encounters where the so-called beneficiaries of development programmes would not only *participate in* but also *have control* over community interventions. However, studies have shown that such radical discourses are easily re-appropriated by a liberal agenda. In the UK for example, ideas of empowerment, participation and active citizenship have been used to make individuals and communities increasingly responsible for services previously provided by the welfare state, transforming people's rights into responsibilities (Ledwith, 2001). In globalised contexts, social psychological studies have highlighted how empowerment and community mobilisation have become central to the language of international development on HIV/AIDS interventions (Campbell, Cornish, & Skovdal, 2012), yet international organizations tend to retain power in north-south relations. This can be seen through complex aid chains that often result in unequal partnerships at community level (Kelly & Birdsall, 2010), and through the ability of international development organisations to determine the criteria of a successful project (Seckinelgin, 2012), thereby controlling the rationale, course, and outcome of development interventions. This situation points to the overemphasis on economic power as an indicator of global

development levels (Escobar, 1995) and the legitimisation of northern expertise and knowledge to solve development challenges in the south (Jovchelovitch, 2007).

The above examples demonstrate the ways in which uneven north-south dynamics are reproduced in community development encounters. In this paper, I will argue that these dynamics are facilitated, fuelled and sustained by racialising practices. In a reading of identity in postcolonial contexts, Baaz (2005) has noted how racialising beliefs enable professional development workers from the north to impose their ideas and methods in participatory projects in southern communities and dismiss their southern partners as passive and lacking in commitment. Addressing race in community mobilisation may therefore point to the less visible ways in which radical discourses of development can easily revert into practices that sustain globalised patterns of uneven development. Notwithstanding the existing body of knowledge exploring race and western influence in development theory and practice (Esteva, 1992; Munck & O'Hearn, 1999; Goudge, 2003; Kothari, 2006), little is known about how lay understandings of development amongst individuals and communities may be imbued with racialised understandings of poverty and development that contribute to maintaining the status quo. Wale & Foster (2007: 38) have described lay understandings of poverty and development amongst privileged whites in South Africa and how, through a racialising discourse, they "argue against attempts to re-distribute white power and privilege". In doing so, whites construct the black poor as immoral and undeserving. This paper thus contributes to this body of knowledge and explores lay understandings of poverty and development in African communities in a postcolonial context and how addressing race in these discourses may pave the way for a more critical consciousness of globalised forms of oppression.

## **POSTCOLONIAL PSYCHOLOGY AND COMMUNITY MOBILISATION.**

The postcolonial psychological concepts explored in this paper come from the work of Frantz Fanon and Steve Biko. My aim is to build upon existing psychological research into community mobilisation to address the above concerns of postcoloniality. Current studies into community mobilisation are concerned with both individual and social determinants that influence the potential for community members to participate in social change, such as promoting empowerment and strengthening social capital (Campbell & Cornish, 2010), otherwise referring to the internal and relational mechanisms of power necessary for social change. The following section introduces the Fanonian (1986) concepts of internalization and projection as instrumental in understanding the politics of internal and relational mechanisms by which powerful development agendas insidiously impose themselves into the consciousness of communities. I thereafter introduce Biko's (1978) principles of Black Consciousness (BC) as providing the context for resistance, by transforming internal and relational forms of power into a productive drive for change. Postcolonial psychological reasoning implies a close relationship between consciousness and social change, and addressing the above propositions can provide a better understanding of the complexities surrounding what people *can actually do* to change their circumstances.

### **Internalization and projection.**

The work of psychiatrist and revolutionary Frantz Fanon has influenced the field of critical psychological understandings of racial identity in postcolonial and diasporan contexts. Fanon (1986, as cited by Hook, 2004a: 101) speaks of internalization as the process whereby "external, socio-historical reality is assimilated into 'internal' and

subjective reality”, showing how individuals are created by the context in which they are located: “even the contents of the unconscious mind, of dreams, fantasies and so on (...)” is shaped by that reality. In postcolonial societies, Fanon argues that individuals unconsciously take on racialising ideas of themselves and believe in their inferiority. An outcome of this is projection, when individuals distribute their own inferiority complexes onto others as a “means of avoiding guilt” (Hook, 2004b: 121). As individuals take on attitudes that undermine others, they are distributing the blame for their own oppression. Internalization and projection thus illustrate two mechanisms of power – internal and relational. In the context of community development work, individuals and communities are often described as lacking in knowledge and capabilities (Jovchelovitch, 2007; Kessi, 2011) or as passive actors in development projects (Baaz, 2005) through racialising representations of global poverty (Dogra, 2012). These descriptions demonstrate the limitations of development interventions that can result in lower levels of empowerment and social capital and thus reduced possibilities for community mobilisation.

### **Black consciousness (BC).**

Black consciousness emerged in the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa in the 1970s. Steve Biko, a co-founder of the Black Consciousness Movement, called for the liberation of the black mind as a prerequisite for freedom (Hook, 2004a). “Black Consciousness ... seeks to infuse the black community with a new-found pride in themselves, their efforts, their value-systems, their culture, their religion and their outlook to life” (Biko, 1978: 63). BC further advocated for self-reliance and initiative (Leatt, Kneifel, & Nurmberger, 1986) through a community conscientization process that engaged people to unite through social activities that would enhance their access to resources. BC has been further defined as “mutual knowledge” and “black solidarity” (Manganyi, 1973) pointing to the common experience of being black and the implications that this poses for relating to others. It is not simply about skin colour but what skin colour signifies for relating to the world and for building a shared consciousness of a cultural heritage of racialism and alienation of self (Biko, 1978). Solidarity signifies the desire for recognition and establishing community feeling (Manganyi, 1973). Introducing BC in community development work, would engage people to become aware of the impact that racialising discourses and practices of development have on their daily realities and represents a unifying force for individuals and communities towards self-determination and empowerment by addressing internal and relational dynamics. BC has been described as a “new stage of cognition” underscored by a “revolutionary humanism”, representing both an awakening of the mind and a desire for action (Gibson, 2004). Community mobilisation around self-help activities was central to BC and therefore relevant to a study on community development.

### **PHOTOVOICE METHODS.**

These ideas and concepts are explored through the findings of participatory community-based action research initiatives with young people from four marginalised communities in Tanzania and South Africa. The research did not constitute a comparative exploration of these two countries, but rather explored the realities and experiences of 51 participants from multiple sites between the ages of 12 and 19 over a total period of 26 months between 2008 and 2011. To run the projects, collaborations were established with youth centres and schools in which the projects took place and participants were selected by the establishments themselves. The data were collected

through a series of seven workshops in four different urban communities, two in Dar es Salaam, one in Soweto, and one in Cape Town. A combination of methods were used, including focus groups, Photovoice, and individual interviews with data incorporating focus group and interview transcripts, flipcharts from critical discussion sessions, and photo-stories (photographs accompanied by written captions).

Photovoice is a community-based participatory research method (CBPR) using a specific photographic technique (Wang & Burris, 1997). Grounded in participatory action research (PAR), it seeks to minimize the role of the researcher by encouraging participants to take an active role in the research process. In PAR, the knowledge and experience of participants foreground the outcomes of the research encounter. Participants are considered to be the experts of their own lives and the researchers act as facilitators in the transformation of that knowledge into critical understandings of the social context of the participants and the possibilities for change (Brydon-Miller, 1997). Photovoice is an approach to knowledge production that draws on a critical approach. Its theoretical foundations are taken from Freirian ideas of critical consciousness and feminist standpoint theory (Wang & Burris, 1997), which are central to critical psychological research (Campbell, 2004; Shefer, Boonzaier, & Kiguwa, 2006). It is a tool typically used with communities that are marginalised from decision-making and access to resources in a given context and promotes empowerment and social change. These tenets of Photovoice thus collude with a postcolonial approach focusing on BC and the postcolonial principle that “it is from those who have suffered the sentence of history – subjugation, domination, diaspora, displacement – that we learn our most enduring lessons for living and thinking” (Bhabha, 1994: 246).

The aims of the project were:

- To gain insight on participants’ representations of poverty and development
- To gather their perspectives on the challenges and assets existing in their communities
- To critically discuss the causes of the realities they face, and what they could do to change their situation.

This process took place over four phases:

*Phase 1:* The workshops began with a focus group on the meaning of “development”. These included questions such as: What does development mean to you? Is your community/country developed? How would you describe a community/country that is developed? The focus groups were aimed at analyzing participants understanding of development and possible levels of internalization.

*Phase 2:* The second phase of the workshop began with the Photovoice component, comprising the photography training and the production of photo-stories about social change in the community. The photography training included how to use digital cameras, lighting, framing, and downloading photographs onto a computer; followed by critical discussions on the role of photography in conveying messages; how to represent community assets and challenges through photo-novella; and to discuss the causes of community assets and challenges through photo-elicitation exercises. These activities were aimed at developing skills and confidence in the use of the equipment as well as a critical consciousness on the issues discussed.

*Phase 3:* When the training was completed, participants selected a story idea of their choice relating to their community and were given the cameras for several days to develop a photo-story on their own. In this process, they were also encouraged to approach other members of their community in order to gain more perspectives and insights for their story. The final photo-stories consisted of a series of photographs accompanied by written text providing an insightful commentary on social change in the community. Each Photovoice project ended with a series of exhibitions open to the public showcasing participants' works. The exhibitions were aimed at raising awareness in the community, lobbying policy-makers, and represented an important source of recognition for the participants.

*Phase 4:* The final stage was a series of individual interviews that took place six to twelve months after the project to gather participants' impressions of the project. This activity was aimed at evaluating whether the project had any lasting impact on the lives of the participants and their communities.

The process described above coincides with the Photovoice Model developed by Catalani & Minkler (2010) (Figure 1) and corresponds to the Freirian action-reflection cycle for the development of critical consciousness (Brydon-Miller, 1997). During the Photovoice training, participants engaged in ongoing and critical discussions involving action-reflection, action being the documenting of issues through photographs and reflection being the critical feedback on the issues arising. The final products were the photo-stories showcased in publications and exhibitions that were aimed at raising awareness and sensitizing the public (policy effect) on the priorities articulated by participants (community needs & assets) who gained recognition from the community in this process (empowerment).

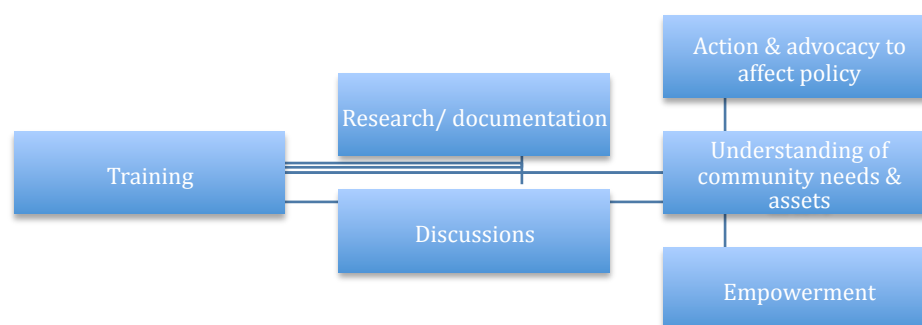


Figure 1. Photovoice impact model (adapted from Catalani & Minkler, 2010).

## FINDINGS.

The findings below include data from each phase of the project to illustrate the different ways that participants conceptualised and explained development. The findings are organized into three general themes:

1. Explaining development: internal and relational concerns
2. Re-politicizing development: a critique of powerful actors
3. Re-politicizing development: community relations and resources.

### Explaining development: Internal and relational concerns.

Development studies and practices are increasingly taking into account social and psychological measures in their approach (Chambers, 2004). However, the field of development has traditionally been more concerned with measures of economic

performance, such as GDP and per capita income (Escobar, 1995). Participants' perspectives confirmed the extent to which development was primarily conceptualised in terms of economic wealth and infrastructural resources, such as the existence of roads and industry (see Kessi, 2011). Drawing on these definitions, participants also described the differences in development between urban and rural areas, between African countries, and between Africa and the West.

**Esta:** *"There is a lot of poverty in the villages but many people in the towns are wealthy."*

**Lerato:** *"[South Africa] is a developed country in Africa but in the whole world it's still developing."*

Development was understood by participants as a relative concept, thereby introducing a comparative framework through which they located themselves on a development hierarchy and in a globalised context. By positioning themselves on a development scale, the young participants, who were from urban areas, attributed themselves as more developed than people living in rural areas and their countries as more developed than other African countries. This practice highlights the significance of development as a discourse on which participants attached meaning to locate themselves in the world and therefore suggests an important basis for relating to others by introducing identity differences on local, regional, and global levels.

When probed further, participants also found explanations in the register of cultural characteristics. For some, development was:

**Aisha:** *"... people who have a western education"; and*

**Rose:** *"... people who speak English."*

The above testimonies demonstrate participants' difficulties in defining a developed state with reference to their own cultural register and allude to racialised understandings of development levels. By describing the English language and a western education as symbols of development, Aisha and Rose are inscribing and fixing onto themselves and their communities the status of inferior identities and knowledges. Most of the participants in the project expressed their wish to live in western countries where, in their opinion, people are developed and educated (see Kessi, 2011). These views were reinforced by direct reference to the link between economic wealth and being white:

**Aisha:** *"Tanzanians think that whites are better because they have more money ..."*

**Cynthia:** *"Tanzanians, we despise ourselves, Europeans think they are better than us and that their colour is beautiful."*

In these quotes, Aisha and Cynthia not only assert that being white is a symbol of wealth, beauty, and superiority but believe that Tanzanians and Europeans in general share this perspective, suggesting that racialised beliefs are widespread in African communities and beyond. Simon also exposed the mythical dimension of racialising

differences in development between the West and Africa, reinforcing the extent to which these beliefs have become widespread and accepted:

**Simon:** “... there is this saying in the village that there was a hoe and a book, and a white man and an African, and they were told to choose. The African went for the hoe and the white man for the book ...”

Simon’s explanation also presents these differences between whites and Africans as pre-determined by mythical beliefs, saturating any further explanation and concealing the history and impact of colonisation.

The above perspectives allude to the psychological internalization of racialised beliefs in lay understandings of development in postcolonial settings. The emphasis on western education and English language as markers of development exposes the cultural alienation and dispossession apparent in postcolonial settings. Fanon (1986) refers to this as laccification, the embodiment of an inferiority complex resulting from cultural alienation, through which the black subject engages in self-negating practices and aspires to all things associated with white culture. He further describes this encounter with whiteness as a pathological process where “a normal black child who has grown up in the bosom of a normal family will be made abnormal by the slightest contact with the white world” (Fanon, 1986: 117). Hence, accentuating whiteness as a symbol of power and superiority exposes the importance of exploring the psychology of race as a significant factor in people’s understandings of themselves. Economic and infrastructural concerns are not sufficient in explaining people’s understandings of poverty and development as these are complicated by meanings related to racialised identities. Development spaces thus become pathological when they perpetuate a particular contact with whiteness that undermines the knowledge and capabilities of postcolonial communities.

The concept of development implies a hierarchy of differences that are both material and cultural, the cultural aspect being imbued with racialised content. Esta and Lerato’s above explanations of development led them to see themselves as lesser than others but also to project onto others an inferior status: the poverty in the villages and the less developed state of other African countries. The psychological process of projection highlights the redistribution of this substandard onto others. Critical literature on development demonstrates how people often attribute the problems of development onto others through racialising images of the ignorance, passivity, and irresponsibility of Africans (Baaz, 2005; Dogra, 2012). Indeed, Esta went on to describe poverty as “ignorance, laziness, and lack of education” whilst other participants described members of their communities as irresponsible and unwilling to work thereby distributing the blame for their circumstances onto others (see Kessi, 2011).

The processes of internalization and projection expose how the racialising beliefs associated with uneven development produce pessimistic and naïve understandings about self and others. They not only conceal the effect of racial dominance and oppression but also present western knowledge and practices as superior (Jovchelovitch, 2007). One participant, Thabang, captures this point well when he refers to development as “the power to dominate.”



Racialisation thus fuels images of whiteness and blackness that contribute to our understandings of development by fixing north-south differences in categories of rich and poor along racial lines (Dogra, 2007). These beliefs undermine the possibilities for community empowerment and mobilisation in postcolonial contexts as they prevent people from associating development with positive images of blackness. Drawing on BC principles, the project attempted to deconstruct many of these beliefs and engage young people in a process of critical reflection in order to find alternative causes and explanations to their lived realities.

**Re-politicizing development: A critique of powerful actors.**

During the second phase of the project, involving critical discussion groups, participants were prompted to start introducing historical and political explanations to underdevelopment and racialising difference and develop new understandings of development actors and practices. For instance:

**Shose:** *“... do you know anything about the history of Tanzania that would explain why Tanzania is poor while other countries are rich?”*

**Biubwa:** *“Because of the past, the way our chiefs here were defeated and all the problems started from there. Then there was colonialism and still now we are exploited. We used to govern ourselves and then the Europeans came and colonised us and corrupted our leaders ...”*

**Lerato:** *“I think the apartheid system has a lot to do with what is happening now because people are not working, they are not educated, they are not able to go to school and work for the jobs that they wanted to do ...”*

In these explanations, Biubwa and Lerato refer to historical events, in particular the significance of colonization and apartheid as explanations to the current situation in Tanzania and South Africa. To explain further, other participants broached the role of development aid as undermining the self-reliance and self-determination of people and therefore as impediments to development:

**Naima:** *“Aid is bad because in order to develop we need to be self-sufficient. I think they give aid to deceive us ... that’s why we are not developing.”*

**Eline:** *“We are getting everything from outside, it affects us, other people are like maybe lazy because we know that we can get everything from outside so there is no effort to improve.”*

Naima’s reference to the need for self-sufficiency indicates a more radical discourse of self-determination and self-reliance, which was prevalent in post-independence discourses on development (Nyerere, 1968) and central to BC (Biko, 1978). These statements suggest that top-down development efforts not only undermine the possibility for community mobilisation but also allude to the complicity of international development actors in arresting community empowerment and action. The discourse that emerged highlights a distancing from the positive understandings of western influence that stood in stark contrast to the testimonies in the previous section. Maisha’s comment below inserts the role of race into these dynamics:

**Maisha:** *“... because of the racial discrimination...that was the beginning of the mistreatment and because we were mistreated and then we started mistreating each other, it moved from men to women to children, we created a wrong belief from there and finally we came to mistreat ourselves.”*

For Maisha, the racial oppression of colonization was a central component to the current dynamics apparent in postcolonial communities. She alludes to racial discrimination as foundational to internalized and relational forms of mistreatment that not only impact on the self-concept of individuals but also on how individuals may treat others as a result. She goes on to say that: “when people say that white skin is better, they are racist against themselves” suggesting a cognitive process of self-hatred and self-denial which is informed by race and that occurs in contexts where individuals do not have at their disposal a repertoire of positive cultural traits and values on which to construct their identities. This resonates with Fanon’s ideas of racial alienation, a distancing from the self and one’s social context resulting from internalization, as well as Biko’s writings on the role of the mind as central to oppression and domination in all spheres of life (Hook, 2004a). The principles of BC are aimed at reverting this situation through a concientization process that would build a collective self-esteem and inspire a desire for social action (Gibson, 2004). Hence, when prompted to think about how to overcome internalized forms of racism, one participant spoke of his experiences of racial oppression as providing him with the tools to enact change:

**Thabang:** *“To me, racism affects me in a good way. Because I get to build my self-esteem too. You see, you don’t get to grow if you are not given challenges. And challenges are not there to destroy but to build us, you see, if we let challenges destroy us, then what are they really meant for?”*

Thabang sees the possibility of change and sees himself and others who share experiences of racism as agents of change in the community and their own suffering as a source of advantage thereby challenging the dynamics of oppressive power into something productive. Another participant, Esta, also agrees that: “The sufferings are the things that make people change.”

The Photovoice process was instrumental in this endeavor. The photography training and the documenting of stories in their communities provided participants with the experience of engaging in social action and afforded them social recognition for their own knowledge and capabilities for change. As Juma, Remy, and Mussa stated:

**Juma:** *“Art and photography can deliver messages in the community ...”*

**Remy:** *“These studies have opened my mind before I knew photos are just for keeping in the album but now I know that pictures can be used to educate the society...I never thought one day other people would be looking at my photographs.”*

**Mussa:** *“Personally I am happy because I have understood the lessons. I had never used a computer before but now I can use a laptop, right now I can even volunteer to teach others and help her [Shose] in those other places.”*

The project triggered a will in young people to document more stories, to inspire others and got them talking about a range of social issues and mechanisms for social change

in their communities. The combination of BC and participatory action research thus engaged participants in reaching alternative understandings of their position in a global development context through a critical perspective on the behaviour of powerful development actors and a shared understanding of the impact of racialism (through colonization and apartheid) and how these legacies were played out in the community.

### **Re-politicizing development: Community relations and resources.**

This final theme describes the ways in which young people used photo-stories to explain development (or the lack of development) in their communities. Breaking from a previous discourse of material resources, many of these stories focused on relational dynamics. The following photo-story entitled the “Fence of disgrace” was produced by a 12 year-old boy from one of the most deprived townships in South Africa.

**Mandla:** *“Behind this fence dirty things and shacks are filthy ... On the right side of this fence, things are beautiful and on the left, things are dirty. This is the fence of disgrace.”*



Mandla's photo-story challenges the notion of poverty as a marker of underdevelopment and suggests that the problem of development is the problem of inequality – and more importantly the disgrace brought by the coexistence between rich and poor. With this story, he introduces the relationship or *lack of* relationship between the advantaged and less advantaged, pointing to the importance of relational dynamics. Simon also takes up this theme with his story on mental illness. Referring to the plight of a mentally ill individual in his community, who had been abandoned, he speaks of the need for cooperation between people for development to take place:

**Simon:** *“There's no cooperation between one person and another person, there is no relationship between one class of people and other people ... then when we talk about development and solving problems, we cannot solve them individually. So that's what am saying, and that's the source of this thing, the problems.”*

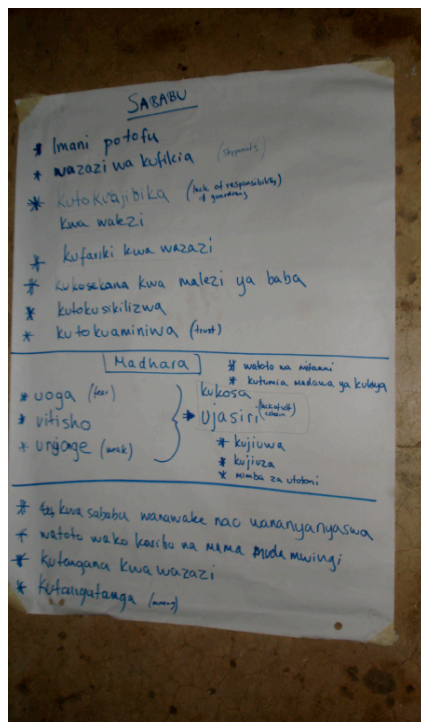
In this story, Simon is alluding to collective action, a key strategy of black consciousness. In this case, he refers to mobilising collaboration across class divisions for development to take place.

Furthermore, unity amongst women was a key concern expressed by participants. Young women often spoke about difficult family dynamics. They explained how, as a

result of breakdown in marriages and/or the loss of a parent, they ended up living with stepmothers or were sent to live with relatives where they became the victims of mistreatment and abuse, leading many of them to a life on the streets. As Fatuma explains:

**Fatuma:** “My uncle’s wife didn’t want me to stay with them. She didn’t give me food and other things I needed. I told my uncle. He then asked her but she denied it and beat me so I couldn’t tell anymore.”

However, through the critical discussions of their stories, their understandings shifted from a language of blame towards broader perspectives on the causes of this situation (see Figure 2). They explained that stepmothers and aunts were often mistreated themselves, and burdened with additional children in contexts where family resources were already limited. These explanations then referred back to the problems of poverty discussed in the focus groups. Participants also raised the absence and lack of responsibility of fathers, which did not appear in their photo-stories. The silence around men in their commentaries then led to discussions on gender discrimination:



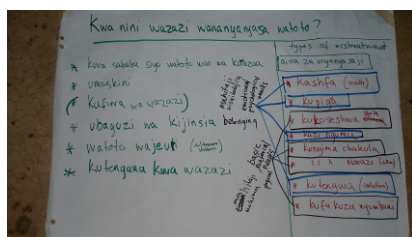
#### Causes

Wrong beliefs  
Step-parents  
Lack of responsibility of guardians  
Loss of parents  
Lack of father’s responsibility  
Not to be heard  
Lack of trust  
Mothers are also being mistreated  
Mothers are overburdened with childcare  
Parents separation  
Moving homes (frequently)

#### Consequences

Fear  
Powerlessness  
Insignificance  
→ Lack of self-esteem

Street children  
Drugs  
Suicide  
Prostitution  
Teenage pregnancy



#### Why do adults mistreat children?

They are not their birth children  
Poverty  
They lost their parents (orphans)  
Gender discrimination  
Children are trouble makers  
Parent’s separation

Figure 2. Kiwohede group flipcharts.

In the above stories and critical discussions, the rhetoric of development was at first removed from participants' understandings of the challenges they faced in their communities. Development discourses focusing on economic wealth were largely absent and instead, stories of daily realities about relational dynamics within families and communities abounded. Asking communities to talk about their assets and challenges shifts our understandings of development and the signifiers of development away from a dominant cultural register towards community knowledges and practices. Participants who spoke of community assets in their stories also highlighted both the significance of social relationships in the community and economic resources. A photo-story about a dance troop, the Makuruti dancers, speaks of young people's talent and dedication in working together to be successful.



**Peter:** *"Makuruti dancers live in Mbagala ... They established their group in 1999. Juma is a dancer who would like to go far. Makuruti dancers would like to be the best artists/dancers in the world. They like their job, enjoy their life and they are very thankful for getting this chance to represent themselves and they hope to be better artists in the future."*

Similarly, this final photo-story is about a street garage that was entirely instigated and run by young people. Not only are the knowledge and capabilities of young people highlighted in this story but also the good relationships between the mechanics are considered key to the success of their business.





Street garages.

**Remy:** *“This is a mechanic. He works with his fellow mechanics who came together as a group and started a business. Their job is a bit dangerous as they are often at risk of accidents. They make good profit because they work well together. They don’t fight during work and they get a lot of customers. They often rest and eat together while exchanging ideas.”*

These stories not only demonstrate the resourcefulness and talent of community members, thereby challenging the assumed lack of empowerment and social capital in the community but also describe the self-determination of people in the face of difficult structural circumstances. They demonstrate examples of community mobilisation, emphasising the importance of relational dynamics, echoing the principles of black consciousness and suggesting that communities draw on their own values and resources towards development and change.

## **DISCUSSION.**

### **Towards a postcolonial psychology of community development.**

The findings above demonstrate that a postcolonial psychological approach to community development can enhance our understandings of the barriers and possibilities for social change and exposes the development paradigm as one that can exclude those who it professes to assist. The internalization and projection of racialising development discourses leads to the problematic beliefs that individuals and communities in marginalised contexts are lacking in knowledge and capabilities and that popular development signifiers are rooted in a western cultural register. These internal power processes are disempowering and lead to challenging relational dynamics that undermine the possibilities for community mobilisation and social change (Kessi, 2011). Navigating immediate concerns, such as the lack of basic resources, mistreatment and abuse, constrains the possibilities for people to reflect on the causes of their situation and the broader dynamics that impact on their daily lives. Developing an awareness of these underlying causes is the first step in the process of social change. In this project, this process took place through an ongoing action-reflection cycle as presented in the Photovoice model, and drawing on the principles of BC. Participants contextualized their daily experiences to questions around global patterns and meanings of development and social justice and shifted the parameters of

responsibility for development towards a shared consciousness of privilege and oppression. This process of consciousness then facilitated understandings of how issues of race, gender and class also intersected in ways that impact on people's lives. If economic wealth, race and gender remain markers of status and success, young Africans and in particular young African women will remain excluded from the development project. For the majority of the young people in this study, who were black, female and involved in informal sector work, their legitimacy as social actors and dignified members of their families and communities was compromised. The existing internal and relational power dynamics diminished their possibilities to construct themselves as legitimate actors with legitimate social knowledge.

Introducing race and in particular the globalised dimension of racialising development practices prompted these discussions and in some cases led participants to see themselves as agents of change. Indeed, emerging from young people's narratives were counter constructs to the grand discourses of development and a more critical understanding of internal and relational forms of power. Stories of their everyday realities exposed the significance of the relationships between individuals in communities, between communities and institutions, between the rich and the poor, or the so-called developed and developing. A postcolonial approach provided the tools with which those links could be made and enabled people in communities to mobilise around wider issues, such as material exploitation, racism, and gender discrimination. This paper thus addresses two under-represented areas of psychological research on community development. First, it enables us to draw attention to the link between the exclusionary discourses of development and how these unconsciously permeate understandings of self and others at community-level. Second, the focus on anti-racism in postcolonial psychology provides the context for a global form of resistance, by turning internal and relational forms of power into a productive drive for change. A postcolonial psychological approach to community development opens up the possibility of re-defining self and community and to consciously mobilise around broader networks and discourses of change.

### **Postcolonial psychology in contemporary spheres.**

In contemporary spheres, integrating race in methodological practices is far from straightforward. When BC emerged, it was responding to the open and racist policies and practices of the South African apartheid government. In contemporary society, racialised power processes are more complex and hidden. Globalisation has also made it clear that the nation is no longer the space within which issues of poverty, development and inequality are to be resolved largely in response to the needs of foreign governments and the aid establishment (Mkandawire, 2004, 2009). It is in the interest of foreign governments and the aid industry to maintain access to cheaper goods, ensure debt repayments and markets for expert consultants. Furthermore, civil society organizations, often made up of international development organizations, are providing services that diminish some of the most basic functions and powers of the state (Mosse & Lewis, 2005; Ferguson, 2006). Faced with changing institutional structures and political environments, postcolonial psychology must develop innovative tactics to be able to respond to the more complex and globalised ways in which racialising development discourses manifest themselves. Young people's beliefs in racialised development hierarchies highlighted the need for new strategies of resistance and change in contexts of globalised power processes.

Furthermore, Biko and Fanon's writings have been criticised for an overemphasis on the condition of black men and for presenting essentialist and fixed notions of identity categories (Hook, 2004a). Given the relational forms of violence against women and young women that arose in this project and that I have described in more detail elsewhere (see Kessi, 2011), it is imperative for postcolonial psychology to incorporate a nuanced approach to contemporary identities. Black feminist literature provides an analysis that rejects the assumption that there is a "racialised core of identity beneath skin colour" (Phoenix, 1998: 863) that presupposes that people will unify around a positive self-concept of being black without exploring further what that means. Such essentialist notions have been disproved amongst black working classes (Leatt et al, 1986), black women professionals (Mama, 1995) and amongst black people of mixed parentage (Phoenix, 1998) because they ignore possible commonalities that black people share with other groups in society. Black feminists have described how people's experiences of oppression are multi-layered and overlapping (Mama, 1995; Phoenix, 1998). In this project, race was a common feature in the discussion groups about globalised development practices but issues of gender and class were more prominent in the photo-stories about relational dynamics within communities. A contemporary BC approach to community mobilisation would therefore need to incorporate further determinants of identity that highlight the link between global patterns of racialised development and the resulting relational dynamics existing in communities.

## **CONCLUSION.**

The approach to community mobilisation presented here provides a critique of the development narrative as a space of contradictions and *in-betweens*. It revealed the tensions between shifting institutions and the individuals and communities that lie within them in order to highlight how development fuels internalized and relational processes of identification and control. I have argued that postcolonial psychology can stimulate a re-politicization of community development by redirecting the patterns of consciousness in communities. In a contemporary world, where the local and global are intertwined, a reflexive project on development is not only possible but also necessary. Taking on the contributions of postcolonial psychology coupled with PAR methods enables us to start mapping the origins and direction of contemporary societies and give meaning to the trajectories of change in marginalised communities in an increasingly globalised world. Racial identity is a key concern in postcolonial African communities and thus provides a starting point for community development practitioners to unlock the conscientization process with community members. Race consciousness was the unifying force that drove the participants in this study to re-locate themselves in the world away from a position in the hierarchy of development spaces towards an understanding of themselves as agents of change. This represents an important challenge to powerful development actors whose practices often undermine the knowledge and capabilities of communities in the South. Race consciousness also sparked a more critical awareness of other significant identity dynamics existing in communities relating to gender and class that came up strongly in participants' stories. The principles of black consciousness are therefore not only relevant but also fundamental to community mobilisation and empowerment in contemporary contexts. For researchers and community development practitioners, postcolonial psychology can open up the possibility of alternative frameworks of enquiry when conducting research and transformative work in north-south development settings.



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