

This book is explosive in the way that fireworks are explosive; it dazzles with its fire, it illuminates dark places in psychology, it celebrates the light towards which we can all go. At a time when our discipline is teetering on the precipice where we can choose to go backwards towards the Eurocentric frameworks that have defined and restrained psychology since its inception, or allow ourselves to have the courage to join in the liberatory project of decolonizing our understanding of humans in every setting, through all possible intersectional lenses, this volume is our guidebook to the territory of this emerging, powerful paradigm. Essential reading for all of us; for those, like myself, decades in the field; for those who teach and train and do research; for those offering healing. Brava/o to editors and authors alike.

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Comas-Díaz, Adames, and Chavez-Dueñas have aptly responded to an urgent call to examine past and current impacts of colonization on the discipline of psychology. The authors, in this significant volume, provide compelling information that is the basis for a sea change in how we approach theory, research, teaching, and practice. The authors' rich examples bring to life the profound problems of colonization as well as the profound potential for decolonial psychology.

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Few disciplines have taken the recent challenges of decolonization and the decolonial turn more seriously than the branches of psychology in the Global South that explore the linkages between subjectivity, community, and social life. Yet, the task is barely starting. Building on the work of figures like the famed psychiatrist and revolutionary fighter, Frantz Fanon, among others, the editors and authors in this book seek to further illuminate the path of decolonization, anticolonialism, and decoloniality in the contemporary world. The anthology provides invaluable resources in the effort to infuse psychology with decolonial transdisciplinary approaches, thereby taking psychology beyond its modern-colonial horizons. An essential reference for anyone heeding the call to consider decolonization as an unfinished project and as an imperative today.

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# Contents

|   |               |
|---|---------------|
| <i>Contributors</i>   | xi            |
| <i>Series Foreword—Frederick T. L. Leong</i>  | xv            |
| <i>Foreword—Gayle Skawen:nio Morse and Marie C. Weil</i>  | xix           |
| <i>Acknowledgments</i>  | xxiii         |
| <br><b>Introduction: Decoloniality as a Transformative Force in Psychology: An Orientation to This Book</b> | <br><b>3</b>  |
| Hector Y. Adames, Nayeli Y. Chavez-Dueñas, and Lillian Comas-Díaz   |               |
| <br><b>I. HISTORY AND KNOWLEDGE</b>   | <br><b>13</b> |
| <br><b>1. Colonial Mentality: Manifestations, Operations, and Psychological Implications</b>                | <br><b>15</b> |
| Hannah L. Rebadulla, Jonathan U. Guerrero, and E. J. R. David   |               |
| <br><b>2. Naming and Unlearning Psychological Coloniality</b>   | <br><b>41</b> |
| Cristalís Capielo Rosario, Eduardo Lugo-Hernández, and Loíza A. DeJesús Sullivan                            |               |
| <br><b>3. Engaging With Decoloniality, Decolonization, and Histories of Psychology Otherwise</b>            | <br><b>61</b> |
| Sunil Bhatia, Wahbie Long, Wade Pickren, and Alexandra Rutherford   |               |

|   |            |
|---|------------|
| <b>II. SCIENCE, METHODS, AND EPISTEMIC JUSTICE</b>  | <b>87</b>  |
| 4. Decolonizing and Building Liberatory Psychological Sciences  | 89         |
| Helen A. Neville, B. Andi Lee, and Amir H. Maghsoodi  |            |
| 5. Beyond Decolonization: Anticolonial Methodologies for Indigenous Futurity in Psychological Research                    | 119        |
| Jillian Fish and Joseph P. Gone   |            |
| 6. Disciplinary Disruptions: Strategies Toward a Decolonial Community Psychology Praxis                                   | 143        |
| Jesica Siham Fernández  |            |
| 7. Decolonizing in a Transnational Feminist Commons Perched Precariously Between the Academy and Movements for Justice    | 169        |
| Adreanne Ormond, Puleng Segalo, María Elena Torre, and Michelle Fine  |            |
| <b>III. EDUCATION, PROFESSIONAL TRAINING, AND MENTORING</b>   | <b>203</b> |
| 8. Decolonizing the High School and Undergraduate Curriculum  | 205        |
| Edil Torres Rivera and Ivelisse Torres Fernandez  |            |
| 9. Unlearning Colonial Practices and (Re)envisioning Graduate Education in Psychology                                     | 219        |
| Carrie L. Castañeda-Sound, Miguel Gallardo, and Susana O. Salgado   |            |
| 10. The Decolonial Mentoring Framework: Advancing an Anticolonial Future in Psychology and Beyond                         | 247        |
| Mackenzie T. Goertz, Hector Y. Adames, Chelsea Parker, Nayeli Y. Chavez-Dueñas, Radia DeLuna, and Jessica G. Perez-Chavez |            |
| 11. Wise Face, Firm Heart: Ethics and Decolonial Psychology   | 271        |
| Melinda A. García   |            |
| <b>IV. PSYCHOTHERAPIES</b>  | <b>293</b> |
| 12. Decolonial Psychotherapy: Joining the Circle, Healing the Wound   | 295        |
| Lillian Comas-Díaz and Frederick M. Jacobsen  |            |
| 13. Decolonizing Psychoanalysis: Anti-Blackness, Coloniality, and a New Premise for Psychoanalytic Treatment              | 321        |
| Daniel Jose Gaztambide, Fabián E. Feliciano-Graniela, José Luiggi-Hernández, and Edlyane Veronica Medina Escobar          |            |
| 14. Decolonizing Feminist Therapy   | 345        |
| Thema Bryant, Carolyn Zerbe Enns, and Yuying Tsong  |            |

**V. QUEER FUTURES, SELF-CARE, AND COMMUNITY CARE 367**

**15. Moving Psychology Toward Anticolonial Queer Futures 369**

Della V. Mosley, Pearis L. Jean, Brittany Bridges, Maria Sobrino,  
Jeannette Mejia, Sunshine Adam, Garrett Ross, and Roberto Abreu

**16. Your Self-Care Is Made of Capitalism: A Decolonial Approach  
to Self and Community Care 389**

Arianne E. Miller and Nellie Tran

*Index 409*

*About the Editors 429*

## INTRODUCTION

### *Decoloniality as a Transformative Force in Psychology: An Orientation to This Book*

HECTOR Y. ADAMES, NAYELI Y. CHAVEZ-DUEÑAS, AND LILLIAN COMAS-DÍAZ

*The past is key to the future. Our past has the wisdom that can help us build a future . . . by looking toward the past, toward those who were the first inhabitants, to those who first had wisdom, who first made us.*

—Marcos, 2002, p. 84

History carries the whispers of our ancestors layered in pain, hopes, and dreams. Whispers that remind us of a past that is still with us. Examining and understanding history is one way to recognize oppressive ideologies and practices that shape the day-to-day existence of Communities of Color. History also contains wisdom that can guide us toward detaching from and resisting the power structures designed to dehumanize, control, and exploit. In many ways, knowing history and its many lessons liberates. This notion of history mirrors the view and description provided by Chavez-Dueñas and Adames, who state that

History allows individuals to learn about themselves and their group's past while contextualizing and understanding their present day-to-day strengths, struggles, and realities. . . . However, when aspects of history are suppressed, ignored, or presented in biased ways, they can bind us to an existence that is

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*Decolonial Psychology: Toward Anticolonial Theories, Research, Training, and Practice*,  
L. Comas-Díaz, H. Y. Adames, and N. Y. Chavez-Dueñas (Editors)

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stifling and defeating. This systematic suppression of history and knowledge is not an academic lapse; instead, it is used to manipulate minoritized groups into collaborating and participating in their own oppression. (Chavez-Dueñas & Adames, 2021, p. 83)

A critical part of history that is often suppressed and ignored is the period of colonization. This historical era was steeped in destruction, exploitation, and genocide (Adames & Chavez-Dueñas, 2017; Kellogg, 2005; Livi-Bacci, 2008). Although colonization has ended in many countries, its ideologies and practices grounded in European colonialism, described as *coloniality*, are alive and thriving in contemporary society across the globe. Coloniality is responsible for policies and political systems that aim to control and erase Indigenous ways of knowing and being<sup>1</sup> in the world.

As a field, psychology in the United States and other Western, industrialized, wealthy countries is not immune to perpetuating coloniality. Recently, the American Psychological Association (APA; 2021) acknowledged U.S. psychology's collusion with coloniality by issuing a public apology that

Since its origins as a scientific discipline in the mid-19th century, psychology has, through acts of commission and omission, contributed to the dispossession, displacement, and exploitation of Communities of Color. This early history of psychology, rooted in oppressive psychological science to protect Whiteness, White people, and White epistemologies, reflected the social and political landscape of the U.S. at that time. Psychology developed under these conditions, helped to create, express, and sustain them, continues to bear their indelible imprint, and often continues to publish research that conforms with White racial hierarchy. (para. 8)

APA's apology is critical. It recognizes the harm of engaging in practices that promote a colonial enterprise that supports those in power while failing to uphold the ethical values of integrity, justice, and respect for people's rights and dignity (see Pope et al., 2021).

## THE ABSENCE OF EPISTEMIC EQUITY IN PSYCHOLOGY KEEPS COLONIALITY ALIVE

Coloniality thrives by silencing those it seeks to control. In psychology, global Eurocentric voices, experiences, and methodologies are often centered and uplifted, and the narratives, realities, and practices from the Global South are

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<sup>1</sup>Although the term *Indigenous* has often been used to describe people born in a specific place, the concept also represents the beliefs and experiences of a group of people who originally inhabited a country (Cunningham & Stanley, 2003). In this book, the authors use the latter usage.

devalued and suppressed. When the wisdom of the Global South is considered, their Indigenous knowledge, traditions, and methods are appropriated and exoticized (Gergen et al., 1996). For instance, Helms (2016) posited that for most of its history, psychology has used the perspectives of White, heterosexual men with power and privilege (WHMP) as “scientific” justification for dehumanizing Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC). This practice is a form of epistemic violence (Spivak, 1988; see also Brunner, 2021; Dotson, 2011) and is a dominant way of how coloniality operates in psychology. In other words, epistemic violence fails to reflect the lives of BIPOC and people from the Global South—it is the heartbeat that keeps coloniality alive in psychology today. Psychological science grounded in WHMP promotes a decontextualized perspective of people despite people’s living in complex and constantly evolving and diverse environments (Gergen et al., 1996; Helms, 2016; see also Adames & Chavez-Dueñas, 2017; Comas-Díaz & Torres Rivera, 2020). Furthermore, it assumes an individualistic and Eurocentric hegemony and dismisses or minimizes the relevance of how sociopolitical contexts impact individuals and groups (Aiello et al., 2021; Comas-Díaz, 2007). As a result, the knowledge generated from a psychology not inclusive of BIPOC communities is incomplete, inadequate, and maintains the global order of coloniality; we need a paradigm shift.

## **DECOLONIAL PSYCHOLOGY AS A PARADIGM SHIFT TO LIBERATION**

Decoloniality is a praxis—it is the process of constantly disrupting the legacies of inequities, dehumanization, domination, and WHMP (e.g., racism, sexism, gendered racism, heterosexism, cissexism, nativism, ethnocentrism, ableism) that maintains the global hierarchy of power. This notion of decoloniality reflects Walter Mignolo’s (2011) description of decoloniality as “delinking from the colonial matrix of power” (p. 9). It also mirrors the Readsura Decolonial Editorial Collective (2022a), which states that decoloniality

is an ongoing orientation toward being and knowing that seeks to unsettle the present, an open-ended mode of de-linking from Eurocentric modernity/coloniality in an attempt to imagine and give birth to another future. (p. 258)

In the field of psychology, the concept of decoloniality is gaining momentum (Barnes, 2018). Over the last decade, psychological work on decoloniality has appeared in professional conferences (see The New School, 2020; Teachers College, 2021), and has been the subject of books (see Beshara, 2019; Boonzaier & van Niekerk, 2019; Ciofalo, 2019) and special journal



issues (see Readsura Decolonial Editorial Collective, 2022b). Additionally, the 2023 president of the American Psychological Association, Dr. Thema Bryant, has commissioned a presidential task force on decolonizing psychology. Building on this body of work, the current volume, *Decolonial Psychology: Toward Anticolonial Theories, Research, Training, and Practice*, seeks to contribute to helping address and remove the stubborn ways coloniality is practiced in psychology. Without paradigm shifts like these, coloniality in psychology will not fade away.

*Decolonial Psychology: Toward Anticolonial Theories, Research, Training, and Practice* presents a collective vision for the next steps in decoloniality in psychology, which aim to create spaces and methods for oppressed and impoverished communities to radically imagine their existence outside of the superimposed borders of coloniality, neoliberalism, racism, and other systems of oppression. It also emphasizes how people's subjectivity and connections to diverse social groups are influenced by history, context, and oppression; how these populations actively resist and survive attacks on their humanity; and how knowledge production is shaped not only by how data is interpreted but also by the nature of the questions asked and the individuals or entities posing those questions.

Together, we build on the emerging scholarship on decoloniality in and outside of psychology by convening a group of scholars, researchers, practitioners, and educators who have been thinking and writing about delinking psychology from its colonial legacy. A collective vision that unites the authors and editors in the book is the goal of developing an anticolonial<sup>2</sup> psychology that places "the power to challenge psychological research norms, assumptions, and outcomes squarely in the hands of Indigenous peoples" (p. 120, Chapter 5, this volume).

## COLONIALITY POSITIONALITY-DECOLONIALITY PRAXIS

This coedited book offers you a path to embark on a decolonial-anticolonial journey and to contribute to psychology's paradigmatic transformation. On this journey, we recognize that how we interpret and experience the world and each other is shaped by many oppressive forces, including coloniality, and how we create joy, make connections, and build community with others. Among populations affected by oppressive and dehumanizing processes, some work to resist and delink their ideologies and actions from the hierarchy of power maintained by coloniality, whereas others support

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<sup>2</sup>*Anticolonial* refers to Indigenous resistance and opposition to colonialism (see Chapter 5, this volume; Hartmann et al., 2019).

the status quo. In editing this book, we recognize the need for each of us to describe what we are coining and defining as a coloniality positionality–decoloniality praxis that openly names the social group identities affected by coloniality; describes how, if at all, scholars are working to disrupt and defy systems of power that keep the heartbeat of coloniality alive; and illustrates how lived experiences influence the production of knowledge. To demonstrate, we briefly apply the coloniality positionality–decoloniality praxis to ourselves as editors. We believe that beyond simply recognizing our social identities, we must engage in critical reflexivity about how those identities and experiences confer power and privilege which can influence our scholarship (see Grzanka & Moradi, 2021; Helms, 1993; Morrow, 2005). In other words, coloniality positionality–decoloniality praxis is not passive, it is not an odd form of exhibitionism or simply about naming our identities for the sake of sharing, but it is an intentional cycle of action-reflection–action that aims to disrupt coloniality and inform the knowledge making process while sharing our hearts and minds with the reader (see Grzanka & Moradi, 2021; Helms, 1993).

### **Lillian Comas-Díaz**

I, Lillian, am a cisgender heterosexual Puerto Rican mixed-race woman with Taíno, African, and Iberian roots. I was born in Chicago and raised in Puerto Rico, the oldest colony in history. My journey and experiences led me to participate in the decolonization and liberation movements of the Global South. Such a path assisted me in connecting with ancestral spirituality and in recovering my historical memory. Several cultural translocations taught me to embrace Otherness and work toward antiracism in my work. I coined the term “LatiNegra” (see Comas-Díaz, 1994) and self-identify as one. As a scholar, psychotherapist, healer, and social justice warrior, I strive to infuse my life and work with decoloniality, liberation, and antioppression.

### **Hector Y. Adames**

I am a cisgender, queer Afro Latino immigrant from Quisqueya, the island divided by superimposed borders now called Haiti and the Dominican Republic. I was born on the island of Quisqueya, the first space in the Americas where Black, White, and Indigenous people met. I come from a land and people who are intimately wrapped by a history of destruction and survival. As a queer man of African descent living in the 21st century of U.S. American imperialism, my experiences of oppression, survival, and resistance reverberate in and outside the academy. These historical and contemporary realities

influence my work as a scholar, practitioner, and educator. It shapes all of who I am. I have devoted my career and talents to speaking the unspoken by naming and studying systemic forces that brutalize people through words, policies, and practices while developing methods that humanize and celebrate the strengths of who coloniality aims to vanish. To echo Junot Diaz, also from Quisqueya, “all of us must be free, all of us must be free, all of us must be free or none” (2016, 4:22). These experiences shape the questions I seek to explore and how I make sense of human behavior and mental processes.

### **Nayeli Y. Chavez-Dueñas**

I am a cisgender, heterosexual, genderqueer Mexican immigrant who grew up in Michoacan, Mexico, the land of the Purepecha people, where remnants of colonization remain alive today. The exploitation of the land and its resources caused by colonization led to the decimation of my homeland and contributed to the forced migration of people to the north. Like millions of Mexicans before me, I crossed the imaginary border and entered the United States looking for the ever-evasive American dream. As a newly arrived teen immigrant, I worked as a day laborer and was affected by laws, policies, and practices anchored in the pillars of coloniality designed to control, dehumanize, and criminalize people for simply being a non-White and non-American. Simply put, people like me pay a heavy price for nurturing and exercising the audacity to cross the human-made borders established by imperial powers to maintain power. It is these experiences and realities that have shaped my scholarship and fueled my determination to continue using my privilege to speak truth to power in and outside of academia.

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Recognizing and constantly reflecting on our coloniality positionality–decoloniality praxis influenced this volume’s conceptualization, development, and editing process. We invite readers to engage in the process of action–reflection–action as they go through the various chapters so we can collectively continue to disrupt coloniality in psychological science, practice, and training.

### **CENTERING DECOLONIALITY IN PSYCHOLOGY: THE ORGANIZATION OF THIS BOOK**

The current volume presents our collective effort to describe how Western psychology has contributed to coloniality and generate ideas and actions to center decoloniality in psychological research and practice. The volume

comprises 16 chapters organized into five parts. Each chapter ends with a list of resources to further stimulate ideas to decolonize psychology and work toward creating anticolonial theories, research, and practice; examples include TED Talks, documentaries, podcasts, and additional readings.

Part I orients readers to the relevant history and foundational knowledge. Chapter 1 serves as a primer that introduces and describes colonial mentality and how it continues to be widespread and experienced by various minoritized racial and ethnic groups providing evidence for the urgent need to embrace and exercise decoloniality in psychology. Chapter 2 invites us to name and unlearn psychological coloniality. Chapter 3 assists us in interrogating and reimagining psychology's histories by examining the roots of postcolonial thought, that is, it focuses on how power relations maintain conditions of oppression beyond the binary of colonizer and colonized (Moore-Gilbert, 1997).

Part II centers on ways to decolonize knowledge production in psychology. Chapters in this part introduce novel frameworks for decolonizing psychological sciences (Chapter 4) and illustrate how an anticolonial stance can help challenge epistemic violence in psychology (Chapter 5). The last two of these chapters provide real case examples of the use of decolonial methods in community psychology (Chapter 6) and participatory action research (Chapter 7).

Part III centers on education and mentoring. Chapters 8 and 9 focus on decolonizing psychology's high school, undergraduate, and graduate curricula. Chapter 10 invites readers to reimagine professional mentorship in psychology through a novel decolonial mentoring framework. The section concludes with a chapter on the ethics of decoloniality in psychology for professionals and trainees (Chapter 11).

Part IV discusses psychotherapies. Chapters in this part focus on decoloniality in psychotherapy (Chapter 12), psychoanalysis (Chapter 13), and feminist therapy (Chapter 14).

Part V, the last section, takes us into two critical topics. Chapter 15 provides a rich discussion on ways to help move psychology toward anticolonial queer futures. Last, Chapter 16 presents a decolonial critique of traditional public and evidence-based notions of self-care and proposes how we might approach building decolonial community care.

We envision this volume as a guide for scholars, educators, practitioners, and students to disrupt coloniality in psychology and its epistemic violence and inequities. We hope the book serves as a roadmap to decoloniality in psychology and anticolonial futures. As Frantz Fanon argued, we need to build a decolonial society that represents all of us. Together we can advance decoloniality in psychology and strengthen the development of an equitable, inclusive, humane, and just society that benefits all.

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