





The struggle to be treated as subjects not objects

- n Thoughts on the historical context to the ideas of the Psyche and the 'Primitive'
- n The 'here and now' some thoughts on the situation in the Northern Territory
- n Implications for practice



“Know what [the anthropologist] thinks a savage is and you have the key to his work. You know what he thinks he himself is.”

Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Culture* quoted in Brickman, C. (2003). Aboriginal populations in the Mind: Race and Primitivity in Psychoanalysis. New York, Columbia University Press.



Sigmund Freud

n “It is no doubt true that the sharp contrast that we make between thinking and doing is absent in both of them [i.e. neurotics and ‘primitives’]. But the neurotics are above all *inhibited* in their actions; with them the thought is a complete substitute for the deed. Primitive men, on the other hand, are *uninhibited*: thought passes directly into action. Within them it is rather the deed that is a substitute for the thought.

(161; Italics in original) Freud, S. (1913) Totem and Taboo quoted in Seshadri-Crooks, K. (1994). "The Primitive as Analyst: Postcolonial Feminism's Access to Psychoanalysis." Cultural Critique 28(Fall 1994): 175-218.

Carl Jung

- n For though a child is not born conscious, his mind is not a tabula rasa. The child is born with a definite brain, and the brain of an English child will not work like that of an Australian black fellow but in the way of a modern English person. The brain is born with a finished structure, it will work in the modern way, but this brain has its history. It has been built up in the course of millions of years and represents a history of which it is the result. Naturally it carries with it the traces of that history, exactly like the body, and if you grope down into the structure of the mind you naturally find traces of the archaic mind (CW, Vol xviii, p41).
 - n (Jung quoted in Dalal, F. (1988). "The Racism of Jung." Race and Class XXIX(3): 1-22.p10)
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n Could the 'primitive' be accepted as an analyst and salvage therapeutic psychoanalytic practice by overthrowing the concept of 'primitivity' ?

The view of the 'primitive' 1928, University of Melbourne

“Remember that primitive man, with abducted lower limbs and sagging knees, had a fight to maintain the erect posture. The aboriginal with his thin legs and long arms is nearer to these people than we and is so-called laziness has a physiological basis. The aboriginal boy sitting at school on seats without backs directs only part of his attention to lessons; the rest is devoted to keeping himself erect.” (Mackenzie 1928)

Harrison, L. (1991). Medical attitudes and health care.

The Health of Aboriginal Australia. J. Reid and P. Trompf. Sydney, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers.



“Under such imperialism a conceptual domain is sometimes hegemonized so effectively by a concept produced and honed in the West that the original domain vanishes from our awareness. Intellect and intelligence become IQ, the oral cultures become the cultures of the primitive or the preliterate, the oppressed become the proletariat, social change becomes development.

Nandy, A. (1990). The Politics of Secularism and the Recovery of Religious Tolerance. Mirrors of Violence. V. Das. New Delhi, Oxford University Press: 69-93.



Dussel and the developmental fallacy

Dussel distinguishes two concurrent paradigms of modernity. One is the rational, emancipatory conceptual content of modernity. The other is the negative and irrational myth, in which Dussel traces the justification of colonial violence to a "developmental fallacy." This fallacy rests on the view that Europe is the endpoint of a universal developmental process, toward which all other peoples must and will go.

Lange, L. (2000). Burnt Offerings to Rationality: A Feminist Reading of the Construction of Indigenous Peoples in Enrique Dussel's Theory of Modernity. Decentering the Center. Philosophy for a Multicultural, Postcolonial, and Feminist World. U. Narayan and S. Harding. Bloomington, Indiana University Press: 226-39.

Sacrificial violence

“Dussel holds the view (contrary to many postmoderns) that it is not modern philosophical or scientific rationality that has been an instrument of terror, but a distinctively modern Eurocentric irrational myth that has resulted in the terror of of what he calls "sacrificial violence."

Lange, L. (2000). Burnt Offerings to Rationality: A Feminist Reading of the Construction of Indigenous Peoples in Enrique Dussel's Theory of Modernity. Decentering the Center. Philosophy for a Multicultural, Postcolonial, and Feminist World. U. Narayan and S. Harding. Bloomington, Indiana University Press: 226-39.

Work not the “passageway to freedom” for the so-called ‘primitive’

n “What we saw in the mining boom [in the Pilbara in the 1970s] was like a repeat of the nightmare our ancestors went through a hundred years ago during the pearling boom. The biggest difference is that during the first boom our people were slaves, while during the second we were left right out of the workforce.”

Narrator Roger Solomon, Exile and the Kingdom

Before these ideas arrived here...

“Prior to colonisation Aboriginal people had control over all aspects of their life. They were able to exercise self-determination in its purest form. They were able to determine their “very-being”, the nature of which ensured their psychological fulfilment and incorporated the cultural, social and spiritual sense.”

National Aboriginal Health Strategy Working Party (1989). A National Aboriginal Health Strategy. Canberra. pix

Subjection – Butler/Foucault

- n We are used to thinking of power as what presses on the subject from outside, as what subordinates, sets underneath, and relegates to a lower order.
- n But if following Foucault we understand power as forming the subject as well as providing the very conditions of its existence and the trajectory of its desire,
- n then power is not simply what we oppose but also, in a strong sense, what we depend on for our existence and what we harbour and preserve in the beings that we are.

Butler, J. (1997). The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection. Stanford, Stanford University Press. pages1-4

Abjection

“...this logic of repudiation in the delineation of other hegemonic subject positions”.

The example

“Heterosexual identification takes place not through the refusal to identify as homosexual but through an identification with an abject homosexuality”

Seshadri-Crooks, K. (1998). The Comedy of Domination: Psychoanalysis and the Conceit of Whiteness. The Psychoanalysis of Race. C.Lane. New York, Columbia University Press

n The insistence that a subject is passionately attached to his or her own subordination has been invoked cynically by those who seek to debunk the claims of the subordinated. If a subject can be shown to pursue or sustain his or her subordinated status, the reasoning goes, then perhaps final responsibility for the subordination resides with the subject. Over and against this view, I would maintain that the attachment to subjection is produced through the workings of power, and that part of the operation of power is made clear in this psychic effect, one of the most insidious of its productions

Butler, J. (1997) *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford, Stanford University Press).p.6.

Violence

“Sometimes this violence is sudden ... At other times it takes the form of a continuous reign of terror ... Even when violence is not present in such dramatic forms, there can be the slow erosion of community through the soft knife of policies that severely disrupt the life worlds of people.”

- n Das, V. and A. Kleinman (2001). Introduction. Remaking a World: Violence, Social Suffering, and Recovery. V. Das, A. Kleinman, M. Lock, M. Ramphela and P. Reynolds. Berkeley, University of California Press: 1-30.p1
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Part 2

3 Powerful opinions ...first example

n Sutton is convinced that Aboriginal culture is gravely defective (he may even be saying that [it] is fatally flawed). The ... thesis will be unwelcome in many quarters, since it goes beyond pointing the bone at Whitey, and perhaps Sutton will find himself dodging a lot of flak for asserting it

n Maddock, K. (2002) *Anthropology enters the heart of darkness Adelaide Review* (Adelaide, Wakefield Press), p.9.

n Maddock summarizes the following points from Sutton: that “family and community violence are deeply rooted in pre-contact tradition”; “Infants are stimulated to react angrily and aggressively by being 'cruelled' (as Sutton calls it)”; “men's violent and demanding behaviour to women has its foundations in the way boys are brought up”; that “traditional beliefs and practices impede better health” and that “family loyalties override regard for the interests of others.”

Maddock, K. (2002) *Anthropology enters the heart of darkness Adelaide Review* (Adelaide, Wakefield Press), p.9.

The second example is from a former Commissioner involved in the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, Commissioner Hal Wootten:

- n Aborigines have to do it themselves, day by day - shame the drunks and abusers of women and children, reject the rorts, get kids to attend school, eat better food, take more exercise and aspire to a future beyond grog, prison and early death. They must bear legacies of racism, historical injustice and broken families as burdens, not as excuses or disabilities that disempower.

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Wootten, H. (2002) Are you listening *The Weekend Australian* (Sydney, News Corporation), p.R10.

Third example –Ernest Hunter

n ...while non-Indigenous mental health practitioners must be more mindful of appropriate ways of working, they have a primary responsibility to deliver a service to Indigenous communities and, as yet, we have not lived up to that responsibility.

n Finally I think Peter Sutton (2000) is correct when he suggests that: 'everything, including the question of perpetuating 'outback ghettos' or other similar bureaucratically maintained institutions, the encouragement of corporatism as against the pursuit of individual needs and aspirations, de facto laissez-faire policing policies with regard to Indigenous community problems of violence, petrol sniffing and drug abuse, even separate Indigenous service delivery, should all be on the table.'

Hunter, E. (2001) *An Ounce of Prevention...: Reconsidering prevention in Indigenous mental health* *The Power of Knowledge, the Resonance of Tradition – Indigenous Studies: Conference 2001* (Manning Clark Centre, The Australian National University, Canberra, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies).

- n The vulnerability to mainstreaming is heightened by such 'expert' opinion. In the wake of the demise of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission the loss of these Aboriginal community controlled organisations would be considerable.
- n All three authors are non-Indigenous men in positions of power and influence who hold up the mirror to the Indigenous subject "pointing the bone at Whitey".

On-going surveillance

- n The effects of the surveillance of, and compliance with, the regulatory mechanisms of post-colonial or neo-colonial structures in which disciplines such as medicine have played an integral part, have left their marks on the lives of Indigenous peoples.
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- n Within the public service one's own Indigenous identity may still be rendered invisible while the expectations of one's professional role for example as a social worker or policy analyst may be scrutinised for conformity to the 'mainstream' benchmarks that have been established.

Gail Lewis outlines a similar situation for Black social welfare workers in England.


Hence if in some senses black people can be invisible, in others they are never able to be free of this marker of social identification and differentiation. There is thus a paradox highlighted here in that it is the visibility of the marker which creates the conditions of invisibility.

- n] Lewis, G. (1996) Situated Voices. 'Black Women's Experience' and Social Work, *Feminist Review*, No. 53(Summer), pp. 24 - 56.p.37.




Part 3





n Finding a way to temper their critical responses while considering how such responses might jeopardize their newfound insider status constitutes a major challenge facing these new arrivals.

n Collins, P.H. (1998) *Fighting words: Black women and the search for justice* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press).p.95.



n This may, for example, include a presumption by the department and its use of the current 'jargon', that not only are you *not* part of the excluded community but that you as a public servant for government have the power to change their situation, to 'empower them' if they meet the criteria for assistance as determined by the funding body.

n Indigenous government workers need to justify their rationale for money spent on prevention projects in the context of a crisis in some communities. The arguments for what should be happening under current conditions are complex and in the area of social emotional wellbeing and mental health, often hinge on evidence that is difficult in an area where evaluations of alternative approaches may not reveal the degree of change in the priority 'target' group needed to convince governments about continued funding.

Being challenged by non-Indigenous colleagues over the need for different approaches to programs and projects from what is offered to non-Indigenous Australians is, in my view, connected not just to economic rationalism but also to institutional racism. It also quite often connects with individual pathologizing of problems rather than community development principles.

As well...

Scrutiny from the Indigenous community upon Indigenous workers is quite different from that of disadvantaged non-Indigenous people in the wider community on 'their' non-Indigenous government workers

the idea of 'time'

- n Outcomes for today (measurable health gains); outcomes for tomorrow (improved health care or health promotion delivery); and outcomes for the day after tomorrow (enhanced institutional, professional and community capacity).

- See Legge, D. (1999) The evaluation of health development: the next methodological frontier, *The Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, 23(2), pp. 117-118. p.118.
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How is this done and for whom? For example is the individual the focus or the position of the community as a whole; who develops the research questions and carries out the research; and who considers the outcomes and responses?

n Dudgeon and Williams commenting on similar programs in Western Australia state that it is “unusual for programs to offer time to build rapport” and how important it is for creating a culturally safe place where people can then be offered “health care choices”. Places where people can meet and develop community networks are usually quite accessible for non-Aboriginal people in most places. These networks however are not necessarily culturally safe for Aboriginal people

n Dudgeon, P. & Williams, R. (2000) Culturally Appropriate Therapies, Models and Services, in: P. Dudgeon, D. Garvey & H. Pickett (Eds) *Working with Indigenous Australians* (Perth, Gunada Press, Curtin Indigenous Research Centre).p.390.

n ...knowledge is most like itself when it undertakes to counter and oppose the unequal distribution of power in the 'world' ... Likewise, knowledge is least like itself when it becomes institutionalised and starts to collaborate with the interests of a dominant or ruling elite.

Edward Said quoted in Gandhi L. (1998) *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction* (Sydney, Allen & Unwin).p.75.



“...racism is not so much a product of race as the very reason for its existence. Without the underlying desire for hierarchical categorization implicit in racism, ‘race’ would not exist.”

Ashcroft, B., G. Griffiths, et al. (1998). Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies. London, Routledge. Pages 198-206



n Those who experience such an epidermalizing of their world (Slaughter, 1982), moreover discover their status by means of the embodied behaviour of others: in their gestures, a certain nervousness that they exhibit, their avoidance of eye contact, the distance they keep.

Young, I.M. (1990) *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press).p.123.

n Western health practitioners may view distancing from the person seeking help as a necessary part of professional practice and objectivity, however for some Aboriginal people seeking help, this 'objectivity' can be seen as a direct link from *terra nullius* to their present disempowerment in a discourse in which the notion of the 'primitive' remains implicit.

n The Cartesian origins of the power that was integral to colonialism and modernity continues in many forms including within the theoretical content in psychoanalysis, psychiatry and psychology. By pathologising, or at the least simply dismissing resistance to these institutional forces of order and method in the modern nation state, means that other knowledges of health and wellbeing are easily silenced or trivialised by the authoritative voice.