
The Role of Decolonization and Indigenization in Historical Criminology

Dr Mike Guerzoni, University of Tasmania and Dr Esmorie Miller, London South Bank University

A chief concern of historical criminology has been with identifying how decolonization and Indigenization activism can translate to both research and classroom practice, in higher education (HE). Indeed, these questions stood among the main themes addressed in the July 2021 joint United Kingdom (UK) and Australian-New Zealand (ANZ) Historical Criminology Network summer online workshop. There are two points worth noting here: first, the specific pairing of decolonisation and Indigenization explored in this piece has its origins in this UK/ANZ collaborative efforts bringing together the networks in which the authors are involved. Second, decolonization and Indigenization is an apt pairing, which as noted below, represent modes by which epistemic equalization can unfold. These timely concerns correspond with wider, contemporary narratives in HE (globally), addressing both decolonization (Smith, 1999) and Indigenization (Rigney 2017; Louie et al. 2017), respectively. Indeed, an important consideration in placing these efforts side by side is to offer insight into the various ways deeply embedded forms of colonial continuities can be both challenged and dismantled. These efforts, first and foremost, urge the importance of thinking historically, as a starting point for both research and teaching.

Ideas and activism around decolonization proffer the deconstruction of knowledge, starting with the logics scholars and practitioners have been required to develop and disseminate as neutral, over time (Smith, 1999). According to the deconstruction logic, knowledge is steeped in colonial continuities of exploitation and oppression which sustains the marginalization and oppression of racialized peoples, globally (Blagg and Anthony, 2019; Smith, 1999). Moreover, contemporary institutions—from education to criminal justice, to health and social care and beyond—are the key purveyors of said continuities (Blagg and Anthony, 2019). Ideas on indigenization, meanwhile, take on a corresponding task. Indigenisation may be broadly defined as

a holistic initiative seeking to instigate change within HE, to increase and improve the presence, representation and involvement of Indigenous people within the life, leadership and learning undertaken at universities (see Rigney 2017: 45; Louie et al. 2017; Mihesuah and Wilson 2004). As such, Indigenisation may be distinguished from de-colonisation in its focus on addition rather than the removal or dismantling of previous knowledge, infrastructure, and practice (McNamara and Naepi, 2018; Guerzoni, 2020).

The article is organized in two brief parts, between decolonization and indigenization. The discussion takes the position that historical criminological aims to transform both research and pedagogical practice, in HE, has key historical lineages which can prove essential in contemporary decolonization and indigenization efforts. Importantly, the discussion draws from a cross section of extant scholarly traditions—taking advantage of the multidisciplinary logics currently tasked with epistemological equalization, for research and pedagogical practice in HE. While not strictly a historiography of decolonization and indigenization, the article exploits the developmental format.

DECOLONIZATION: KEY ANTECEDENT LINEAGES FOR HISTORICAL CRIMINOLOGICAL PURSUITS

Among the antecedent narratives on which historical criminology can base decolonization practice are foundational scholarships concerned with deconstructing the fallacies which have sustained orthodox renderings of modernity as progressive and enlightened. Critical Fanonism (1967, 1963), for instance, has long established such a task. In his seminal work *The wretched of the earth* (1963: 36) Franz Fanon notes that:

Decolonization, which sets out to change the order of the world, is, obviously, a program of complete disorder. But it cannot come as a result of magical practices, nor of a natural shock, nor of a friendly understanding.

Decolonization, as we know, is a historical process: that is to say it cannot be understood, it cannot become intelligible nor clear to itself except in the exact measure that we can discern the movements which give it historical form and content.

A premier point to emphasize is that ideas about decolonization reflect a historic scholarly trajectory, presaging contemporary engagement. Corresponding with

Fanon, historical criminology is currently tasked with 'discern[ing] the movements which give [contemporary decolonization goals] historical form and content' (Fanon, 1963: 36). Fanon cleared a path for challenging the legitimacy of the modern project towards universal equality, particularly the knowledge production processes which sustain narratives prophesizing equality as a realistic, universal experience. Such an approach is instructive for contemporary efforts, including historical criminologists, intent on contributing to the transformation of both the gatekeeping and knowledge production processes, on which HE relies. This includes contemporary concerns about the Whiteness of curriculums (Phillips et al., 2019), the under representation of educators of colour (Peters, 2015), and intersections of gendered and other cultural concerns (Shomanah and Dube, 2012), in the UK and beyond.

Other extant lineages, proffering the deconstruction of systematized epistememes supporting continuities of colonial exploitation and oppression, remain relevant for contemporary criminological efforts. Consider, for instance, the scholarship chronicling historic Pan African activism, from C.L.R James (1969 [2012]) to Hakim Abdi (2018). These histories prophesized the need for active opposition to the paradoxical entrenchment of anti-African racism, exploitation and oppression running parallel to the modern expansion of universal rights. Consider also Edward Said's contribution in *Orientalism* (1978; see also 1993), challenging the essential distortion and hyper-representation of Oriental peoples and culture, including but necessarily limited to the Middle East. Foundational works like these exemplify the risk acknowledged in extant scholarships, that contemporary decolonization efforts privilege the global north, furthering the distortion and invisibility of voices and narratives from the global south, remarkably crucial to the epistemic transformation and equalization decolonization ultimate seeks (Moosavi, 2020; Tuck and Yang, 2012).

A final point on what historical criminology can glean from looking backwards, is the ability to conceptualize and integrate with what Said (1993) describes as the allencompassing tentacles of modern imperialism, into both research and thinking practice. In this scenario, criminologists must necessarily engage with a historiography of colonial development, foregrounding a chronology of the evolution of how colonialism has manifested, over time. This has been noted as a move from the conquest of 'the physical spaces and bodies of the colonised...[to] the colonisation of the mind through

disciplines, such as education, science, economics and law' (Odora-Hoppers & Richards, 2011: 7). The tentacles Said references are recognizable in the more sanitized guises, particularly education, in which these continuities have sustained themselves. This includes the ways notions of epistemic neutrality have resisted classification as oppressive and have more readily masqueraded as modern and progressive.

INDIGENIZATION: A GIFT OFFERED TO HISTORICAL CRIMINOLOGY

A correlate to decolonization, indigenization is seen across nations formerly colonised by the British Empire, including but not limited to, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States of America. Presently the concept is more specifically used in respect to curriculum development (viz. Indigenising the Curriculum), which can be understood as the inclusion of Indigenous content and knowledge (viz. epistemes) within individual units of study, and across university degrees as a whole (le Grange 2018; Marlene Brant Castellano 2014; Walter and Guerzoni 2020). In terms of teaching, put simply, curricula Indigenisation involves amending units so that students are 'learning from' Indigenous people, and not simply 'learning about' them (Hart et al. 2012:717; Harvey and Russell-Mundine 2019: 800-801). Indigenisation is also present within research, both in respect to method and methodology, ethical practice in research, and in the custodianship and use of research data. Scholars have called attention to, and given examples of how, Indigenous people, knowledge and practice may be involved and incorporated into research within the health, behavioural and social sciences, both for quantitative and qualitative research (Walter and Anderson 2013; Lambert 2014; Bessarab and Ng'andu 2010; Walker, Fredericks and Anderson 2012). Furthermore of interest to Criminology, in being a discipline frequently commenting on negative statistics relating to Indigenous people (viz. incarceration rates), a body of literature that seeks to address issues pertaining to the use and ownership of data on Indigenous people, known as 'Indigenous Data Sovereignty', is presently emerging (Kukutai and Taylor 2016; Walter et al. 2020). In previous years the scholarly resources and infrastructure can be said to have been absent, thus impeding its utilisation with the academy, though this is now no longer the case.

Understandably the question remains as to why one should Indigenise their research and curricula, and what it would entail. There are many reasons that cannot be exhaustively detailed here, but to draw from the words of Sámi scholar Professor Rauna Kuokkanen (2007: 3), Indigenous epistemes are a 'gift' to the academy, deepening its

'understanding of knowledge and the world'. It is not simply academically fashionable to Indigenise as some may contend, rather, it is beneficial for academy, and by extension Western society, to do so; albeit one with, understandably, accompanying obligations (see Kuokkanen 2007). In the context of historical criminology, receiving Indigenous knowledge and perspectives on subjects pertaining to country and other areas of historical inquiry may complement and deepen our understanding of that previously acquired from colonial sources. Hearing from Indigenous people may result in identification of omissions within previously acquired accounts (as we are finding here in Tasmania, Australia). Partnering with Indigenous academics and knowledge holders, we submit, will widen the scope of, and enrich, our research. Over time it is hoped that Indigenisation will be taken up by criminology as a discipline, and that the fruits of this process will be received by Indigenous and non-Indigenous people alike.

CONCLUSION

Higher Education across nations formerly colonised by the British Empire, including but not limited to, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States of America continue to seek ways to translate decolonization and indigenization activism, to both research and classroom practice. Motivating these concerns has been the recognition of colonial continuities of power which have continuously undermined the epistemic equalization. This equalization is necessary to both challenge and dismantle these same continuities of exploitation and oppression sustaining the marginalization and oppression of racialized peoples, globally. Our inaugural July 2021 joint United Kingdom (UK) and Australian-New Zealand (ANZ) Historical Criminology Network summer online workshop allowed the authors to explore ways these themes could be embedded in teaching and practice. A unifying theme which emerged is the usefulness of historical legacies of scholarship which have long exhorted recognition of, and the need for, challenging and transforming continuities of colonialism, built into institutional practice, which sustain exploitative, oppressive research and teaching practice.

Bessarab, D & Ng'andu, B (2010), 'Yarning About Yarning as a Legitimate Method in Indigenous Research', *International Journal of Critical Indigenous Studies*, vol. 3, no. 1, pp. 37–50.

Blagg, H. and Anthony, T. (2019) *Decolonising criminology: Imagining justice in a postcolonial world*. Springer Nature.

Castellano, M. (2014). *Indigenizing Education*. *Education Canada Magazine: Aboriginal Student Success*. 54.

Doyle, K, Cleary, M, Blanchard, D & Hungerford, C 2017, 'The Yerin Dilly Bag Model of Indigenist Health Research', *Qualitative Health Research*, vol. 27, no. 9, pp. 1288– 1301.

Fanon, F. (1967) *Black Skin, White Masks*. New York: Grove Press, Inc.

Fanon, F. (1963) *The wretched of the earth*. Grove/Atlantic, Inc.

[Guerzoni M.A. \(2020\). *Indigenising the Curriculum: Context, Concepts and Case Studies*. University of Tasmania.](#)

Hart, V., et al. (2012). "Pre-service teachers' pedagogical relationships and experiences of embedding Indigenous Australian knowledge in teaching practicum." *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education* 42(5): 703-723.

Harvey, A. and G. Russell-Mundine (2019). "Decolonising the curriculum: using graduate qualities to embed Indigenous knowledges at the academic cultural interface." *Teaching in Higher Education* 24(6): 789-808.

James, C.L.R., James, C.L.R. and Kelley, R.D. (1969 [2012]) *A history of pan-African revolt*. PM Press.

Kukutai, t. and G. Taylor (2016) *Indigenous Data Sovereignty: Toward An Agenda*.

Canberra: Australian National University Press.

Kuokkanen, R. (2007). *Reshaping the University: Responsibility, Indigenous Epistemes, and the Logic of the Gift*. Vancouver, UBC Press.

Lambert, L. (2014). *Research for indigenous survival: Indigenous research methodologies in the behavioral sciences*. Pablo: Salish Kootenai College Press.

le Grange, L. (2018). "Decolonising, Africanising, indigenising, and internationalising curriculum studies: Opportunities to (re)imagine the field." *Journal of Education* (74): 4-18.

Louie, D., et al. (2017). "Applying Indigenizing Principles of Decolonizing Methodologies in University Classrooms." *Canadian Journal of Higher Education* 47(3): 16–33.

[McNamara, R. and S. Naepi \(2018\). "Decolonizing Community Psychology by Supporting Indigenous Knowledge, Projects, and Students: Lessons from Aotearoa New Zealand and Canada." *American Journal of Community Psychology* \(62\): 340–349.](#)

Mihesuah, D. and A. Wilson (2004). *Indigenizing the Academy: Transforming Scholarship and Empowering Communities*. London, University of Nebraska Press.

Moosavi, L. (2020) The decolonial bandwagon and the dangers of intellectual decolonisation. *International Review of Sociology*, 30(2): 332-354.

Odora-Hoppers, C. and H. Richards (2011) *Rethinking thinking: Modernity's 'other' and the transformation of the university*. Pretoria: Unisa Press.

Peters, M.A. (2015) Why is my curriculum white? *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 47(7): 641-646.

Rigney, L. (2017). *A Design and Evaluation Framework for Indigenisation of*

Australian Universities. Indigenous Pathways, Transitions and Participation in Higher Education: From Policy to Practice. J. Frawley, S. Larkin and J. Smith. Open Access, Springer Open: 45-64.

Said, E.W. (1993) Culture and Imperialism. Vintage.

Said, E.W. (1978) Orientalism. London: Penguin Classics.

Shomanah, M.W.D. and Dube, M. (2012) Postcolonial feminist interpretation of the Bible. Chalice Press.

Tuck, E. and Yang, K.W. (2012) Decolonization is not a metaphor. Decolonization: Indigeneity, education & society, 1(1).

Walker, Fredericks and Anderson, D (2012), 'Understanding Indigenous Australian Women's Social and Emotional Well-Being and Wellness Through Yarning: The Indigenous Women's Wellness Program', in Proceedings of the International Indigenous Development Research Conference 2012, University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand: 270–276.

Walter, M., Kukutai, T., Carroll, S.R. & Rodriguez-Lonebear, D. (Eds.) (2020) Indigenous data sovereignty and policy. London: Routledge.

Walter, M and Guerzoni, MA, (2020) "How a university can embed Indigenous knowledge into the curriculum and why it matters", The Conversation, Australia.

