

# Practical perspectives on decolonizing psychology ~Glen Jankowski

Further decolonizing psychology resources: 1) [www.bmepsychology.com](http://www.bmepsychology.com) 2) Professor Erica Wojcik' BIPOC psychologists [https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1i7Eacoyv9VVq2IBbCV-KJZg4nSGvR\\_VZFOysOyOGG8g/edit#gid=666010790](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1i7Eacoyv9VVq2IBbCV-KJZg4nSGvR_VZFOysOyOGG8g/edit#gid=666010790) 3) Journal of Black Psychology <http://jbp.sagepub.com/>

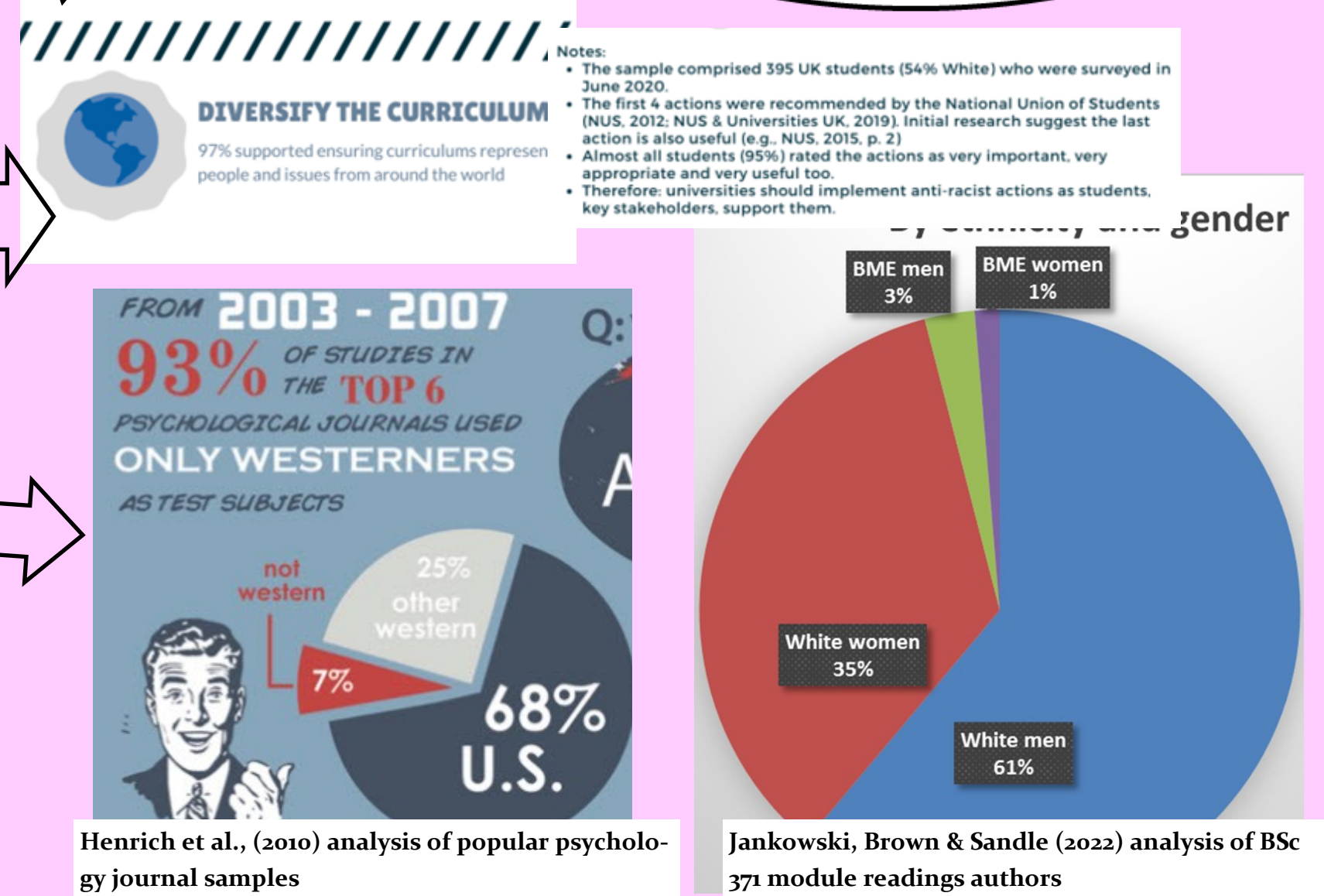
Feminists have long challenged psychology's exclusion of the 'other' whether by highlighting its androcentric sampling or pushing for decolonizing psychology's practices and outlook (Hegarty & Buechel (2006); Kessi and Kigawa 2015; Macleod et al., 2020; Ratele et al., 2020).

"[There is] a need to explore "diversity", "social constructionism", & "culture" (BPS 2017).

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that APA calls on psychology departments and programs to engage in sustainable and systemic anti-racist effort"; & [Racism is] highly relevant to teaching about diversity across all five learning goals of the undergraduate psychology curriculum" (APA 2013, 13).

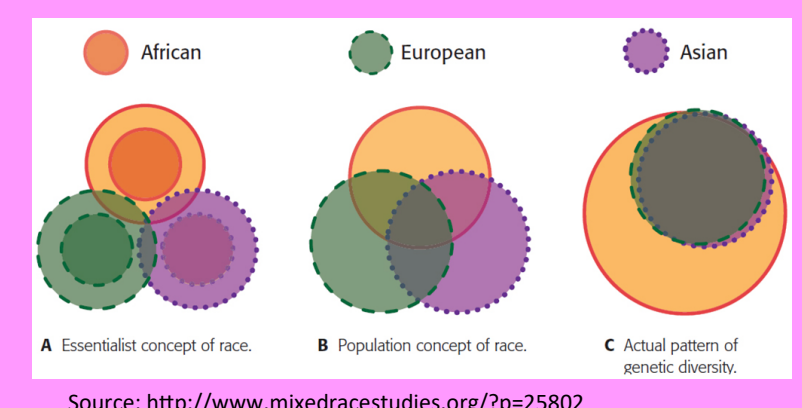
Here are 6 further practical reasons in favour of a decolonized psychology:

1. Psychology's governing bodies advocate for anti-racism explicitly (APA, 2013) or implicitly/ arguably (BPS, 2017)
2. Most staff know curriculums are white (e.g., Jankowski, Brown & Sandle, 2022).
3. Evidence suggests students want decolonisation (Gillborn et al., 2021; Jankowski, 2022; NUS and Universities UK, 2019; NUS, 2012)
4. Universities may wish to promote the global –skills or -outlook of its graduates
5. Empirical analyses document psychology is biased towards the Global North in research (Thalmayer et al., 2021; Heinrich, Heine & Norenzayan, 2009) & BSc Psychology teaching (Jankowski, Brown & Sandle, 2022)
6. There are meaningful differences in behaviour between the tiny over-studied populations in the Global North and the rest of the world (Heinrich, Heine & Norenzayan, 2009)



## Practical Teaching Topic Examples

- Social construction of 'race': "That is, race is understood as real not because it is an essential category but as an historically specific means of effecting certain forms of social organisation, of mediating human relations" (Hylton et al., 2011; 271). This could include a class discussion of 'white passing', transracialism, the invention of whiteness and/or different racial categorizations of the same group over time e.g., Mexicans, Irish immigrants (Smedley & Smedley, 2005).
- Racism's impact on human behaviour e.g., development, health/wellbeing, relationships etc.
- Empirical dissertations or laboratory reports (e.g., a Thematic Analysis of newspaper representations of migrants/ Black Lives Matter protestors or a replication of Arnett's content analyses analysing 'race' and gender of popular psychology samples)
- Some Global Southern psychological insights can be used to teach about human behaviour e.g., that collective harmony motivates humans more than self fulfilment or that the self may be collectively influenced rather than individualized:



### BPS guidance (2019)

Biological psychology for example: animal behaviour, hormones and behaviour, and abnormal psychology, com. Cognitive psychology for example: attention, thinking, problem-solving, decision-making, consciousness and cognitive neuropsychology. Developmental psychology for example: the life-span, including childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. Individual differences for example: personality, cognitive style, emotion, intelligence, mental health (including social, biological & social psychology), assessment, special processes and processes and identity and level.

## The self: Global Southern insights

- An Ubuntu self: "akin to] their state of being was conditioned by my state of being. [This is demonstrated by the phrase]: I am well if you are well"....or "We are because of each other." (Pamela Ayo Yetunde, 2020; para. 4)"
- The Self has been challenged as being Globally Northern biased and too individualized from an Indian perspective (Bhatia, 2020) & from an Ubuntu perspective (Mkhize, 2018; Wilson & Williams, 2013)
- Ubuntu is a Zulu term / widely applicable Pan-African concept
- It is a worldview, philosophy and/or idiom: 'A person is a person through other people'.
- It locates the self within collectives including the living & ancestors
- Note some have challenged an ubuntu informed that maintains sexism: "Ubuntu...needs to be reconstructed so that it ceases to be steeped in the past, especially in [patriarchy]" (Manyonganise (2015; pg. 6)

## Cognition: Global Southern insights

Blasi et al. (2022) highlights English-language biases in cognitive research & understanding

Image credit: Blasi et al (2022)	English	Global diversity
	Mirrored graphs hinder mirror invariance detection	Written Tamil does not have mirrored graphs and its users are better at identifying mirror invariance
	Left-to-right cognitive biases evident in memory and attention are said to be innate	Readers of Arabic and Hebrew show right-to-left cognitive biases in accordance with their writing direction
	Auditory pitch and spatial height are inherently associated in non-linguistic tasks	Farsi and Turkish speakers do not display robust non-linguistic associations between pitch and height
	Large numerosities rely on a generative vocabulary for large numbers	Speakers of Tsimane resort to approximate number representations in simple numerical matching tasks according to their verbal count range

"A narrow focus on English compromises the scope and validity of the cognitive science enterprise".  
 ~(Blasi et al., 2022, p. 13)

Heinrich et al (2010) highlights perceptual, decision making and other behavioural biases because of Global Northern dominance

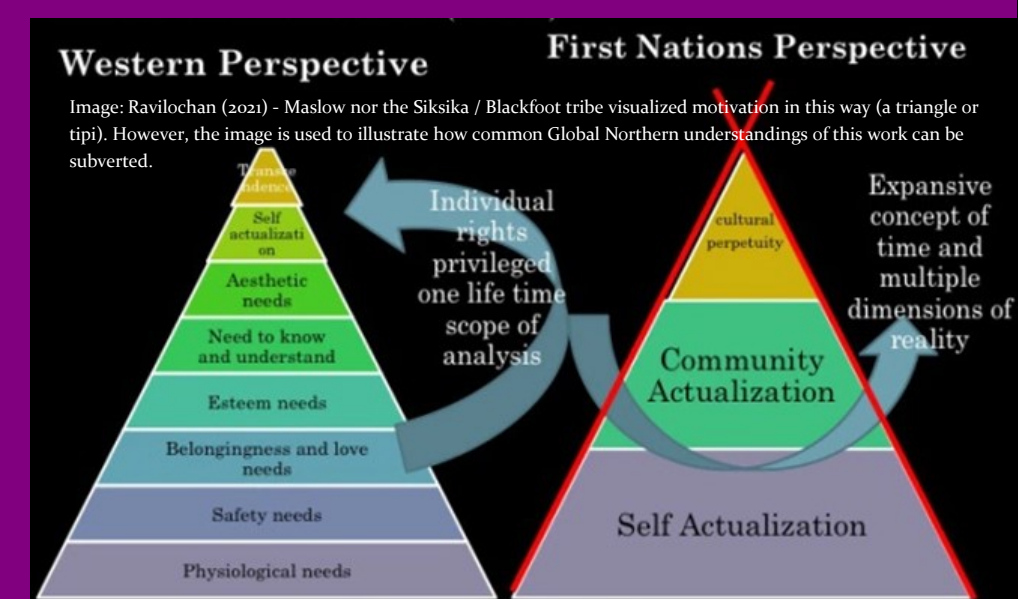


## Motivation: Global Southern insights

- Motivation theories critiqued for White, Global Northern biases
- Example 1: intrinsic/Extrinsic Theory ignores that "[Muslims] are actually motivated by external factors, that is the heavens of Allah".
- Example 2: Hierarchy of needs



- Critiqued for:  
 Ignoring indigenous American originators (Blackstock, 2014; Ravilochan, 2021)  
 Individualizing a community based view of human needs (see also Dhoni, 2022).  
 Limited applicability to collectivist cultures (Gambrel & Cianci, 2003)  
 Ignores religious people's motivations



## INDIAN WISDOM vs. WESTERN PSYCHOLOGY

Dhoni (2022) / @brhat\_in

Let's explore the differences between Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and the Puruṣārtha Model of ancient India.

3 Differences	Hierarchy of Needs	Puruṣārtha Model
Humans have...	Needs	Needs and Purpose
Food and sex are...	The first and lowest needs	Potential works to higher consciousness
The ultimate purpose of life is...	Individual expansion	Freedom from bondage

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