

Response



## Racialized misogyny: Response to 44th Foulkes Lecture

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### **Introduction**

The focus of my response is racialized misogyny. My main spotlights are:

- Misogyny is always intersectional.
- We are all implicated in racialized misogyny.
- Do not assume that group analysis is fit for purpose in racialized misogyny.
- A hospitality between ‘Established’ group analysis and ‘Outsider’ analysis is needed.

My focus on the interdependency of racism and misogyny takes up the intersectional imperative threaded through Sue Einhorn’s 44th Foulkes Lecture, and her question of how

unconscious patriarchal formulations of group analytic theory, erases or disavows, what misogyny does to women. (Einhorn, 2021)

As an Indian Irish, queer woman of colour, working within groups of women of colour, Einhorn’s spotlight takes on particular complexity.



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We cannot separate racism from misogyny. The ‘intersectional experience [of racial misogyny] is greater than the sum of racism and sexism’ (Crenshaw, 1989: 140).

### **Racist misogynist psychic structures**

Foulkes’ ‘Basic Law of Group Dynamics’ that there is

no clear-cut frontier between inside and outside. (Foulkes, 1990: 184),

takes on particular complexity when translated into:

racist [misogynist] social structures create racist [misogynist] psychic structures. (Oliver, 2001: 34)

The group analytic maxim is that the social penetrates to the core. So, the inevitable tension is, how do we practice and understand through our racist misogynist psyches? Group analytic practice depends on the extent to which we enable awareness of how

The unconscious mind is constantly scanning the external world in a very active way, seeking out events and situations which can be used to represent our internal situations. The unconscious is therefore making use of perceptions of the external world for *its own purposes*. These representations manage to both express and hide these inner situations—or become objects of projection. (Bell, 1998: 168, emphasis in original)

### **Political nature of group analysis**

How do we, in our group analytic practice and thinking attempt the task of interpreting the internal—external relation, as implicated (re) producers of racist misogyny?

These questions spotlight ‘commitment to the political nature of group analysis’ (Einhorn, 2021).

- Racialized misogyny spotlights the political of group analysis.
- Racialized misogyny spotlights intersectionality.
- Racialized misogyny spotlights commitment as a sustained action to counter our individual and collective complicity with racist patriarchy.

Sustained action to counter racialized misogyny is much more than a hyper-vigilance of recognition. Given that we are all inevitably implicated in intersectional racist misogyny, it is inevitable that ‘systems of segregation, ghettoization or colonization are replicated in analytic groups’ (Aiyegbusi, 2021a, 2021b). The scaffolding that supports group analytic thinking and practices must grapple with the aporetic that emancipatory metanarratives are ‘implicated in the narrative it criticizes’ (Caselli, 2005: 105).

### **Archetypal fetishes of Black and Asian women**

The ideas, language, clinical practice, organizational structures of international institutes of group analysis, have, and are, evolving in a social unconscious where the ‘public persona’ (Einhorn, 2021) of Black women is shaped by archetypal fetishes of ‘mammies’, ‘sapphires’, ‘jezebels’, and ‘welfare queens’ and ‘smiling Aunt Jemimas on pancake mix boxes’ (Hill Collins, 2000: 5; Byrd and Solomon, 2005; West, 2008), and archetypal fetishes of Asian women as ‘dragon lady’, ‘lotus blossom’ and ‘china doll’ (Lee, 2018), perpetuated by sell out performances of *Madame Butterfly* (Hwang and DiGaetani, 1989; Kondo, 1990; Poa, 1992). This year, on the 17th March 2021, the shooting of six Asian women in Atlanta was performative of the archetype of ‘Suzie Wong, the prostitute with a heart of gold’ (Mason, 1957; Lang, 2021; The Jakarta Post, 2021; Sloan, 2013).

### **Disrupting essentialist constructions of gender and sexuality**

What does this mean for Black and Asian women group conductors? How does the splitting between good/bad; hyper-sexualized/asexualized; soiled/pure; heart/mind; and East/West, manifest in group analytic relational and structural dynamics? What tools does group analysis have to disrupt ‘established’ essentialist constructions of gender and sexuality and embrace indeterminate ‘outsider’ positions of transwomen, non-binary, and queer women of colour? These questions are pivotal to how we experience mothers, desire, sexuality, potency, aggression, and love—all of which are fundamental to group analysis and none of which are homogeneous.

### **From generality to specificity**

My feminist activist practice to end violence against women and my training in group analysis has taught me the necessity of moving from

speaking in generalities to naming the specificity of conscious and unconscious experience (Nayak, 2013).

Moving from generalities to specificity is fundamental to the ‘transformation of silence into language and action’ (Lorde, 1977).

I propose that group analytic concepts such as projective identification, countertransference and resonance must always (for it is always present) enable a naming of the nameless dread of racialized misogyny. The challenge is of using group analytic concepts implicated in racist misogyny, to enable a reparative naming of racist misogyny. Navigating the aporia of insider–outsider positions is what we do in group analysis—what I am doing here is naming the task in terms of racialized misogyny.

### **Part-object objectification**

Let us take the psychoanalytic ideas of splitting and part-object relations and think of these in the context of wombs, breasts, vaginas, and objectification of bodies, whilst holding in mind that in the context of racialized misogyny, part of this objectification is the invisibility and silence about women of colour, women constructed as having a disability, non-binary, queer and transwomen. The use of psychoanalytic concepts of object-relations and splitting needs to account for the social unconscious part objectification phantasies of the presence and/or absence of wombs, breasts, and vaginas of women who do not fit dominant white, heteronormative, able-bodied constructions.

Part-object objectification of racialized wombs takes on a particular sharpness in the context of the mass forced sterilization of wombs of Black, Asian, Latino, Indigenous, Romani women (Balasundaram, 2011; Byrd and Solomon, 2005; Owens, 2017; Roke and Szilvasi, 2017; Threadcraft, 2017), including the current serialization of Muslim Uyghur women in Xinjiang (Turdush, and Fiskesjö, 2021).

The idea of part-object takes on a particular sharpness in the context of racialized breasts ironed flat, racialized clitorises and labia cut off, and racialized vaginas sewn up leaving a small hole for urine and menstrual blood (Amahazion, 2021; Black, et al., 1995; Tremblay and Reedy, 2020). I could add the misogynist practices of forced marriage, child marriage (Nour, 2009), dowry violence (Rudd, 2001; Srivast, et al., 2021; Sharma, et al, 2005) and menstruation ostracization (Ingole, 2021). These experiences are in the matrix of groups I conduct with women of colour, and I/we need rigorous holding here.

The idea of identification between mother and daughter takes on particular sharpness in the context of a brown queer baby born from a white racist heteronormative uterus, suckling a white racist heteronormative breast (Nayak, 2021). What are the implications for the group matrix, where a patient and/or group conductor brings the 'intersectional experience of being the Black daughter of white mother, and/or white mother who maybe overtly racist' (Nayak, 2020: 456)?

### **Theatres of the body are intersectional**

Theatres of the body are intersectional (McDougall, 1989; Tate, 2015)

Did *bad* mean *Black*? The endless scrubbing with lemon juice in the cracks and crevices of my ripening, darkening, body. And oh, the sins of my dark elbows and knees, my gums and nipples, the folds of my neck and the cave of my armpits! (Lorde, 1983:149, emphasis in original)

Are psychoanalytic ideas of somatization, and body (Hadar, 2019), fit for purpose in racialized misogyny? How would group analysis enable a reparative, liberatory deconstruction of the intersectionality of women's relationship to self and others?

On a broad level the query is about who and what are included in the practice, theory, and organizational structures of group analysis. How is group analysis responding to the ever changing social and racial demographic landscape? For example, in areas of the North West of England, where I live and work, international migration is the major influence on population growth, with 25% of the increase due to forced migration of asylum seekers. A context where issues of racialized misogyny are both the cause and consequence of forced displacement.

### **Conclusion**

I propose that group analysis with women asylum seekers and with women intergenerationally forged in colonialism and slavery demonstrates that we cannot assume group analysis is fit for purpose in racialized misogyny.

I propose that a spotlight on intersectional racialized misogyny exposes the urgency for socio-economic, heart and mind hospitality

between ‘Established’ group analysis and ‘Outsider’ analysis (Elias and Scotson, 1994).

I call for an unconditional hospitality to outsider intelligence of anti-colonial, Black feminist, critical race, and queer knowledge.

In terms of the ‘critical chorus’ and ‘cage of emotions’ (Einhorn, 2021) within group analysis generally, and in the context of intersectional racist misogyny specifically, I leave you with the words of Audre Lorde:

this territory between us feels new and frightening as well as urgent, rigged with detonating pieces of our individual racial histories which neither of us choose but which each of us bear the scars from. (Lorde, 1983: 162)

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