
RESEARCHING “ON AND IN” GLOBAL SOUTH COUNTRIES: SOUTHEAST ASIA

M o h a m m e d I l y a s

Introduction

Over the last few decades, calls for epistemic decolonisation have rapidly increased among some global north countries (hereinafter, global north countries include global north settler states) and global south countries. Especially after the initial Black Lives Matter Movement (2020-) and the Rhodes Must Fall campaign protests at Cape Town University in South Africa in 2015. Since these protests, a lot of literature calling for the decolonisation of global north academia, in the form of decolonising the university, social theory, pedagogy, curricula, classroom, knowledge production, and methodology, has been published.¹ That said, this article focuses on decolonising methodologies, and specifically on how global north academics conduct research on or in global south countries because their attitudes and practices could sometimes inadvertently reinforce coloniality.² This situation, in

¹ Gurminder K. Bhambra, Dalia Gabriel and Kerem Nisanciolu, *Introduction: Decolonising the university* (London: Pluto Press, 2018); Linda Smith, *Decolonising Methodologies* (London: Zed Books, 1999); Syed Farid Alatas, “Academic Dependency and the Global Division of Labour in the Social Sciences,” *Current Sociology* 51, no 6. (November 2003): 599–613, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00113921030516003>; Syed Farid Alatas and Sinha Vineeta, *Sociological Theory beyond the Canon* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2017); Raewyn Connell, *Southern Theory: Social Science And The Global Dynamics Of Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 2007); Romon Grosfoguel, Roberto Hernandez and Ernesto Rosen Velasquez, *Decolonizing the Westernized University: Interventions in Philosophy of Education from Within and Without* (Washington D.C: Lexington Books, 2018).

² Hamid Dabashi, *Can non-Europeans think?* (London: Zed Books, 2015).

some ways, mimics how non-white students are perceived and treated in global north universities.^{3,4,5} That said, I am fully aware that some global south academics may hold similar attitudes and engage in similar practices and, therefore, inadvertently reinforce coloniality. I will explore how global south academics inadvertently reinforce coloniality in future articles.

Therefore, this article offers some ways for global north academics doing research on or in global south countries to guard against reinforcing coloniality, based on the work of indigenous and decolonial academics like Lind Smith.⁶ That said, it is also important to mention that I am aware that the term ‘indigenous’ may be considered problematic by some academics, given the diversity of communities that claim indigeneity based on language, culture or claims to other identity registers.⁷ However, I am using the term specifically to refer to communities that were present before European colonisation in countries that are today called ‘global north settler states’.⁸

Over the last decade, decolonising global north academia has gained considerable popularity among some global north academics and stu-

³ Xianlin Song and Greg McCarthy, “Governing Asian international students: the policy and practice of essentialising ‘critical thinking’,” *Globalisation, Societies and Education* 16, no 3 (January 2018): 353–365, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14767724.2017.1413978>.

⁴ Anne Shirley Tate and Paul Bagguley, “Building the anti-racist university: next steps,” *Race Ethnicity and Education* 20, no 3. (December 2017): 289–299, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2016.1260227>.

⁵ B. Kumaravelu, “The Decolonial Option in English Teaching: Can the Subaltern Act?,” *Tesol Quarterly* 50, no 1. (October 2014): 66–85, <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.202>.

⁶ Smith, *Decolonising Methodologies*; Levac et al, *Learning across Indigenous, Western Knowledge Approaches and Intersectionality: Reconciling Social Science Approaches* (Guelph: University of Guelph, 2018); Walter D. Mignolo, “Epistemic Disobedience, Independent Thought and Decolonial Freedom,” *Theory, Culture & Society* 26, 7–8. (February 2010): 159–181; <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276409349275>.

⁷ Hamdeesa Tuso and Mureen P. Flaherty, *Creating the third force: indigenous processes of peacemaking* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, 2016); Jennifer Ball, *Women, development and peacebuilding in Africa: Stories from Uganda* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019).

⁸ Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, “Decolonisation Is Not a Metaphor,” *Decolonising, Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no 1. (September 2012): 1–40, <https://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/des/article/view/18630>.

dents, especially epistemic decolonisation.⁹ This popularity has led to many publications, conferences, seminars and workshops (online and offline) being organised by global north academics, students and research centres. For example, a quick search using the Web of Science portal for the term 'decolonising' reveals that publications on decolonisation have rapidly increased since 2000. Not only is most of the literature authored by academics based in global north countries, but the publishers are also primarily from the same countries. For example, academics at the University of London have published the most articles on decolonisation, suggesting that the UK is an important hub for decolonial knowledge production. This situation could be interpreted as centres of knowledge production in global north countries inadvertently reinforcing coloniality because they continue to dominate knowledge production, even on decolonisation.¹⁰

One of the most popular ways to engage in epistemic decolonisation is decolonising methodology. One reason for its popularity is that it makes academics and students aware of the 'dirty history' of research and research methods in global north countries and global south countries. It also provides ways to conduct research that could help guard against reinforcing coloniality. By research, I mean several things. Firstly, epistemological and methodological choices. Secondly, the recruitment of research participants, research assistants, advisors, funders and other stakeholders. Thirdly, fieldwork. Fourth, the dissemination of findings through articles, books, conference papers, specialist workshops and seminars. Finally, the advancement of the researched community through the research. There are several research methods under the banner of decolonial methodologies that have gained much popularity among global north and, in some cases, global south academics and students. These methods are popular and important because they have been developed by indigenous and decolonial academics and are deemed non-invasive, non-exploitative and non-predatory. These

⁹ Kasturi Behari-Leak, "Decolonial turns, postcolonial shifts, and cultural connections: Are we there yet?," *English Academy Review* 36, no. 1 (May 2019): 58–68, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10131752.2019.1579881>.

¹⁰ Connell, *Southern Theory*; Mohammed Ilyas, "Decolonising Terrorism Journals," *Societies* 11, no. 6. (January 2021): 2–18, <https://doi.org/10.3390/soci11010006>.

methods are based on knowledge production and dissemination practices that have roots among indigenous communities and global south countries.¹¹ These methods include but are not restricted to critical and autoethnography, art-based methods, storytelling, sharing circles, yarn-ing, *pagtatanong Tanong*, learning from wisdom keepers, participatory research and *halaqas*.¹² For example, the *halaqa* is a research method that comes from traditional Muslim teaching and knowledge exchange practices, which is still used among Islamic institutions such as universities, *madrasas*, mosques, Sufi circles and even in Muslim homes in the global north and global south countries.

Since Linda Smith's groundbreaking book entitled *Decolonising Methods*, which was published in 1999, decolonising methods have gained considerable popularity among global north academia. In her book, she discusses the colonial history of research and its legacy among indigenous communities in New Zealand, which is a global north settler state. Since then, many other academics have highlighted the racism of research during colonialism and its continued impact. As such, they have not only called for theoretical and methodological reflexivity but also raised important concerns about the dangers of decolonial research methods and epistemologies being assimilated or integrated into global north knowledge production paradigms.¹³ For example, some

¹¹ Bagele Chilisa, *Indigenous Research Methodologies* (California: Sage Publications, 2011): 117–139; Norman Denzin, Yvonna Lincoln and Linda Smith, *Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies* (California: Sage Publications, 2014); Raven Sinclair, "Indigenous research in social work: The challenge of operationalising worldview," *Native Social Work Journal*, no 5. (November 2003); Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, "Provisional Notes on Decolonising Research Methodology and Undoing Its Dirty History," *Journal of Developing Societies* 35, no 4 (November 2019): 481–492, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0169796X19880417>.

¹² Tuck and Yang, "Decolonisation," 1–40; Levac et al, *Learning across Indigenous*.

¹³ Moyra Keane, Maren Seehawer and Constance Khupe, "Decolonising Methodology: Who Benefits From Indigenous Knowledge Research?," *Educational Research for Social Change* 6, no 1. (May 2017): 12–24; Lauren Landau, "Communities of knowledge or tyrannies of partnership: Reflections on North–South research networks and the dual imperative," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 25, no. 4 (December 2012): 555–570, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fes005>; Miguel Zavala, "What do we mean by decolonising research strategies? Lessons from decolonising, indigenous research projects in New Zealand and Latin America," *Decolonisation: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 2, no. 1 (2013): 55–71; Mirjam B. E. Held, "Decolonising Research Paradigms in the Context of Settler Colonialism: An Unsettling, Mutual, and Collaborative Effort," *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 18 (January 2019):

indigenous academics¹⁴ argue that appropriation and integration of indigenous epistemologies into global north epistemology could weaken the former, and assimilating indigenous knowledge into global north knowledge could mean denying the core differences between the two. Other indigenous¹⁵ academics argue that appropriation and integration can lead to global north epistemology marginalising and delegitimising what it does not consider to be knowledge because of its global dominance. This situation could lead to indigenous and global south research paradigms, theories, concepts, methodologies and imaginaries being further marginalised or suffering epistemicide.¹⁶

For some global north academics and students, methodological decolonisation may seem a simple and easy task, and decolonial methodologies may appear attractive methodological alternatives to those born out of the global north episteme. However, in reality, methodological decolonisation and using decolonial methodologies is not an easy task and reinforcing coloniality is an ever-present risk, despite the good intentions of academics and students. The primary reason for this is not the research methods themselves but how global north academia conditions the minds of academics and students on how to think, know, feel, believe, be and do. Here, I am referring to the colonised mind of global north academics and students, which is the opposite of the colonised mind that academics like Alatas¹⁷, Alatas¹⁸ and Gu¹⁹ have explained in

1–16, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406918821574>; Jason Chalmers, "The transformation of academic knowledges: Understanding the relationship between decolonising and indigenous research methodologies," *Socialist Studies/Études Socialistes* 12, no. 1. (May 2017): 97–116, <https://doi.org/10.18740/S4GH0C>.

¹⁴ Levac et al, *Learning across Indigenous*.

¹⁵ Timothy Reagan, *Non-western educational traditions: Local approaches to thought and practice 4th edition* (London: Routledge, 2017).

¹⁶ Margaret Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009); Chalmers, "The transformation of academic knowledges," 97–116; Walter Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2011).

¹⁷ Syed Hussein Alatas, "Intellectual Imperialism: Definition, Traits, and Problems," *Southeast Journal of Social Science* 28, no. 1 (November 2000): 23–45, <https://doi.org/10.1163/030382400X00154>.

¹⁸ Alatas, "Academic Dependency".

¹⁹ Ming D. Gu, *Sinologism An alternative to Orientalism and postcolonialism* (London: Routledge, 2011).

their work on global south academics. Admittedly, the global north colonised mind that I am referring to needs more explanation, which I hope to do in future articles. However, for this article, it is sufficient to mention that the global north colonised mind suffers from a ‘superiority complex’ based on cultural and intellectual superiority.²⁰

This article is composed of four parts. In the first part, I detail my methodological approach, which includes my motivations for writing the article from the perspective of a British-BAME (black, Asian and minority ethnic) academic, who works for a global north university in a global south country. It also includes the framing and key terms that I use in the article. The second part of the article focuses on making global north academics researching on or in global south countries aware that using decolonial methodologies is not an easy task and inadvertently reinforcing coloniality is an ever-present risk. In fact, those wanting to use them will need to think carefully and, on the one hand, justify their research methodology and, on the other hand, show how their research findings will benefit the researched community in meaningful and substantial ways. Therefore, using decolonial methodologies entails more than having a ‘diverse research team or inviting a global south academic to talk at a global north university’. In the third part of the article, I discuss what indigenous and decolonial academics call the dirty history of research and research methods. This history, in most cases, is not taught in undergraduate and postgraduate social science degree programmes or research method courses in the global north and, for this matter, in global south universities, which is why most academics and students are unaware of it. In the final part of the article, I suggest certain ways informed by decolonial methodologies for global north academics to consider using to guard against reinforcing coloniality whilst researching on or in global south countries.

²⁰ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

Methodological Approach

This article is methodologically informed by decoloniality. In other words, it is written from the borders of different identity registers²¹. This part of the article is broken down into a few sections. In the first section, I explain my motivations for writing this article by employing autoethnography as a decolonial methodology because it offers a unique way to discuss personal experiences of coloniality along several registers, including identity that connects global north and global south academia.²² That said, I am aware that some academics may disapprove of using decolonial methods because they deem them unscientific or because of some other reasons.²³ However, such positions do not acknowledge that decolonial methods have become popular, on the one hand, from the critique of global north epistemology and methodology, and on the other hand, because there is limited awareness of decolonial methodologies emanating from indigenous and global south knowledge production traditions.²⁴ Furthermore, autoethnography offers me a way to discuss my positionality and situatedness in relation to the global north and global south actors I engage with as part of my research from the perspective of critical reflexivity and broader local, regional and global power structures and privileges, including those that privilege me.²⁵ As such, it adheres to key decolonial goals, like addressing social justice concerns.²⁶ Importantly, autoethnography also enables me to start a

²¹ Walter D. Mignolo and Madina Tlostanova, "Theorising from the Borders: Shifting to Geo- and Body-Politics of Knowledge," *European Journal of Social Theory* 9, no. 2 (2006): 205–221; <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368431006063333>.

²² Levac et al., *Learning across Indigenous*; Jason Arday, "Dismantling power and privilege through reflexivity: negotiating normative Whiteness, the Eurocentric curriculum and racial microaggressions within the Academy," *Whiteness and Education* 3, no. 2 (January 2019): 141–161, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23793406.2019.1574211>.

²³ Mohammed Ilyas, "Decolonialisation and the Terrorism Industry: Indonesia," *Social sciences* 10, no. 2 (February 2021): 417–440, <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci10020053>.

²⁴ Held, "Decolonising Research Paradigms," 1–16.

²⁵ Tony E. Adams, Stacy Holman Jones, and Carolyn Ellis, *Handbook of Autoethnography*. (London: Routledge, 2016); Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies Characteristics*.

²⁶ Smith, *Decolonising Methodologies*; Davydd Greenwood and Morten Levin, "Reform of the social sciences and of universities through action research," *Teaching and Learning* 1, no. 1. (Spring 2008): 89–121.

process centred on reciprocity as a way to do ‘decolonial work’. In the form of publishing with global south academics (Southeast Asian) on issues such as why and how some voices and perspectives are silenced and dismissed, and others are not and why inappropriate treatment of global south academics and researchers is overlooked or downplayed? In the second part, I explain coloniality and decoloniality for the benefit of those readers who may not be aware of these basic and fundamental decolonial concepts, as well as to theoretically and conceptually frame the article as decolonial in orientation. In the final part, I detail the key terms I use throughout the article, which have been developed by employing autoethnography as a decolonial method.

Motivations

I am motivated to write this article based on my personal experiences as a British-BAME academic working for a global north university in a global south country, whose research focuses on a range of sociological and criminological issues, such as race, religion, risk, and political violence. As an academic, I engage with a range of global north and global south actors. These include academics, religious and community leaders, embassies and NGOs (Non-governmental organisations) and CSOs (Civil Society Organisations) (hereinafter, I will use the terms global north and global south actors) and with the latter often funding research on political violence and community cohesion programmes. Although providing names of organisations, events and programmes is good practice, and it is better not to do so in some instances because it may lead to loss of funding and livelihood for those involved, as well as a range of risks that are not always appreciated by some global north academics.²⁷

Through my interactions with global north and global south actors, I have realised that their motivations for researching and funding research on political violence, disseminating research, accepting one perspective on political violence over another, and organising community cohesion programmes differ on several registers. On the one hand, it

²⁷ Ilyas, “Decolonising the Terrorism Industry,” 1–16.

seems that the theoretical and conceptual understandings employed by academics and funders are underpinned and organised around coloniality through a culturalist approach. Where Islam and Muslims are essentialised and deemed as the causes of extremism and political violence'. With little reflection on other possible causes, such as how local sociopolitical ecosystems are fostered by economic and political struggles that are a composite of the local, regional and global powerplay.²⁸ On the other hand, the methodological approaches adopted by some academics and funders have, in some instances, led to attitudes and research practices that appear predatory and exploitative. With little regard for the physical and mental well-being of the academics and researchers that they employ.²⁹ One good example of this is how some funders expect global south academics to be available 24hrs a day. As such, having little regard for the mental and physical well-being of the academic and researcher.³⁰

Like the theoretical and conceptual understandings, the community cohesion programmes also appear to be inadvertently underpinned by coloniality and, in some instances, designed in a way that preserves the socio-political status quo. In other words, they preserve the privileges of the dominant community and connected elites from minority communities. For example, some community cohesion programmes tend to employ a state-orientated understanding of religious discourses that appears to be centred on the War on Terror logic, which imagines Islam and Muslims in essentialist ways and being the only cause of extremism and political violence. The funding for research on political violence and community cohesion programmes appears to be based not only on the same logic and imagination but also on ideological and political convictions that project the global south's future as congruent to that of the global north, despite the apparent historical and cultural differ-

²⁸ Ilyas, "Decolonising Terrorism Journals," 2–18.

²⁹ Smith, *Decolonising Methodologies*; Ilyas, "Decolonising Terrorism Journals," 2–18.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

ences.³¹ Therefore, Sardar's³² point about the future of the global south being the global north seems to hold true.

Based on these engagements, I feel it is important for me to encourage all the global north and global south actors involved in funding, researching political violence and organising community cohesion programmes to carefully consider whether their understandings, motivations and goals could inadvertently be reinforcing coloniality. However, the suggested ways to guard against reinforcing coloniality are intended for global north academics researching on or in global south countries. However, I feel that they could also be helpful to global south academics, religious and community leaders, embassies and NGOs to consider. This is because political, religious, social and organisational status and identity registers do not preclude an organisation or individual from inadvertently reinforcing coloniality through attitudes, research and organisational practices. That said, the reason why I have chosen global north academics as the focus of my suggestions is because of the glaring power differentials that I have noticed, which are structured around race and connected privileges between the global north and global south actors involved in funding, researching, organising community cohesion programmes, and the researched communities. Not being aware of the power differentials can easily and quickly lead to unethical attitudes and research practices. In other words, predatory and exploitative motivations, goals and research practices that are reminiscent of colonial knowledge production relations.³³ That said, I know that the aforementioned type of power differentials also exist between global south actors, which I will explore in future articles.

³¹ Guendalina Simoncini, "International PVE and Tunisia: A Local Critique of International Donors Discourse," in *Encountering Extremism: Theoretical Issues and Local Challenges*, ed. Alice Martini, Ford Kieren and Richard Jackson (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020), 180–199.

³² Ziauddin Sardar, "Development and the Locations of Eurocentrism," in *Critical Development Theory Contributions to a New Paradigm*, ed. Denis O'Hearn and Ronaldo Munck (London: Zed Books, 1999), 44–63.

³³ Ilyas, "Decolonising Terrorism Journals," 2–18.

Coloniality and Decoloniality

Coloniality and decoloniality are perhaps the two most important concepts in decolonial thinking. Maldonado-Torres³⁴ posits that coloniality is the process of racial domination and marginalisation that structured colonialism and has continued into the postcolonial era in various forms. We see coloniality working in global politics, economics and the global north and global south academia. Mignolo,³⁵ a leading decolonial theorist, argues that modernity and coloniality are two sides of the same coin. For him, coloniality signifies the underside or dark side of modernity, where exploitation, marginalisation, violence and epistemicide occur.

Decolonial theorists, such as Maldonado-Torres³⁶ and Ndlovu-Gatsheni,³⁷ argue that coloniality is composed of three main parts that condition all aspects of life in different ways, including the mind, identity registers and politics. These are the coloniality of power, knowledge, and being and non-being. The coloniality of power refers to how and why global politics and international organisations organise the world based on global north political and economic standards.³⁸ The coloniality of knowledge refers to how global north academia and attached epistemology and ways of sensing, thinking, imagining, feeling, believing, being and doing dominate how knowledge is produced globally. They dominate for three main reasons. Firstly, global north academia lays claim to universality, objectivity and neutrality. This marginalises other epistemologies and ways of sensing, thinking, imagining, feeling, believing, being and doing and, therefore, ways of producing knowledge. Secondly, dominant global north languages, such as English, French and German, are the main repositories of what is considered as

³⁴ Nelson Maldonado-Torres, "On the Coloniality of Being," *Cultural Studies* 21, no. 2-3 (April 2007): 240–270, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09502380601162548>.

³⁵ Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity*.

³⁶ Maldonado-Torres, "On the Coloniality of Being," 240–270.

³⁷ Ndlovu-Gatsheni, "Provisional Notes on Decolonising," 481–492.

³⁸ Romon Grosfoguel, "Decolonising Post-Colonial Studies and Paradigms of Political-Economy: Transmodernity, Decolonial Thinking, and Global Coloniality," *TRANSMODERNITY: Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World* 1, no. 1 (May 2011), <https://doi.org/10.5070/T411000004>.

knowledge by global north academia. Thirdly, these languages provide the lexicon through which knowledge is expressed and understood. In turn, they construct a mental architecture by imposing a knowledge system on indigenous communities and global south countries that is not their own.³⁹ As Taiwo⁴⁰ posits, the knowledge system had already been rigged before we were born (referring to himself as an African man and African people). The coloniality of knowledge has several negative ramifications for global south academia and academics. For example, global south academia and academics suffer from intellectual dependency, the captive and colonised mind and extroversion.⁴¹ In other words, there is a tendency among global south academics to mimic or copy their global north counterparts in terms of university structure, curricula, theorisation, methodology and knowledge production. This is because global north academia determines how academia should be organised, including universities and ‘what should be taught and how it should be taught’ globally. The final type of coloniality is the coloniality of being and non-being, which structures how people are racialised and treated according to a predetermined set of racialised tropes.⁴² For example, people occupying the zone of being are deemed more human than those occupying the zone of non-being. As such, the former are afforded human rights, material resources and social and political recognition, unlike the latter. One current and obvious example of how the zone of being and non-being operates is the differential treatment of refugees fleeing from the Ukraine and Russia war and those fleeing from conflicts in global south countries by global north countries.⁴³ For

³⁹ Ngũgĩ Thiong’o, *Decolonising the Mind. Nairobi, Kenya* (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1986); Kwasiri Wiredu, “Conceptual decolonization as an imperative in contemporary African philosophy: some personal reflections,” *Philosophies africaines: traversées des expériences*, no. 36 (2002): 53–4.

⁴⁰ Qlufemi Taiwo, *Against Decolonisation: Taking African Agency Seriously* (London: Hurst & Comapnt, 2022).

⁴¹ Alatas, “Intellectual Imperialism,” 23–45; Thiong’o, *Decolonising the Mind*; Wiredu, “Conceptual decolonization,” 53–64; Alatas, “Academic Dependency,” 599–613; Paulin J. Hountondji, *African Philosophy: Myth and Reality, 2nd edition* (Bloomington, US: Indiana University Press, 1996); Thiong’o, *Decolonising the Mind*.

⁴² Maldonado-Torres, “On the Coloniality of Being,” 240–270.

⁴³ Philip S. S. Howard, Bryan Chan Yen Johnson and Kevin Ah-Shen, “Ukraine refugee crisis exposes racism and contradictions in the definition of human,” *The Conversation*,

example, Ukrainian refugees are considered 'like us', meaning 'white and civilised' by media outlets from global north countries, unlike those fleeing Iraq and Syria.⁴⁴ These opinions suggest the prevalence of a hidden "pernicious racism".

Unlike coloniality, decoloniality is the theory and practice of 'how to undo coloniality'.⁴⁵ It is "ways of thinking, knowing, being and doing that began with, but also precedes the colonial enterprise and invasion. It implies the recognition and undoing of the hierarchical structures of race, gender, heteropatriarchy and class that continue to control life, knowledge, spirituality and thought, structures that are clearly intertwined with and constitutive of global capitalism and Western modernity". As such, decoloniality breaks the theory and practice binary, moves towards plurality and includes embodied experiences, such as emotions, feeling and ways of being. Therefore, moving towards pluriversal imaginaries and future realities.⁴⁶ As such, readers need to be familiar with both terms because understanding them will help them identify and guard against reinforcing coloniality while researching on and in global south countries.

Conceptual Framing

The first term I will define is *global north countries*, *global north settler states* and the *global south*. I use these terms to preface ontological, epistemological, axiological, academic, geographical, racial, political and economic differences between the global north and global south countries. However, I am aware that there are also differences between the countries within the global north and the global south.⁴⁷ In other

February 27, 2022, <https://theconversation.com/ukraine-refugee-crisis-exposes-racism-and-contradictions-in-the-definition-of-human-179150>.

⁴⁴ Danial Hannan, "Vladimir Putin's monstrous invasion is an attack on civilisation itself," *The Telegraph*, February 26, 2022, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2022/02/26/vladimir-putins-monstrous-invasion-attack-civilisation/>.

⁴⁵ Walter D. Mignolo and Catherine E. Walsh, *On Decoloniality* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2018).

⁴⁶ Grosfoguel, "Decolonising."

⁴⁷ Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *Epistemologies of the South, Justice against Epistemicide* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2014).

words, there are ‘norths in the south and souths in the north’, which makes the aforementioned differences challenging to describe accurately. As such, there is considerable debate among academics over the most accurate terms to explain the aforementioned differences.⁴⁸

The second term that I will define here is what I call *critical decolonial reflexivity*, which I employ as a methodological approach to writing this article. Critical decolonial reflexivity entails turning the ‘decolonial gaze’ onto critical ways of seeing, thinking, feeling, believing, being and doing, including decolonial ways. As a methodological approach, on the one hand, it is based on border thinking, which is the space created ‘outside of the inside by the inside’ because of its exclusionary and marginalising practices based on race. On the other hand, it is based on ‘double consciousness’. In other words, it provides a way of sensing, seeing, thinking, feeling, believing, imagining, being and doing that is based on the experiences of global south populations, indigenous communities and BAME communities from global north countries interacting with borders in multiple ways (often conflictual). The experience also includes being forced to be on the borders because of the exclusionary and marginalising practices, becoming aware of the colonial difference and constantly being a ‘stranger in one’s own home’. An estrangement that the BAME and indigenous individual and the dominant group in global north countries use to define the BAME and the indigenous ‘I’.⁴⁹ Critical decolonial reflexivity also means acknowledging that the current ways of sensing, thinking, imagining, feeling, believing, being and doing are conditioned and continue to be conditioned by coloniality, irrespective of identity and political registers.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Sinah Theres Klob, “The Global South as Subversive Practice: Challenges and Potentials of a Heuristic Concept,” *The Global South* 11, no. 2 (Fall 2017): 1–17, <https://doi.org/10.2979/globalsouth.11.2.01>.

⁴⁹ Inash Islam, “Muslim American Double Consciousness,” *Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race* 12, no. 2 (November 2020): 1–20, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1742058X20000235>; Jose Itzigsohn and Karida Brown, “Sociology and the Theory of Double Consciousness. W. E. B. Du Bois’s Phenomenology of Racialized Subjectivity,” *Du Bois Review. Social Science Research on Race* 12, no. 2. (Fall 2015): 231–248, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1742058X15000107>; Grosfoguel, “Decolonising”; Mignolo and Tlostanova, “Theorising from the Borders,” 205–221.

⁵⁰ Mignolo, “Delinking. The Rhetoric of Modernity, the Logic of Coloniality and the Grammar of Decoloniality,” *Cultural Studies* 21, no. 2-3 (April 2007): 449–514, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10753080701431111>.

Critical Decolonial Reflexivity and Decolonisation

In this part of the article, I highlight how current decolonisation efforts in global north universities could inadvertently reinforce coloniality. My intention here is not to devalue the decolonising work of global north academics and students because I am aware that decolonising efforts face a lot of resistance from other academics, universities, the media, politicians and sections of the public. Instead, I simply want to show that decolonising is not a simple or easy task for global north academics and students (also applies to global south academics and students), who may wish to use decolonial methodologies because poorly thought out decolonial efforts could lead to 'moves to innocence'. This situation means that coloniality is inadvertently reinforced because the decolonising efforts end up being a 'checkbox' exercise and do little to address the deep-rooted coloniality.⁵¹

The first criticism that can be levelled at global north academics engaged in decolonising work is that some of them imagine attending events organised by their global south counterparts is not worthwhile because they will not benefit from them. This situation means that the work of global south academics is silenced through omission and knowledge production remains dominated by global north academics and academia.⁵² The second criticism that can be levelled at global north academics engaged in decolonising work is that the events organised by global north academics, students and research centres based in global north universities tend to cater for academics and students from their region in two ways. By primarily inviting academics from global north countries and, secondly, by organising events at times that are suitable for global north academics and students – thus silencing global south academics and students through omission. This situation suggests that decolonising in the imagination of the organisers is something that

org/10.1080/09502380601162647; Mignolo and Tlostanova, "Theorising from the Borders," 205–221.

⁵¹ Tuck and Yang, "Decolonisation," 1–40.

⁵² Syed Farid Alatas, "Silencing as Method: Leaving Malay Studies out," in *Fieldwork and the Self*, ed. Jammes, J., King, V.T., Asia in Transition, vol 12 (Singapore: Springer, 2021), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-16-2438-4_10.

only global north academics and students are interested in. The third criticism that can be levelled at global north academics engaged in decolonising work is that some of them imagine decolonisation as a new field of study. A field born out of global north intellectual and cultural tradition and isolated from other traditions and cultures. As such, they fail to acknowledge that decolonisation as a field of study and process has existed for many decades in global south countries.⁵³ The fourth criticism that can be levelled at global north academics engaged in decolonising work is that they tend to only call for what I have elsewhere referred to as ‘soft decolonisation’.⁵⁴ Soft decolonisation tends to centre on diversifying the curricula or recruiting BAME academics to show how the university is taking anti-racism seriously. However, such work has been taking place under other banners for a few decades now, with little success. One reason for this could be that universities defer responsibility to fight racism to BAME academics because of white fragility, which reinforces whiteness and, more broadly, coloniality.⁵⁵ As such, the aforementioned decolonising efforts appear to be, on the one hand, a ‘tick box and branding exercise’ and, on the other hand, an exercise of ideological pacification, leading to ‘moves to innocence’ by universities.⁵⁶ This type of decolonising arguably does little to address the deep-rooted causes of coloniality in global north academia. The

⁵³ Behari-Leak, “Decolonial turns,” 58–68; Maldonado-Torres, “Thinking through the Decolonial Turn: Post-continental Interventions in Theory, Philosophy, and Critique—An Introduction,” *TRANSMODERNITY: Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World* 1, no. 2 (Fall 2011): 1–15, <https://doi.org/10.5070/T412011805>; Walter Mignolo, “Geopolitics of Sensing and Knowing: On (De)coloniality, Border Thinking, and Epistemic Disobedience,” *Postcolonial Studies* 14, no. 3 (October 2013): 273–283, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13688790.2011.613105>.

⁵⁴ Mohammed Ilyas, “Decolonialisation and the Terrorism Industry,” *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 15, no. 2 (March 2022b): 417–440, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17539153.2022.2047440>.

⁵⁵ DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism* (London: Penguin Books, 2018).

⁵⁶ Tuck and Yang, “Decolonisation,” 1–40; Malose Makhubela, “Decolonise, Don't Diversify: Discounting Diversity in the South African Academe as a Tool for Ideological Pacification,” *Education as Change* 22, no. 1 (2018): 1–21; Kalwant Bhopal and Clare Pitkin, “‘Same Old Story, Just a Different Policy’: Race and Policy Making in Higher Education in the UK,” *Race Ethnicity and Education* 23, no. 4 (January 2020): 530–547, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2020.1718082>; Makhubela, “Decolonise,” 1–21.

fifth criticism that can be levelled at global north academics engaged in decolonising work is that they tend to monopolise decolonisation. This has resulted in two things. Firstly, global north academics are centre-staged by other global north academics, students and research centres, which fosters the impression that they are leaders of decolonisation.⁵⁷ Secondly, it creates a global north 'decolonial bubble' dominated by and for global north academics and students. The sixth criticism that can be levelled at global north academics engaged in decolonising work may be upsetting for some, but it is important to mention because it is based on the lack of 'self-reflexivity' among some of them regarding decolonisation efforts and attached privileges.⁵⁸ By this, I mean that there is little introspection about their positionality and situatedness when it comes to decolonising work. The seventh criticism that can be levelled at global north academics engaged in decolonising work concerns the criticism of decolonisation. Here, I include myself because the criticism levelled at decolonisation is based on employing global north epistemology, and in doing so, global north epistemology is recentred through the backdoor.⁵⁹ The eighth criticism can be levelled at all those engaged in decolonising work, including me, for not adequately defining and explaining what decolonisation is and what it entails. For example, what does decolonisation mean and entail in the global north and global south countries?⁶⁰ This situation raises several questions. These include whether decolonisation only concerns the epistemic struggle against global north epistemic hegemony.⁶¹ Is decolonisation

⁵⁷ Nirmal Puwar, "Puzzlement of a Déjà Vu: Illuminaries of the Global South," *The Sociological Review* 68, no. 3 (December 2020): 540–556, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038026119890254>.

⁵⁸ Heidi Mogstad and Tse Lee-Shan, "Decolonising Anthropology," *The Cambridge Journal of Anthropology* 36, no. 2 (September 2018): 53–72, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26946000>; Leon Moosavi, "Turning the Decolonial Gaze towards Ourselves: Decolonising the Curriculum and 'Decolonial Reflexivity' in Sociology and Social Theory," *Sociology* (July 2022): 1–20.

⁵⁹ Ilyas, "Decolonialisation," 417–440.

⁶⁰ Morreira et al, "Confronting the complexities of decolonising curricula and pedagogy in higher education," *Third World Thematics: A TWQ Journal* 5, no. 1-2 (August 2020): 1–18, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23802014.2020.1798278>; Ilyas, "Decolonialisation," 417–440; Taiwo, "Against Decolonisation."

⁶¹ Taiwo, "Against Decolonisation."

something more than epistemic?⁶² When will decolonisation (or decolonisations) end? What are the post-decolonisation plans, or is it an endless process? The ninth criticism that can be levelled at global north academics engaged in decolonisation work is that they have a tendency to romanticise the past and trap global south countries as some kind of ‘chattel property’ of the global north countries, which entails some kind of ‘mental servitude’ and always needing to be saved by the global north.⁶³ The final criticism that can be levelled at global north academics engaged in decolonising work is related to the fifth one, which is that they tend to ‘read, cite and invite academics that only publish in a select few global north journals’ that are part of the decolonial bubble. This leads to several issues from a decolonial perspective. Firstly, it leads to the silencing through omission and dismissal of global south academics and, for that matter.⁶⁴ Secondly, it means that knowledge production on decoloniality is centred in global north countries. Thirdly, it creates the impression that only global north academics and universities are concerned about decolonisation. Finally, it reinforces a global north decolonial bubble that seems to be designed (accidentally or otherwise) by and for the global north, academia, academics and students.

Coloniality and Research Paradigms

In this part of the paper, I discuss what indigenous and decolonial academics call the dirty history of research and research methods. By this, they mean the predatory, exploitative, racist and inaccurate research during colonisation.⁶⁵

Academics like Ndlovu-Gatsheni⁶⁶ argue that research conducted by academics from global north countries in the global north and global south countries during colonisation has a dirty history because it was predatory, exploitative and informed by racist tropes that involved bi-

⁶² Tuck and Yang, “Decolonisation,” 1–40.

⁶³ Taiwo, *Against Decolonisation*; Chalmers, “The transformation of academic knowledges,” 97–116; Ilyas, “Decolonialisation,” 417–440.

⁶⁴ Alatas, “Silencing as Method.”

⁶⁵ Sinclair, “Indigenous research,” 117–139.

⁶⁶ Ndlovu-Gatsheni, “Provisional Notes,” 481–492.

ocolonialism and intellectual exploitation.⁶⁷ Similarly, Smith⁶⁸ argues that research during colonialism involved measuring and comparing the limbs and faculties of colonised people to determine their level of mental capacity, such as intelligence, based on global north standards. This situation, as Smith argues from her personal perspective, has left the Māori people traumatised and suspicious of academics.⁶⁹ Arvizu and Saravia-Shore⁷⁰ also argue that the exploitation and inaccurate representations of colonised people have meant that they do not trust academics. The trauma and lack of trust in global north academics is compounded by several other factors that reinforce coloniality, which I will briefly mention here. Firstly, some global north academics still think it is acceptable to make archaeological digs on land that, for example, is held sacred by indigenous people.⁷¹ This situation not only suggests that the global north academics have little care for the rights of indigenous people but also think, feel and imagine the world in a way that is reminiscent of colonisation and therefore perpetuates colonial knowledge production relations. Secondly, governments of global north countries remain unapologetic about colonisation.⁷² This situation is unfortunate and undermines the decades of anti-racist policies and education that these countries have rolled out. Thirdly, some museums in global north countries still possess the remains of colonised people and their cultural artefacts, which were brought back for either 'racialised research or as war trophies'.⁷³ This situation suggests that the grievances and the trauma of colonised people do not matter to the governments of global north countries. One reason for this could be that, for them, colonialism is something that happened in the past and,

⁶⁷ Laurelyn Whitt, *Science, Colonialism, and Indigenous Peoples: The Cultural Politics of Law and Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

⁶⁸ Smith, *Decolonising Methodologies*.

⁶⁹ Whitt, *Science*.

⁷⁰ Stefen F. Arvizu and Marrieta Saravia Shore, *Cross-cultural Literacy: Ethnographies of Communication in Multiethnic Classrooms* (London: Routledge, 2017).

⁷¹ Whitt, *Science*.

⁷² Andrew Woolford and Jeff Benvenuto, "Canada and colonial genocide," *Journal of Genocide Research* 17, no 4. (December 2015): 373–390, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623528.2015.1096580>.

⁷³ Kehinde Andrews, *The New Age of Empire How Racism and Colonialism Still Rule the World* (London: Penguin Books, 2021); Whitt, *Science*; Smith, *Decolonising Methodologies*.

therefore, is not relevant or important to their present or future.⁷⁴ That said, one would expect things to have changed since the end of colonialism, but this appears not to be the case. Instead, the opposite seems true because colonialism continues under the banner of coloniality and is, in some cases, justified by employing discourses on scientific and intellectual advancement.⁷⁵

The Research Process and Guarding Against Coloniality

In this final part of the paper, I will suggest some ways that the global north academics can guard against reinforcing coloniality whilst researching on and in global south countries. The methods I suggest are informed by decolonial methodologies.⁷⁶ Admittedly, the methods I suggest for conducting research may be difficult for some global north academics to employ because of their research training, epistemological, methodological, ideological and political convictions, or economic interest or even due to pressure from their universities and funders.

The first way is for academics to examine what Tuck and Yang⁷⁷ call the academic-industrial complex. On the one hand, doing so will mean highlighting how coloniality operates at different levels of global north academia, such as at structural, cultural, academic and publishing levels. On the other hand, it implies that academics need to engage in deep self-introspection, which will help them identify and address how their attitudes and behaviour could lead to them reinforcing coloniality. However, this will not be an easy task, and global north academics who are serious about not reinforcing coloniality must understand that decolonising is a life choice and does not start and end at the university entrance. The second way is for academics to learn about the researched

⁷⁴ Keme Nzerem, "Nigeria's battle to reclaim looted Benin Bronzes," *Channel 4 News*, September 10, 2021, <https://www.channel4.com/news/nigerias-battle-to-reclaim-looted-benin-bronzes>.

⁷⁵ Karsten Noko, "Medical colonialism in Africa is not new," *Al-Jazeera*, April 8, 2020, <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2020/4/8/medical-colonialism-in-africa-is-not-new>; Whitt, *Science*.

⁷⁶ Held, "Decolonising," 1–6; Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies*; Chalmers, "The transformation of academic knowledges," 97–116.

⁷⁷ Tuck and Yang, "Decolonisation," 1–40.

community's religious and cultural beliefs, practices and politics and simultaneously critically reflect on how their own ways of knowing, thinking, feeling, believing, being and doing condition their positionality and situatedness.⁷⁸ This will help them identify possible methodological problems and plan how to address them before and during the research. The third way is for academics to become students of the researched community, which will help them learn and understand the ways of thinking, knowing, feeling, believing, being and doing of the researched community and therefore guard against attitudes and behaviour that may undermine the research.⁷⁹ The fourth way is for academics to critically reflect on their positionality and situatedness and attached privileges in relation to their research participants, the researched community, research assistants, translators, local advisers and other stakeholders. Such reflection will help them become aware of the unequal power relations, which give them considerable power to characterise, define, describe and foster perceptions of the researched community among the public and policymakers. Therefore, making them more conscious of the need to accurately and carefully report their research findings because not doing so could lead to unintended consequences for the researched community, such as economic exploitation, political marginalisation and even violence, long after the research has been completed. The fifth way is for academics to critically reflect on the type of questions that they want to ask, why and how they want to ask them, the language they want to use to ask them, where (location) they will ask them and what type of answers they are expecting to receive. Critically thinking about such methodological concerns will encourage academics to reflect on their epistemology, methodology, research objectives and personal attitudes and behaviour. Not doing so could mean that the research findings are inaccurate, the research objectives may not benefit the researched community, and the attitude and behaviours of the academics may harm the researched community. The sixth way is for academics not to see the research participants and the researched community as repositories of information. Seeing them in such

⁷⁸ Smith, *Decolonising Methodologies*.

⁷⁹ Levac et al., *Learning across Indigenous*.

ways could lead to predatory and exploitative research practices and unethical research findings.⁸⁰ The seventh way is for academics to ensure that the research participants and researched community are not seen or used as native informers or intellectual compradors. Seeing or using them in such ways entails holding attitudes and engaging in practices that are reminiscent of colonial knowledge production relations.⁸¹ The eighth way is for academics to make the duty of care part of their research. Doing so will mean that the research participants and the researched community are not negatively impacted by the research but actually benefit from it.⁸² The ninth way is for academics to ensure that the research process, from the initial conceptualisation to dissemination, does not inadvertently lead to the silencing of the research participants and the researched community through omission and dismissal.⁸³ The tenth and perhaps the most important way is for academics to make the concept of reciprocity a central component of the research process. Indigenous academics developed the concept to address the unequal power relations and prevent predatory and exploitative research objectives, attitudes and practices among academics.⁸⁴ Reciprocity can mean several things, such as research collaboration between the academics, research participants, the researched community or other stakeholders.⁸⁵ This means seeing and encouraging research participants, the research community and other stakeholders as knowledge producers and beneficiaries, rather than just repositories of information.⁸⁶ The final way is for academics not to organise and use events as a way to gather information from global south academics, CSOs and educational institutions

⁸⁰ Smith, *Decolonising Methodologies*; Levac et al., *Learning across Indigenous*.

⁸¹ Alatas, "Intellectual Imperialism," 23–45; Rohit Varman, Saha Biswatosh and P. Skalen, "Market subjectivity and neoliberal governmentality in higher education," *Journal of Marketing Management* 27, no. 11–12 (October 2011): 1163–1185, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257X.2011.609134>; Ilyas, "Decolonising the Terrorism Industry," 1–16; Yimovie Sakue-Collins, "(Un)doing development: a postcolonial enquiry of the agenda and agency of NGOs in Africa," *Third World Quarterly* 42, no. 5 (August 2020): 976–995, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2020.1791698>.

⁸² Smith, *Decolonising Methodologies*.

⁸³ Alatas, "Silencing as Method."

⁸⁴ Smith, *Decolonising Methodologies*.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ Greenwood and Levin, "Reform of the social sciences," 89–121.

for funding and publishing purposes. Doing so will mean that the academics are engaged in predatory and exploitative research practices that are reminiscent of colonial knowledge production relations.

The ways I have suggested here to guard against inadvertently reinforcing coloniality are by no means exhaustive, and I am sure other indigenous and decolonial academics can think of more ways. Nevertheless, I hope that the ways I have suggested will help global north academics to critically reflect on how they plan, conduct and disseminate their research and ensure that the research participants and researched communities benefit and are not silenced through omission and dismissal.

Conclusion

Decolonising academia is not a simple task because it is hard and traumatic work that impacts the mind, body and emotions of those who engage in it. Therefore, the thinking and feelings generated by decolonising cannot be turned on and off like a light switch. Like a trauma, the thoughts and feelings remain with the academic all the time. Perhaps the most difficult part of decolonising is that it demands that academics make sacrifices, which most academics are unlikely or unwilling to make for personal reasons or other convictions.⁸⁷

With this in mind, I admit that changing the ways of doing research among global north academics is not an easy task because of epistemic coloniality and a range of other factors. For example, academics will need to reflect on whether their ideological and political convictions, economic interests and academic career goals align with the goals of decolonisation.

In this article, I have attempted to show that global north academics wanting to use decolonial methodologies to research on or in global south countries should not assume that it will be an easy task but a task that should be undertaken. Of all the ways I have suggested, I feel that four are the most important and should be incorporated as part of any research process. The first way is for academics not to absolve themselves of their duty of care to all those that participated in the research,

⁸⁷ Tuck and Yang, "Decolonisation."

including stakeholders. The second way is for academics not to see all those who participated in the research as repositories of information that they can economically and academically benefit them. Instead, academics should see and actively encourage their research participants and the researched community to become co-knowledge producers, owners and beneficiaries of the knowledge they produce about themselves. The third way is connected to the second. It entails academics not seeing or treating all those who participated in the research as native informers or intellectual compradors because this may lead them to be harmed long after the research has been completed and published. Finally, academics should not engage in predatory or exploitative research practices because they clearly demonstrate no regard for the research participants and the researched community and are akin to colonial knowledge production relations and therefore reinforce decoloniality.

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