

The Psychic Life of Colonial Power: Racialised Subjectivities, Bodies, and Methods

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Abstract:

Ongoing histories of racism in colonial nations such as Australia challenge us as academics to consider how we understand racism and its role in practices of both privilege and oppression. In this paper we as two non-indigenous people living in Australia attempt to work through issues of collective responsibility by focusing on what we believe are three key issues in the study of racism: 1) methodology and researcher subjectivity, 2) subjectification as a practice of racialisation, and 3) racialised embodiment and its relation to power. In exploring these three issues we utilise theoretical interpretations of subjectivity and embodiment alongside a brief examination of a speech by Prime Minister Howard in order to elaborate our claim that racism is foundational to white subjectivities in Australia. By examining colonial violence and our relation to it, we suggest that it may be possible to develop an ethical relationship to Indigenous sovereignty that challenges race privilege at the very moment that it is deployed. In speaking of racism in this way we seek to develop a framework within which research on racism in Australia may disturb white claims to belonging by continuing to explore how racism works in the service of the 'good nation'.

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Critical psychological approaches to the study of racism have long drawn attention to the need for understanding racism not as an intrapsychic phenomenon, but rather as a social phenomenon that structures the lives of all those who live in societies that privilege racialised understandings of subjectivity (e.g., Augoustinos, 2001; Augoustinos, Tuffin & Sale, 1999; Hook, 2004; Riggs & Augoustinos, 2004; Teo, 2003). Everyday understandings of the 'reality' of race and racism, however, have been tempered by social constructionist approaches which attempt to deconstruct race as an analytic by drawing attention to the ways in which race is the product of particular cultural and historical locations. Such an approach emphasises that because race has no biological basis or scientific legitimacy we therefore need to 'move beyond race'. Whilst we share this desire to deconstruct race, and the role that it plays in perpetuating both oppression and privilege, we are also concerned that in emphasising the ways in which race has been socially constructed as a site of difference, we run the risk of ignoring the ways in which 'race' continues to be constituted as 'real' and functions as a lens through which social relations and subjectivities are constructed and understood (see also Winnubst, 2004, for more on this problem). 'Race' continues to be used as a 'taken-for-granted' category in both everyday and scientific discourse. Importantly, 'race' also continues to shape research agendas, public policy, and the relationships we have with one another. Race is thus, in our understanding, central to the ways we understand ourselves – particularly in colonial nations such as Australia, where we will direct our focus in this paper.

What we believe is required, then, and what the title of our paper draws attention to by building upon the recent work of Hook (2004) on racism, power and subjectivity, is a focus upon hegemonic practices/structures of racism. In particular, we will suggest in this paper that such practices/structures form the basis of colonial power, and continue to exert considerable hold over academic understandings of racialised subjectivities. In order to substantiate this claim, we elaborate three key sites within this paper through which we may explore the machinations of race. We propose that a focus on these three sites (amongst others) will allow for the continued development of an account of racialisation that acknowledges the workings of power at the level of the psyche (conceptualised here as a collective practice). First, we raise concerns that relate to method, and the problems that may arise from prioritising any one form of method in the presumption that it will be inherently more useful for combating racism. Second, we suggest that there is a need for a continued engagement with subjectivity and power, the intention being to develop a more thorough elaboration of how subjects are constituted within a network of power relations that are shaped by the effects of race. And third, we outline the implications of the first two points for how we understand embodiment in relation to race. In this regard, we propose that ignoring the materiality of race (as per the 'social construction of race' approach) may do very little to challenge how race is played out on a day-to-day basis.

By drawing on work in the areas of critical psychology, philosophy and psychoanalysis, and by exploring the long-standing relations between these

three areas, we thus provide a tentative map of one of the directions that we believe critical psychological approaches to racism may take. In doing so, we focus specifically on the experience of racism in Australia, in order to emphasise the importance that we place upon theorising the specificities of racialised practices. Obviously some aspects of our paper will strike a resonance with those working in other colonial nations, but we are also aware of the particularities of racism in varying locations. We also write openly and intentionally as two individuals who identify, or who are identified, as being white. We believe that this focus on researcher subjectivity is of great importance in relation to work on racism, and one that we now address by examining in more detail issues of method in regards to research on racism.

Method, Criticality and 'Being on the Left'

In a review of critical psychological methodologies, Teo (1999, p. 122) draws attention to the distinction between methodology and method: "The term methodology, which refers to a general way of studying an object or event... [may be] opposed to the term method, which refers to a specific set of techniques (such as discourse analysis)". This distinction helps to draw attention to the problems that sometimes arise from prioritising particular methods over exploring the implications of the methodological frameworks that we bring to our research. Teo outlines three broad types of critical methodologies (deconstruction, construction and reconstruction), and suggests that we may fruitfully employ all three when examining the effects of racism. He also notes that we should be wary of paying attention primarily to deconstruction to the

detriment of methodologies that seek to construct new theories or understandings of social practices. We take this point up later in the paper where we attempt not only to deconstruct how race operates, but also to develop an intellectual framework, based on the work of Butler (1997), for understanding how racialisation is foundational to the processes of subjectification and embodiment.

In regards to research on racism, there appears to be an increasing split between approaches that prioritise discursive methods, and those that privilege psychoanalytically informed accounts. (A notable exception to this being the work of Billig, 1999, who has sought to provide a discursive account of psychoanalysis). Our concern here is that a focus primarily on method may prevent us from exploring a wide range of theoretical tools that may allow for analyses of racism that contribute to challenging the status quo. In some of our own recent work (e.g., Riggs, 2004 a; 2005; Riggs & Augoustinos, 2004) we have used a psychoanalytic discursive approach to explore and challenge racism. Our intent has not been to promote psychoanalysis as the be all and end all of research on racism. Rather we have taken notice of the increasing use of psychoanalytic concepts to understand colonial relations in Australia, and the relative salience of these concepts in everyday life. Thus psychoanalysis appears as a discourse often employed in the popular media, in academic debates and in the everyday talk of people living in Australia. Using psychoanalysis to examine racism in the context of Australia thus neither represents the imposition of psychoanalysis onto people's lives, nor the unproblematised uptake of psychoanalytic discourses. Instead, we (amongst others, e.g., Clarke & Moran,

2002; Nolan, 2003; Rutherford, 2000) have used psychoanalysis as an analytic that exposes the histories and practices that perpetuate racism in Australia at the same time as exposing psychoanalysis' own role in rendering racist ways of thinking possible (see also Bhabha, 1994; Frosh, Pheonix & Pattman, 2000; Seshadri-Crooks, 2000, in relation to such work undertaken in the context of other countries). At another time or place, or for another purpose, psychoanalysis may be entirely inappropriate for researching racism. But as both a deconstructive and constructive tool, psychoanalysis in the context of Australia provides us access to challenging social practices and academic discourses that often, unknowingly, perpetuate racist practices.

These points about method and methodology bring us to the question of criticality. We thus ask; 'What are some of the issues that arise from appending the term 'critical' to psychological work on racism, and how may it serve to recentre particular hegemonic ways of understanding race?' In her engagement with the subject area of whiteness studies, Ahmed (2004) points out that:

We might assume that if we are doing critical whiteness studies, rather than whiteness studies, that we can protect ourselves from doing – or even being seen to do – the wrong kind of whiteness studies. But the word 'critical' does not mean the elimination of risk, and nor should it become just a description of what we are doing over here, as opposed to them, over there (8)... The 'critical' in 'critical whiteness studies' cannot guarantee that it will have effects

that are critical, in the sense of challenging relations of power that remain concealed as institutional norms or givens (10).

Ahmed draws attention to the need for constantly examining the taken for granted assumptions of research that comes under the banner 'critical'. Whilst critical work has contributed a great deal to understanding racism in Australia (e.g., Augoustinos, 2001; Augoustinos, Tuffin & Rapley, 1999; Augoustinos, Tuffin & Sale, 1999), it has also at times failed to engage adequately with issues of privilege (Riggs & Selby, 2003). The banner of 'criticality' thus does not mitigate race privilege, nor does it constitute an a priori challenge to white hegemony. Indeed, critical research is often responded to by those who are positioned as 'objects of power' as representing yet another form of oppression masked under the guise of goodwill (e.g., Moreton-Robinson, 2000).

This then leads us to reaffirm the importance of focusing on the subjectivity of the researcher. Drawing on the seminal work of Fanon (1967), we would propose that simply claiming a theoretical or political position 'left of the middle' does not automatically mean that we are outside systems of oppression. In other words, analysing the rhetoric of politicians, or examining how racism is enacted in talk, does not necessarily translate into the reflexive move that is required in order to acknowledge our own location within racialised practices. Indeed, outlining other people's racism can easily serve as a disingenuous form of activism, whereby those of us who identify as white are ourselves implicitly positioned as somehow not benefiting from racism (Riggs, 2004a).

Exploring our own privileges and complicity with whiteness need not be understood as a form of white solipsism, but rather may be seen as an engagement with the activism that is presumed to inhere to 'critical research'. Otherwise, by leaving our privileges unexamined, those of us who identify as white may perpetuate the notion that there can be a split between 'good anti-racists' and 'bad racists'. What such a split ignores is the fact that whilst many people working under the banner of 'critical' may challenge oppressive practices, those of us who are white still stand to benefit from national practices that seek to enshrine the rights of white people (Mills, 1997). Challenging forms of nationalism may contribute to their destabilisation, but it does not require us as white people to give up the power to do so.

In the sections that follow, we apply this logic of challenging privilege when we examine constructions of power and subjectivity. By focusing on the implications of specific understandings of subjectivity, we suggest that a continued emphasis on subjectivity is required in order to better understand how white subject constitution works in the service of racism, and the ways in which collective practices of racialised memory serve to enshrine the privileges of those of us who identify as white. In particular, in the following section we briefly explore some of the implications for white researchers in the area of a critical psychology of racism that arise when we focus primarily on the racist actions of other white people. As a counter to this, we locate ourselves firmly within our analysis, and outline how we too stand to benefit from the colonising moves of the white Australian nation.

The denial of racism and colonial violence

The willful denial and forgetfulness of ongoing acts of colonization within Australia is most evident in public debates about apologising to the Stolen Generations – those Indigenous children who were forcibly removed from their families and communities through successive government policies throughout the 20th century. A national apology to Indigenous peoples for these racist policies and practices was one of several recommendations made by The Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission (HREOC) in their National Inquiry Into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children From Their Families. This particular recommendation – of ‘saying sorry’ to Indigenous peoples for historical injustices - generated considerable debate and controversy, not only among members of the presiding Coalition Government, but also among the wider Australian community (see LeCouteur & Augoustinos, 2001). Prime Minister Howard refused to offer an official apology to Indigenous peoples on behalf of ‘the nation’, drawing repeatedly on the argument that present generations should not be held accountable for the practices of past generations. Howard’s speech to the Reconciliation Convention in May 2001 is thus instructive for understanding the ways in which colonial violence¹ continues to be perpetrated by the nation state against Indigenous people.

¹ It is important to note here that our understanding of ‘colonial violence’ and ‘colonial power’ is derived primarily from the work of scholars in the area of race and whiteness in Australia. Such work demonstrates the ways in which colonisation continues to occur, and how it circulates as a set of psychical/epistemic/physical/structural relations of racialised power. Moreton-Robinson (2003) has referred to Australia as ‘post-colonising’, rather than ‘postcolonial’, an important distinction that demonstrates the specificities of colonisation in Australia. Such an understanding of the ongoing presence of colonisation allows for a recognition of how colonial violence continues to shape, and is indeed foundational to, white subjectivities in Australia (see also Nicolacopolous & Vassilacopolous, 2004).

In the speech examined below, Howard attempts to justify his Government's 'practical' approach to reconciliation and his refusal to make a national apology to Indigenous peoples. Importantly, however, it is also a speech where Howard can be seen to be engaged in the ongoing struggle over contested versions of Australia's history. Such struggles over historical accounts continue to shape how we as non-indigenous people claim belonging and ownership within Australia, both by those for, and those against, the recognition of Indigenous sovereignty (Riggs, 2004b). Contestations over historical accounts therefore serve to further enshrine the hegemony of white ways of knowing. Howard's rhetoric may thus be seen as reasserting the value accorded to white interpretations of history in the speech to the Reconciliation Convention, by first stressing the importance of acknowledging, openly, the (historical) injustices perpetrated against Indigenous peoples - describing this as "the most blemished chapter" in Australia's history - and then going on to qualify this call to acknowledging injustices by invoking a version of Australia's history that strongly contests the story of dispossession and genocide of Indigenous peoples that is documented by the Stolen Generations Report.

It is important, however, that we point out before providing a brief examination of Howard's speech, that Howard's rhetoric is indicative of the ways in which all white people living in Australia stand to benefit from the policies of the Howard government. The justification of economic, political, health and social privilege to non-indigenous Australians through constructions of 'pride', 'tolerance' and 'a fair go' serve to legitimate colonization and dispossession. As a result, whilst we

may well be critical of the rhetoric that Howard employs to legitimate a particular version of history, those of us who are non-indigenous Australians share a vested interest in maintaining our status within the nation. Deconstructing Howard's texts thus not only serves to show how white privilege is enshrined in government rhetoric, but how also it circulates as a discourse that renders intelligible the location of non-indigenous people as 'knowing subjects' (as we will elaborate further in the following sections).

In the extract below, Howard can be seen to signal his clear disagreement with the findings of the Report, and moreover, to replace it with a version of history that valorises, above all, 'nationhood'.

In facing the realities of the past, however, we must not join those who would portray Australia's history since 1788 as little more than a disgraceful record of imperialism, exploitation and racism.

Such a portrayal is a gross distortion and deliberately neglects the overall story of great Australian achievement that there is in our history to be told, and such an approach will be repudiated by the overwhelming majority of Australians who are proud of what this country has achieved although inevitably acknowledging the blemishes in its past history.

Australians of this generation should not be required to accept guilt and blame for past actions and policies over which they had no control.

However, we must acknowledge past wrongs, understand that they still cause a great deal of personal distress and resolve to improve areas of indigenous disadvantage both now and into the future.

Howard can be here seen to explicitly challenge the version of history that is documented by HREOC in the Stolen Generations Report – a history of systematic violence against Indigenous peoples. He refers to this history euphemistically as "the realities of the past", and "blemishes", but these realities are constructed here as a "gross distortion" that "deliberately neglects the overall story of great Australian achievement" (our emphases). Moreover, this 'distorted portrayal' is undermined as illegitimate by the attribution of interest or motivation. It is a version that "deliberately neglects" the positives that exist in "our" history. It is not a factual version; it is an interested one. Howard's argument that "we must not join those who would portray Australia's history . . . as little more than a disgraceful record of imperialism, exploitation and racism" suggests that this is what the HREOC report amounts to, and thus casts doubt on the legitimacy of its findings and recommendations (our emphases).

In much the same way, there is the risk that any analysis of such talk by fellow non-indigenous Australians such as ourselves will serve to reinforce the illusory distance between Howard's claim to legitimacy, and our own claims to

legitimacy, both within our analysis and in our own lives. Thus whilst Howard warns that the “overwhelming majority of Australians”, that is, the white non-indigenous majority, will repudiate such an account – that like Howard, this “majority of Australians” are proud of Australia’s story of great achievement and do not want it distorted by ‘exaggerated’ claims of racism and exploitation by a minority – our repudiation in this paper of Howard’s own repudiation of responsibility serves to shift the blame in ways similar to those evident in Howard’s rhetoric. In other words, a focus on Howard’s remarks may serve as a form of disavowal in regards to the ways in which our own status as non-indigenous people living in Australia works as a constant repudiation of Indigenous sovereignty. Whilst in Howard’s preferred version of history, injustices perpetrated against Indigenous people are represented as mere stains that tarnish an otherwise great story of a nation – a fundamentally ‘good nation’ – our account of Howard’s speech implicitly renders Howard’s rhetoric as a ‘mere stain’ arising from the racism of the current government. Both accounts effectively result in what Luke (1997, p. 359) has argued to be a construction of history that “amounts to a denial of ‘racism’”.

Following Hook (2005), we may understand any non-indigenous account of colonisation (whether it be framed through nationalism or anti-racism) as engaged in the disavowal of colonisation in some form. Hook usefully distinguishes between denial (understood as the refutation of another’s claim or statement, and the subsequent blanking out of the affect associated with the occurrence of that claim), and disavowal (understood as an act of perception that, whilst refuting the knowledge of another’s claim, actually evidences the

ongoing impact on affect that the claim makes). A fine line, indeed, in distinguishing between denial and disavowal, but we believe a useful one for understanding how non-indigenous discussions of history and accountability function to both manage the unsettling that Indigenous sovereignty produces whilst at the same time evidencing the ongoing enactment of such anxiety. It appears in Howard's speech, and it appears within our analysis and reading of his speech. Our very ways of talking about our status in Australia is mediated by the impact that the disavowal of dispossession and genocide has upon our sense of being and belonging in Australia.

In order to further explicate how disavowal operates in the service of white hegemony, we now go on to elaborate what Hook (2004) has termed 'the psychic life of colonial power', and from there we explore the implications of this for the formation of colonising subjectivities in Australia.

Colonial subjects, colonial minds

In referring to a 'psychic life', we take as integral the work of Butler (1997) in her elaboration of how subjects are formed in relation to power. In regards to racism, the question of subjectivity holds particular meanings that are shaped by the ongoing acts of colonisation that configure the Australian nation. The subject of the Australian nation (as distinct from Australian citizens) continues primarily to refer to the white, middle class subject, a subject who is formed in conjunction with their possessive investment in white belonging in Australia (cf. Moreton-Robinson, 2004). Such investments are structured through the disavowal of

Indigenous ownership (as previously elaborated), and are a continuation of the acts of dispossession and genocide that are formative of the Australian national psyche. To unpack this somewhat; if read through a psychoanalytic discursive lens, the originary violence of the Australian nation continues to shape the ways in which those invested in the nation relate to one another. It requires that this violence is routinely disavowed, in order to construct a notion of 'the good nation'. Indeed, as Rutherford (2000) has suggested, notions of a 'national good' are intimately related to national violence – the former exists precisely as an enactment of the latter. This results in non-indigenous people claiming a location as subjects of the Australian nation at the expense of Indigenous people in two ways: a) as a result of the fact of Indigenous dispossession (i.e., non-indigenous people claim to belong to land that is stolen), and b) through the construction of Indigenous people themselves as a threat to the Australian nation, a claim that is used to further exclude Indigenous people from representation within the national space (Riggs & Augoustinos, 2004). In order for these two factors to be rendered normative, the nation requires nominal members (i.e., those who are recognised by the nation as being legitimate subjects of the nation) to invest in the disavowal of Indigenous sovereignty.

In relation to the 'psychic life of colonial power', then, it is possible to conceive of this term as referring to the collective ways in which non-indigenous Australians are invested in maintaining the unequal power relations that exist under colonialism. Colonial power in Australia, and its operation through discourses of racialised difference, thus works in the service of white hegemony by setting up a series of exclusionary binaries wherein representation is reserved primarily for

non-indigenous people. Thus as Butler (1997, pp. 10-11) suggests, “Individuals come to occupy the site of the subject... and they enjoy intelligibility only to the extent that they are, as it were, first established in language”. Here we may understand that if non-indigenous ways of knowing and conceptualising subjectivity are taken as normative in Australia, then by default it will be the case that ‘being intelligible’ (as a subject of the nation) will only be extended to those who are established through the language of the nation (i.e., one that is founded upon the denial of colonial violence). The psychic life of colonial power is thus a network of racialised practices that are performed by recognised colonising subjects who hold an investment in this power. These networks of power attempt to exclude Indigenous people from representation by attributing the role of ‘object’ to Indigenous people.

However, such attributions are rarely successful. Thus, whilst as Teo and Fabrarro (2003, p. 683) suggest: “When it comes to socio-historical concepts such as subjectivity, identity, intelligence, emotion, motivation, personality, and so on, Euro-American researchers tend to teach, write and act as if they have told the whole story of human mental life”, we would emphasise the importance of the disclaimer ‘as if’ in their statement. In other words, though the Australian nation may believe in the success of its psychic power, this success is rarely evidenced as a totality within the nation. Indigenous people have always resisted colonial power, and continue to challenge the hegemony of white ways of knowing. Furthermore, what Moreton-Robinson (2003, p. 31) has termed Indigenous people’s “ontological relationship to land” continues to unsettle claims to white belonging by demonstrating the inalienable rights that

Indigenous people hold within the land (see also Riggs, 2004c). Thus the challenge that Indigenous sovereignty represents to the Australian nation, alongside the fact that, as Nicoll (2000, p. 370) suggests; “Indigenous sovereignty exists because I cannot know of what it consists; my epistemological artillery cannot penetrate it” (original emphasis), together undermine the white nation’s claims to sovereignty.

Our point here is thus twofold: to illustrate how colonial power is exercised in the service of white belonging, and at the same time to draw attention to the ways in which the myth of white sovereignty is continually destabilised by the visibility of ongoing histories of white violence. Claims to white sovereignty thus represent what Ridgeway (2001) has termed a ‘terra nullius of the mind’. In suggesting this term, Ridgeway alludes to the fact that most non-indigenous Australians demonstrate a ‘willful forgetfulness’ in regards to histories of genocide and dispossession. Ridgeway’s statement thus draws attention to the previously mentioned distinction between denial and disavowal – within this ‘wilfull forgetfulness’ remains the trace of white anxiety, and the ongoing impact that the fact of Indigenous sovereignty has upon affect. In other words, whilst non-indigenous people often deny our relationship to both colonial violence and Indigenous sovereignty by focusing on all of the supposedly ‘good things’ that we have done for Indigenous people, the metaphor of a ‘terra Nullius of the mind’ draws attention to the fact that (much like the legal fiction of Terra Nullius itself) it is far from the case that ‘white minds’ (as enactments of a colonial psyche) are an ‘empty land’ in regards to memories of white violence. Indeed, as the recent public debates in Australia concerning the Stolen Generations clearly

demonstrate, they are densely populated by ongoing histories of colonisation (cf. Haggis, 2001).

Subjectification and collective memory

Following on from the previous discussion of the psychic life of colonial power, we may now better understand the ways in which this 'psychic life' is played out on a day-to-day basis, where commonsense discourses of race, racism and reconciliation are deployed to justify the past and the present. The above point about the collective memory of colonial violence thus reinforces our suggestion that colonial power has a 'psychic life' – not that critical approaches to examining racism should take psychoanalytic concepts (for example) and use them to diagnose 'white neuroses' per se, but rather that we need to look at how whiteness operates psychically in the service of white hegemony. We believe that this is a fine but important distinction – understanding how subjective investments in colonial power work is not the same thing as suggesting that racism occurs in the minds of individual people.

Butler (1997, p. 19, original emphasis) argues a related point in her work on subjectivity and power, where she suggests that the “process of internalization fabricates the distinction between interior and exterior life, offering us a distinction between the psychic and the social that differs significantly from an account of the psychic internalization of norms”. In other words, if we are to understand the construction (or psychologization) of subjectivities as occurring through the assumption of a distinction between interior/exterior,

intra/intersubjective, then subjectivities (here referring specifically to white subjectivities in colonial nations) necessarily reflect the ways in which internalization is achieved as an aspect of subject-hood. This, however, whilst predominantly being the case in regards to the formulation of Western subjectivities, does not suffice to explain how race operates in the service of subjectification, and how investments in race are continually reasserted in the face of dissent. What Butler's quote suggests is that whilst the claim to interiority reflects the interior/exterior distinction as privileged in Western nations, an understanding of the 'psychic internalization of norms' may be a potentially more productive way of approaching race, and more specifically, possessive investments in race privilege.

As previously outlined in regards to the ways in which non-indigenous people in Australia disavow Indigenous sovereignty, if we are to understand the psyche as the site where national (white) subjects are made possible within particular contexts, then understanding racism becomes not a matter of individualisation or internalization (as the opposite of exteriorisation), but rather one of subjectification, where becoming intelligible subjects on the terms set under colonial power requires non-indigenous Australians to be spoken into existence as subjects through racism. This process requires that the collective memory held within colonial nations is taken up as an available resource by all nominal members, and is actively reiterated and normalised on a daily basis (as we will further elaborate when we turn to look at embodiment).

There is an important point that we should clarify here, however, in relation to racism as a formative aspect of subjectification in colonial nations. There is a risk that a statement such as this will be read as one which absolves non-indigenous Australians of responsibility or accountability. In other words, if occupying the site of the subject in Australia means being spoken through discourses of racism, then it could be inferred that non-indigenous Australians are interpellated into racism, and that this is something that is beyond our control. However, following on from Butler's critique of the notion of interpellation as outlined in Psychic Life of Power, we may understand that subjects are not hailed by a sovereign power that identifies them as racialised after their formation as a subject. Thus as Butler (1997, pp. 5-6) suggests:

The interpellation of the subject through the inaugurative address of state authority presupposes not only that the inculcation of conscience already has taken place, but that conscience, understood as the psychic operation of a regulatory norm, constitutes a specifically psychic and social working of power on which interpellation depends but for which it can give no account. Moreover, the model of power in Althusser's account attributes performative power to the authoritative voice, the voice of sanction, and hence to a notion of language figured as speech.

As we have outlined previously, the (white) subject of the Australian nation is thus understood not as one that is addressed as racialised after its inception, but rather that the very speaking of intelligible national subjects in Australia is

founded upon the racialisation of collective consciousness itself. This also returns us to our previous point about privilege, researcher subjectivity, and 'being on the left'. As our brief analysis of Howard's speech suggested, not only does the speech demonstrate how histories of colonial violence are either denied or repressed, but it also demonstrates how this denial generates a notion of the 'good nation' that validates white subjects as somehow not formed through violence. In contrast to this, our suggestion that racism is foundational to white subjectivities directs attention to the ways in which Howard's rhetoric not only fails to account for colonial violence, but how it also implicates those of us who engage in 'anti-racist practice' in such acts of denial. In other words, as we have previously suggested, our location as two white Australians renders us complicit with the privilege that Howard enacts, even as we attempt to analyse it. As we suggest through the remainder of this paper, the recognition of such complicity thus requires critical interrogation of how privilege operates through certain racialised bodies. An understanding of racial embodiment is thus central to understanding how racialisation works at the level of subjectification. In order to develop an understanding of how the white subject is raced at the moment of their initiation into networks of power, and the implications of this for understanding racialised practices in our everyday lives, we require a focus on how particular bodies are 'made to matter'. This, we hope, will further elaborate our claims as to the foundational aspects of racism in Australia, and its relation to subjective investments in whiteness as collective psychic responses to colonial violence.

How do bodies matter? The 'epidermilisation' of difference

There exists a great deal of literature on racialised embodiment outside of the discipline of psychology (e.g., Alcoff, 1999; Winnubst, 2004), which unfortunately has not penetrated into the discipline of psychology. This has resulted in what Granek (2005a; b) terms a 'writing over the body': "To theorize over the body is a violation. It is a dominating and power-laden act, like rape, it is about disregarding the subjectivity of the other in an enforcing of one's own beliefs about what is appropriate and desirable" (2005a, p. 4; original emphasis). In the example of racism in Australia, there exists a long history of both colonising authorities and academics theorising (and legislating) over the bodies of Indigenous people – of both using the body of the racialised other to determine access to rights and subjectivity, whilst simultaneously denying the reality of the body in order to justify claims such as those underpinning the fiction of Terra Nullius. In other words, only particular bodies have been constructed as mattering in Australia. The irony of this is that such bodies (i.e., those of white people) have most often not been marked as (racialised) bodies in the eyes of the nation. Thus as we suggested in the previous section in regards to subjectification, the subject that comes into being under the sign of race is one that is prescribed by the hierarchical forms of knowledge that are deemed intelligible within the framework of race itself – only certain bodies (materialised through visual markers that are accorded value within racialised systems) are ascribed with power, at the expense of those bodies positioned as being without (or unable to have) power.

Racialised differences are thus achieved primarily through sets of contrasts, wherein 'the other' is marked as 'having race', whilst the normative self is not marked as raced. This is what Fanon (1967) has termed 'epidermalisation', or as Hall (2000, p. 5) defines it: "the writing of difference on the skin of the other". We would suggest also that epidermalisation marks the practice whereby difference is actually constructed on the terms of the same – racialised difference is built upon the incorporation of incommensurable difference into a logic of sameness. Hook (2005) suggests much the same thing in his incisive analysis of the racial stereotype, where he expands and clarifies the work of Bhabha (1994). Hook, following Bhabha, suggests that the racial stereotype (particularly as it is enacted through the repetitive framing of particular presumed bodily forms of the racialised other) demonstrates an attempt to achieve the impossible: "the fixity of mutually exclusive subject categories for colonizer and colonized" (p. 13). This attempt at the impossible may be understood as a form of disavowal, as described earlier, aimed at erasing the anxiety that the existence of the racial other (as opposed to the racialised object of the stereotype) produces.

Our point here is not that an objective point of racial difference exists per se – that is not an argument we would consider particularly productive of critical ways of understanding how race is produced. Rather, our point is that the co-option of difference (marked in this instance as race) into a logic of sameness (through, for example, the racial stereotype of the other), serves to deny the incommensurable differences that undermine white hegemony, and more specifically, white claims to ownership and belonging in Australia. Our point in this section is thus not to further fetishise race, or to call for a 'return to the

body', but instead to look at how the skin, which is conceptualized as the container of the body (and in particular those types of (white) bodies that accrue privilege within Australia), is both given such prominence in racialised accounts of subjectivity in Western nations, whilst at the same time the skin of white people is seldom ever mentioned (Winnubst, 2004). Discourses of race are thus not about 'describing' the differences between people, but about incorporating these differences into one particular way of understanding the world. Thus as Alcott (1999, pp. 15-16) suggests, race as a practice of visibilisation works to "enclos[e] the entirety of difference within a taxonomy organized by a single logic". This point therefore demonstrates the importance of examining how race is materialised, and how it is used to legitimate practices of oppression.

In Psychic Life of Power, Butler provides a useful reading of Foucault's work on the prison. Whilst not talking about race, the following passage draws interesting and useful parallels with the materialisation of race:

The materiality of the prison, Foucault writes, is established to the extent that (dans la mesure ou) it is a vector and instrument of power. Hence, the prison is materialized to the extent that it is invested with power. To be grammatically accurate, there is no prison prior to its materialization; its materialization is coextensive with its investiture with power relations; and materiality is the effect and gauge of this investment. The prison comes to be only within the field of power relations, more specifically, only to the extent that it is saturated with such relation and that such a

saturation is formative of its very being. Here the body – of the prisoner and the prison – is not an independent materiality, a static surface or site, which a subsequent investment comes to mark, signify upon, or pervade; the body is that for which materialization and investiture are coextensive (1997, p. 91; original emphasis).

Leaving aside the obvious connections between Foucault's work on the prison, and the notion of 'race as a prison' (e.g., Muecke, 1992), we would suggest that this passage from Butler usefully extends our previous discussion of race as formative of subjectification. Indeed, it draws attention to the issue of accountability, and provides a more nuanced account of precisely how subjective investments work through the materialisation of race, and how this demonstrates the complicity of non-indigenous people in Australia with racism.

To elaborate: if, following Butler's logic, there is no 'race' prior to its materialisation, and if this materialisation occurs through the investment of race with power, then it would seem important to grasp how materialisation occurs concomitantly with subjectification. In other words, how does what we have previously said about the taking up of a collective memory of colonial violence become 'written' through the body – how is it that the materialization of particular bodies as mattering occurs as a result of their location within ongoing histories of colonisation, and thus as products of practices of subjectification that occur within racialised networks of power? Towards the end of the passage Butler suggests a potential answer to this question, namely that "the body... is not an independent materiality... which a subsequent investment comes to mark... the body is that for which materialization and investiture are

coextensive". In regards to race, then, the racialised body does not exist outside of a particular context, nor does it become racialised upon the choosing of particular individuals. Rather, in the context of a nation built upon colonising desires (such as Australia), bodies come to matter precisely as markers of race that are used to shore up the colonising project. Bodies must thus be invested with race as a prerequisite for intelligibility within a nation that is founded upon race as its source of legitimation. To do otherwise would be to deny the hegemony of white rule, or to acknowledge the legitimacy of Indigenous sovereignty. The question is not then whether the racialised body is brought into being through colonial power, and is then inhabited by a subject differentially invested in said power (or vice versa), but rather that bodies are spoken into being specifically as colonial bodies – as bodies whose existence relies upon the corollary of particular subjective investments in the colonial project. In regards to subjectivity, then, the racialisation of bodies is the very grounds for subjectification – we come into being as knowers/subjects or objects in the form of particular racialised bodies. Thus as Granek (2005b: p 7) suggests, "bodies do not have psychology – they are the psychology whose signifiers (i.e., acts such as thinking, feeling, reacting etc.) come through the body" (original emphases).

It is important, however, to acknowledge here that this may at first seem to be a rather overdeterministic reading of racialised embodiment, and one that subsumes the experiences of Indigenous people (alongside those who are identified as 'non-white' within the Australian nation) yet again into a logic of 'difference in sameness', whereby racialisation occurs in the same ways (and for the same purpose) for all people. This is not our claim at all. Instead, our point

has been to mark precisely how those bodies that are typically not designated as racialised (i.e., white bodies) come into being through discourses of race in relation to colonial power. This, as we see it, was a large part of Fanon's project – not to maintain a focus on how the white man constructs the black man, but how the white man constructs the white man through his constructions of the black man. Racism, and the investment in racialised practices (such as the materialisation of race) are thus formative of white subjectivities in Australia.

The important point that arises from this understanding of subject formation, then, is how the racialisation of white subjects is for the large part denied (in order to legitimate the a priori status of white privilege) by focusing on race as a 'regime of looking', whereby the white subject (rendered intelligible within networks of colonial power) does the looking, rather than being a recipient of a racialised gaze. Thus as Seshadri-Crooks (2000, p. 2) suggests, "although race cannot be reduced to the look... it is common knowledge that some 'black' people can be very white, and some 'whites' can be very dark; identity is a question of 'heritage', not skin colour. Once claimed, however, heritage is ultimately marked by the body... thus by visibility I refer to a regime of looking that thrives on 'major' and 'minor' details in order to shore up one's symbolic position".

The desire to control the gaze (and to do so by controlling what counts as 'major' and 'minor' details) thus demonstrates what we have termed elsewhere as the 'anxiety of whiteness' (Riggs & Augoustinos, 2004). That is, whilst on the one hand there is the white desire to 'be whiteness' (to occupy the site of the signifier), such a desire is predicated upon an illusory notion of wholeness – that

those of us who are white could exceed the racialised categories of whiteness, and thus occupy all positions (or more accurately, deny any position other than the 'whole self') within a racialised system of representation. Yet the paradox (and thus anxiety) is that such a fantasy of wholeness would effectively obliterate constructions of difference – resulting in the destruction of the self/other binaries that racialised systems are reliant upon (Seshadri-Crooks, 2000). In this way the 'double nature' of white anxiety is always already evident in the ways in which the gaze circulates as a purported site of power. Obviously this is not to deny the ways in which the gaze does exert effects over colonised people, but instead our point is that attempts at controlling racialised looking through marking particular bodies as 'raced' is always an incomplete project – it never totally encompasses signification or representation in Australia.

So what does all this mean for research on racism in Australia, and how does it connect back to Teo's suggestion about critical methodologies? We can see at least three areas where our thoughts about subjectivity and embodiment may prove fruitful in the study of colonial racism. First, and following from Teo, we would support the idea of developing analytic approaches that both deconstruct and reconstruct. An example of this may be work that explores ongoing histories of white violence, but which juxtaposes this with Indigenous people's accounts of resistance. This would not be so as to co-opt Indigenous narratives as a form of moral authority, but rather to examine how white violence, whilst continuing to invade the lives of Indigenous people (alongside making white privilege possible), is also always an incomplete project: it never manages to successfully legitimate white sovereignty. Second, we would encourage research that

explores how racialisation is evident in the texts of non-indigenous Australia. And third, we are excited by research that examines how we may understand the 'psychic life of colonial power' by looking at the everyday talk of non-indigenous Australians. This need not make recourse to notions of 'internality' or 'individuality', but instead may look at how the psychic circulates as a discourse of accountability and responsibility between people. Thus as Alcoff (1999, p. 16) suggests; "The realm of the visible, or what is taken as self-evidently visible... is recognized as the product of a specific form of perceptual practice, rather than the natural result of human sight". In light of our previous discussions within this paper, we would propose that 'perception', much like the 'psychic', has little to do with what goes on 'inside people's heads', and everything to do with how race is negotiated in everyday ways so as to deny non-indigenous people's complicity with racist practices. Seeing, or rendering visible some of the ways in which white people 'do race', or deny our own privilege, will be an important tool for examining how race circulates as a foundational property of Western subjectivities, and how its (non)visibility is predicated upon the disavowal of ongoing histories of colonial violence.

Conclusions

Throughout this paper we have explored the relationships between critical approaches to method, subjectivity and embodiment, in the hope that this will contribute to an understanding of racism in colonial nations such as Australia. In so doing, we have located ourselves as invested in racism through our psychic location as subjects of the white nation. Thus our intention has not been to examine racism as a practice that happens 'out there', but rather to look at how

privilege is always the flip side of oppression, and that within every claim to 'national good' there resides an act of aggression (Rutherford, 2000). Statements such as these may be read by some as too strong, or as eliding the important differences that shape race alongside concurrent discourses of sexuality, gender, class and ethnicity, to name but a few. Indeed, we acknowledge the centrality of understanding the ways in which such discourses intersect, and their involvement in subject constitution. But that is another project that we do not have the space to elaborate here (but see Riggs, in press). In this paper we have instead paid specific attention to the practices of race in Australia. We have done this as they continue to inform public debates over land rights, to arbitrate over access to education, health and policy, and to generally shape the lives of all people living in Australia.

Critical readings of race and racism are always located within particular contexts. Acknowledging the centrality of white ways of understanding race (as well as subjectivity and embodiment) is thus an important step towards decentring the hegemony of whiteness. Thus as Nicoll (2001) suggests, we need to develop an eccentric (as opposed to normative) account of race that refuses to either reify race as an a priori category of difference, or discount race as being just a social construction. By better understanding how race is 'done' in everyday ways, and how it works in the service of whiteness, we may be able to contribute to the growing psychological literature that works through the complexities of race, not so as to 'come out the other side' per se, but to see more clearly where we stand when we are precisely right in the middle of it.

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