

# REFLEXIVITY AS ENACTMENT OF CRITICAL COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGIES: DILEMMAS OF VOICE AND POSITIONALITY IN A MULTI-COUNTRY PHOTOVOICE STUDY

Shahnaaz Suffla

*Medical Research Council–University of South Africa Violence, Injury and Peace Research Unit*

Mohamed Seedat

*Institute for Social Sciences, University of South Africa and Medical Research Council–University of South Africa Violence, Injury and Peace Research Unit*

Umesh Bawa

*Department of Psychology, University of the Western Cape and Institute for Social Sciences, University of South Africa*

*The performance of critical community psychologies is always contextual, intersubjective, embodied, and politicized in nature. In this article, we draw from the epistemological standpoint that researcher and participant subjectivities are fully implicated in the (co)-construction of knowledge and should therefore be documented and made retrievable. Through the lens of reflexivity, and drawing from an African-centered Photovoice project on youth representations of safety, we surface the tensions, contestations, instabilities, power variances, constraints and inventiveness in our research to expose voice and positionality dilemmas inherent in the enactment of critical community psychologies. We also seek to record context-sensitive practice to encapsulate how this particular innovative*

We are deeply grateful to the project participants and our research partners from South Africa, Mozambique, Uganda, Zambia, Egypt, and Ethiopia for inviting us into the rich dialogic spaces from which this reflexive engagement draws.

Please address correspondence to: Shahnaaz Suffla, P.O. Box 19070, Tygerberg, 7505, South Africa. E-mail: [suffla@mrc.ac.za](mailto:suffla@mrc.ac.za)

JOURNAL OF COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGY, Vol. 43, No. 1, 9–21 (2015)

Published online in Wiley Online Library ([wileyonlinelibrary.com/journal/jcop](http://wileyonlinelibrary.com/journal/jcop)).

© 2014 Wiley Periodicals, Inc. DOI: 10.1002/jcop.21691

*project operates in real-world settings. We argue that reflexivity is central to participatory forms of knowledge construction and consciousness raising directed at transformation, and rendered all the more significant in research contexts characterized by difference, inequality, and marginality.*

© 2014 Wiley Periodicals, Inc.

The ascendancy of critical intellectual and practice traditions within international community psychology (see, for example, Acosta, 2011; Coimbra et al., 2012; Perkins, 2009; Stevens, 2007) has in large part been driven by gradations of a reflexive approach that seeks to disrupt the historical role of mainstream psychology in maintaining the social status quo (e.g., Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010; Montero & Montenegro, 2006) and reconfigure its epistemological and ideological foundations towards a liberatory praxis (e.g., Kagan & Burton, 2001; Seedat, Duncan, & Lazarus, 2001). This approach is grounded on the premise that the promotion of individual and community well-being is necessarily realized through the transformation of pernicious social conditions, and it is an emancipatory enterprise that is overtly political, value-laden, and intersubjective in nature. From this perspective, critical community psychologies subvert the notion of scientific neutrality, acknowledge the socially constructed nature of knowledge, and view power as constituted in the context of social relations.

Critical community psychologies also observe the interaction of various subjectivities as integral to social change, and thereby confer significance to the interactive and dynamic context within which these psychologies are performed (Fisher, Sonn, & Evans, 2007; Viljoen, Pistorius, & Eskell-Blokland, 2007). In this way, not only is the embodied, situated, and subjective complexion of its protagonists made more visible, but so are their interpersonal, social, and organizational contexts.

Against this backdrop, the construct of reflexivity is considered to be central to understanding, interpreting, and negotiating the interactional context within which researcher and participant subjectivities are performed. Reflexivity is predicated on the view that human beings are embedded in a complex web of proximate and distal social relations. The idea that our realities are relationally constituted is the basis for, and underlines, the imperative to critically examine the assumptions, values, discourses, and practices that we deploy to portray reality and create knowledge.

Reflexivity refers to the process of critically examining how the researcher and intersubjective elements influence research, described by Finlay (2002) as engagement in “explicit self-aware meta-analysis” (p. 209). The reflexive turn in the social sciences has given rise to feminist, postmodern, poststructural, hermeneutic, interpretive, and critical discourses that signify knowledge and understanding as contextually and historically located, and as linguistically represented (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003). The knowledges produced are hence located within the context of our subjectivities and intersubjectivities, and the spaces that we inhabit at that moment (Sultana, 2007). This attention to reflexivity has contributed to the demystification and situating of knowledge and knowledge production processes, and raised complex questions about the legitimacy, basis, and authority of knowledge claims (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Referenced against the work of Paulo Freire (1970), whose work has been highly instructive in the emergence of critical community psychologies in different parts of the world, reflexivity emphasises the development of critical consciousness and a praxis that is fundamentally responsive, collaborative, transformative, and ethical (Cunliffe, 2004).

Resultantly, community psychologists working within critical paradigms have come to increasingly invoke transparency and public accountability in their research. In critical community psychologies, reflexivity invites—if not insists—on critical reflection and action to transform, rather than merely ameliorate, the social arrangements that reproduce social, cultural, political, and economic inequities (Montero, 2011).

In this article, we draw from the epistemological persuasion that researcher and participant subjectivities are fully implicated in the (co)-construction of knowledge and should therefore be documented and made retrievable. Drawing from both internal and shared reflexive conversations, and detailed research content and process notes, we offer a reflexive account of our participation in an African-centered Photovoice project on youth representations of safety. We suggest that our participation in this action research project obliges a “participant conceptualizer” and “praxis explicator” role (Elias, 1994, p. 293), within which we have the responsibility of not only collaborating with participants to conceptualize and impel change processes but also reflexively examining and documenting their intersubjective elements towards generating and sharing knowledge products and learnings. In so doing, we also seek to record context-sensitive practice to encapsulate how this particular innovative project operates in real-world settings.

Specifically, we reflect on the issues of voice and positionality with reference to select illustrations, and consider their enactments as both challenge- and opportunity-derived. We precede our reflexive observations with a brief description of the project and our particular situatedness therein. In the performance of our reflexivity, our experience of it as “muddy ambiguity” (Finlay, 2002, p. 212), and in the composite representation of our three reflexive voices through the rhetorical tool of this Special Issue, we declare our knowledge claims to be situated, partial, contingent, and evolving.

## **AFRICAN-CENTERED PHOTOVOICE PROJECT ON YOUTH REPRESENTATIONS OF SAFETY: BACKGROUND AND LOCATION**

Photovoice is a community-based participatory research (CBPR) method that seeks to expand the representational modes and compass of voices that act to portray and improve people’s social realities. Wang and Burris (1997), generally considered to be the innovators of this method, define it as follows:

A process by which people can identify, represent and enhance their community through a specific photographic technique. It entrusts cameras to the hands of people to enable them to act as recorders, and potential catalysts for social action and change, in their own communities. It uses the immediacy of the visual image and accompanying stories to furnish evidence and promote an effective, participatory means of sharing expertise to create healthful public policy (p. 369).

Photovoice as community-engaged research has been applied in a variety of contexts, with demographically diverse populations, and in response to a range of social justice issues (see Suffla, Kaminer, & Bawa, 2012 for a more detailed description). In Africa, the method has been employed with socially marginalized groups in countries such as South Africa, Sierra Leone, and Tanzania to explore topics as wide-ranging as masculinity (Langa, 2008, 2010), HIV/AIDS stigmatization (Moletsane et al., 2007), caregiving (Walker & Early, 2010), social solidarity (Kesse, 2011), injury risk (Ibragimova & Bekmukhamedov, 2010) and, more recently, safety (Suffla et al., 2012).

The defining feature of the Photovoice method is that it aims to privilege community voice and, concordantly, local forms of knowledge, thereby fostering individuals' and communities' agentic capacities. The theoretical contributions of Paulo Freire (1970) have been seminal in the development of Photovoice. Freire argued that through the stimulation of critical consciousness, "people develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world with which and in which they find themselves; they come to see the world . . . as a reality in the process, in transformation" (Freire, 1970, p. 83). From this perspective, Photovoice espouses the idea that individuals' realities, and therefore their narratives, are situated in social configurations of class, gender, race, geography, sexuality, kin, and the like, and that their portrayal is negotiated through culturally available forms of representation (Wang, Morrel-Samuels, Hutchison, Bell, & Pestronk, 2004).

In its application, Photovoice typically accords prominence to individuals and groups whose voices tend to be marginalized in processes of social change, such as youth, women, and the historically oppressed and economically disadvantaged. In summary, Photovoice participants represent their social realities through photographs that they take, employing these as a modality through which to engage with academic partners and one another in a critical and reflexive dialogue about the denotations of the photographs, the social conditions that they signify, and the potential for grassroots social activism and change (Wang & Burris, 1997).

Our interest in Photovoice derives from an alignment with critical knowledge traditions in community psychology and an immersion in community-engaged research over the span of three decades. As an orientation to research that focuses on social transformation, we recognize the Photovoice method as an innovative and potentially transforming medium through which to partner with young people as producers of knowledge and agents of social change. In contexts characterized by persisting and multiple levels of marginalization, affording youth experiences of agency may contribute to the mitigation of adolescent risk behaviours (Chinman & Linney, 1998) and the construction of young people as influential civic actors (Flanagan & Christens, 2011; Yohalem & Martin, 2007).

Located within a larger child-centered safety, peace, and health promotion initiative that focuses on safety in the African context, the Photovoice project aims to explore and elicit young people's representations of safety in their communities, as characterized by both assets and risks, and to stimulate youth-driven safety promotion action. Having successfully secured funding for a multi-country application, we initiated the project in 2011. It has since been collaboratively implemented in marginalized communities in six African countries, namely, South Africa (see Suffla et al., 2012), Mozambique, Uganda, Zambia, Egypt, and Ethiopia, around the theme *Things, Places and People That Make Me Feel Safe/Unsafe in My Community*.

In an attempt to situate the project actors, in Table 1 we profile the members of the respective country research teams and the youth participants. The collaborations were negotiated through our existing partnerships in the psychology, injury, and violence prevention and safety promotion sectors in Africa, with us serving an axial and situated role in each of the country applications. Situated here refers to our physical presence in the research settings, and consequently to the research process being shaped by our relationships within these settings, as well as by ideological, linguistic, spatial, material, biographical, historical, political, economic, and cultural dimensions (see Mauthner & Doucet, 2003).

Our central role in the project has provoked the kinds of dilemmas, self-critique, and reflections that constitute the essence of reflexivity. First, though, we briefly situate our evolving criticality. We are Black, middle-class, English-speaking South Africans of Indian

Table 1. Profile Outline of Photovoice Participants and Researchers

Research site	Participants				Research teams			
	Number & gender	Age range (at project onset)	Language/s <sup>a</sup>	Number & gender	Discipline	Language/s <sup>a</sup>		
Cape Town, South Africa	10 F	12–14 years	English Afrikaans	5 F	Psychology Public Health	English Afrikaans		
	10 M			3 M				
Maputo, Mozambique	5 F	15–16 years	Portuguese	4 F	Public Health Psychology Education	Portuguese English Shangaan		
	5 M			2 M				
Kampala, Uganda	5 F	11–12 years	English Luganda	1 F	Public Health Education	English Luganda		
	5 M			1 M				
Lusaka, Zambia	5 F	16–17 years	English	2 F	Public Administration & Development Social Work	English		
	5 M			0 M				
Ismailia, Egypt	10 F	11–15 years	Arabic	3 F	Public Health	Arabic		
	16 M			1 M				
Axum, Ethiopia	8 F	11–14 years	Tigrinia	3 M	Public Health Education	Tigrinia English		
	8 M			0 M				

Note. F = female; M = male.

<sup>a</sup>Noted in order of predominance.

descent. We use the term Black as employed by the Black Consciousness movement to refer to all those classified as other-than-White in the apartheid nomenclature. The first author is female and the others male. All three of us have been trained in the traditional mold of psychology. Since our entry into the discipline, we have resisted, negotiated, and reinscribed our professional identities and locations, collectively expanding our work to focus on such issues as marginalized knowledges, race and racism, human rights, violence, and peace. Our work has come to embrace a form of disciplinary hybridity that draws from a number of related fields in the social and health sciences. Our own historical experiences of apartheid oppression have been pivotal in centring us within a social justice orientation in our research, and sensitizing us to our current positions of privilege and how these may unwittingly contribute to the (re)production of unequal power relations in the settings in which we undertake research.

Profoundly influenced by such critical scholars as Steve Biko (1978), Frantz Fanon (1967, 1968), Hussein Bulhan (1985), and Paulo Freire (1970), we continue to strive towards an emancipatory consciousness that commands an awareness of the underlying ideological imperatives, epistemological assumptions, and subjective and intersubjective influences that shape our thought and action. As we highlight in the sections to follow, our evolving criticality is more tidily articulated here than it is performed in the real-world locations of our engaged research, where we are challenged to deal with the complexities, contradictions, and binaries that inevitably accompany the issues of voice and positionality.

## REFLEXIVE ANALYSIS

### *Voice: Resonance and Silence*

In the critical social science literature, the term “youth voice” has gained increasing credence as a construct that supports the creation of opportunities for youth to have voice, to engage in critical dialogue with adults, and to lead on efforts directed at the pursuit of social justice (e.g., Evans, 2007; Foster-Fishman, Nowell, Deacon, Nievar, & McCann, 2005; Ginwright, 2011; Richards-Schuster & Dobbie, 2011; Zeldin, 2004). The violence prevention and safety promotion sectors in Africa, and equally elsewhere, have only to a marginal degree invited youth voices to contribute to intervention and social change agendas (Suffla et al., 2012). Photovoice, as a voice-centered method, therefore represents in our work a promising mode through which to privilege youth vocality towards the description, dialogue, documentation, and direction of safety action in communities.

The subject positions or voices of our participants are multiple, constructed in time and space, and here externalized and mediated by our own. Within the context of researcher and participant intersubjectivities, researcher voice refers to matters of interpretive authority and representation (Chase, 2005). In this article, we position our interpretive authority and representation along the lines of what Chase (2005) characterizes as the researcher’s interactive voice, intended to capture and represent the complex interactions in our research contexts through the lens of our own specific locations, interpretations, and experiences.

Our aggregate experience in the Photovoice project is that the voices of our participants are rich and textured and infused with meaning that extends far beyond the scope of this analysis. This was immediately apparent to all the researchers, who, demonstrating caution against the mere tokenizing of the young people’s involvement, overtly enacted support, power sharing, and the privileging of participants’ knowledge and social lens to cultivate the dialogic spaces within which their evolving voices were expressed. For

example, we relinquished our role as “experts” most optimally in decision making about community-level knowledge-sharing strategies. In all the participating countries, youth voice assumed primacy in the decision to share their knowledge making through photo exhibitions.

In keeping with the Photovoice methodology (see Wang et al., 2004), the photo exhibitions were targeted at local community members and leaders, and policy makers with whom partnerships could be created to advocate for local safety promotion. Notwithstanding that the participants chose to employ a technology and representational practice that was altogether novel to them, we witnessed, without exception, the claiming and resonance of youth voice in the public realm of the photo exhibitions. The photo exhibitions appeared to represent for the young people a symbolic and physical space that was more fully owned and inscribed by them. In the nature of this situatedness, we observed confident and bold pronouncements about the import of young people’s constructions on safety, why these should be granted attention, and the role and obligation of official change agents present, such as local and national government officials, in building safer communities.

This voice resonance, here at its most powerful, appeared to function as a potent intersubjective device in the rescripting of these young people’s positions towards a counter-narrative that portrayed their knowledge and agency instead of their invisibility and voicelessness. In turn, this very demonstrable performance of youth voice was met with a dynamic engagement by audience members that involved reflecting together critically about community change agendas, attuning to adult–youth differences in meaning-making, honoring the knowledge of typically marginalized social actors, and encouraging a shared vision of action for individual and community safety.

The illustration above highlights the privileging and legitimizing of youth voice. Yet, in other instances, we inadvertently acted to preserve the very kind of hegemonic narrative that is silencing of subaltern voices. In three of the six participant countries, we relied almost solely on the translation support provided by members of the local research teams. While this was carefully negotiated with both the researcher/translators and participants, the more obvious triadic intersubjective arrangement that this created sometimes functioned to prohibit and constrain the voices of the young people. This was especially apparent when the dialogic space comprised multiple adult researcher/translators. In turning to the adults to translate and interpret meanings, who in turn encoded and layered the participants’ voices with their own, we very likely skewed our interactions towards the adult dyad in the dialogue. In so doing, we believe that we unintentionally contributed to the appropriation of the youth voice, thus retaining the epistemic power that the Photovoice methodology seeks to resist.

Here we are reminded of England’s (1994) challenge: “Can we incorporate the voices of others without colonizing them in a manner that reinforces patterns of domination?” (p. 81). In this case, it was in the silence of the muted youth voice that we were able to discern how our conscious efforts to access and enhance youth voice had paradoxically accorded supremacy to the researcher voice, thus setting into play an intersubjective orientation that detracted in these moments from the intended youth focus of the project.

The parallel enactments of confirmation and contradiction of youth voice were made strikingly evident in one country where action by the Photovoice participants catalyzed a community-wide intervention that directly and concurrently addresses structural vulnerability and physical disorder as risks to safety. At their first photo exhibition, the participants displayed a number of photographs of the volume and toxicity of garbage in the community, depicting the injury risks and health hazards resulting from poor waste management.

Their dialogue on the issue was compelling enough to induce a local government official present at the exhibition to prioritize its status on the community's social action agenda. Fifty widows from the community, and an additional 100 from two neighbourhoods served by the same local council, have subsequently been employed to manage the transfer and disposal of garbage.

Resulting wholly from the participants' advocacy, the intervention is noteworthy in that it addresses a serious community-level safety and health risk, extends beyond the borders of the participating community, and has created employment for another vulnerable subgroup in the community, widowed women, whose subordinated position in the local economy renders them structurally vulnerable to violence, injury, and ill health. The intervention is, however, driven by the adults in the community, with the voice of the original social actors having been decentered. Despite the permeating influence and reach of the youth voice, we suggest that a presumably uncertain and variable youth–adult partnership at the higher decision-making levels and the predominantly depreciated subject position of youth continue to skew power relations within the project.

### *Positionality: The Space Between*

In critical community psychologies, including CBPR, the value of understanding positionality is considered as central to reflexive praxis. As a methodological tool that seeks to make visible power imbalances in the research relationship, positionality is a means of recognizing and understanding researcher situatedness and its influence on the production of knowledge (Day, 2012). Specifically, positionality refers to the researcher's social location, personal experience, and theoretical viewpoint, the relational and institutional contexts of the research, and the bearing of these elements on the research process itself (Sands, Bourjolly, & Roer-Strier, 2007).

Positionality, in the contiguous processes of performing and documenting research, is therefore marked by such signifiers as race, gender, class, nationality, and intellectual traditions and has historically been defined in terms of insiderness and outsiderness (Day, 2012; Fletcher, 2010). However, more recent articulations of insider/outsider status suggest that the characterization of positionality as the binary subject position of either insider *or* outsider is overly simplistic and restrictive of the scope of researchers' understanding and experience, and argue instead for a dialectical approach that constructs differences as unstable and multi-layered and emphasizes the relative nature of researchers' identities and social positions (e.g., Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Kerstetter, 2012).

There now exists a compelling argument for a reflexive approach that extends beyond singular aspects of a researcher's identity to prioritize intersectionality, where the ascribing of a dominant status is resisted in favor of multiple dimensions of identity that may be relevant to the research relationship (Day, 2012). Within this construction, positionality is construed as insider *and* outsider situatedness, bridged by an intersecting space that is referred to as the third space (Fletcher, 2010) or the space between, "a space of paradox, ambiguity, and ambivalence, as well as conjunction and disjunction" (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009, p. 60). In this article, we draw on the notion of the space between to explore and represent the multiplicity, fluidity, and hybridity of our positionality, and the challenges and insights that this evoked in the implementation of the Photovoice project. In making our positionality explicit, we seek to resist the reproduction of "the anonymous, decontextualized voice of authority" (Day, 2012, p. 74).

In reflecting on our multiple and simultaneous positioning and the different spaces that we occupied in the project, we first consider the obvious: Although having insider

knowledge of conditions of marginalization and oppression, we were outsiders largely by virtue of our nationality, class and educational status, language, university affiliation, research expertise, access to resources, and experiential base.

In assuming positional consciousness in our research, we anticipated that as community-based researchers entering communities in which we had not directly conducted research previously, together with the markers of our privileged status in society, we would be observed as outsiders. Our privileged outsider positioning tended to accentuate the power imbalance in the research relationships, particularly in the former stages of the research process when we were relatively unfamiliar with the participants and research settings. We believe that at these times we were privy to the more public transcripts about the subject under study, or to that which is voiced when members of a less powerful group interact with those perceived to hold more power (Kerstetter, 2012). We speculated about the hidden transcripts (e.g., participants' uneasy relationships with community leaders and structures and own proximity to violence victimization), but decided to explore them only under changing positional circumstances, as indicated by an evolving sense of trust and collaboration.

On the other hand, our very outsidership appeared, even during the early phases of our engagement, to prompt extensive and reflective accounts by some participants of their perceptions and experiences of safety and its risks. For these participants, rendering and placing us as knowing others seemed to be an important prerequisite to their further engagement with us. In turn, we sometimes strategically heightened our outsidership to perform the role of unknowing subjects seeking to learn and understand from the insiders or participants. In allowing us to elicit more in-depth responses than those offered to the local researchers, who were considered to already know, here our outsider status came to represent an asset. Where insider researchers are typically considered to be better positioned to access richer and more nuanced insights through shared experiences and a common cultural language (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Fletcher, 2010), interestingly, in some moments our positionality drew closer to that of insiders precisely as a function of the more obvious variant experiences that existed between us and the participants.

In the space between, we were insiders as Blacks, as Africans, and as community-based researchers whose work centers on underrepresented and oppressed groups, and insiders through our established and recognized partnerships with the local research teams. The involvement of local researchers facilitated our entry into the participant groups and communities, and the negotiation of an insider connection with the participants. Although our presence as outsiders appeared to be moderated by our collaborative and participatory approach to the project, working in partnership with insider research teams was by no means sufficiently promotive of engendering insidership. Given that positionality is intersubjectively configured, we therefore paid a great deal of attention to building relationships of trust between the young people and ourselves, while remaining mindful of the axis of power asymmetry and difference between us.

From a positional lens, evolving trust, for us an indicator of insider status, was signified in the moments when (a) rapport and participatory dialogue deepened, (b) participants communicated culturally bound assumptive connections about the collectivist ethos of "our" African communities, (c) private transcripts about existences and realities marked by hardship began to be made public, (d) moving accounts of the experience of inclusion and affirmation through the project were shared, and (e) the emergent sense of connectedness with us was expressed verbally, affectively, and through symbolic gestures that suggested shared affinities.

The mutability of insider–outsider boundaries is however not without its complications. In our project, the task of traversing insider–outsider positionality and navigating our multiple positions was most challenged in a situation in which the scale of power relations threatened to halt one country’s ongoing application. Our project resources allowed us to plan for a multi-country photo exhibition and youth leadership workshop in South Africa. Following negotiations with our country partners and, through them, with the parents and guardians of the participants and having attended to the requisite ethical obligations, such as obtaining formal consent from parents and guardians, we informed all the relevant consular offices of the research teams’ intended travel to South Africa and proceeded to arrange the indicated events. Astonishingly, and to our collective distress, the research team’s preparations to travel out of the country were duly treated as a case of suspected child trafficking by national security structures and led to a series of punitive measures against our colleagues.

Notwithstanding that the trafficking of children on the continent is a justifiable concern, we believed that we had sufficiently followed due processes to demonstrate the legitimacy of the invitation extended to the children. As the lead researchers and in support of the said country team, we responded on multiple levels and engaged with multiple social actors to refute the allegation that was levelled against our partners. While some of our colleagues constructed our supportive action as insider-based and reinforced this subject position, we were acutely aware that as outsiders we knew very little about the structures, individuals, politics, culture, and agenda linked to the fallout, and therefore likely held little influence in the situation.

Our insider status was further destabilized by the inevitable disruption that this created within the country project itself, and seemingly the distance that was desired by some in the interest of self-protection. As is highlighted here, intersubjectivity is conditional to sociopolitical, spatial, and temporal influences so that as dynamics alter with the context, so too does positionality. We concur with Sultana’s (2007) contention that such fluidity in the research process and in positionality is sometimes difficult to manage, especially when embedded in and influenced by multiple hierarchies of power relations, diverse institutional processes, and physical, emotional, and political distance.

## CONCLUSION

The performance of critical community psychologies is always contextual, intersubjective, embodied, and politicized in nature. In this article, we argue that reflexivity is central to participatory forms of knowledge construction and consciousness raising directed at transformation, and rendered all the more significant in engaged research contexts characterized by difference, inequality, and marginality. Through the lens of reflexivity, and drawing from a multi-country Photovoice project, we surface the tensions, contestations, instabilities, power variances, constraints, and inventiveness in our research to expose voice and positionality dilemmas inherent in the enactment of critical community psychologies.

Our illustrations reflect exchange, fluidity, negotiation, and contestation in the expression of voice, with power being focal in our analysis. Our reflexive examination highlights that within critical community psychology enactments too, the research encounter has the potential to silence participant voices even as it strives to enhance them, therefore obliging greater attention to the conditions and constraints under which marginalized voices attain resonance. Our reflexive observations on positionality demonstrate how

our location in grids of power relations interacted with the purpose, process, and context of the Photovoice project, representation of subjectivities and intersubjectivities, and construction of knowledge. Our illustrations underline the argument that grappling with and understanding researcher situatedness is key to the transformative and epistemic concerns of critical community psychologies. Our article offers one reading of researcher–participant intersubjectivities within the project; our reflexive analysis therefore represents partial, situated knowledge and reflects particular constellations of power and knowledge making.

In contributing to a discourse that is among the most marginalized in mainstream academic scholarship, we seek through the disruptive influence of our reflexive accounts to generate both creative tensions and insights into critical community psychology praxis. Critically engaged research and text such as ours may not sufficiently destabilize hegemonic practices or provoke satisfactory change, but failure to interrogate, reveal, and locate researcher–participant intersubjectivities represents the more problematic alternative.

## REFERENCES

- Acosta, F. H. E. A. (Ed.). (2011). *International community psychology: Community approaches to contemporary social problems* (Vol. I). Puebla, Mexico: Universidad Iberoamericana Puebla.
- Biko, S. (1978). *I write what I like*. London: The Bowerdean Press.
- Bulhan, H. A. (1985). *Frantz Fanon and the psychology of oppression*. New York: Plenum Press.
- Chase, S. E. (2005). Narrative inquiry: Multiple lenses, approaches, voices. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.) (pp. 651–679). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Chinman, M. J., & Linney, J. A. (1998). Towards a model of adolescent empowerment: Theoretical and empirical evidence. *The Journal of Primary Prevention*, 18(4), 393–413.
- Coimbra, J. L., Duckett, P., Fryer, D., Makkawi, I., Menezes, I., Seedat, M., & Walker, C. (2012). Rethinking community psychology: Critical insights. *The Australian Community Psychologist*, 24(2), 135–142.
- Cunliffe, A. L. (2004). On becoming a critically reflexive practitioner. *Journal of Management Education*, 28(4), 407–426.
- Day, S. (2012). A reflexive lens: Exploring dilemmas of qualitative methodology through the concept of reflexivity. *Qualitative Sociology Review*, 8(1), 60–85.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.). (2005). *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.
- Dwyer, S. C., & Buckle, J. L. (2009). The space between: On being an insider-outsider in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 8(1), 54–63.
- Elias, M. J. (1994). Capturing excellence in applied settings: A participant conceptualizer and praxis explicator role for community psychologists. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 22(3), 293–318.
- England, K. V. L. (1994). Getting personal: Reflexivity, positionality, and feminist research. *Professional Geographer*, 46(1), 80–89.
- Evans, S. D. (2007). Youth sense of community: Voice and power in community contexts. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 35(6), 693–709.
- Fanon, F. (1967). *Black skin, white masks*. New York: Grove Press.
- Fanon, F. (1968). *The wretched of the earth*. New York: Grove Press.

- Finlay, L. (2002). Negotiating the swamp: The opportunity and challenge of reflexivity in research practice. *Qualitative Research, 2*(2), 209–230.
- Fisher, A. T., Sonn, C. C., & Evans, S. D. (2007). The place and function of power in community psychology: Philosophical and practical issues. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology, 17*, 258–267.
- Flanagan, C. A., & Christens, B. D. (2011). Youth civic development: Historical context and emerging issues. *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development, 134*, 1–9.
- Fletcher, T. (2010). “Being inside and outside the field”: An exploration of identity, positionality and reflexivity in inter-racial research. In D. Chatziefstathiou & L. Mansfield (Eds.), *Leisure identities and authenticity* (n.p.). LSA Publication No. 107. Eastbourne: Leisure Studies Association.
- Foster-Fishman, P., Nowell, B., Deacon, Z., Nievar, M. A., & McCann, P. (2005). Using methods that matter: The impact of reflection, dialogue, and voice. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 36*(3/4), 275–291.
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Herder and Herder.
- Ginwright, S. (2011). Hope, healing and care: Pushing the boundaries of civic engagement for African American youth. *Liberal Education, 97*(2), 34–39.
- Ibragimova, A., & Bekmukhamedov, U. (2010). Evaluation of “youth perspectives on injury risk in Dar es Salaam.” Dar es Salaam, Tanzania: Centre for Injury Prevention and Community Safety (CIPCS), Peercorps Trust Fund.
- Kagan, C., & Burton, M. (2001). Critical community psychology praxis for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Paper presented at the British Psychological Society Conference, Glasgow, March 2001.
- Kerstetter, K. (2012). Insider, outsider, or somewhere in between: The impact of researchers’ identities on the community-based research process. *Journal of Rural Social Sciences, 27*(2), 99–117.
- Kesse, S. (2011). Photovoice as a practice of re-presentation and social solidarity: Experiences from a youth empowerment project in Dar es Salaam and Soweto. *Papers on Social Representations, 20*, 7.1–7.27.
- Langa, M. (2008). Using photo-narratives to explore the construction of young masculinities. *Psychology in Society, 36*, 6–23.
- Langa, M. (2010). Contested multiple voices of young masculinities among adolescent boys in Alexandra township, South Africa. *Journal of Child & Adolescent Mental Health, 22*(1), 1–13.
- Mauthner, N. S., & Doucet, A. (2003). Reflexive accounts and accounts of reflexivity in qualitative data analysis. *Sociology, 37*(3), 413–431.
- Moletsane, R., de Lange, N., Mitchell, C., Stuart, J., Buthelezi, T., & Taylor, M. (2007). Photovoice as a tool for analysis and activism in response to HIV and AIDS stigmatisation in a rural KwaZulu-Natal school. *Journal of Child & Adolescent Mental Health, 19*(1), 19–28.
- Montero, M. (2011). A critical look at critical community psychology. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass, 5*(12), 950–959.
- Montero, M., & Montenegro, M. (2006). Critical psychology in Venezuela. *Annual Review of Critical Psychology, 5*, 257–268.
- Nelson, G., & Prilleltensky, I. (Eds.). (2010). *Community psychology: In pursuit of liberation and well-being*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Perkins, D. D. (2009). International community psychology: Development and challenges. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 44*, 76–79.
- Richards-Schuster, K., & Dobbie, D. (2011). Tagging walls and planting seeds: Creating spaces for youth civic action. *Journal of Community Practice, 19*, 234–251.
- Sands, R. G., Bourjolly, J. N., & Roer-Strier, D. (2007). Crossing cultural barriers in research interviewing. *Qualitative Social Work, 6*(3), 353–372.

- Seedat, M., Duncan, N., & Lazarus, S. (Eds.). (2001). *Theory, method and practice in community psychology: South African and other perspectives*. Johannesburg: Oxford University Press.
- Stevens, G. (2007). The international emergence and development of community psychology. In N. Duncan, B. Bowman, A. Naidoo, J. Pillay, & V. Roos (Eds.), *Community psychology: Analysis, context and action* (pp. 27–50). Cape Town: UCT Press.
- Suffla, S., Kaminer, D., & Bawa, U. (2012). Photovoice as community engaged research: The interplay between knowledge creation and agency in a South African study on safety promotion. *Journal of Psychology in Africa*, 22(4), 517–528.
- Sultana, F. (2007). Reflexivity, positionality and participatory ethics: Negotiating fieldwork dilemmas in international research. *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies*, 6(3), 374–385.
- Viljoen, G., Pistorius, A., & Eskell-Blokland, L. (2007). A critical orientation to community psychology. In N. Duncan, B. Bowman, A. Naidoo, J. Pillay, & V. Roos (Eds.), *Community psychology: Analysis, context and action* (pp. 117–133). Cape Town: UCT Press.
- Walker, A., & Early, J. (2010). “We have to do something for ourselves”: Using Photovoice and participatory action research to assess the barriers to caregiving and abandoned and orphaned children in Sierra Leone. *International Electronic Journal of Health Education*, 13, 33–48.
- Wang, C. C., & Burris, M. A. (1997). Photovoice: Concept, methodology, and use for participatory needs assessment. *Health Education and Behavior*, 24(3), 369–387.
- Wang, C. C., Morrel-Samuels, S., Hutchison, P. M., Bell, L., & Pestronk, R. M. (2004). Flint Photovoice: Community building among youths, adults, and policymakers. *American Journal of Public Health*, 94(6), 911–913.
- Yohalem, N., & Martin, S. (2007). Building the evidence base for youth engagement: Reflections on youth and democracy. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 35(6), 807–810.
- Zeldin, S. (2004). Preventing youth violence through the promotion of community engagement and membership. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 32(5), 623–641.

Copyright of Journal of Community Psychology is the property of John Wiley & Sons, Inc. and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.