Law, Justice, and Indigenous Intergenerational Trauma—A Genealogy

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Abstract

Aboriginal Australians experience trauma that is linked to continuing colonising practices in the present, and which are also reproduced throughout the more than 230 years of colonisation. Intergeneration trauma intersects with the over-representation of Aboriginal people in the welfare and justice systems. This paper examines evidence of the relations between trauma and colonialising practices imposed on Indigenous peoples, as past and present conditions leading to intergenerational trauma. Historical and present-day conditions affecting Aboriginal children and families are shown to set in place the conditions producing trauma over time.

Introduction

Indigenous peoples' engagement with policing and the justice and welfare systems has been a longstanding problem in most parts of Australia. At a recent seminar titled 'Raising the age: Getting children out of prisons', coordinated by the Australia Institute (2021), a group of legal, health and welfare workers who work closely in the field of juvenile offending and support services in the Northern Territory, spelt out the problem of children from the age of 10 regularly being held in jail or police cells in the Northern Territory. Evidence from these workers detailed the effects of legislation, policing, the courts and youth detention centres that regularly oversee Indigenous children and young people's detention, from ages below 10 upwards, often for minor offences. Both police cells and youth detention hold children as young as 10 who have received sentences or been placed on remand, waiting for their cases to be heard. Many of the children were vulnerable, in some cases partially disabled or with brain function issues, and often had been arrested for behaviour that would not normally lead white children to be arrested or imprisoned. In the course of their imprisonment, Indigenous children were subjected to violence and strip searches. Indigenous peoples' deaths in custody are not uncommon in the circumstances of various kinds of trauma, and this situation has continued over time and has been investigated through policy documents and despite judicial and governmental enquiries and legislative changes (ATSIC 1996; HREOC 1997).

Many of the children had an entrenched disadvantage. The Australia Institute seminar reported that the sentences and overall treatment of these children were excessive in terms of the kinds of offending that led to imprisonment; much of this was described as 'small-time naughtiness' that might annoy some people. Children required support programs to suit the individual child's needs, rather than imprisonment, which was simply not an answer to the kinds of problems that underpinned the child's behaviour. One of the seminar contributors, an Indigenous woman and parent, reinforced the need for schooling including retraining and programs for Indigenous people that are culturally specific, including medical care, child care and programs that assisted in protecting communities. She argued that Indigenous culture came first in moves against white-run organisations like medical interventions and child care. Children require schooling, protected communities and Indigenous culture. The cost of imprisonment in Australia was between 800,000 and one million dollars for approximately 50 children over one year. The literature and surveys on Aboriginal engagement with health, welfare and policing has a long history (McCallum 2014; Nanni and James 2013; Rowse 2009).

In Victoria, Aboriginal people, especially youth, are over-represented in the criminal justice system, and this has been the case for decades. In the 1960s, the final closure and evacuation of the old Aboriginal missions, stations and assorted institutions that had held Indigenous peoples since the 1860s saw a surge in the transition of young Aboriginal people to the children's institutions (McCallum 2017). Now, young Aboriginal children in prisons but named as 'protection' are shown to be highly susceptible to higher rates of psychopathology, recidivism and lower rates of rehabilitation (Cunneen 2020; Shepherd et al. 2018) in the Victorian justice system, Aboriginal youth have higher rates of substance abuse and lower rates of rehabilitation (Phelan and Oxley 2021). Women, in particular, are vulnerable to imprisonment and institutional intergenerational trauma is perpetuated by criminal justice interventions into the lives of Indigenous women (Anthony, Sentence and Bartels 2020).

Prior to an investigation of the antecedents or matters 'in the past', it is important to acknowledge that the object of inquiry here is not with the past but rather with the trauma that is triggered by contemporary events. While the 'killing fields' is a backdrop to a continuum with current forms of state interventions and settler violence, trauma is not a 'product' of history alone but constantly re-enlivened by contemporary interventions and continuing injustices and interventions. So, this article should not be taken as a historical account of a particular period of colonising and other practices, to simply record what happened in the past. Rather, the purpose is to understand the historical conditions of possibility for the current circumstances and the treatment experienced by so many Aboriginal peoples; how did theories, practices and policies concerning the management of Aboriginal peoples come to be what they are? Present descriptions and accounts will turn on the phenomenon of intergenerational trauma, which, it is argued, is the production, reproduction and continuance of traumas brought into being over time by the violence

of colonisers and colonising practices in the past and present. The purpose of historical investigation is specific in what it studies and brings to light in the present: the kinds of controls and oversight of Aboriginal peoples in these extended and ongoing circumstances of removal from their lands, communities and families; the containment of peoples over generations and decades, decades, which became centuries. How did the present methods and workings of power come into being? What brought into being the present logics of policing and incarceration, the systems of oversight of First Nation Peoples recorded and authenticated in the manuals of control, containment and punishment. What are the *contingencies* of the present management of Aboriginal peoples? The approach to history allows the uncovering of hidden conflicts and contexts as a means of revaluing the value of contemporary phenomena.

These introductory notes on Aboriginal peoples, their management by government and their engagement with justice and welfare regimes introduces what David Garland (2014) might call a diagnosis of the present problem. This particular set of concerns and contexts may have to do with how the management of Aboriginal peoples has been conducted and how these historical events make the present problematic. Here, we draw out how Foucault's methods of understanding that a key category of *modernity* that takes on the status of a comprehensive periodisation:

> The 'present' … is less an epoch than an array of questions: and the coherence with which the present presents itself to us—and in which guise it is re-imagined by so much social theory— is something to be *acted upon* by historical investigation, to be cut up and decomposed so that it can be seen as put together contingently out of heterogeneous elements each having their own conditions of possibility. (Barry, Osborne and Rose 1995: 271)

Foucault's discussion of the 'carceral' is relevant here, in particular its 'institutions of supervision or constraint, of discrete surveillance and insistent coercion' in the periods of nineteenth-century European developing prison systems (Foucault 1979: 253). His account is formed around a historical analysis of 'a kind of disciplinary training, continuous and compelling'; also something of the professional networks that were well marked out by the nineteenth century, and that became generalised outside law and prison— 'residential apprenticeships, penal colonies, disciplinary battalions, prisons, hospitals, almshouses' (Foucault 1979: 254). In the sections that follow, it is the trauma of war and its aftermath, in the removal of Aboriginal peoples from their country, the deliberate and concentrated separation of Indigenous extended families and communities, and the generalising of a carceral system encompassing a bridging of welfare and prison that provide a framework for understanding the sources of trauma in the present.

The Killing Fields—Historiography

The boats that arrived on the east coast of Australia in the late 1700s were uninvited, its occupants declaring the country 'discovered' for the English Crown. Soon afterwards, the Crown deposited English prisoners and their overseers and administrators and effectively established an outdoor prison. Aboriginal society, economy, culture and the pristine country they belonged to and had maintained through millennia saw the beginning of an invasion and devastation of Aboriginal Country. English, Scottish and other 'illegal' arrivals set about establishing farming enterprises, such as wool, ruining the pristine land that had been carefully tended for centuries by Indigenous peoples. Anthropology, historical studies and economics have contributed accounts of the peoples whose lands the English came to occupy, as well as the effects of invasion, the taking of land and the killings perpetrated by the new arrivals (Pascoe 2014), and later began accounts of the effects of what was called a 'discovery'. According to the twentieth-century historian Ernest Scott, Governor Phillip thought the Aboriginal numbers were 'probably 1,500 in Botany Bay and the environs of Port Jackson' and 'about 6000 in the Port Phillip District in 1837 … (t)hey were a people so low in the scale of human development that they had no domestic arts or domestic animals. They were in the Stone-Age stage of human evolution' (Scott 1916: 185). The commentators seemed qualified to consider Aboriginal peoples a degenerate and physically vulnerable population, an earlier version of human development that would *inevitably disappear over time*, viewpoints that, as we will show, continued to hold sway well into the twentieth century. Scott nevertheless attributed the violence to the settlers:

Neither they nor their assigned servants would allow the natives to live in peace. As settlement spread, cases of murder and outrage were frequently reported. The evidence is conclusive that the wrongdoing was on the side of the whites. 'The resentment of these poor, uncultivated blacks,' wrote Davey in a proclamation in 1813, 'has been justly provoked by a most barbarous and inhuman mode of proceeding, viz. the robbing of their children. Let any man put his hand to his heart and ask, which is the savage, the white man who robs the parent of his children, or the black man who boldly steps forward to resent the injury and recover his stolen offspring'. (Scott 1916: 169)

By the 1950s, a tribute was given for the success of the peoples who 'all in all, before European settlement the Aborigines had attained a successful relationship with the land, living from it without destroying either the land or the delicate balance of the various forms of nature in it' (Crawford 1952). All the same, an Australian Governor echoed the alternative view: 'the advance of British civilisation made inevitable the natural progress of the Aboriginal race towards extinction—the soothing phrase', a view held since the nineteenth century (Hancock 1930: 21). Attempts at the counting of peoples on the mainland continent at the time of arrival of boats, such as that of Radcliff-Brown's anthropological survey, had ignored the intended or accidental spread of smallpox and chickenpox (Radcliffe-Brown 1930). Economic historian Noel Butlin (1983; 1993; 1994) and later Hunter and Carmody (2015) estimated the size of Black populations in south-eastern Australia in 1788 to be at least five times the number that had been proposed in earlier attempts at counting. Butlin's evidence showed that, during the first 60 years of occupation, the combined effects of the killings, disease and 'resource competition' had reduced the Aboriginal population by 90 per cent from the 1788 level.

The killing of Indigenous Australians involved the murder of Aboriginal men, women and children immediately following the arrival of the English ships and well into the next centuries. In the early nineteenth century, missions were being set up mostly by religious groups in an attempt to protect a now highly vulnerable Aboriginal people. Many local authorities were dangerous, as James Dredge from a protectorate on the Goulburn River reported on the great difficulty in keeping drunken policemen and other Europeans from having intercourse with Aboriginal women. As the invasion continued moving over the country throughout this century, the attempts to exterminate Aboriginal populations continued:

In Queensland, an unknown observer in the young colony wrote in 1863 that Aborigines were 'shot down like wild dogs'—and with as little remorse … To justify the extermination and exploitation of the natives, Queensland colonists de-humanised Aborigines by comparing European with Indigenous culture. Expropriation of land was rationalised by arguing that Aborigines [sic] had no government, law or society and, therefore, had no title to land. Stories of Aboriginal violence, cannibalism and sexual depravity enabled white settlers to justify shooting men and women for sport, much as they shot kangaroos in North Queensland. Whites have, by political, legal and sometimes police action, created conditions that foster murder and assault in Aboriginal communities. (Wilson 1982: 7–9)

These remarks on what is described here as the 'killing fields' represent only a brief scan of a historical record. The accounts engage with the range of strategies, procedures and interventions to install white rule over a country that was invaded, occupied and possessed well outside the rule of law and rules that apply to the taking of foreign land (Ford 2010; Muldoon 2008). The attention of the colonisers, in forming closed encampments for Indigenous men, women and children, which were made into legislation just a few decades after the occupation, initially was put forward as an attempt to repair and harmonise the monstrous effects of the invasion—a 'liberal' apparatus of welfarism (McCallum 2017). The notion of a 'pure Australian' came into being as a quasi-anthropological entity—that is, the study of variations of skin colour was made to shape levels or registers of moral and physical difference and hence the difference in treatment, which formed a rationale for marriage policies, confinement in encampments represented as 'protection': child removal and separation from family, community and country. For white people, personhood depended on skin colour as the measure of civilisation and life chances. The encampments, which set up designated spaces for protection and correction, on the one hand, and for those destined to

extinction on the other, continued well into the 1960s in Victoria, as in other states, after which most of the child occupants were transferred to children's homes and prisons. In the 1920s, in keeping with the terminology of the day, the settlement destined to hold 'full-caste Aborigines' was named by more than one journal as the Lake Tyers Concentration Station.

Before returning to the evidence of subjectivising of Aboriginal persons and personhood, and to core knowledge of the present trauma experienced by Indigenous Australians, it is necessary to examine some of the sources of this knowledge and to give attention to the place of the human sciences, in both the psy-sciences and the social domain. The author here wishes to acknowledge colleagues in community psychology, in collaboration with sociology, to coordinate a breadth of engagement in genealogical approaches to the problem of knowledge, power and trauma.

Human Sciences and Welfare

Literature that might clarify relations of knowledge past and present might begin with the theoretical distinction that has been made of distinguishing 'modernity' and 'coloniality' in the context of broader international engagement with First Peoples. An example of this work is that of Quijano (2007), who analyses, in order, the conquest of Southern lands, the constitution of a new world order, the global power over the whole planet and producing a coloniality of power in political and economic spheres but which was also 'strongly associated with a coloniality of knowledge' (Quijano 2007; Bhambra 2014: 117). Efforts to engage in the 'decolonising' of the human sciences have been long in coming, although the problem of this kind of domination was acknowledged in the psy-sciences over several decades, especially in the fields of social and political psychology and community psychology, and in the study of the history of human sciences. There is clear acknowledgement in many of these studies of the role of the state in placing 'absolute control' over Indigenous Australians through displacement, protection and assimilation, leading to direct and indirect psychological effects, including both 'the pervasive trauma, grief and loss, and the devaluing and silencing of these impacts by the dominant society' (Wanganeen 2014; see also Dudgeon and Walker 2015). Importantly, these studies acknowledge a strong sense of unity around the shared colonial experience and defining characteristics, including family, community, land and universe (Dudgeon and Walker 2015: 278).

So, the idea of modernity in this sense runs into difficulties. The writings on the violence of colonial conditions emphasise the everyday lived experience of Aboriginal peoples if we consider that present aspects of living might well live alongside modernity. Maggie Walter has argued that disregard of Aboriginal peoples is sewn into the cultural fabric of the nation—'it is part of our national psyche' (Walter 2010: 130). It is the resurgence of knowledge of Indigenous peoples' lives, making explicit the lived experience of Indigenous peoples, that have been able to turn from interrogating the past to initiating 'new dialogues about that past and this bringing into being new histories … new presents and new futures' (Bhambra 2014: 117). New developments connected to storytelling and 'the recovery of historical memory in processes of community healing and restoration' has been central to reconstituting Indigenous peoples as 'subjects' and 'knowers', rather than as 'objects' constructed by their rulers (Quale, Sonn and van den Eynde 2016: 80). In a section of this work, titled 'This is where it all stems from: the psychosocial legacy', Aboriginal Elders speak of their concerns about young people being 'led astray', about them being part of their 'lost generation'. In this reported study, 'Mick' discussed how fear was put into the Noongars and how he continues to remain fearful:

> We was fearful. I'm still a bit fearful myself. When we were young, we see the police or welfare people coming (*smacks hands together*). We used to take off running in the bush, hiding, and they used to come and say 'what you running for, what you done, you done something wrong? Hmm', you know, trying to get us to retaliate and then they take us for anything so that's the way it's, it came down through history, and it's still going that way.

In addition, the study involved conversations on the extent of child removal and how every family was affected by 'being on the mission and the devastating impact of child removal on the family unit'. One of these impacts was 'the generational transmission of historical trauma' (Gone 2013):

> It's just something that I couldn't...tap into at the time that there was a... there was a space in between our lives that never...between me and my children's, there was a space. (Quale, Sonn and van den Eynde 2016)

These are important observations that introduce certain historical circumstances—that is, the conditions linked to distress and trauma in Aboriginal families. This distinction is fundamental to the theoretical and practical concerns of trauma among Aboriginal people, past and present. We return to specifying these historical conditions affecting Indigenous trauma and its connections to governance. However, before that, it is necessary to examine the appearance of trauma itself. But the trauma itself, its origins and the circumstances of its appearance in the present draw attention to how historical conditions reproduce in different forms and take on specific kinds of responses. They appear in the results of historical breaks in family and community life, in the reproduction of antagonisms between policing, legal process, oversight of children and youth, hostilities around culture and relations to country, and the delimiting of Indigenous personhood more generally. A history of this present is one level of causation of a hurt that can be identified, taken into account and addressed in the way its reproduction appears.

Trauma, Soul and Personhood

Early use of the word 'trauma' referred to a tear in the body, a physical wound, as in the hospital 'trauma centre', a place for people whose physical bodies have been torn and need repair. A new use for the word trauma depended on a set of material conditions for it to be spoken, which Ian Hacking (1995) and others have described as an organising concept to do with 'the soul', or perhaps with 'personhood'. Hacking argued the new idea of trauma had radically transformed our sense of selves. It has to do with memory, or with 'knowledge effects', of the past. Intergenerational trauma has the implication of having seriously disturbing effects on one's selfhood, the effect of horrific events being carried forward into the present, through generations. Hacking called his work 'historical ontology', citing Foucault's *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972) as its underlying thinking on the conditions of possibility for things to be said:

> One cannot speak of anything at any time; it is not easy to say something new; it is not enough for us to just open our eyes, to pay attention, or to be aware, for new objects suddenly light up and emerge out of the ground. (Foucault 1972: 44; see also Hacking 2002: 18)

The now commonplace conception of trauma relates to the 'mind' and emerged and directly linked to horrific experiences of war. Allan Young's *The Harmony of Illusions* (1995) described an archaeology of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), based on his study of American veterans' hospitals in the years following the Vietnam War, which started in the 1950s and officially ended in 1975. The conditions of possibility for speaking this particular trauma rested mostly on the demands of returning American service personnel for recognition of, and medical and financial support for, the ongoing trauma caused by that war. In 1994, PTSD appeared in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM) of the American Psychiatric Association. Karl Erikson (1976) wrote that 'every disaster is a unique private tragedy, inflicting its own special wounds, its own peculiar species of pain'. More recently, Hacking in his *Historical Ontology* (2002) observed of Young's work that successive versions of the category of trauma and PTSD in diagnostic manuals were 'taking up the space of neuroses':

> The neurotic of olden time must now, as a matter of PTSD logic and definition, have had a traumatic experience. But that definitional requirement is easily met, because no adult human lacks events that can now be counted as 'traumatic'—recounted, told, experienced as traumatic. (Hacking 2002: 18)

Research on Indigenous trauma has a significant place in the human sciences, particularly in psychiatry and psychology, and many of these make a case for its connection with PTSD, as well as the role it plays in analysing contemporary pain and disorders (Menzies 2010); its transmission between generations of families (Brothers 2014); its connections to war (Walkerdine, Olsvold and Rudberg 2013); and its relation to homelessness. But what emerges from these studies is that there are different approaches to studying trauma, some of which might suitably be captured by knowledge in psychology and psychiatry. In the case of PTSD, a more specifically 'psy' meaning of the word 'trauma' is related to war and wartime. Hacking and Young observed that the psychiatric profession had linked this kind of trauma in the 1994 DSM to the category of neuroses and that the trauma listed in the DSM was joined up to the study of all the old neuroses, most often to do with a traumatic event in the past.

Judy Atkinson's *Trauma Trails. Recreating Song Lines* (2002) is a key source on the origins of intergenerational trauma experienced by Aboriginal Australians. Atkinson, a Jiman and Bundjalung woman from Queensland, gives an account of relations between the colonising wars and the trauma it has produced through generations. Her study points out the importance of the categories we use to speak about the effects of the colonial wars in Australia. She argues that the basis of present Indigenous violence is linked directly to historical relations with the colonisers and the present. She argues that the colonisers disregarded the basic rights of Indigenous peoples and used violence to 'dominate, intimidate, subdue, violate, injure, destroy and kill' Indigenous peoples. On the one hand, the colonisers 'did not consider their own actions, either morally or under their own law, to be violent'; on the other, they categorised much contemporary Aboriginal interpersonal violence as a customary practice. However, Aboriginal people themselves have spoken of this as unacceptable behaviour, transgressing the cultural mores of our societies (Atkinson 2002: 11–12).

In the cases experienced by Indigenous peoples, intergenerational trauma is produced and reproduced in the present, as what we might describe as 'war by other means', from the origins of colonising and its effects on later generations through the reproduction of similar traumatic events, many of which are experienced in the contexts of family, health, and everyday living. The effects include those detailed in the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare reports down the years—Indigenous incarceration and deaths in custody, child removal, poverty, alcohol abuse, family violence, etc. Indigenous trauma is not easily amenable to 'psy' categories, diagnoses, or therapy. Here, trauma is problematised in terms of a history of the present, and it relates to a question of personhood. Intergenerational trauma experienced in the lives of many Aboriginal Australians might be experiences that are comparable with 'the transgenerational transmission of the trauma of the Nazi concentration camps' (Atkinson 2002: 86). Moreover, trauma does not locate itself in individual psychological neuroses but rather settles around the effects of attempts at cultural and spiritual engagement. Atkinson refers to Baker's (1983) description of the components of psychosocial domination: 'cultural genocide, cultural imperialism'. Aboriginal people would call this the greatest violence, 'the violence that brings the loss of spirit, the destruction of self, of the soul' (1983: 69). The *Bringing them Home* report (Commonwealth of Australia 1997: 3) made these points about past and present: 'the past is very much with us today, in the continuing devastation of the lives of Indigenous Australians'. These are the circumstances in which, collectively, the history, sociology and psychology of trauma experienced by Indigenous peoples are able to be examined.

Further, Atkinson distinguishes between 'lore' and 'law' in the colonising, the disruption to family and community relations, the taking of the land, and the fracturing of relationships between men, women, children and particularly Elders. 'Land forms people', and the trauma that came with the invasion disrupted and restricted relationships between people. Prior to the invasion, the essence of 'being Aboriginal … was the dynamic processes of engaging and managing conflict, which would often be challenging' (2002: 40). Post-invasion, intergenerational trauma was produced and reproduced in the present, an outcome of violence that could be described as a war that affected generations through the reproduction of traumatic events. These effects include those detailed in yearly reports of government bodies, such as the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Indigenous incarceration and deaths in custody, child removal, poverty, alcohol abuse, family violence and so on. This kind of trauma is not easily

amenable to 'psy' categories, diagnoses or therapy. Here, there is a case for relating a trauma and related affliction with a more focused location: the question of personhood.

Atkinson gives attention to a quite specific phenomenon. She uses 'trauma' to denote 'circumstances that seriously challenge people's capacity to cope with ordinary living' (2002: xi). Specifically, the problem was 'how to gain a contextual understanding of the violence experienced among Indigenous people, and also the cultural and individual processes of recovery from violence-related trauma' (2002: 9); trauma is an event or situation that overwhelms the individual, family or community, and the ability to cope in mind, body, soul, spirit (2002: xi). The difference is that the DSM definition of trauma does not highlight chronic, ongoing stress cumulative over time; it is 'inadequate as a diagnostic tool when considering colonial conditions' (Atkinson 2002: 50). Further, Atkinson points to limitations of the DSM account of PTSD; that it fails to highlight the chronic, ongoing stress of particular situations or that the stressors are cumulative over time: 'it is, therefore, inadequate as a diagnostic tool when considering colonial conditions and cumulative traumatic situations' (2002: 51).

So, the argument here is that histories of trauma have clear links to major human disasters, catastrophes, tragedies, criminal violence, and to war—to the United States war in south-east Asia, and also to the war of the colonisers against Indigenous Australia. Atkinson's study was located in coastal areas of central Queensland, in sites of numerous massacres throughout the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. She points out that this ongoing war, stretching across the continent, continues into the present. In conceptions developed in the human sciences, notions of 'personhood' and the 'soul' allow for objects of inquiry that broaden analyses of 'the individual' and 'the social'. In the psy-disciplines, these are problematised in new ways, particularly since the literature of the Foucault effect from the late 1970s, and the revision of psychological studies drawing on sociological and other insights, such as the publication of *Changing the Subject* (Julian Henriques et al. 1984) and more recent specific Indigenous studies (Fast and Collin-Vezina 2020). As community psychology acknowledges, the notion of trauma is able to be approached by means other than in individual psychology or the psychiatric fields of traumatology. The important point historically is the evidence of a strong association of the trauma of war with the constitution of selves—with how personhood more broadly is constituted over time.

There are implications flowing from these observations for practitioners. The first is historical evidence that suggests problems of intergenerational trauma among Indigenous peoples should be handled not by psy-practitioners or non-Indigenous experts but rather by Indigenous communities themselves, with assistance only if requested. Ian Hacking (2002) records an example of the case of children who had been inducted into rebellious armies in Northern Uganda and who were given trauma counselling, which in turn led to strong peoples' protests against this intervention. Preference was expressed instead for Indigenous ways of dealing with the cruelty, violence, abduction and physical pain that did not necessarily require Western ideas and emotions. Indeed, this is evidence supporting much of community engagement, community support, and political change.

Again, Hacking is useful when it comes to possibilities in the field of power and its potentialities:

> The power of victims over abusers; but also, the power of courts and the legislators; declaring that statutes of limitations do not apply to those who caused pain long ago; when the pain has been forgotten by the victim … most importantly, it is the power of the very concept of trauma that works in our lives. (Hacking 2002:19)

What emerges from these studies is that there are different approaches to studying trauma, some of which are suitably captured by the knowledge of psychology and psychiatry. In the case of PTSD, a more specifically 'psy' meaning of the word 'trauma' is related to war and wartime. Hacking and Young observed that the psychiatric profession linked this kind of trauma in the diagnostic manual to the category of neuroses. Hacking observes that the trauma in the DSM was joined up to the study of all the old neuroses, and they mostly had to do with a traumatic event in the past.

Conditions of Trauma—Summary

So, the trauma of Indigenous peoples has its antecedents in the wars of occupation and subsequent actions of authorities overseeing displaced Indigenous peoples, those that here might be described as the survivors of the 'killing fields'. This section focuses on both children and adult Aboriginal people in a period when discernible systems of governing were coming into being later in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, in missions or Aboriginal stations largely managed by religious organisations and acting at some distance from formal government. The term 'mission' is misleading because although these stations were in part established to protect Aboriginal peoples from the violence of white peoples and early were often run by churches with clergy in charge, they were also intended to train, educate, provide material support and discipline. These institutions purported to give welfare and protection to victims of war but were also sites of correction and control. They melded together concepts of welfare but also the carceral. In Victoria, these sites closed, and their 'inmates' were moved to the newly formed reformatories and juvenile justice facilities in the mid-twentieth century that had replaced the Neglected Children and Reformatory Schools.

For more than a century, residents of protection/correction institutions, adults and children alike, were to be inculcated into habits of industry and disciplined into obedience. Although it was not formally acknowledged, their purpose was also to prevent Aboriginal peoples from returning to Country. Daily and weekly routines were punctuated and regulated by work bells, meat bells and prayer bells, through which residents could be mustered, accounted for and reported on. The interior of the houses was to be regularly inspected for order, cleanliness, signs of immorality or ineffective parenthood. Permission had to be sought, for everything from absence from the station, to medical treatment, to marriage, all of which were subject to approval and arrangement by station management operating under the direction of the Aborigines Protection Board. Punishments were largely carried out internally, without resort to legal process or police involvement. Inasmuch as the early twentieth century was home for Aboriginal children, there is no home for these children that is not thought of by the administration as, in essence, a 'reformatory for parents and children alike':

> these men will learn that the Board of Aborigines is their proper authority, which will protect as well as correct them if they find it necessary to do so. (Public Records Office of Victoria 1694 1912)

The concepts of welfare and justice, protection and correction merged into one.

In the early decades of the twentieth century, there was a settled logic through which the Victorian Government presented to its non-Aboriginal constituency, its aspiration of 'concentrating' and confining the Aboriginal population on a single 'reserve' (Public Records Office of Victoria 1917). A knowable, identifiable entity called 'the Aboriginal' will be peaceably, not forcibly, enclaved in a reserve, free to do what 'the blacks' do (hunting and fishing) and in which nature, not government, is taking a particular course. Here we have black and white, the natural and the engineered, the pre-historic or ahistorical and the progressive co-existing but each contained, albeit one much more tightly bound than the other. But note too that the plan for this future comes with built-in obsolescence—it will last 'for the rest of their natural lives'. The policy of 'concentration' was first officially communicated in a Victorian Government document a decade previously, in a 'Mortality Report' of 1879:

> I have the honour to inform you that the Board for the Protection of Aborigines has recently had under its serious consideration the advisability of concentrating the natives on fewer stations than at present. It is a painful fact that the Aborigines throughout Victoria are rapidly decreasing in number, the total number being now probably not more than 800, including half-castes. (Jennings 1879)

Clearly, throughout these events, is the hand-in-hand coming into being of a fact, a point of arrival of knowledge, that is, the evidence of a naturally declining population, but which exists at the same time as the engineering of that decline. The deaths of Aboriginal peoples, especially the children, was directly and

intimately related to the conditions in the missions/stations—the containment and permanent oversight, the lack of medical science and basic public health amenity, in each of these 'concentrated' reserves. It is an achievement of a 'fact' that it is nature, not government, that is doing the work of excluding the application of science and technology, and how in turn, that exclusion goes about engineering a reduction in population. The episodes of counting with which we began once again came to the rescue in the twentieth-century administration, in new counting procedures inherited from the *Aborigines Protection Act 1886* (Victoria). Prior to that Act, the 'half-caste' was to be counted as 'Aboriginal', but after the Act, the 'half-caste' was to be excluded from the category of 'Aboriginal'. What more effective way to engineer a reduction in numbers than to change the criterion by which one counts?

Conclusion

Trauma affects personhood as an effect of war and its aftermath, the ongoing effects of colonial war and the ongoing colonising of Australian Indigenous peoples. The effects relate to the 'making up' of Indigenous personhood as an unstable category of person. The decline in Aboriginal populations throughout the late nineteenth and twentieth century, and into the present, was produced through knowledge statements, governmental planning and institutional engineering aimed to achieve two main outcomes: the dislocation of Aboriginal peoples from Country and culture and reduction in the Aboriginal population through engineering and what is now called 'deaths in custody'. Attempts were made to sever Aboriginal peoples' connection to Country, critical to health, wellbeing and Indigenous self-determination, through exclusion and resource engineering. These remain as elaborations of the killing fields, and subsequent detention and subjugation of Aboriginal peoples give acknowledgement to the present, those 'strategies, technologies, programs, techniques' (Barry, Osborne and Rose 1995) that are the contingencies of systems of power we inhabit today.

A vivid depiction and demonstration of the importance of Aboriginal self-governing of young people and the importance of Country were shown in the film *In My Blood It Runs*, which won awards at the 2020 Melbourne Film Festival. The question of power here includes the empowerment of Indigenous peoples in relation to the sources of trauma. The power/knowledge complex is at the core of addressing the problem of intergenerational trauma and intergeneration justice (Hacking 1994: 83). This present then, its discourses and its relations of power, the way in which to 'think' a person, and the ways in which people 'can think of themselves, find their roles and choose their actions' can be understood as the pursuit and conduct of war by other means (Garland 2014: 365–384).

Finally, a reference to the current rates of Aboriginal child removal taking place around Australia. I ask that the next time one hears about Aboriginal child removal they consider who are the architects of this problem. Once again, the resolution of this problem seems to begin with governance and self-government. Bodies such as an Indigenous 'Voice to Parliament', such a simple enough request, have been a demand from First Peoples participation in self-government. This is not a big call. Ghassan Hage (2019) has recently argued that:

> the caging of people to dominate them is a sign of weakness, not of power. Today, as we witness Aboriginal deaths in custody, asylum seekers immolating themselves for finding their cages intolerable, people dying while trying to break free from claustrophobic national borders behind which they are kept against their will, we also face the fact that the caging of mainly black and brown people has become 'a racist technique of extermination'.

Michael Dodson, the first Northern Territory Treaty Commissioner and author of the *Bringing them Home* report, delivered the 2019 Garran Oration at the Institute of Public Administration Australia (IPAA) National Conference in Darwin. He explained why truth-telling and treaty is the only way to begin to overcome the 'crossroads' that Australia currently faces in bridging the social and economic gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Truth-telling requires all Australians to know the shared history that continues to harm Indigenous First Peoples, Dodson said, 'to appreciate what horror and devastation most of Indigenous Australia has gone through over the past 234 years' (Dodson 2019).

Reflecting on how she started her book, Atkinson explains how during a time of great pain and crisis in her life, her great-grandmother gave her a gift—she sent her a dream. The dream was full of terror, tremendous terror. At the end, the rain came, there was great stillness, the women danced a dance of rebirth, regeneration. Her granny taught her, 'we are women// we are not victims// nor are we merely survivors// we are women// we have creation powers// we are the Creatures of the Future' (Atkinson 2002: 3).

Acknowledgements

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