Editorial: Critical Research in and through Practice

Since the call for the special issue back in 2016, various life altering events have taken place, including the Covid-19 pandemic that South Africa and many other nations across the globe find themselves battling with. The pandemic has had an impact on how we do things, including how we conduct research, particularly qualitative research that is more often than usual reliant on face-to-face interactions: observations, interviews and/or discussions. We now see a move towards online platforms in conducting qualitative research due to social distancing public health measures and lockdown restrictions to reduce the spread of the novel Corona virus that causes Covid-19. The new norm is quickly changing the way we think about qualitative research methods and designs. Furthermore, 2019 was a year where we witnessed race science research methods being challenged as a result of two journal publications from the Universities of Stellenbosch and Cape Town resulting in a retraction and staff resignation, respectively. The challenges were not only posed to the authors but to the university's ethics committees and the journals that published the biased, un-scientific content with racist ideological underpinnings. This brought into the fore the importance of critical scholarship.

The journey to publish this Special Issue was not easy. The journey was mostly filled with moments of excitement and hope but also fraught with disappointments and jiffies of wishing to surrender. The initial idea to publish a special issue that critically reflects on the teaching and use of qualitative research methods in South Africa was between three colleagues. This project was befitting and appropriately located in PINS as a reflexive journal for scholars in the field

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of psychology and cognate disciplines (Bradbury, 2014). A conversation that reflects on what, why and how psychology research is undertaken is an ongoing scholarly contribution that remains relevant in Southern Africa, and other global South institutions owing to their colonial history (Nduna, Tabane, Khumalo, & Kheswa, 2020; Ramose & Baloyi, 2020). The third colleague, who lectured at Fort Hare, pulled out of the project early on citing other work commitments as an impediment. Fort Hare is one of the early establishments in higher education and was a site of resistance against the Apartheid regime. Due to new exclusions that are facilitated by, among other things, ratings and racial and class profiling of students through inequitable and differentiated admission criteria and course offerings (Bunting, 2006; Boshoff, 2009; Mzangwa & Dede, 2019), institutions such as Fort Hare remain marginalised in a system that is meant to unify the higher education sector. Fort Hare is considered to be a research-driven university (Bunting, Sheppard, Cloete, & Belding, 2010). Academic staff at Fort Hare teach, as well as undertake research; unlike their colleagues in research-intensive universities who are *expected* to mainly contribute to knowledge production whilst teaching (Boshoff, 2009). Our colleague from Fort Hare later moved to private practice.

Back to the drawing board, we recruited and found a replacement co-editor. The colleague withdrew from the project citing other research interests; we understood because the strenuous pressure to publish or perish, whilst teaching requires that academics strategically use their time. It was clear that my colleague and I had to pull this project together; it was not going to be easy but we had already co-edited special issues before (Nduna & Khunou, 2014; Kiguwa & Langa, 2015; Naidu, Nduna, & Manuel, 2016; Nduna, Mthombeni, Mavhandu-Mudzusi, & Mogotsi, 2017), so we remembered these past successes and drew strength from them. In hindsight, we realised that these experiences were smoother due to effective and efficient research admin assistance, responsive administrators and editors of the journals, and generous research grant support.

The project took an inordinate amount of our time. Whilst the manuscripts that were submitted in response to the call were internally reviewed by the editors on time and desk top decisions were made and communicated to the authors with a few desk rejections; it was the review processes that delayed. Desk rejections are a huge task that is undertaken by the editors and it was mainly based on the fit of the submission to the focus of the special issue (Deursen, 2012; Banke-Thomas, 2020). Care was taken to choose peer reviewers with content and context expertise (Banke-Thomas, 2020). Never has it become so clearer the struggle that those of us who do not belong to the "invisible college" of academic social networks go through (Willis & McNamee, 1990; Banke-Thomas, 2020). As academics of colour (Black African), who take a random chance at approaching publishers, journals and editors for knowledge production ideas, we were subjected to unanticipated delays and we panicked in the process

because we understood that unfortunately the underlying systemic bias in publishing delays authors for whom the publications are not only a vehicle to communicate knowledge but are also linked to tenure and promotions. The *invisible college* in peer reviewed journal publishing has an inherent race, class and gender bias. This project was a partnership of less known academics, and intentionally sought co-editors outside the "big 5" South African Universities. Through this, and other projects, we have experienced the biases, prejudices and selective collaborations of authors, reviewers and editors. The process of putting together this special issue brought to the fore that the intersectionality of gender, race and class that underpin social relations in academy surpassed the fact that the lead guest-editor worked in one of the "big 5" institutions, albeit she is a Black African woman. The editorial team clearly lacked access to patronage. These identity-barriers and biases to publishing are discussed in other reflexive works (Kumashiro et al, 2005; Wellmon & Piper, 2017). After going back and forth with reviewed, rejected, and revised articles, it was until PINS was edited by two Black female academics that a firm expression to publish this special issue encouraged us to work on it to completion.

Throughout the journey to publish this special issue we had a research assistant; we always do this as our demonstration of commitment to train and mentor the next generation of scholars. However, research assistants graduate and leave the projects; funding dries and contracts end, leaving the guest editors with the tasks to do the secretarial and administration tasks amidst their teaching, research supervision and own research workloads. It was clear that the multiple demands of being an academic were taking a toll on us and the co-editor from NMU could not continue with the project anymore. At the time of going to print; the project had had four guest co-editors and two research assistants. One of the research assistants had experience in providing support to editors for the Father Connections special issue (Nduna & Khunou, 2014), she became a guest editor for the SOGI(e) special issue (Nduna et al, 2017) and was a member of the editorial of a collection of essays (Chinguno et al, 2017); on the basis of her experience, she joined this project as a co-guest editor. This was a successful mentorship and a mammoth task for her.

Decolonial scholarship has gained momentum in South Africa as elsewhere (DHeT, 2018). As part of this body of work Ramose and Baloyi question educational methodologies that are adopted in pursuit of epistemic and social justice in South Africa (Ramose & Baloyi, 2020). These pedagogical epistemologies are critically examined for, according to the authors, they maintain a cycle of knowledge (re)production, (re)generation, (re)use, and they (re)cycle existing ideologies in the South African education system. Ramose and Baloyi, argue that at some point, the pedagogical stance that reproduces colonial epistemologies need to be interrupted so as to make space for transforming

and truly transformative and reformative pedagogies. It is transformed and transforming pedagogies that will birth new knowledge production theories and practices. The authors argue so in a similar fashion to a panel that argued for reforms in research ethics training and practice (Nduna et al, 2020).

Published in this special issue is an article by Moroke and Graham (2020) that reflects on the position of power when engaging marginalized urban youth. Moroke and Graham researched experiences of young men train surfers from the Soweto townships. Train surfing is an extremely risky and masculine pastime common in some groups of boys and young men in major townships in South Africa. Young Black men tend to be involved in this activity no matter the risks for injury and or death. Though the first author shares race and background identity characteristics with the research participants, the positionality of being a university affiliated researcher sets her apart and requires that the class gap, as slightest as it might be, be examined for how it might have influenced the research processes. These fieldworker-participant power dynamics that are discussed in the paper by Moroke and Graham are further examined in the article that reflects on community-based sexual and reproductive health and rights research by Nduna (2020a). This article by Nduna reflects on years of experience with using varied qualitative research methods with diverse communities in South Africa (Nduna, 2020b). Nduna demonstrates how, in research engagements, communities and research participants could become co-designers of the data collection and co-producers of knowledge and how this can be managed without compromising the integrity and credibility of a study. Feminist researchers are mostly known for being unassuming, reflexive and engaging, and Tamara Shefer (2020) from the University of the Western Cape continues in that tradition. This is a tradition that has distinctively come to be known as one that is encouraged by PINS for it grows inclusive scholarship and ensures that multiple voices represent themselves, and where they could not, that they are adequately represented. The article by Shefer joins similar voices and weaves a critique of patriarchal research approaches. Shefer engages with the pitfalls of colonial hegemonies that Ramose and Baloyi (2020), and others (Nduna et al, 2020), argue against. Shefer goes beyond the critique of what is not working for different contexts and different researchers to make suggestions for a scholarship that *thinks with affect* and a scholarship that does not remove the scholar from their everyday experiences. Shefer thus argues for relational scholarship, transformed and relational research approaches.

Another provocative paper calling for decolonial thought practices in psychological research is a paper by Ally (2020) which focuses on the underrepresented autoethnographic methodology and its applicability to psychological research. Ally, a research psychologist by training argues that psychological practitioners cannot continue

to be excluded from the research and work they investigate, and through the use of autoethnographic methodologies there is a potential of breaking the barrier between practitioner and object/subject of study. This view ties to the feminist scholarly argument that the personal is political and the political is personal. Researchers and practitioners have and share lived experiences which if incorporated to their investigations and reflected upon, could provide rich knowledge production and theoretical as well as therapeutic engagements. In the world of social media and technological advancement, it is argued that people are more visual than ever before. In their paper, *The value of photovoice in researching the 2012 Marikana massacre*, Langa, Merafe and Rebelo argue that a photovoice tool brings more insight into the qualitative research design methodologies. Through taking of photos as a form of narration of participants' lived experiences post the Marikana massacre, the researcher is able to gain in-depth insight of the issues affecting their respondents and their community. It is often said that a picture says a thousand words; the paper presented by Langa and co-authors supports this and advocates for use of pictures as visuals that serve as a provocation to narratives and as aids to telling one's story. The special issue also includes a book review by Velile Notshulwana (2020). Notshulwana explores histories, politics, and cultural considerations in the book **Social Science Research Ethics for a Globalizing World: Interdisciplinary and Cross-Cultural Perspectives** (2015).

All the articles that are published here made use of qualitative research methodologies (QRM) in the Social Sciences and Humanities. They contribute to the productive, contemporary and contextual debates and discussions around the use of QRM, especially around the teaching and application of research methods, research design, data collection and analysis. These papers call for further and continuous decolonial exploration of these issues so as to advance theoretical and conceptual considerations related to doing QRM. The aim of the conversation presented here is to challenge and question what is being done and how it has been always done in the quest to encourage and advance the use of QRM particularly in the postcolonial and post-imperial societies.

The papers also offer practical suggestions and serve as a resource in order to broaden the scope of, and help novice researchers, students and those who teach in the use of QRM in the Social Sciences and the Humanities.

We would like to congratulate all the authors for their efforts in writing, correcting and finalising their articles and especially bearing with such a protracted process. Our gratitude is extended to Oyama Tshona, who, when Andile Mthombeni stepped up to the role of the co-editor, assisted with the finalisation of all the submitted manuscripts and provided research admin support and editing of all the manuscripts.

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