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China Mills & Brenda A. Lefrançois

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CHILD AS METAPHOR: COLONIALISM, PSY-GOVERNANCE, AND EPISTEMICIDE

CHINA MILLS 
University of Sheffield, UK

BRENDA A. LEFRANÇOIS
Memorial University, St. John's, Newfoundland, Canada

This paper mobilizes transdisciplinary inquiry to explore and deconstruct the often-used comparison of racialized/colonized people, intellectually disabled people and mad people as being like children. To be childlike is a metaphor that is used to denigrate, to classify as irrational and incompetent, to dismiss as not being knowledge holders, to justify governance and action on others' behalf, to deem as being animistic, as undeveloped, underdeveloped or wrongly developed, and, hence, to subjugate. We explore the political work done by the metaphorical appeal to childhood, and particularly the centrality of the metaphor of childhood to legitimizing colonialism and white supremacy. The article attends to the ways in which this metaphor contributes to the shaping of the material and discursive realities of racialized and colonized others, as well as those who have been psychiatrized and deemed “intellectually disabled”. Further, we explore specific metaphors of child-colony, and child-mad-“crip”. We then detail the developmental logic underlying the historical and continued use of the metaphors of childhood, and explore how this makes possible an infantilization of colonized peoples and the global South more widely. The material and discursive impact of this metaphor on children's lives, and particularly children who are racialized, colonized, and/or deemed mad or “crip”, is then considered. We argue that complex adult-child relations, sane-mad relations and Western-majority world relations within global psychiatry, are situated firmly within pejorative notions of what it means to be childlike, and reproduce multi-systemic forms of oppression that, ostensibly in their “best interests”, govern children and all those deemed childlike.

KEYWORDS: *Colonialism, development, governance, infantilization, metaphor, psychiatrization, racism.*

Address correspondence to China Mills, Ph.D., Lecturer in Critical Educational Psychology and Director of MA Psychology and Education, University of Sheffield, 241 Glossop Road, Sheffield, UK, S10 2GW, china.mills@sheffield.ac.uk; Brenda LeFrançois, Ph.D., Professor, School of Social Work, St. John's College, 709-864-2555, Memorial University, St. John's, Newfoundland, Canada, NL A1C 5S7, blefrancois@mun.ca

INTRODUCTION

To be childlike is a metaphor that has been used for centuries to denigrate and subordinate certain groups including racialized/colonized others, and/or psychiatrized and disabled people. Erica Burman (2016) states that an important analytic task “is to render explicit the work done by the rhetorical appeal to childhood” (p. 2). Inspired by Burman, the analytic task of this article is to trace the work done by the metaphorical appeal to childhood, specifically in relation to colonialism, madness and disability. We ask: how does the “child” function as metaphor, and what is the performative nature of this metaphor – what does it do both for those deemed child-like, and for actual children (Mills, 2014)? While the metaphors of childhood in relation to child/colony have been well documented, less attention has been paid to the metaphors of the child in relation to madness and disability. Thus, this article takes seriously the need to explore the centrality of the child and the metaphor of “childlike” in the development of white supremacy (Levander, 2006), colonialism, sanism, disableism, and ablism.¹

For Ashis Nandy (2007), the Western worldview of childhood as an imperfect transitional state on the way to adulthood is embedded in ideologies of colonialism and modernity, meaning “the use of the metaphor of childhood [is] a major justification of all exploitation” (p. 59). Accordingly, parentification – or even *in loco parentis* – has been used to justify, and to deem benevolent, interventions used by the powerful to “protect” those who are “childlike”. Not so hidden from the surface are the vested capitalist interests as well as the social, political, and psychological agendas of power and control taken on by those in the parental role within these socially constructed and contrived “parent-child” relations. The developmental logic that underlies these power relations legitimizes various regimes of ruling that promote the subordination of certain groups in the name of benevolence. In this article, we demonstrate the ways in which these forced paternalistic encounters, and the infantilization that characterize them, serve not only to debase and erase racialized/colonized, psychiatrized and/or disabled adults and children as knowers, but also serve to reinscribe children themselves as incompetent and inferior. Colonial logics intersect with medical and psychiatric logics that enable not just the marking of certain individual bodies as sub-human but also the global categorizing of whole groups of people as being undeveloped, underdeveloped and/or wrongly developed. Correspondingly, we understand the importance placed within mainstream corporate academia upon the subfields of developmental studies within political science, international development, international relations, economics, geography, child psychology, and medicine, all which serve the same function of maintaining the status quo of (white) supremacy whilst (re)producing majority world people, children, psychiatrized and/or disabled people as childlike (Blaut, 1993). We expose and contest such debasement whilst also disputing the essentialized and adultist meanings contained within

the very concept of *childlike*, a concept which emanates from dominant Euro-western and adult-centric constructions of childhood.

Metaphor is “pervasive in everyday life”, and is classically understood as structuring the way we think and act, and enabling us to understand and experience “one kind of thing in terms of another” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, pp. 3–5). Yet many concepts may not be separate as such, and may be historically entangled with one another. Metaphors are contextually bound and have a performative aspect in that they structure what action we can take (Kövecses, 2015). Understanding something through metaphor may hide aspects of a concept that are not consistent with that metaphor (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), and thus metaphors can be used to do political and ideological work. We are interested in how certain groups of peoples (colonized, racialized, mad and crip)² come to be understood, talked about and acted upon through the metaphor of childhood. Specifically, the pervasive, entangled and co-constitutive nature of metaphors of the child, colony/“savage”, mad and crip are explored. The intersections of these metaphors call for an approach attuned to overlaps and not constricted by disciplinary boundaries.

We engage in this analysis through a creative transdisciplinary inquiry that is not discipline-specific but instead brings together knowledges that are rarely understood to coexist and that may at times be in tension with each other (Augsburg, 2014; Leavy, 2006; Mitchell & Moore, 2015; Montuori, 2013). Transdisciplinarity – as contingent and non-essentialized – alerts us to and rejects the politics of differentiation and exclusion, key to the bordering and disciplining practices of social scientific knowledge and their beginnings in the codification of Enlightenment rationality used to justify slavery, colonialism and apartheid (Sehume, 2013). Following Nicolescu (2008), we understand transdisciplinary inquiry to be a form of meaning-making that breaks down the academic hierarchy of epistemological relationships, that is open to different forms of logic including that which is unknown (Augsburg, 2014), and that strives to eliminate epistemic injustice (Leblanc & Kinsella, 2016) or epistemicide (Santos, 2014). Further, our inquiry is informed by mad studies, critical disability studies, critical childhood studies, as well as critical race, transnational and post-colonial theories.

Mad studies transgresses the academy and its disciplines, with its beginnings being located outside the academy and within mad social movements (Gorman & LeFrançois, 2017; LeFrançois et al., 2013; Russo & Sweeney, 2016). A transdisciplinarity lens is consistent with Mad studies, in that it is not only inquiry based but also questions the logics and the very form in which that inquiry may take (Augsburg, 2014), whilst Mad studies may further rebelliously challenging enlightenment and eurocentric notions of rationality (Blaut 1993) which underpins and structures knowledge emanating from academic disciplines (Sehume 2013). That is, at times, Mad studies may be at odds with rationalism as the basis of knowledge production and as the basis of the formation of the academy. As Bruce (2017) notes, “(r)ationalist readers may fear that such a mad study...detrimentally reinforces myths of black savagery and

subrationality. Such investment in rationalism presumes that Reason is paramount for fully realized modern personhood” (p. 307). Like Bruce (2017), we reject such investments and presumptions, and our work instead interrogates the adultist, disableist, saneist, colonial and racist logics that often underpin the conventional academic imaginary. However, debasement of mad people’s knowledges does not just occur within the academy but also within the general public (Leblanc & Kinsella, 2016). Mad studies produces knowledge where the meaning-making of mad people is centred, but where other meanings emanating from other sources – academic or otherwise – also can be considered and deconstructed, incorporated or rejected.

So too do we argue that critical childhood studies should also be seen as not only transdisciplinary (Mitchell & Moore, 2015) and as a direct challenge on ‘Reason’ as key for children’s entrance into a fully realized personhood, given the ways adultist notions of children’s inherent irrationality, lack of reason, rule by passion, animism (Scott and Chrisjohn, forthcoming), and their supposed lack of contribution as productive members of (capitalist) society is conventionally inscribed on their bodies and minds in the West. According to Rollo (2018, 61) this denigration and subordination of children – misopedy – was in ancient Greece a “form of social and political hierarchy”. Here the child functions as the ontological other to reason and politics; children as a group for whom there was seen to be a moral obligation to assist but for whom political claims were seen as impossible. It was this that made possible the framing of violence as necessary and legitimated as being in children’s ‘best interests’. As these dominant notions of children and childhood not only exist but also shut down discussions of the social construction of childhood within most academic disciplines (child psychology, sociology, social work, medicine, psychiatry, etc), understanding (critical) childhood studies as a direct challenge to this denotes the desire to disrupt and break away from “the governing strictures found within academic modes of dominant knowledge production that both center and reproduce privileged and constraining notions of reason and productivity” (LeFrançois and Voronka forthcoming). For the most part, the academy neither acknowledges the existence of nor includes knowledge production emanating from children themselves, whether such contributions mirror dominant (adult) discourses or not, as the concept of “children’s contributions” is read through an adultist lens.

This is not to imply that the heterogeneous accounts of children and/or mad people are innocent; it is instead about radically calling into question what the academy counts as knowledge. For those contributions deemed childlike, whether they emanate from children, colonized and racialized peoples, psychiatrized or disabled people, transdisciplinarity coupled with Mad studies may provide a platform for ensuring epistemic justice through both the deconstruction of dominant, racist, sanist and ableist strictures but also by opening up a wider space for meaning-making beyond such adultist and Euro-western positivism. We argue that the use of child as metaphor operates as a form of epistemicide – what Santos (2014) terms, a “failure to recognise the different ways

of knowing by which people across the globe provide meaning to their existence” (p. 111), including different ways of knowing children. This operates as a form “cognitive injustice” often followed by attempts to destroy epistemological diversity with a single story that claims to be universal (Santos, 2014), including a single developmental story about children and those deemed childlike. These concepts are mostly used by Santos in reference to the violent eradication of Indigenous knowledge systems enabled through a colonial framing of irrationality. Yet cognitive injustice is also at work in the dismissal of alternative experiences of reality and alternative cognitions that are classified as ‘mad’ and intellectually disabled respectively, and hence, marked as incompetency and irrationality.

CHILD AS METAPHOR

We are interested in how the child functions as a metaphor for colonized, racialized, psychiatrized and disabled peoples. Literature on the iconography of childhood usually makes a distinction between metaphorical or symbolic and actual “flesh and blood” children (Burman, 2016; Morrigan, 2017). We also make this distinction here by exploring the performative nature of “child as metaphor” for those deemed childlike, and for actual children. However, in making this distinction we do not seek to reify a naturalized and essentialized developmental child. Sánchez-Eppler (2005) notes the entanglement of “childhood as a discourse and childhood as persons”, particularly in Euro-western affective deployments of childhood (p. xxiii). Furthermore, we recognize that given the “societally as well as intrapsychically invested character of childhood, arguably all appeals to ‘the child’ are metaphorical” (Burman, 2016, p. 2; Stainton Rogers & Stainton Rogers, 1992). Our point of departure, then, is the analytic task outlined by Burman (2016) to render “explicit the work done by the rhetorical appeal to childhood” (p. 2), and the task in this article is to trace the work done by the metaphorical appeal to childhood, specifically in relation to colonialism, madness and disability. While we are concerned with the effects of metaphor, we are cognizant that the conceptual basis on which “child as metaphor” functions is largely a Euro-western construction of childhood as an early rung on a linear developmental ladder and a stage marked by a lack of intellectual capacity, dependency, irrationality, animism, emotionality, – or “rule by passion”, and economic unproductivity (Blaut, 1993). This is an evolutionary and developmentalist narrative globalized by the West as a universal standard (Nieuwenhuys, 2009) and, as we shall see, a narrative that is deeply entangled with colonialism (Blaut, 1993) and epistemicide (Santos, 2014).

Child/Colony

Multiple colonial texts portray colonized people as children, for instance, as “sullen peoples, Half-devil and half-child” (Kipling, 1899). Nandy (2007) finds that there are a number of “metaphor[s] of childhood that justified

colonialism”, from James Mill’s conception of Britain as an adult guiding the development of India, to Cecil Rhodes’ assertion (in Southern Africa) that “the native is to be treated as a child and denied franchise” (p. 58). Here we see evidence that “colonial ideology required savages to be children, but it also feared that savages could be like children” [and indeed that children could be “savage”] (Nandy, 2007, p. 58) – a dual framing of children as at once innocent and dangerous.

Postcolonial theory has long recognized the centrality of “the metaphor of childhood [as] legitimizing colonialism and modernity” (Nandy, 2007, p. 69), where the “child-native” performs a discursive function “foundational to the ideology of imperialism” (Barker, 2011, p. 7). Thus, the “classic connection in the colonial library is, of course, that between the colonized other and the white child” (Eriksson Baaz, 2005, p. 52). Burman (2016) states that “longstanding colonial dynamics link children with the colonised”, where child/colony comes to stand as other/ed to the male western industrialized liberal self (p. 10). The construction of colonized peoples as developmentally akin to white children was central to colonialism, yet a key difference here is that, unlike ableist imaginings of the ideal white child, colonized peoples are constructed as permanently childlike and unable to develop further (Barker, 2011) and as stuck within a state of savagery and ‘mental infancy’ (Scott and Chrisjohn forthcoming). This diverges from Rollo’s compelling argument that the child provides the internal structure and logic of the colonial conception of the “Indian” (2018, 63) meaning the ‘child’ is a homology, not a metaphor, for settler colonialism. Thus, Rollo concludes it is ‘not contingent’ but ‘necessary that justificatory frameworks of European empire and colonialism depict Indigenous peoples as children’ (2018, 60). Despite our focus in this paper on metaphor, we acknowledge the need for further discussion as to differences between homology and metaphor, and about what each framing may make visible and foreclose. The metaphoric of child/colony is contingent on patriarchal domination, where the familial ruling of the husband/father is naturalized as a model for colonial domination (McClintock, 1995). It is also contingent on what Melber (1989, as cited in Heinz, 1998) describes as the “colonial view” – a process that reconfigures inequities and difference as modes of evolutionary hierarchy and that represents western white adult males as the highest stage of evolution against which colonized peoples are constructed as inferior. This is evident in some psychoanalytical framings that posit, “the Negro is just a child” (Fanon, 1967, p. 27).

Nandy has commented on the seeming “subsidiary homology between childhood and the state of being colonized” (1983, p. 11), and the “implied homology between the adult-child relationship and the West-East encounter under colonialism” (2007, p. 70). Similarly, it is this “colonial conflation of the colonized with the figure of the child” that, for Nieuwenhuys (2009, p. 149), needs to be interrogated to enable a deconstruction of “childhood as a metaphor for institutionalized violence visited upon humanity in the name of progress”. In this way, the trope of the “childlike” functions to reframe violence, to construct it as necessary, legitimate, and even benevolent.

Nelson Mandela (1994) describes the racialization of the South African prison system, in which black African prisoners (unlike white prisoners) were forced to wear shorts because “African men are deemed ‘boys’ by the authorities” (p. 396). This racist infantilization of Black people persists in both colony and metropole, with black men routinely referred to as “boy” (Burman, 1994). In this way, notes Levander (2006), “the child works to establish race as a central shaping element of ostensibly raceless Western ideals...[Thus] excavating the child’s importance to the development of white supremacy is urgently needed” (pp. 2–3). Goerg (2012) argues that colonial logics include an entrenched openly racist paternalism where Africans were infantilized as “child-people” and hence treated like “big children” or as being and living in a “state of childhood”. This comparison of colonized people to children was evident in French Africa, the Belgian Congo, as well as the British and Portuguese colonies (Goerg, 2012), while Hegel (1975) said that “Africa proper” was the “land of childhood” (p. 91). Yet, the metaphor of childhood not only impacts on those constructed as childlike but also has had, and continues to have, materially violent effects for colonized and racialized children.

Much in the same way that Piaget (1953, 1967) falsely assessed children as being incapable of abstract thinking – an adultist and markedly masculine Euro-western interpretation of children’s abilities (Burman, 1997; Macnamara, 1976; Prout & James, 1997) – so too did white supremacy in the form of colonization lead to the assessment of Africans as having limited ability to engage in abstraction. Colonial authorities saw themselves as protectors of the colonized; people who, like children, were impressionable and immature, unable to exercise critical judgement, had “weak intellects”, and were, therefore, in need of guidance. As Goerg (2012) explains, this was exemplified in 1949 when Sudanese officials requested censorship of French and other foreign films that were seen as having a bad influence on their children and young people. This call was echoed by Senegalese officials and others within French West Africa,⁴ looking to bolster existing local censorship laws through a stronger decree and the application of consistent compliance. This call for supervision from the West Africans themselves fed into colonial logics of the incompetence of colonial subjects, and the mission to protect peoples who were understood to have, by nature, less intellectual capacity than their white colonizers. As West African adults attempted to shield their young people from what many considered immoral and violent influences of foreign cinema, and perhaps in an effort to resist assimilation of their young people, French authorities readily supported this call, in order to shield themselves from the potential of any radicalization provoked by the subversive content of some of these films. In this example, we see an intertwining of, and a direct connection between, West African parent-child relations and colonizer-colonized relations, and the protectionism that mutually constituted both, with notions of morality, public order and obedience providing the motivation to enforce such a protectionist stance.

At the same time, many colonial administrators romanticized and exoticized those they were colonizing, and felt compelled through racist stereotyping to

preserve their (white) image of an unspoiled (black) Africa (Goerg, 2012), much in the same way that the (heterosexual) Western imaginary calls for the preservation of “childhood innocence” (Greensmith & Sheppard, 2017; Morrigan, 2017; Scraton, 1997). However, rather than merely and ostensibly protecting African children and preserving “Black Africa”, the colonizers were most concerned with self-protection and maintaining their economic interests within Africa. Indeed, as Goerg (2012) notes, the targeting of West African children and young people for this exercise of control and censorship ensued because they were seen as not only the most vulnerable but also as the most dangerous to colonial power, given that it is the young people who were understood to be more likely to revolt against the violence of colonization and foreign domination. By falsely claiming the right to choose for others, established in the name of moral and intellectual superiority, and often inscribed legally through the “rule of law” imposed in many colonies, political, economic and cultural domination through white supremacy persisted (Goerg, 2012; McBride, 2016). In this example, colonized children were perceived by both colonized and colonizing adults (albeit for very different reasons) as in need of saving from foreign cultural influences, in an attempt to perhaps preserve their “childhood innocence” on the one hand, to preserve African cultures or the “culture of Black Africa” on the other hand, and with a third underhanded agenda on the part of the colonizers to preserve colonial power and authority. West African children themselves appear to have been left silenced on the question of the censorship of foreign cinema by both the racist infantilization of Africa as a whole, and by the adultism that was used to further debase them as West African young people.

According to Valentin and Meinert (2009), the “civilization of the children of the ‘savages’ in the colonial world was an inherent part of the colonization mission in Africa, the Americas and Oceania in the 19th century” (p. 23). For example, in the settler-colonial context of Canada, huge numbers of Indigenous children were forcibly taken from their families and communities and incarcerated in residential schools, which explicitly aimed to “kill the Indian in the child” (Razack, 2015). Here another powerful use of metaphor is evident in the construction of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples as an inevitably “dying race”, incapable of self-governance, enabling residential schools to be justified as “saving” Indigenous children from “the death of their race” (Chapman, Carey, & Ben-Moshe, 2014, 7; Kelm, 2005). This logic has many similarities to the child apprehension policies within racist/colonialist child protection systems that led to the “sixties scoop” (Chrisjohn & Young, 1997; Blackstock, 2009; LeFrançois, 2013) and, in what is now Australia and Torres Strait, constituted the “stolen generation” (Read, 1981). Continuing since the “sixties scoop”, Indigenous children remain vastly over-represented within the Canadian child protection system (Chrisjohn & Young, 1997; LeFrançois, 2013). Here, a difference becomes apparent in the colonial violence enacted on colonized adults who are constructed as childlike and on actual colonized children, constructed as in need of saving both from their Indigenous parents and kin, as well as from their indigeneity.

A key effect of constructing colonized peoples through the metaphor of childhood is to justify governance of the “natives” who are constituted as “immature, childlike beings that need to be subjected to European discipline and control” (Giesebrecht, 1898, as cited in Heinz, 1998, p. 427). In this way, non-Europeans were constructed as:

ripe for government, passive, child-like...needing leadership and guidance, described always in terms of lack-no initiative, no intellectual powers...; or on the other hand, they are outside society, dangerous, treacherous, emotional, inconstant, wild, threatening, fickle, sexually aberrant, irrational, near animal, lascivious, disruptive, evil, unpredictable. (Carr 1985, p. 50)

Moreover, assimilated colonized people in Africa – those who behaved less “native” and acquired the mannerisms of their colonizers – were seen as less childlike, and those who were judged to be, or physically appeared to be, “more black” were seen as more childlike (Georg, 2012). In addition, colonized subjects who outwardly demonstrated their intelligence in ways that could not be denied by the white lens were marked as an aberration or *hors-norme*, perhaps much in the same way that intellectually “gifted children” are seen as extraordinary, as not actually “like other children” or as not really “childlike”. The American television series *The Blacklist*⁵ provides a contemporary example of these enduring colonial logics. Dembe, a black Sudanese body-guard working for the white criminal Reddington, is portrayed as having been saved by Reddington – and hence, saved by white benevolence – at the age of 14, after years of enslavement within an African human trafficking ring. Characterized with several stereotypes consistent with racializing logics, such as having superior physical prowess and readily engaging in violence, Dembe is also portrayed as intelligent, thanks in part to the education that Reddington provided him. In the episode entitled *The Endling*, Reddington plays scrabble with the now 40-something Dembe, and in response to Dembe accumulating points, Reddington states: “Honestly. You're like one of those extraordinary children who knows how to spell onomatopoeia”. Here, we witness the invoking of both the racist colonial logics of “black man as child” and white Euro-western notions of what constitutes “normal” childhood intelligence, together forming both the denigration and exultation of Dembe as intelligent – as *hors-norme* and remarkable both for a black man and for a child.

Child/Mad – Child/“Crip”

In the Eurocentric imaginary, the “colonized were discursively linked and compared not only with women and children, but also mental patients, criminals, and the working-class in Europe”, where “‘primitives’ were equated with children and the mentally disturbed” (Eriksson Baaz, 2005, pp. 53–54). Nandy (2007) reads this fear of childishness as a symptom of psychological insecurity in cultures that use “the metaphor of childhood to define mental illness, primitivism, abnormality, [and] underdevelopment” (p. 65). Disability and madness figure in three key ways within the colonial apparatus: the representation of

colonized peoples as child-like and thus impaired and irrational; ableist discourse as central to domination; and the idea that the colony can itself disable and drive white people mad. We discuss madness and disability, and specifically intellectual disability, alongside each other because the distinction between them in much contemporary discourse doesn't hold historically and is also in part a construction of "western" medicalized and psy discourse.

It is not unusual for adults who have been psychiatrized to indicate that they are treated as being childlike by those who work within psychiatric services. This infantilization is evident in Malacrida's (2015) account of Canadian institutions for intellectually disabled people where "inmates regardless of their age were treated as though they were children", not permitted freedom of movement or choice, and were seen as incapable (pp. 90–91). In many ways, being deemed childlike, using denigrating Euro-western understandings of what constitutes a child, is a classic example of the form of sanism (Poole et al., 2012; Meerai, Abdillahi, & Poole, 2016) that is deeply rooted within psychiatry and within society generally. The comparison of mad people to children is embedded within historical and current day psychiatric practices. For example, the evolutionary psychiatry dominant in England from 1870 to the First World War posited that insanity constituted an evolutionary reversal – a movement backwards on the assumed evolutionary developmental scale (Showalter, 1985). Sicherman (1977) points out the similarities between infancy and the "enforced dependency" of the rest cure, developed as treatment for white upper-class women diagnosed with neurasthenia with treatment constituting "childlike obedience" to a male physician. The current day Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-V) continues to list "childishness" and "childlike behaviour" in adults as a symptom of mental illness. What constitutes childlike behaviour in the DSM includes such things as "silliness", being "disorganized", "clinging" to others, "unpredictable agitation", "self-effacing and docile behaviour" and "gregarious flamboyance with active demands for attention", which can be found as symptoms within the categories of dependent personality disorder, histrionic personality disorder, as well as schizophrenia spectrum and other related psychotic disorders.

Not only do we find here stereotypes of the essentialized child and associated behaviours, but we find also the essentializing of narrowly defined adult behaviours, with those daring to behave differently being deemed mad. The implications of these diagnostic criteria for colonized people are exemplified by Chrisjohn and McKay's (2017) demonstration that despite centuries of the racist infantilization of Indigenous peoples (motivated by capitalist greed and enacted through white supremacy), by the 1990s Indigenous peoples in Canada began to be labelled as dependent and, thus, psychopathologized with dependent personality disorder. Chrisjohn and McKay (2017) explain:

[I]t was economic conservatives doing the talking, and they weren't using dependency in any recognizable economic form (you know, as in seizing the assets and means of production of a whole people and determining the shape and direction of their fundamental economic activities)...(Instead) (they) applied

it to us.... We were suffering from “dependency disorder”; or even, from the lack of an “entrepreneurial instinct”, such as they themselves possessed. This defect accounted for our absence in the mainstream Canadian political economy, our economic backwardness, our relative joblessness, why we got fired a lot, and why we were always late for appointments. The cure...consisted of cancelling all treaties, ending any social programs and subsidies, taxing Indian reserve lands (and seizing the lands when taxes weren’t paid on time).... The self-serving circularity of the whole conception bypassed even a hint of science...: we obviously had the “inner, hidden trait” of dependency. (pp. 167–168)

Here we see the ways in which the infantilization of generation after generation of Indigenous peoples is then later characterized by psychiatry as a mental illness within those who have been infantilized, in the form of dependency. The source of the violence of colonization, dispossession and genocide is obscured with the psychiatric gaze turning directly onto the colonized rather than the colonizers. Psychiatrization is thus deployed in order to divert attention away from the violence exerted upon colonized peoples (Chrisjohn & McKay, 2017).

The political utility of diagnoses of mental illness is further exemplified in Samuel Cartwright’s coining of drapetomania – the so-called mental disease that was said to compel enslaved Africans in the Americas to run away. This too was entangled with the metaphors of childhood, when Cartwright wrote that “like children, they [slaves] are constrained by unalterable physiological laws, to love those in authority over them. Hence, from a law of his nature, the negro can no more help loving a kind master, than the child can help loving her that gives it suck” (Cartwright, 1851, as cited in Gould, 1981, p. 71). As treatment, Cartwright prescribed continued slavery and the handling of slaves like children, in order to “cure” them from running away.

Throughout colonial texts colonized peoples were represented as limited in intellectual capacity, as behaviourally disordered, as physically degenerate (Barker, 2011) and as animistic (Scott & Chrisjohn, 2018), depicting “the colony not only [as] a child but an oafish child” (Prentice, 1997, p. 71). Scott and Chrisjohn (2018) note that racism (and disablism) fuels the assertion, first declared by cultural anthropologist E. B. Taylor in 1871, that “primitives” like children are inherently animistic: they believe (wrongly) that everything is alive. This assertion designates colonized people, intellectually disabled people, and/or children as having a general lack of attachment to reality, as “backward” and crippled as “simpletons”; and as stuck within a state of savagery and “mental infancy” (Scott & Chrisjohn, 2018). Imperial children are understood to eventually grow out of it, whereas Indigenous peoples are locked into permanent animism. Chrisjohn elaborates:

When Indians say something like they believe in honouring the spirits in the environment around them, they are childish, unsophisticated animist philosophers who are just wrong and stuck in...(undeveloped) “emotional” or

“cultural” faculties.... (It) is racism and it is maybe the biggest part of infantilizing Native people.⁶

This understanding of animism – as a lack of attachment to reality – is also used as justification to psychiatrize and drug people who hear voices and/or who see, feel or communicate with spiritual entities in their midst.

The trope of “disabled child-nation” has its “antecedents in a long colonial history in which childhood and disability contributed substantially to the conceptual apparatus of empire” (Barker, 2011, p. 7). The construction of colonized peoples as “permanently childlike” worked to frame European imperialists as “permanent guardians” (McEwan, 2008, p. 136), masking colonial “ambitions to achieve global sovereignty under the rhetorical banner of a duty of care” (Barker, 2011, p. 7). Barker (2011) shows how this permanent state of childhood is suggestive of disability in a way that mediates the racialized differences between colonized child and colonizer adult. Ableist discourse was central to bolstering colonial and racial domination, where the “subtext of disability” suspended “normal” developmental logic, with colonized peoples seen as unable to fully develop, “producing a model of arrested development that stabilized and consolidated the conditions required for ongoing colonial dependency” (Barker, 2011, p. 8). In this way, “the child, figured as a developing body, has been used in the making of global hierarchies and knowledge” (Castañeda, 2002, p. 13). The expansion of imperialism throughout the mid-19th century fed into and occurred alongside the establishment of developmental norms and the ‘science’ of eugenics, where cultural differences were equated with biological deficiency. Here normalcy became a benchmark by which children, colonized peoples and disabled people were judged, meaning that conceptions of normal and pathological behaviour and psychology were made possible through the colonial binary of the “normal” West and the pathological “Rest” (Eriksson Baaz, 2005). For Meekosha (2011) this means that:

The idea of racial and gender supremacy of the Northern Hemisphere is very much tied to the production of disability in the global South and racialised evolutionary hierarchies constructed the colonised as backward, infantile and animal-like. We cannot meaningfully separate the racialised subaltern from the disabled subaltern in the process of colonisation. (pp. 672–673)

Alongside seeing colonized people as childlike, the colonies themselves were seen as capable of disabling white children, and preventing them from “growing up”. It was assumed in Britain that if the colonizer’s children were not sent back to Europe from the colonies during the important years of childhood, they would become “stunted in growth and debilitated in mind” (Thomson, 1843, p. 116). In tracing the above history, it becomes possible to see how “childhood and disability have provided interlinked markers of the helplessness, dependency and subnormality of the ‘Third World’ countries”, continuing today within the contemporary development regime, humanitarian rhetoric and developmental psychology (Barker, 2011, p. 7).

Child/Development

Above we traced the co-constitutive histories of imperialism, developmentalism and normalcy, and the centrality of child-colony-mad-“crip” to this history. Throughout this we see examples of how “savages were made developmentally equivalent to children” (Castañeda, 2002, p. 26), and implications of this in terms of paternalistic colonial dominance. Hence Nandy’s (2007) claim that “much of the pull of the ideology of colonialism and much of the power of the idea of modernity can be traced to the evolutionary implications of the concept of the child in the Western worldview” (p. 57). Developmental logic is key to white supremacist narratives of progress linked to the nation state, and used to justify colonialism as a civilizational and economic project (Klein & Mills, 2017). Here the history of the development of Western countries is imagined as a linear trajectory of progress that all countries must pass through in order to “develop”. Cultural recapitulation assumes that in their lifetime, an individual body will reproduce the same developmental stages as the development of the species body. This is central to the colonial idea that:

the adults of inferior groups must be like the children of superior groups, for the child represents a primitive adult ancestor. If adult Blacks and women are like white male children, then they are living representations of an ancestral stage in the evolution of white males. An anatomical theory for ranking races – based on entire bodies – had been found. (Gould, 1981, as cited in McIntock, 1995, p. 51)

This is summarized by the social Darwinist, Herbert Spencer (1895), who said that “the intellectual traits of the uncivilized ...are traits recurring in the children of the civilized” (pp. 89–90). Gould (1981) shows the influence of recapitulation in Freudian and Jungian theories, and within the school curriculum in the United States, where a number of school boards “prescribed the Song of Hiawatha in early grades, reasoning that [white] children, passing through the savage stage of their ancestral past, would identify with it” (p. 114). The Song of Hiawatha, authored by a white man and telling the story of the noble savage and the vanishing Indian, was also taught in residential and industrial schools for Indigenous children throughout the USA and Canada as an attempt to socialize Indigenous peoples into inferior roles (White, 2016). Recapitulation was a central argument in justifying colonial expansion into what was known as “tropical Africa”, where Kidd (1898) wrote that African peoples “represent the same stage in the history of the development of the race that the child does in the history of the development of the individual. The tropics will not, therefore, be developed by the natives themselves” (p. 51).

Recapitulation is evident also in Freudian constructions of “the aboriginal [as] Europe’s childhood and her children” (Emberley, 2007, p. 97). Castañeda (2002) takes this further, showing how “the now of the primitive was not only placed in the time of childhood, but also in the child-body: the child was seen as a bodily theater where human history could be observed to unfold in the compressed timespan of individual development” (p. 13). This posits a shared

global developmental telos of multiple forms of development, from the child to the economy, that positions the “West” as more advanced, with global South countries constructed as needing to catch up and “grow up”.

This links closely to the growth of developmental psychology and developmental stage theories that portray child development as a series of distinct naturalized stages, akin to evolution, through which a child passes on a linear pathway. These theories have come to be applied and used to understand diverse areas of life, from the growth of a child to the construction of nation states. Children who don’t meet prescribed levels of progress are said to be developmentally delayed (Valdivia, 1999), while whole populations of the global South have been and continue to be framed as underdeveloped or developing societies, and in need of “western” expertise. Interestingly, those deemed mad and/or “crip” are often framed as being wrongly developed.

DISCUSSION: INFANTILISATION OF THE GLOBAL SOUTH AND THE FOURTH WORLD

The centrality of parent-child metaphors to 19th-century colonialist imperialism is well documented in postcolonial scholarship (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 1989), where the idea of the child functions to make thinkable the colonial apparatus of “improvement” used to justify subjugation (Wallace, 1994). Linked to the construction of children as the “property” of their parents, “parental care and education have often been a cover for the widespread social and psychological exploitation of children” (Nandy, 2007, p. 60). Like colonial interventions into child saving, child-focused development initiatives often justify the child as site of intervention through appeal to a developmental narrative of early intervention, constructing children as “objects for adult and institutional intervention” (Valentin & Meinert, 2009, p. 23). The framing of whole populations as childlike, and thus as unable to take care of their own children, extends into current day neo-colonial practices of child saving within multiple development projects in the global South. Valentin and Meinert (2009) trace how the idea of “civilizing through children” (p. 29) continues in the global South through child-focused development projects that are heavily reliant on foreign aid. Through global inequalities in power, the global North acts *in loco parentis* of the global South, meaning the “‘adult North’ can bestow rights and duties on the ‘young South’, and if the South fails to comply with these, can implement sanctions” (Valentin & Meinert, 2009, p. 24). Indeed, the legal doctrine of *in loco parentis* implies not only the parentification of one individual or group and the infantilization of another, but that there is a responsibility on the part of the former to maintain that status over the latter and to make decisions in their best interest, including exerting discipline. This sense of responsibility, and the professed benevolence that ostensibly informs it, obscures the oppressive and coercive relations that it enforces.

Here populations of the global South are not only being talked about as children, they are being acted upon as if they were children, with global North

countries working *in loco parentis* for children of the global South, further serving to infantilize populations of the global South, especially those in receipt of aid (Burman, 1994). This extends to the treatment of Indigenous peoples in current settler-colonies in the Fourth World, and of racialized peoples globally. The doctrine of *in loco parentis* is understood to allow for parental substitutions for children or “incapacitated” adults when their “natural” parents are unable to perform their parental duties. However, in the colonial context this doctrine was used by some settler nation states to make decisions for the colonized groups they deemed childlike and in need of parental guidance, often resulting in economic exploitation and the furthering of the capitalist colonial agenda. In the context of the treatment of Indigenous peoples in Canada, Chrisjohn and McKay (2017) poignantly explain that:

The Indian Act, for example, on the assumption that we were, essentially, children in grown-up bodies, placed the government in position of control over our economic resources. Search the histories of what royalty deals Canada, in loco parentis, made in our name with oil companies, and ask if you want your parents to behave like this. (p. 167, emphasis in original)

Chrisjohn and McKay (2017) further note that still to this day Indigenous peoples in Canada experience “racism, marginalization, condescension, infantilisation, disparagement, and (unidirectional) cultural ignorance” (p. 97). As we have seen, the ways in which the infantilization of Indigenous peoples and the enacting of the doctrine of *in loco parentis* – which in its very construction forcibly fabricates dependent parent-child relations – is then characterized as mental illness in the form of dependency within those who have been infantilized.

Both *in loco parentis* and the related legal doctrine of *in parens patriae* may be used to create a parental substitute for either a child or an “incapacitated” adult and, as we have seen, in relation to colonized peoples as a group. Both historically and in current times, these doctrines have been used to allow the state, or a substitute adult or institution, to act, for example, as the “general guardian of all infants, lunatics, idiots” (Blackstone, 1769) or, for example, in the “role of a parent to a child who is under 18 or 18 years of age or older and incapable of self-care because of a mental or physical disability” (United States Department of Labor, 1993) in many Western countries. In order to further ensure that adults, who have been deemed mad or “crip” and are seen as incompetent, are unable to make decisions for themselves within health institutions, for example, many countries have also adopted specific legislation around medically assessing capacity, such as the Mental Capacity Act in Canada. We see how the infantilization of colonized, mad and “crip” subjects has over time become enshrined within Western legal doctrines and legislation, all the while reproducing the notion that children themselves are naturally incompetent. This locates racialized/colonized children, psychiatrized children and intellectually disabled children in a particularly dehumanizing space within these white supremacist hierarchical arrangements.

Likewise, in child protection cases, where parents are deemed unable to protect their children from neglect and/or abuse, *in parens patriae* may be invoked to give the state the right to parent, and engage in the associated responsibilities in relation to protecting actual children. As we saw above, with the over-representation of Indigenous children living in Fourth World contexts within neo-colonial child protection systems, as well as the over-representation of black and racialized children within these same racist child protection systems (Clarke, 2011; Pon, Gosine, & Phillips, 2011), the invoking of the legal doctrine of *in parens patriae* is rampantly used against both Indigenous families and black settler families in Canada. If colonial administrators served in *loco parentis* for the adults they were colonizing – as a surreptitious means to engage in economic exploitation at the same time as promoting degradation through infantilization and scientific racism – and then the state served *in parens patriae* for many of the children of those infantilized adults, the implications become stark for generations of actual children whose parents have been deemed as in need of parenting themselves.

Further to Burman's (1994) analysis of infantilization within global North-South relations, we also see, then, how the adult-Western world "benevolently" offers help and knowledge to the infantilized Fourth World, repeating the colonial paternalism inherent to Indigenous-colonizer relations in what is now Canada, formalized in the Gradual Civilization Act (1857) and the British North American Act (1876), amongst other early legislation, which was then consolidated within the Indian Act (1876). This Western "benevolence" was then further cemented more than a century later within children's rights discourse through the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). Pupavac (2001) writes that the export of western child developmental models "in the absence of the universalisation of the conditions upon which the model[s] arose" (p. 103), serves to legitimize western governmental and non-governmental actors behaving in children's "best interests" and on their behalf in the global South, as well as, we argue, within Fourth World communities. This also echoes Nieuwenhuys' (2009) assertion that development agencies (and, we add, child protection agencies) push the global South (and, we add, Indigenous communities located elsewhere) for "the emulation of a kind of childhood that the West has set as a global standard" (p. 148). Here we see a dual epistemic injustice, whereby those deemed childlike and actual children are seen as seen as cognitively subpar, while at the same time other/ed ways of knowing children are actively denigrated by western models – destroying epistemological diversity in relation to children. This results in current day advancing of the longstanding and now deep-rooted (white) Western agenda of assimilation and genocide within both former colonies and current white settler colonial nation states.

And yet, the kind of childhood that the West has set as the gold standard is one where children are denigrated, which is in striking opposition to the ways in which children are valued within many Indigenous cultures within the Fourth World. For example, the lack of a common understanding of what constitutes childhood led to misunderstandings amongst the some of the first

Christian missionaries in Canada. With the goal of engaging in the assimilation of the Wendot peoples, referred to as the Hurons, through Frenchification (Jaenen, 1968), Gabriel Sagard, a Recollects missionary, documented his attempts. In his writings from 1623 and 1624 when he lived amongst the Hurons, Sagard notes that the Hurons did not hold a high opinion of French settlers but “in comparison with whom they considered their children wiser and more intelligent, so good a conceit have they of themselves and so little esteem for others” (Wrong, 1939, p. 138). Betrayed in this description is Sagard’s projection of the European’s lack of esteem for children onto the words of the Hurons.

As Oneida academic and critical psychologist Roland Chrisjohn explains, the concept of “children” within the Iroquois Federation (of which the Hurons form part) is not the insult that it is from the Euro-western perspective. “Rather, our word (for children) merely implies someone who hasn’t been around as long as some other people: ‘Someone who is inexperienced with regard to certain things’ is what was being implied, not ‘someone not to be taken seriously because they have underdeveloped mental skills...’.”⁷ As such, the Hurons may have been communicating to Sagard that the French settlers had less experience living in the bush than the Huron children, which no one would have likely taken issue with at the time. However, so ingrained within the Euro-western mindset that children are in many ways subhuman, the mention of a comparison between the French settlers and children directly connects to the degrading discourse of the time that infantilized all Indigenous people as being childlike and in need of guidance from the colonizers. It appears that the Hurons’ words were misunderstood and mischaracterized by Sagard’s Euro-western lens. This, however, is not to imply that all non-Western cultural understandings are somehow innocent or not degrading of children, or disabled people (Kolářová, 2016).

Throughout this article we have demonstrated the ways in which the concept of child as metaphor functions to denigrate colonized, psychiatrized, and/or intellectually disabled people, as it reproduces these groups and actual children as being irrational, incompetent, unintelligent, animistic, in need of (parental) guidance, (economically) unproductive, and epistemically void. The use of this metaphor, as we have seen, performs important political agendas inherent to the colonial project, racism, epistemicide, the medicalization of madness and disability, and the subjugating notions of development that underpins each. All this is accomplished by focusing on and imposing a pejorative Western understanding of childhood that may be neither consistent with Indigenous/non-Western understandings of what constitutes childhood nor consistent with actual children’s abilities. Regardless, the material and discursive impact on children has been demonstrated to include multisystemic oppression including the interplay of adultism, colonialism, racism, sanism and dis/ableism, which mutually constitute and complicate each other. This interplay takes place at the level of adult-child relations and the psy governance of childhood itself, within global North-South-Fourth World relations and the racist infantilization-parentification constructed within them, as well as within sane-mad relations and

ableist-“crip” relations, including the psy and medical domination that governs both.

A transdisciplinary approach has enabled the deconstruction of the co-constitutive metaphors of mad, “crip”, child, and colony/savage. This has made visible how the psy-disciplines have been constituted through colonialism and so are always already a colonial practice, and how the psy-disciplines and colonialism (even when seemingly operating apart from one another) use similar tools, which are built upon the interlacing metaphors of madness, disability, savagery, and childhood. We suggest that a transdisciplinary (critical) childhood studies must continue to unsettle and reconcile its current and historical attachment both to development (in its various disciplinary and applied forms) and to whiteness by embracing and maturing into a symbiotic interdependence with critical race, transnational and postcolonial theories (Sehume, 2013). So too do we suggest the need for a greater influence and integration of deconstructed notions of adultism, and the unsettling of adultist forms of knowledge production, within and beyond the academy, including within critical race-informed interventions, cultural studies and transdisciplinary praxis.

NOTES

1. For a discussion of the importance of deconstructing dis/ableism and the distinction between disablism and ableism, see Liddiard (2018).
2. We use the terms “mad” and “crip” as reclaimed signifiers and as concepts that unsettle, contest and challenge normalcy and biological reductionism (LeFrançois, Menzies, & Reaume, 2013; Liddiard, 2018; McRuer, 2006). The terms “psychiatrized”, “mad” and “madness” are used interchangeably in this article, as are the terms “crip”, “disabled”, “intellectually disabled” and “disability”.
3. These are Euro-western understandings of childhood, which not only negate the realities of children’s abilities and experiences in the West, but further make invisible the lives of children in the global South, including those who are materially affected by the capitalist exploitation that characterizes child labour practices.
4. French West Africa consisted of Mauritania, Senegal, French Sudan (Mali), French Guinea, the Ivory Coast, Burkino Faso, Benin, Niger, Togo and parts of Nigeria.
5. Season 5, episode 4, 2017, *The Endling*. See: https://www.springfieldspringfield.co.uk/view_episode_scripts.php?tv-show=the-blacklist&episode=s05e04
6. Personal communication, November 15, 2017.
7. Personal communication, August 14, 2017.

ORCID

CHINA MILLS  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-3965-2877>

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