

Differences, self-image and the individual

It is the nature of a commentary to engender debate, and debate presupposes the highlighting of differences. The danger, however, is that one will focus on differences to the exclusion of commonalities and therefore give a false impression of distance between authors and commentators. So, if the bulk of my comments will be given over to where I disagree with Owusu-Bempah and Howitt, I want to start off by stressing what we share in common.

There are three basic claims in their paper which I fully endorse. The first is that psychology and psychologists, wittingly or unwittingly, have been and remain part of the problem of racism. The second is that at least part of the problem lies in the way in which psychological theorising tends to explain racism at an intra-psychoic level to the exclusion of intergroup, ideological and social structural factors.

The third claim is that psychology needs to confront and be confronted with the issue of its own racism. Any institution — and whether through the Society or our own departments we are no exception — tends



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to react to attacks on its cherished self-image in defensive ways. However, the mark of anti-racism, whether individual or collective, is not that it is free of all traces of racism but rather that it welcomes any opportunity to challenge racism — whether that of others or its own. I therefore welcome the Owusu-Bempah and Howitt article for providing such an opportunity and I am pleased to participate in the debate.

Focusing on discrimination

The core claim of the paper is that psychology supports racism so far as it ‘continues to propagate notions of black inferiority’ — even if inferiority has come to be defined on a cultural rather than a

biological level. Stated so baldly, such a claim can easily be dismissed as one-sided. Certainly, psychology has propagated notions of black inferiority and, as the pages of *The Psychologist* have unfortunately borne witness, continues to do so. However, any balance sheet of psychology’s contribution must acknowledge the major shift in post-war analyses, from an analysis of racial difference to one of racial prejudice.

The issue has become not so much whether black people are different, but rather why white people discriminate; and the explicit focus of much of this work has been to challenge such discrimination. Of course, it can be argued that such attempts are seriously flawed. Indeed, I am but one of many who has suggested that such work can provide a scaffold for new racisms. It does this by presupposing the perception of people in terms of racial categories, and by assuming hostility between members of different categories to be inevitable. By reducing racism to hostility, the importance of social structure and of power is ignored (e.g. Reicher, 1986; Hopkins *et al.*, 1997; see also Miles, 1989, 1993).

However, the key thing to note is that the point of convergence between psychology and new racisms is not around the claim that black people are a problem because ‘they’ are inferior, but rather the claim that ‘they’ are a problem because ‘they’ are simply different. At times, even overtly fascist organisations have openly denied the idea of inferiority. Rather, they have argued for repatriation on the grounds that those who are culturally different will ‘naturally’ engender social conflict.

It is therefore necessary to recognise that

Toussaint L. 'Ouverture' s troops take on the French during the San Domingo revolution

cultural racism is not simply about replacing biology with culture, but also about replacing inferiority with difference. To miss this point and to restrict the argument over psychology's racism to whether or not it brands black people as inferior is actually to miss the major part of the contemporary problem.

Black self-image

Owusu-Bempah and Howitt's more specific claim has to do with what they consider to be the myth of 'black self-hatred'. This, they maintain, is a superficially benign form of

downgrading black people. They therefore posit a number of disreputable motives for the survival of the myth: it fits with the general stereotype of black inferiority; it accords with pseudo-scientific preconceptions; it allows for the control of black people; it fits with the therapeutic focus on individuals rather than the social environment; and last, but not least, it serves the professional interests of therapists — black therapists in particular, who can claim the franchise of healing the black psyche.

There are, however, other possibilities, which the authors miss. One is a genuine concern that oppression may lead to psychological distress, and a desire to highlight that distress in order to fight oppression. After all, the original doll studies carried out by Clark and Clark (1947) were used by them to oppose racial segregation in the USA, and were central to the outcome in the landmark school desegregation case of *Brown v Board of Education* (1954).

When viewed in such a context, it would seem hard to object to the use of the doll studies or, indeed, to the underlying suggestion that oppression exacts a psychological cost. Owusu-Bempah and Howitt are suspicious of the academic literature, but there are other voices to which they might listen more sympathetically. In his magisterial study of slave revolts on San Domingo, C.L.R. James (1989) records the strict hierarchy amongst black people themselves based on darkness of skins.

The Caribbean writer Merle Collins provides a contemporary echo of that hierarchy in her poem *At Cock Crow* (Collins, 1992):

*His mother
African black
won't be called African
knows nothing, she says
of Africa*

*doesn't like to say black
sounds so kind of harsh
so calls herself coloured instead
wished she needn't think of the coding
the colouring*

If intellectuals and poets still won't do, then how about the testimony of two men who gave their lives in the struggle for black equality? They can hardly be accused of putting personal or professional advantage before the cause. Steve Biko writes: 'No wonder the African child learns to hate his heritage in his days at school. So negative is the image presented to him that he tends to find solace only in close identification with the white society.' (1988, p.43.)

More personally, Malcolm X writes of the way that he, like others in the Harlem of the 1940s, used to go to painful lengths in order to transform his appearance: 'This was my first really big step toward self-degradation: I endured all of that pain, literally burning my flesh with lye, in order to cook my natural hair until it was limp, to have it look like a white man's hair.' (Haley, 1980, p.138.)

Of course, Biko and Malcolm X saw the answer to black self-degradation in the collective struggle against a racist society rather than in individual therapy. Yet this only goes to underline the point — already evident in the work of the Clarks — that a

Malcolm X saw the answer to black self-degradation in the collective struggle against a racist society

focus on the psychological costs to the oppressed does not necessarily exclude action against the perpetrators and structures of oppression. Owusu-Bempah and Howitt are, therefore, quite right to criticise those who counsel the victim and let the oppressor off the hook.

However, in a number of ways they retain the opposite position, which is at the root of the problem. Thus, they argue that racism damages one's life chances, *not* one's sense of self-worth. They also argue that we should target the racist system *rather than* individual psychologies.

losing sight of the oppressed? The dangers of focusing on the systemic to the exclusion of the individual are every bit as serious as those of treating the individual to the exclusion of the system — and every bit as fatal to the fight against racism.

First of all, on a humanitarian rather than political level, are we seriously supposed to ignore the child or adult who is the subject of systematic and sustained denigration in order to target the perpetrators? In no other area would we suggest abandoning the abused while pursuing the abuser and the system of abuse. We would do both. Why exclude black people?

Secondly, on a political level, who is this we' who is supposed to fight racism? Is it the radical psychologists who target the system rather than liberal psychologists who target the individual? Surely not! I assume that Owusu-Bempah and Howitt would accept that it is for black people themselves to lead the struggle against their oppression,

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The National Guard with fixed bayonets in Oakland, California

with ourselves as psychologists strictly in a supporting role.

This then raises the key question of what it is that holds such a struggle back. An important part of the answer lies in the way that oppressive systems ensnare people into accepting or even colluding in their own oppression. It is equally important, therefore, to consider how individuals pass from acceptance of oppressive standards to a sense of their power to change those standards. To propose struggle without considering how people join that struggle is to fight a war with ghost armies.

For sure, there are many ways of answering such a question. The lesson of the anti-apartheid and black liberation struggles was that the relationship between psychological transformation and collective action is complex. It is not simply that positive and empowered people join social movements, but also that people become transformed through their participation.

For Malcolm X and Steve Biko, collective struggle was about spiritual transformation, both as a means to material liberation and as an end in itself. This was not a repudiation of the psychological needs of the individual, but rather an argument as to how they are best addressed. We too may want to have such a debate — on the respective roles of identity work, multicultural education, anti-racist education, collective therapy and collective action. However, to dismiss the importance of such needs is to exclude the possibility of this vital debate.

In conclusion, my concern is that, however trenchant its critique, Owusu-Bempah and Howitt's article challenges its targets on their own terms and, therefore,

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ultimately serves to reproduce those terms. It reinforces dominant ideologies concerning both the nature of racism and of the subject of oppression in a racist society.

Conventional psychology might divorce the subject of oppression from society in order to concentrate on him or her as if in a vacuum. But Owusu-Bempah and Howitt maintain individual–society dualism by conceptualising oppression almost without a subject of oppression — and therefore without the possibility of a subject who can resist. If they are quite right in diagnosing a problem (and should be thanked for doing so), they do not provide a solution so much as a mirror-image.

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the relationship between psychological transformation and collective action is complex

Multiple racisms

OVERALL, psychology has not paid sufficient attention to racism or to processes of racialisation;¹ and some psychologists have helped to perpetuate racism. It is, thus, useful to discuss racism and psychology, and Owusu-Bempah and Howitt have repeatedly contributed to such discussions.

Their article raises interesting and important issues. These include: that even analyses critical of racism can reproduce it through 'victim-blaming'; that psychological work has frequently served to produce and reproduce racist ideas; that black children's racialised identities and self-esteem are not generally problematic; and that the (re)production of racist narratives or of anti-racist discourses are not necessarily colour-coded — that is, just as anti-racist discourses are not the sole prerogative of black and Asian people, so racist narratives are not only (re)produced by white people.

These ideas are not new within psychology (see e.g. Billig, 1979; Henriques *et al.*, 1984; Condor, 1988; Wong, 1994),

¹ The term 'racialisation' (Omi & Winant, 1986) is designed to convey the idea that the meanings associated with 'race' are not static but are dynamic social processes.



Peer commentary

by ANN

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where some psychologists have undermined, rather than reproduced racism.

Critique of essentialism

Owusu-Bempah and Howitt argue that the skin colour of the proponents of racist discourses is irrelevant. This argument contributes to the belief that racisms (and their opposition) are not divided into a black–white binary where black people necessarily oppose, and white people perpetuate, racisms. (Many people now agree that racisms have to be conceptualised in the plural, since racism takes different forms and is experienced in different ways.)

This belief has been enabled by a variety of psychological work (often drawing on insights from other disciplines). Examples include work on: difference, diversity and multiple positioning (see e.g. Essed, 1991; Mama, 1995); whiteness (see e.g. Fine *et al.*,

1997); mixed parentage (Root, 1992, 1996; Tizard & Phoenix, 1993); discursive and rhetorical analyses (Wetherell & Potter, 1992; Billig, 1991, 1995) and the dethronement of experience as epistemologically central to claims of knowledge and authenticity (see Burman, 1994; Henwood *et al.*, 1998).

Such work has allowed recognition of differentiation within, and commonalities across, socially constructed categories of 'black' and 'white'. This recognition has contributed to the critique — common outside psychology — of essentialism, which exaggerates differences by treating racial groups as in essence for ever differentiated. It has also helped to foster the conditions within which Owusu-Bempah and Howitt's article has been produced.

Historical and geographical context

The 'doll studies' by the black psychologists Kenneth and Mamie Clark in the 1930s and 1940s (which generated hundreds of further studies) are said by Owusu-Bempah and Howitt to symbolise research depicting black people as defective. Although the ideas generated have passed into professional thinking and practice, doll studies have been criticised methodologically and analytically.

However, Clark and Clark's argument was that racism, not inherent inferiority, damaged black children's 'racial identity'. Their work was central to the evidence produced in *Brown v Board of Education* (1954) which assisted the desegregation of southern USA schools (Clark, 1963).

Despite later debate about whether the Clarks' evidence was appropriate (Murphy *et al.*, 1984), their research did what Owusu-Bempah and Howitt argue psychologists should do. It sought to undermine rather than support racism, and was ground-breaking in its time.

Later 'doll' and 'photograph' studies also need to be analysed in their historical context. Milner's (1983) findings 'which showed no self-identity problems in black children' differ from his earlier findings because they were done at a different historical period. Milner (1983), and others, make a plausible case for the profound impact on black

children's identities of the black power and lack consciousness movements.

Nonetheless, in most studies, a minority of black children produced similar responses to those reported by the Clarks in the 1930s. The findings of researchers in Britain, on the one hand, and those of Powell-Hopson and Hopson (1988) in the USA, and Gopaul-McNicol (1988) in New York and Trinidad, on the other, are not as dissimilar as Owusu-Bempah and Howitt suggest. However, geography, as much as history, makes findings specific to the societies in which studies are conducted.

Non-essentialist recognition of the impact of racism

Clark and Clark also placed the issue of the emotional impact of racism on theoretical and research agendas. Black children subjected to racism are often hurt (although not necessarily damaged) by it. Recent research suggests that identities are plural and more complex than is denoted by labels such as 'positive' or 'negative', 'black' and 'white' (Hall & du Gay, 1996).

Furthermore, there is no one-to-one correspondence between racialised identities and self-esteem (Jackson *et al.*, 1986). This does not mean, however, that racism has no emotional impact on those subjected to it.

Owusu-Bempah and Howitt make the important point that some black therapists have perpetuated individualistic notions that black children suffer from 'identity problems'. However, the complexity of the impact of racism on black children is also important and pertinent to their (unfortunately, truncated) argument against the anti-transracial adoption position.

Normalising whiteness

Owusu-Bempah and Howitt argue that psychology continues to propagate notions of 'black inferiority', whilst not censuring 'white negative self-identity' and the 'high rate of lone parenthood in the white community'. It would have been helpful to have more explanation of 'white negative self-identity'. However, although it has not received equivalent treatment to black identity, white identity has been addressed within and outside psychology.

Billig's (1978) work on white people who join fascist organisations arguably problematised white identities. In the context of the murder of an Asian schoolboy by a white peer, Rattansi (1992) discussed the negative consequences for white working-class boys of feeling themselves to be

without cultural and ethnic identities.

It is certainly true that socially constructed problems are attributed to culture, 'race' and ethnicity when they occur among black people, but to individual pathology when they occur among white people. As a result, the condemnation by politicians and the media of white women's lone motherhood has not been racialised (see e.g. Phoenix, 1993, 1996).

Yet, although 'whiteness' has only recently received attention, white people have always been treated differentially within psychology. The white working classes are, for example, not generally treated as 'the norm' (Walkerdine, 1996). 'Race', ethnicity, social class and gender intersect in everyday lives and in psychological treatment of them.

Where to now?

Owusu-Bempah and Howitt call for racism to be tackled 'at its very root' — a metaphor that arguably obscures the plurality of types, and sites, of racisms; the multiple ways in which racisms are expressed; and that they are geographically and historically specific.

The dynamism of racisms is recognised in their discussion of the shift away from

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Problematic identities?

biological racism to 'cultural and professional racism' — a shift Barker (1981) termed 'new racism'. However, it would have been helpful to have some indication of how the authors would like to see these issues addressed.

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Comparative views and social identities

IN identifying racist assumptions in psychological accounts of black people, Owusu-Bempah and Howitt illustrate strategic and ideological dilemmas (Billig, 1991) when discussing racism. They criticise the doll-choice research by Clark and Clark which, when presented in the case of *Brown v Board of Education* (1954), led the US Supreme Court to ban school segregation.

Black children aged under eight had to choose either a black or white doll as looking most like them, and to select one of the two dolls in response to another four questions. The white doll was much preferred, and over one-third even selected the white doll in response to the supposed 'identity' question.

Clark and Clark explained that the racist structuring of society led to 'a pernicious self- and group-hatred, the Negro's complex and debilitating prejudice against himself' and that 'Negroes have come to believe in their own inferiority'.

At the cost of apparently demonstrating black psychological inferiority, this research delegitimised racist laws that forced inferior status on black Americans. Owusu-Bempah and Howitt only avoid this dilemma of



Peer commentary by GERRY FINN.

identifying potentially negative psychological consequences of racism by offering general comments on racism's denial of life chances, but they correctly criticise the belief in *inevitable* black identity problems.

Misunderstandings

Katz (1983) noted that the Clarks' work was very unusual in psychology in being able 'to significantly alter history and social policy', because the research 'was simple enough for non-social scientists to understand'. But the research has been misunderstood, and by psychologists too.

In addition, the replicability and validity of 'identity' responses are questionable. Preference choices do show some recognition of societally approved hierarchies. However, it is not obvious what it is that doll choices do specifically depend on.

The Clarks' suggestion of damage to both personal and social identities simply demonstrates this confusion, confirmed by others claiming doll choices measure 'self-concept', 'self-esteem', 'self-image', 'ethnic identity', 'racial identity', 'group identity', 'reference group orientation', and so on. Terminological confusion reflects analytical and conceptual bewilderment. Doll-choice responses need not be related to either an individual's personal or social identity (Finn, 1990).

So Owusu-Bempah and Howitt are right to dismiss this as evidence of general black identity problems; this research has buttressed racist beliefs in the inevitability of black inferiority. Yet racism does involve 'inferiorisation' and creates racialised hierarchies, and here lies the dilemma.

Racism has psychosocial consequences

that require analyses at different levels, but one is that racism can lead to personal difficulties for its targets. Owusu-Bempah and Howitt do mention extreme cases in which black children attempt to eradicate their blackness, but the issue is then ducked by suggesting that these reports may be myths. Dismissal of misinterpretations of doll-choice research does not dismiss the possibility of some black identity problems.

Admitting this possibility should not re-admit an option of racist beliefs in black inferiority. The resolution to this dilemma is to tackle oversimplification, by analysing racism in all its complexity and by resisting the essentialism of difference (see Brah, 1996).

Dangers of oversimplification

Experience of racism is complicated. Minority social identities emerge from an engagement with dominant societal values. Social identities can be contested, re-shaped and re-defined in interaction with that wider society. The dynamic nature of the social identity process allows potential for both positive and negative influences on individuals.

Black activists have attested to their struggles over black identities, but those normally cited (Malcolm X, Marcus Garvey, James Baldwin) demonstrate that racism does not result in inevitable and permanent black inferiority.

Experiences of racism can produce resistance and collective action to defeat racist 'inferiorisation'. This potentially complex psychological response to racism is indicated by Kureishi (1986). Racist support for the politician Enoch Powell initially made Kureishi feel inferior. Subsequent isolation from white society led him to spend more time in libraries where he discovered

the Black Panthers, who inspired him to fight back against racism.

Kureishi's tale underlines the convoluted effects of racism and the dangers of racist oversimplification. He also shows that there can be negative psychological consequences of racism. For Kureishi they were short-lived, showing how extreme and improbable is clinical damage from racism. But, for a few, his prospect cannot simply be dismissed.

Scots and Irish visions

By definition, many minority social identities contain some potential for feelings of inferiority. Cheyne (1970) demonstrated that both Scots and English listeners attributed more status to English than to Scottish speakers. Evidence from personal quality ratings was mixed, but only a few preferences for Scots were noted.

Just as doll choice does not demonstrate black identity problems, these results do not demonstrate a general Scottish identity problem. Nonetheless, a weaker, recent empirical study (see *Scottish Affairs*, nos. 9 & 15) did lead to more Scottish debate on the 'Caledonian antiszygy' — the supposed diagnosis of the disturbed Scottish identity in which inferiority is accompanied by boasts of superiority.

Although these symptoms may describe some Scots, no one has yet argued for the necessity of identity-based therapeutic interventions for Scots in general. Scottish education is, nevertheless, increasingly expected to offer more support to a Scottish identity. However, a more positive



Anti-Irish cartoon published in **Punch**(1882)

interpretation of these studies is that Scots have been granted Burns' wish to see themselves as (English) others see them.

More directly comparable results to the study of black identities can be found with another white minority social group, one that has experienced racialised social differentiation. Study of anti-Irish racism challenges the essentialism that leads to a belief in 'race' and its colour-coding (Finn, 1987; Brah, 1996; also see Ignatiev, 1995).

This racism did leave Irish adolescents in England with some identity confusion

(Ullah, 1985). However, Ullah also observed that being an ambivalently positioned minority allowed Irish youth to understand majority viewpoints and participate actively in both cultural settings.

A similar interpretation fits black children's doll choices: responses show recognition of the cultural domination inherent in racialised hierarchies, and may indicate some potential for negative consequences. But they do also demonstrate a black dual-consciousness of majority and minority perspectives, that white majority group children largely do not possess (Cross, 1985).

Instead, white children consistently make own-group doll choices. The general neglect of this result and its implications confirms Owusu-Bempah and Howitt's view of the racist perspective enveloping the doll studies. Racism means that white majority group children usually experience psychologically limited perspectives. They *do* need help in dealing with racism and recognising its personal, structural and societal effects — which is why anti-racist education is required (Finn, 1987).

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The Black Panthers inspired many to fight racism

Defective soul Response to commentaries

KWAME OWUSU-BEMPAH *and* DENNIS HOWITT *reply.*

It is usually easier for a writer to question the assumptions of those who are seen by the peer group as opponents than to expose the weaknesses in causes to which the writer lends support, but it is not the intellectual's duty to follow the crowd. (Banton, 1983, p.2.)

In our view, there are more points of agreement, intellectually and ideologically, than disagreement between us and the commentators on our article. For the purposes of debate, however, we will delineate some of the differences of opinion between us and them.

Many differences (and points of agreement) have been dealt with at length elsewhere (e.g. Owusu-Bempah, 1985, 1989, 1990), including Steve Reicher's suggestion that we might be unsympathetic to the views of other anti-racism and anti-oppression protagonists. Specifically, we would be loath to be seen to be devaluing the price that Steve Biko, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King and many others paid in opposing racism and oppression. Indeed, our article fully acknowledges this by asking practitioners to

TOPHAY PICTURE/GETTY

Freedom marchers 'white-up' to draw attention to inequalities in voter registration (Montgomery, Alabama, 1965)

be prepared to make sacrifices in the long-term interests of their black clients.

Gerry Finn, Ann Phoenix and Steve Reicher all perceive an omission in our article: the pivotal role that the Clarks' studies played in dismantling educational apartheid in the USA. Again, we have acknowledged the monumental significance of this elsewhere (Owusu-Bempah & Howitt, 1997). However, it must be appreciated that psychology's influence on the Supreme Court's decision was, at best, secondary (Owusu-Bempah & Howitt, 1997).

Besides, if the doll studies were politicised or exploited to achieve a socially desirable end, they were also interpreted from a racist perspective. A socially desirable goal, *per se*, cannot justify the anti-black spin that continues to be given to the studies by numerous commentators of diverse backgrounds. It must also be borne in mind that it was the anti-segregationist lawyers,

and not the Clarks themselves, who used the studies to achieve this historic end.

In this connection, we appreciate commentators' observations regarding the simplicity of the doll studies, and their derivatives. In order to achieve a better understanding regarding the self-concept of black children, our current research in this area seeks to avoid the bluntness and naivety inherent in previous studies.

Another point of fundamental disagreement concerns Ann Phoenix's idea of 'racisms'. We very much doubt the helpfulness of this idea. There is only one racism — racial injustice — in spite of its many faces dictated by the historical, political, economic or social conditions in which it manifests itself.

Although a chameleon may blend into its surrounding environment to escape detection it remains a chameleon. The difficulty in spotting the chameleon of racism may

Martin Luther King speaking at a mass rally in 1965 against segregated education at Girard College, Philadelphia

account for Phoenix's suggestion that our article follows from the works of others, including her own.

Most of the literature she cites looks at racist discursive processes in what we would see as soft targets, such as apartheid South Africa and the biological perspectives of Jensen and Eysenck, and fails to consider the racism of the discourse important to us here — psychology.

We have criticised these alternative approaches for their smugness (Howitt, 1995). We would like to be part of the crowd, but our approach is at odds with that of those who see racism as merely text — something 'out there', outside of themselves. In brief, we have been consistently critical of the 'racisms' viewpoint she cites even before it became fashionable (e.g. Howitt & Owusu-Bempah, 1990; Owusu-Bempah, 1985, 1990; Owusu-Bempah & Howitt, 1995).

Yet another point of disagreement concerns the discipline and its members' apparent complacency in general. For example, Reicher draws our attention to the belief that post-war psychology's approach to, or treatment of, racism is different from its pre-war analysis.

The truth is that the past is the present, and — unless we rid ourselves of complacency — will be the future. One would surely be dissatisfied with one's GP if she or he terminated a course of treatment simply because it improved one's medical condition, as opposed to curing it. We must pluck up courage and launch a full frontal

attack on racism and other 'isms' in which psychology is heavily implicated.

Similarly, one may accept Reicher's claim that we 'posit ... disreputable motives for the survival of the myth' of 'black self-hatred'. We concede that there may be a genuine concern, and there certainly is on the part of some therapists about the effects of racism on its victims, especially children. Nonetheless, this may equally easily be seen as merely providing a justification for therapy where something else may be required (Masson, 1989).

From our perspective, it is hard to accept that 'treating' individual children (or adults) in the privacy of the therapeutic environment constitutes a public appraisal of the plight of the victims of racism or oppression. It is rather the racist system or society that should be our primary target.

In connection with this, we must address a key issue raised by both Steve Reicher and Ann Phoenix: that we may have diagnosed the problem without providing a solution to it. To this we simply say that finding a solution to racism must be the collective responsibility of all concerned. We cannot accomplish this by burying our heads in the sand.

As Steve Reicher perceptively points out, one of the aims of our article is to stimulate debate in an area from which, for obvious reasons, many shy away. We must not shun this issue because:

One of the duties of the intellectual is to press the awkward questions. He or she

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should probe the arguments that are advanced in support of the good causes as well as the bad; should reveal any inconsistencies, and disturb the complacency which can affect those who advocate apparently progressive movements as well as those who defend the established order. (Banton, 1983, p.2.)

To achieve this, psychologists must be constantly mindful not only of the subtle ways in which they may perpetuate racism in their work — theorising, research, writings and practice — but also the ways in which they are recruited and trained to do the dirty work, as it were, of those with a vested interest in the *status quo*. This is the plain message of our article.

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