

On Teaching Decolonising White Psychology

Group of Trainers in Clinical Psychology Conference 2016

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Plan of Presentation

- ▶ Rationale for Teaching this Session
- ▶ Some personal-professional context
- ▶ What was Taught and Why
- ▶ What Was the Impact?
- ▶ Where Do We Go From Here?

What Brought Me to Teach This?

- ▶ Supervised Dr. Snehal Shah's D.Clin.Psy. thesis at Hertfordshire
- ▶ Shah, S., Wood, N., Nolte, L. & Goodbody, L. (2012) *The experience of being a trainee clinical psychologist from a black and minority ethnic group. A qualitative study*. Clinical Psychology Forum, 232. pp. 32-35.
- ▶ 'I am tired of having to carry the flag and burden of cultural expertise.' (One memorable quote from supervision).
- ▶ WHY SHOULD SHE?
- ▶ WHO'S BURDEN IS IT? (Q to Audience)
- ▶ It's a WHITE Burden!
- ▶ And we need to OWN it and DO Something about it!

Additional Reasons to Teach This

- ▶ Reading Clinical Psychology Forum Special issue on Racism (2005)
- ▶ Incidentally, CPF due for an update on how far (or not) we have come?
- ▶ Adetimole, Afuape, & Vara (UEL, 2005) call for:
- ▶ Training lectures where white trainers own & take responsibility for:
- ▶ ‘Deconstructing whiteness’ and the attendant privileges (pp. 13-14).
- ▶ UEL have been working hard as a team to address eurocentricity in training!
- ▶ Beyond this, my experiences working during State of Emergency apartheid SA
- ▶ In South and East London Services (UK) and
- ▶ In specialist CAMH Service for Maori & PI children/families in Aoteroa NZ,
- ▶ crystallised Psychology as a (largely) Eurocentric colonial enterprise, hence...

Why The Need for Decolonisation?

- ▶ Q But surely Psychology is backed by science and is thus universal?
- ▶ Depends on the 'science' (which is itself a cultural practice: Kuhn, 1962)
- ▶ So I teach the history of Psychology in South Africa, including:
- ▶ HF Verwoerd (one of the major architects of apartheid) as a practicing Psychologist
- ▶ Arguing for a social engineering system recognising 'inherent racial differences' -
- ▶ One of the foundation stones of Apartheid being IQ studies showing...?
- ▶ Ask class to apply Occam's Razor - alternative & more credible explanations?
- ▶ Essentialism in psychology negates external structures and processes, e.g. cultural bias, inequity, structural systems built on racism etc.
- ▶ Essentialism is a (Western) cultural practice too.
- ▶ Many non-western models of identity e.g. focus on interacting systems not 'I'

Decolonisation is a broad agenda

- ▶ Not just psychometrics and Culture bias - AND no such thing as 'culture free'
- ▶ Cultural 'sensitivity' to the default (un-marked state) WHITE US.
- ▶ The dangers and limits of psychiatric classification in non-Western cultures
- ▶ And medicating - not just misery - but normal cultural expressions (examples)
- ▶ ...But we must not divert/project blame onto Psychiatry per se
- ▶ Psychotherapy too is an indigenous enterprise - if identity and meaning is systemically constructed, what is the relevance of 1:to:1 therapy?
- ▶ 'Socialising to the model' - as if our clients lack social knowledge, what about
- ▶ We socialise to **their** models? (e.g. NZ = Training in Maori models of MH)
- ▶ What do symptoms mean to them - and what is their usual recourse for help?
- ▶ Model less important than relationships we build & belief(s) client has
(Wampold, 2015)

White is Embedded Too

- ▶ Also provide trainees with a brief history of racism and linking to:
- ▶ Colonial enterprise - human lives construed as capital units of varying 'worth' /value
- ▶ White as 'civilised' bringer of moral and technological salvation -
- ▶ justificatory narrative
- ▶ White as intrinsically more valuable - an *enduring* narrative!
- ▶ Black = less valuable & can be treated as such & used to generate more White wealth,
- ▶ Apartheid & Capital - Racism embedded in capitalist structures, e.g. cheap labour
- ▶ Anyone living in SA during apartheid - Whiteness & Male Patriarchy too. (Trump Too?)
- ▶ So we acknowledge inter-sectionality and multiple identity markers impacting
- ▶ Class, gender, sexuality, disability etc.

Teaching: Building 'Cultural Competence'?

- ▶ Cannot hope to learn all the 'cultural' groups in the world
- ▶ And within group diversity is often larger than between group differences, so
- ▶ Trap of Stereotyping/Racism may increase if cultural knowledge is reified
- ▶ What other ways to build 'cultural sensitivity' then?
- ▶ Becoming aware of YOUR own culture first! (Cultural genograms)
- ▶ Decentering the White Gaze - White as the privileged 'default' position, but...
- ▶ We are 'Other' too!
- ▶ Aotearoa NZ - embracing the term 'Pakeha' (white other)
- ▶ Exercise - what is your cultural identity/heritage?
- ▶ What does 'being white' mean to you? (Nolte, 2007 - White is a Colour Too.)

Exercises 2 - Addressing Racism

- ▶ And, if you're 'black', what are your experiences of whiteness?
- ▶ Opening up dialogue and discussions
- ▶ Second Exercise Further in:
- ▶ How Do you raise the issue of difference and acknowledge the potential impact of racism on mental health with clients?
- ▶ (Group discussion and feedback).
- ▶ What about your own (experiences of) racism?
- ▶ How is this found and addressed? (Constantly)
- ▶ Hierarchies of colour and shades of whiteness
- ▶ Implicit association tests - strengths and limitations
- ▶ Racism not just a 'thing' you have or don't have, but 'in the air' (media, institutions...)

But What About White Guilt?

- ▶ What About It?
- ▶ Guilt is uncomfortable & inevitably people prefer to avoid this, but...
- ▶ It's there for an (earned) reason, so it needs to be acknowledged and
- ▶ 1. 'Sucked Up' - discussions and support groups?
- ▶ 2. Used as a spur for positive action to 'Disrupt Whiteness' (UCT),
- ▶ i.e. to challenge racism at a systemic/structural level and to
- ▶ Educate white colleagues/friends/family etc. as and if needed.
- ▶ Not easy, sure, but did we join the profession because it was 'easy'?

So What ELSE Should We Do?

- ▶ Diversity & Inclusion is NOT enough! (Paulraj, 2016)
- ▶ If BME access training but encounter racism and leave?
- ▶ Access without *positive* retention is meaningless.
- ▶ Supporting the idea of upwards mobility without addressing institutional racism blocking this is fruitless.
- ▶ ***Systemic racism within services and the profession needs to be tackled.***

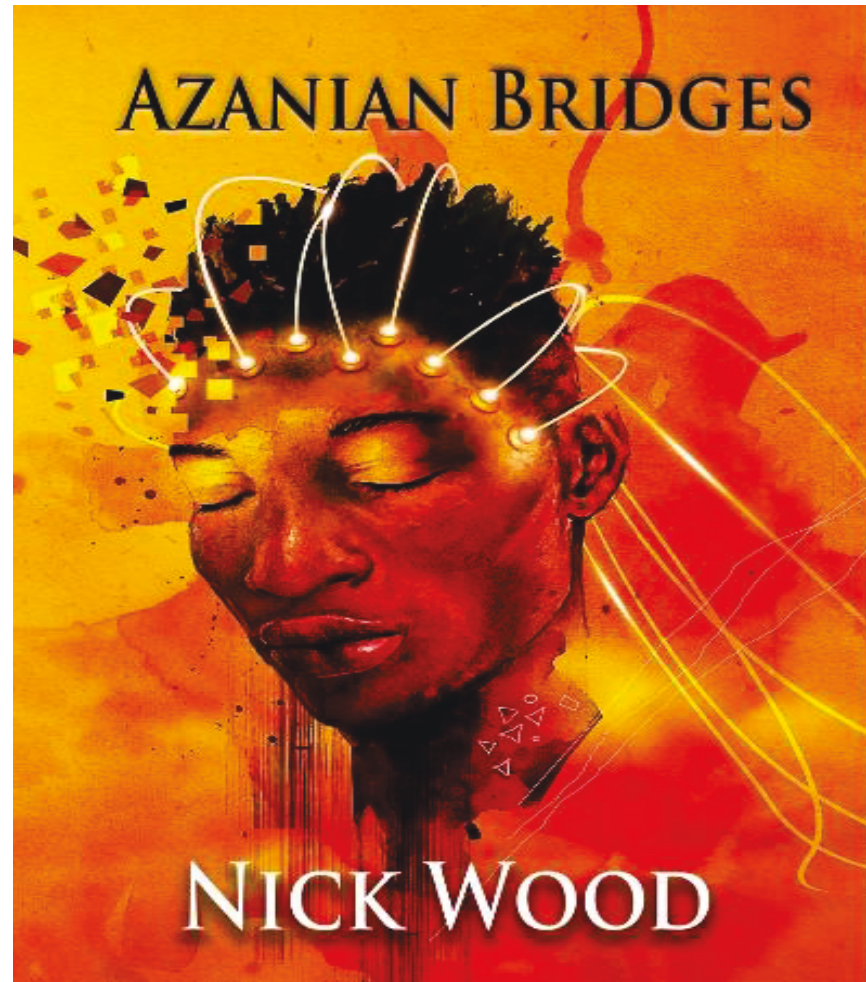
Doing More

- ▶ We also need to engage with our own cultural roots and realise
- ▶ We are 'OTHER' too - 'Addressing Whiteness in CP Training'
- ▶ But How to Do All of This?? (Q For Audience)
- ▶ Team formulations -> including cultural genograms (Lucy Johnstone)
- ▶ Mobilise - White (Black?) Psychology anti-racist alliance? (CPF Special Issue?)
- ▶ Challenge Psychological structures from within (How?) and
- ▶ Ally with critics wishing to transform UK Psychology into
- ▶ A Western model of mind care sensitive to learn and engage with other models

Feedback & Key References

- ▶ Very positive feedback from trainees with suggestion:
- ▶ Bring in earlier, near start of training, so that issues are thought about by ALL AND from the beginning.
- ▶ *With thanks to guidance and advice from Professor Nimisha Patel too.*
- ▶ **REFERENCES 1**
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- ▶ Azibo, D. (1996) *African Psychology*. Africa World Press.
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- ▶ Decolonising the Academy #RMF <http://www.ascleiden.nl/content/decolonizing-academy-informal-conference-report>
- ▶ Holdstock, L. (2000) *Re-Examining Psychology: Critical Perspectives & African Insights*. Routledge.

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