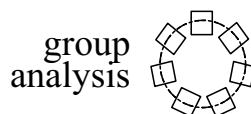Article

Silencing, power and racial trauma in groups

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As a black woman I have found myself in various settings where as the only person of colour, speaking of my experience of the world has led to hostility, occasionally to violence, and, more frequently to disorientating silencing attempts. As a therapist working specifically with people of colour, clients have approached me, ashamed, often terrified, describing these familiar walls of impenetrable defensiveness bolstered by gagging manoeuvers their voices meet, when attempting to articulate racism within all social structures. This collective experience of silencing, as illustrated by Eddo-Lodge's words, is of critical significance for group processes and social dynamics and thus group work practice. This article aims to illuminate the functions of racism related silencing in groups and to offer some formulations of the same in the hope of supporting the profession to make space for those whose voices and perspectives it is still by and large to integrate. This article will present my reflections on silence, silencing and power in groups, primarily from a black perspective. It will mainly engage with formulations and theoretical explorations of racialized dynamics personally experienced, witnessed or reported to me. It will argue that silencing is a mechanism that protects the white psychic equilibrium and the racially stratified social order. It will be further posited that acts of racial silencing as remnants of intergenerational trauma, reproduce and are borne out of power relations and, that they may be enacted within group analytic therapy.

Key words: racism, race, power, social unconscious, diversity, society, silence, racial trauma

Introduction

> I'm no longer engaging with white people on the topic of race. Not all white people, just the clear majority who refuse to accept the existence of structural racism and its symptoms. I can no longer engage with the gulf of an emotional disconnect that white people display when a person of colour articulates their experience. You can see their eyes shut down and harden. It is as if treacle is poured into their ears, blocking up their ear canals. It's like they can no longer hear us . . . your voice is snatched away. (Eddo-Lodge, 2017: preface)

I have found myself in various settings where, as the only person of colour, speaking of my experience of the world has led to hostility, occasionally to violence, and more frequently to disorientating silencing attempts. As a therapist working specifically with people of colour, clients have approached me, ashamed, often terrified, describing these familiar walls of impenetrable defensiveness bolstered by gagging manoeuvres that their voices meet when attempting to articulate racism within all social structures. This collective experience of silencing, as illustrated by Eddo-Lodge's words, is of critical significance for group processes and social dynamics and thus, group work practice. This article aims to illuminate the functions of racism-related silencing in groups and to offer some formulations of the dynamic in the hope of supporting the profession to make space for those whose voices and perspectives have yet, by and large, to be integrated. This article will thus present my reflections on silence, silencing and power in groups, primarily from a black perspective. It will engage mainly with formulations and theoretical explorations of racialized dynamics personally experienced, witnessed or reported to me. It will argue that silencing is a group-specific factor and a defence mechanism that protects the white psychic equilibrium and the racially stratified social order. I will further posit that acts of racial silencing, as remnants of intergenerational trauma, reproduce and are borne out of power relations and that they may be enacted within group analytic therapy.

Silence, silencing and censorship

'When we speak, we are afraid

Our words will not be heard

Nor welcomed but when we are silent,

We are still afraid.

So it is better to speak

Remembering

We were never meant to survive. (Audre Lorde, 1978)

Group analysis has been seeking to make itself accessible and welcoming to marginalized groups including to people of colour, who remain largely unrepresented within the discipline. However, it is not certain whether this conscious project is matched by more unconscious motivations, and whether the current level of understanding of race-based power and racism would support it (Stobo, 2005). As a new entrant to the discipline and at my current stage of early training, I have felt like a wanted child and experienced a sense of cautious optimism. I have also seen hopeful expectations related to the changes that more 'diversity' may bring. Perhaps there is also a degree of naivety or positive transference, which can come with the start of new journeys.

I am writing this article, however, with a sense of anxiety. As an author, this is rather noteworthy. I am worried about how this article will be received: specifically, whether my writing may increase the very risk of marginalization and exclusion I am naming and attempting to conceptualize here. I am wondering whether my words constitute an unconscious invitation to the same. I am nevertheless certain that the strong impulse to self-censor I am resisting is also, at least in part, an introjection of silencing. That it speaks to the various ways marginalized voices learn to keep quiet as a survival strategy or because of fear. Or shame. Even though, all the elaborated ways they/we rationalize the need to uphold silences rarely serve their/our own interests at group level. The words of Audre Lorde resonate. Were we indeed meant to survive?

My hope is that the article will be read as an act of trust, in that I am entrusting the profession I intend to join with the capacity to bear and contain the challenging theories and experiences that are to follow; experiences acquired and reflected upon over many years. Thus, to treat the present as an invitation to think but also to act. To both speak and to be silent. To turn in but also to turn out. Indeed, if the central tenet of group analysis is that 'external' realities, including sociopolitical and historical contexts, exert powerful influences within and between individuals and within and between groups, then the current political climate in the UK would have triggered some deep reflections. The rise in overt racist hatred, xenophobia and hostility towards

all groups deemed 'Other', often supported by misconceived griev-ances related to freedom of speech, are bound to find their way into group analysis, if only in residual form.

Within the psychotherapy professions, difficulties in attracting and retaining trainees from 'black and minority ethnic backgrounds' or trainees of colour are longstanding. This lack of representation is multi-factorial. It rests on our history of setting white 'western' val-ues and norms as universal (Fernando, 2018), on the embeddedness of analytic epistemes within the colonial project (Gordon, 1993; Frosh, 2013) and on an enduring Eurocentric lens, which is antitheti-cal to recognizing the centrality of oppression and racial trauma in the functioning of societies, groups and individuals, including in their social unconscious (Fanon, 1970). This absence is also related to how authentically trainees of colour may feel able to be with their/our lived experience and related fears, paralleling the anxieties shared earlier. Can they/we and by extension their/our new groups survive their/our words—or indeed worlds—and the naming of their/our realities?

The ongoing hesitation—if not resistance—to see racism and racial trauma as operative within relational configurations (Blackwell, 2018) may consequently be conceptualized as a form of resistance to change and to inclusion. Unsurprisingly perhaps, despite debates and concerns about representation, the slow pace of change is undeniable. I was the only black student in the country studying for the diploma in group analysis when I completed it. However, although bodies do matter, increasing inclusivity within group analysis, and more broadly within psychotherapy, is not merely a matter of body count. Space must be made for those 'newcomers' or new offspring. Space physi-cally, psychologically and epistemically. Space for the Other to speak, to be heard. For these 'new' perspectives and experiences to be accepted as valid and to be contained and digested.

Without these conditions, black and brown bodies cannot be inte-grated or sustained; at least, not without compulsory ego splits, thus potential risks to their/our psychological integrity. The dynamic of silencing must be examined with this risk in mind. Considerations of silence have a long history within analytic scholarship. Silence has been considered a form of communication with various meanings. As a therapeutic intervention, the analyst's intentional use of silence can be of great value. It can allow analysands to process, reflect or assim-ilate information and to engage in deeper exploration. On the other hand, Freud (1926) considered a patient's silence to be a form of

resistance to the unconscious becoming conscious, and thus an act of repressing or keeping away from consciousness material that challenges the ego: an act tantamount to unconscious censorship.

One manifestation of silence that has received relatively little attention within analytic literature is the use of silence as an instrument of violence. As a tool to prevent verbal expression in groups and to smother unpalatable voices. Yet the unconscious impulse to assimilate, neutralize or sanitize those we deem Other, inferior, or threatening via group homogenizing forces, is an important obstacle to inclusion and may be enacted through acts of silencing. Here, silencing may be envisaged as a destructive group-specific factor or process aimed at stopping others and, indeed usually, those racialized as Others, from expressing unbearable content and keeping the same out of conscious awareness. Silencing, it is suggested, may be thought of as an attack on the psychic autonomy of the Other and on their individuation. It is another form of censorship, albeit one that is socially sanctioned and enacted at group or collective level.

Fragility, denial and ignorance
Group-enacted acts of silencing are acts of repression that deny others reciprocity, recognition and the functional use of their voice and by extension, negate their full humanity. This negation may be carried out through intimidation, harassment or the denigration of their words. More commonly today though, such silencing is more likely to be exercised through banalized discursive devices used to smother intolerable racialized histories, inequalities and injustices. Those with more social power may therefore employ silencing as a means of maintaining the status quo and their psychic equilibrium. Various conceptualizations exist to help us make sense of racial silencing within wider socio-political contexts and within groups.

White fragility (DiAngelo, 2011) is a recent and influential sociological framework that aims to formulate the anger-filled responses to racism that white people display when presented with race-based material. White fragility essentially refers to white groups' reduced racial stamina. DiAngelo posits that whiteness provides psychological insulation or protective pillows to white groups who have not learnt to tolerate race-based stress and, as a result, initiate a range of defensive responses in an attempt to disengage from conversations on race and racism. Further, the framework proposes that whiteness leads to expectations of racial comfort, self-centredness, and an

irrational desire to be psychologically looked after and thus protected by people of colour. When these expectations are transgressed, DiAngelo suggests that attempts may be made by white people to remove themselves from the stress-inducing situation over time, impairing their capacity to hear people of colour and leading, almost inevitably, to retaliation. Analytically, we may think of this dynamic as a form of acting out, an attack on the object raising the disturbing material. A failure in containment or metabolization.

Akala (2019) has also interrogated the genesis of what he refers to as (white) denial. His framework proposes that rather than fragility or lack of racial stamina, it is a socially sanctioned inability to turn inward and to reflexively examine both oneself and one's history, as well as one's inherent investment in the racialized social order which leads white groups to silence conversations on racism. This context causes a kind of intellectual regression, Akala proposes, that occurs in cross-racial discussions on racism leading to responses that are, according to the author absurd, irrational or not commensurate with the level of intellectual functioning of white social actors. Typically, the author continues, a person mentioning racism will be confronted with one or more of these defences:

- They will be told that talking about racism ensures racism will not go away
- They will be accused of 'playing the race card'
- They will be instructed to get over racism or, indeed, past atrocities
- They will be accused of having a 'chip on their shoulder'
- They will be urged to just go 'back home'/to Africa if they do not like it 'here'
- They will be accused of hating Britain or being anti-British/anti-white
- They will be derailed by what has been termed 'whataboutery', questions such as 'What about . . . [insert random injustice here]?'
- They will be described as being obsessed with identity politics
- They will be asked to stop making excuses or feeling sorry for themselves
- They will be accused of blaming white people in the present for the actions of their ancestors
- The racial components of a particular situation, experience or event will be denied or minimized.

Although Akala's silencing strategies may be deployed in analytic groups when racism is raised, other group-specific responses may become manifest and have been noted.

> Until only very recently, it was well known that any black trainee psychotherapist in London who tried to discuss her/his experience of everyday racism in her/his training analysis could expect to have it interpreted as a displacement of some other problem. Analysts seemed completely unable to conceptualize the possibility that racism might be part of 'reality' with which they were unacquainted, or indeed part of the social unconscious of the psychoanalytic community in which they participated (Blackwell, 2018: 306).

In the quote above, Blackwell (2018) speaks of the common pathologization of those who speak of their experience of racism and the individualistic decontextualization of their social trauma, illustrating a potential split between group analytic scholarship and its everyday practice. Although the author uses the past tense—and I would like to share his optimism—my personal and professional experience lead me to believe that the pathologizing of targets of racism is far from a thing of the past; that it continues, in fact, to take multiple forms so that when a black person speaks of their racialized experiences in groups, even today, they continue to risk:

- Being called racist, hostile to the analytic group
- Being dismissed because of their tone, demeanour or emotional expression
- Being accused of aggression, brutality or creating unsafeness for the group
- Being accused of lacking psychological mindedness or psychic maturity
- Being accused of being defensive or resistant to psychological interpretations
- Being described as lacking insight into their own experience
- Being repeatedly asked to educate or explain the working of racism to white analysts/analysands
- And ironically, being charged with silencing the group.

In a context where it is now widely accepted that race, as a social fact, has profound implications for psychological functioning/health, life trajectories and opportunities, group identity, and for the social order/organization (Delgado and Stefancic, 2001; Fernando, 2018), and where a large volume of sophisticated scholarship on race,

racism and power, including analytical scholarship exists (Fanon, 1970; Frosh, 2013; Gordon, 1993), the extent of this barely veiled hostility and of such strongly held yet misconceived projective beliefs may surprise those racialized as white. I believe few people of colour would not have been exposed to, witnessed or personally experienced such defensive manoeuvring. A final conceptual framework, proposed to help elucidate white responses to race material and groups' reluctance to address race, may be Mills' (1999) 'white ignorance'. White ignorance may be thought of as a systemic group-based form of unknowing, disowning or mis-cognition of the social order and historical arrangements that are both the cause and effect of white supremacy.

This ignorance, however, is of a distinct type. It is a kind of ignorance that has been defined as intentional, militant and structural and, by tacit or unconscious agreement, signed into. It is posited here that because white groups—and dominant groups in society, more generally—do not need to learn about the unjust social structures that benefit them, they are deprived not only of opportunities to recognize the normativity of their experience, social practices and worldviews, but also of learning to tolerate being held accountable for their role or complicity in the injustices and violence they are necessarily social-ised to refuse acknowledging. According to Mills, white ignorance is an amalgam of various processes: historical amnesia, deliberate irra-tionality, testimonial injustice, and material self-interests. Consequently, white ignorance—far from entailing a lack of educa-tion or understanding of the stratification of the socio-historical and political—is a motivated and functional tool designed to protect, pro-duce and reproduce white supremacy.

Silencing: the social unconscious and trauma

The sum total of each of these conceptual frames, and their application to group analytic practice, is that people of colour remain doubly vul-nerable to exclusion amidst inclusion discourses. However, that exclu-sion may be enacted dangerously in apparently legitimate, rational and analytically defensible ways. Thinking about this exclusion analytically, we may say that the shame, disturbance or guilt that white groups expe-rience by contemplating ongoing racial injustice, or the nation's colo-nial or imperial histories, are split off. Thus, liable to being projected, it places analysands of colour potentially at risk of projective psychic vio-lence. That vulnerability is compounded by the common position of

isolate that many occupy, which in itself, places them at risk of being scapegoated, when or if the group needs a scapegoat.

Disturbing the group with race content may thus translate in bodies of colour becoming repositories for the group's anxieties and fears; particularly fears of annihilation, increasing risks of them being at the receiving end of psychic violence. The tendency to minimize the working of power and of racism here by exclusively interpreting such group dynamics as some latent pathology located in analysands or people of colour, at the expense of using more socio-political or historical lenses, has serious implications: not least the reproduction of racism by the profession, thus issues of structural and institutional racism, as well as the enactment of harmful oppressive historical configurations.

One core idea cutting across group-specific factors is that our behaviour is not only shaped by unconscious drives in the Freudian sense, but that interpersonal and social forces equally exert powerful influences: this notion remained central to Foulkes' thesis (Hopper and Weinberg, 2011; Dalal, 2012). Group-level unconscious phenomena are exemplified by the social unconscious and the closely related 'condenser phenomena' (Foulkes, 1964; Foulkes and Anthony, 1965). Condenser phenomena refers to the activation of so-called 'primitive' material from the deepest levels of our consciousness resulting from the grouping of ideas or free association in groups. The social unconscious, or the properties of the social world that evade our conscious awareness, is believed to act as a condenser in group situations and has the potential to trigger regressive or distally connected affect and behaviour (Foulkes, 1948).

Despite emphasizing that the group analytic situation lends itself particularly well to the exploration of the social unconscious, Foulkes did not fully theorize the latter; nor did he provide guidance, or indeed much detail at all, on how the concept may be utilized to formulate group relations and processes in society or group dynamics in therapy (Hopper and Weinberg, 2011). Others have, nonetheless, helpfully provided further elaboration. Hopper (2003) posits that the social unconscious is central to the formation of the collective identity of societies and other social systems.

Hopper and Weinberg (2011) conceptualizes it as the co-constructed shared unconscious of members belonging to a particular social system, including community, society, nation or culture. Importantly, Nitzgen (2002) proposes that the social unconscious offers a tool to consider collective defences against shared anxieties that have been caused by historical trauma. Few have interrogated the framework in

relation to racism and racial trauma within analytic group practice. This absence, this silence amplifies the silencing which may take place in groups.

Intergenerational racial trauma

Historical trauma refers to collective psychological wounds related to mass trauma passed from one generation to the next, so that family or community/group members without direct experience of the traumatic agent come to experience its effects years, or decades, if not centuries later (Brave Heart, 1999). Trauma may be transferred through generations, behaviourally, such as through the sharing of survival scripts and lessons passed from older generations to new ones (Harrell, 2010). Further, epigenetic and genetic hypotheses are increasingly proposed to explain trauma in offspring associated with parental trauma exposure (Yehuda and Lehrner, 2018; Kellermann, 2013). Unconscious mechanisms are also believed to be implicated.

In her investigation of the phenomenon in Holocaust survivors, Ritter (2014) found that projective identification was a core mechanism by which trauma was transmitted to offspring. Parents who projected Holocaust-related feelings and anxieties into children often had children who introjected them and who would, as a result, behave as though they had directly experienced concentration camps and other Nazi atrocities, themselves. The social unconscious, if only partly, also allows us to explicate the persistence of past traumatic relational configurations. Indeed, the role of history in the structuring of the social world, and in the transmission of trauma, has long been recognized.

In her qualifying paper, Stobo (2005), one of very few black group analysts in the UK, describes in poignant detail her experience of feeling silenced and voiceless during much of her group analytic training, which resulted in her almost leaving. This inability to speak maintains a silence which she proposes served to regulate and maintain the group's psychic equilibrium; a silence that constitutes an empty space between black and white people. It is this space that is posited to hold the unspeakable and the unbearable: specifically, shared histories of imperialism, colonialism and enslavement. Stobo thus suggests that what is feared and difficult to articulate is a discovery or acknowledgement of racism. This unexpressed conflict manifests as a disturbance, which is then located in individuals racialized as black within whom it becomes fixed. It is a proposition that echoes but extends Fanon's (1970) concept of the black object as 'phobogenic' or as repository of neurotic and disowned white or colonial fears and anxieties.

Stobo's use of Foulkes' location of disturbance to formulate racial processes in groups was a major theoretical advance. One possible way to further develop her thesis is to shift the focus from difficulty with articulation to group difficulties with hearing and thus, again, with containing, and critically to link these to an intergenerational trauma framework. Much of our theoretical and empirical attention in relation to intergenerational trauma focuses on the victims of atrocities and their descendants. Alleyne (2004) posits the existence of an 'internal oppressor' in black people, which is a post-traumatic 'syndrome' centred on the activation of memory imprints from the legacy of their/our painful historical past, activated in the present with the occurrence of oppression. Similarly, Fletchman-Smith (2011) has highlighted how particular cruelties central to slavery, such as separating infants from their mothers and loving parents from one another, continue to affect attachment and oedipal patterns in people of Caribbean backgrounds.

Nonetheless, trauma simply did not end at the boundaries of slaves' quarters. Nor does it remain neatly confined within former colonies/colonial subjects or their descendants. Terror has historically existed on both sides of the power divide. Slave masters were terrified of slaves. Similarly, and more contemporaneously, the collapse of the apartheid regime led to collective phobias of retaliatory genocide in white groups in South Africa. These traumatic anxieties still reverberate today, as illustrated by the paranoia-based fantasy of 'white genocide' which can also be observed in South Africa and in other settler colonial lands with actual histories of African or indigenous genocide. Also of particular note, clinical evidence suggests that those who commit violent crimes have a much higher incidence of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), irrespective of trauma histories prior to offending (Crisford, Dare and Evangeli, 2008), findings consistent with the well documented increased incidence of trauma symptomatology and PTSD in soldiers and in those involved in combat situations or conflict zones regardless of which adversary side they stood in: in other words, subjecting others to trauma also traumatizes us.

Silence, power and the social unconscious

The practice of silencing people of colour, their social concerns, and their lived experience has a history spanning several centuries. It is perhaps not a surprise that it continues to be reproduced and overlooked within therapeutic practice. As previously noted, silencing may be enacted by white individuals claiming or believing to be

victims of silencing, whereby they may make projective persecutory claims in relation to individuals of colour by positioning themselves as being gagged and unable to speak freely, or being victims of 'political correctness'. It is a discursive move which is widely performed socio-politically and instrumentalized to invisibilize power. In group therapy, too, white analysands may expect to speak without challenge, and possibly with the erroneous notion that this constitutes freedom of expression or speech, something the group will likely hold very dear. Perhaps this argument may be advanced as a result of being held to account, or when they grapple aloud with changing social norms around acceptable or unacceptable language, or as they come into conflict with the racist that exists within themselves.

Similarly, a need for safety and protection that we observe in wider society, from the most socially privileged, may become vocalized or performed via a regressive affect or behaviour in white analysands. In cross-racial exchanges about racism, it has been noted that facilitators often become distracted by white participants 'strategic' or socially functional use of affect. Facilitators/conductors may find that they spend a lot of energy and time coddling, reassuring and or placating white group members distressed about racism, including accusations of racism, creating false equivalencies between suffering racism and being accused of racism. Thus, the group conductor may be pulled into fulfilling an unduly protective or parental role. Worse, they may be unconsciously enlisted to punish the transgressive person of colour breaking the silence, and thus retaliate on behalf of the dominant section within the analytic group and/or indeed within society at large, once more protecting power, the status quo and reproducing historical schemas, such as lynching.

The notion of political correctness and its associated moral assumptions are great current political preoccupations. Concerns over a perceived erosion of freedom of speech and the so-called 'right to offend' have taken prominence in society and found their way into the discipline. Many have criticized the undue caution white groups have been asked to exercise regarding the words they employ. Dalal (2012), for example, has written strenuously against political correctness and what he considers to be a neoliberal agenda towards fairness and equality centring on semantic changes rather than structural transformation. The author argues that the fear of offending has got out of control and has led to social performativity rather than reformed attitudes. Further, the need to make a distinction between causing offence and deliberately being offensive is stressed, as it is suggested

the limitation of freedom of expression is rooted in white liberals' fear of racism. The author also argues that it is this fear expressed through language policing that has caused both thought and action paralysis. That the right to offend constitutes a fundamental right or any right at all, is not in fact what Dalal argues. Still, this line of thinking has become concretized. Outside group analysis and in the public arena, there are many in popular culture and politics, particularly within the far right and far-right adjacent parties, who continue to allege that this loss of 'the right to offend' is leading to racial tensions and resentment as white groups now feel silenced, fear repercussions or negative consequences and punishment for using incorrect language.

Although it is accepted that exclusively focusing on language at the expense of structures is deeply unhelpful, the contemporaneous logic of the freedom of speech argument is fundamentally flawed. Language is constitutive and the language used to present the argument illustrates that very point. Indeed, the notions of 'the right to offend' or 'political correctness', which tend to underlie the freedom of speech argument, are discursively significant. The offence framework masks the real and empirically documented psychological and physical harm caused by racist and discriminatory speech (Harrell, 2010; Halvorsrud et al., 2018). We are, thus, well beyond the offensive and firmly in the domain of the harmful. What is being consequently requested is that freedom of speech should be granted to those who are liable to enact not only discursive harm but actual physical or psychological harm, but not to those likely to be at the end of it. They, in turn, should have no right to retort since expressing opposition, dissent or offence would create . . . offence.

In essence, the current freedom of speech argument demands that accountability, challenge or resistance to speech as violence be quashed. It is tacitly using freedom of expression to force those expressing dissent or resistance to the violence they experience into compliance. It is actually denying those with less social power not only freedom of speech, but also the right not to suffer discrimination-related harm. In other words, it is a covert demand that the social and psychological realities, and lived experience, of people of colour be ignored or silenced so as to maintain white peace, convenience and again, arguably, the dominant psychic equilibrium. Although appearing to seek freedom to speak, it is in fact an act of silencing; a censorship act. In the context of race, it follows a reproduction of wider white supremacist configurations and the

traditional, normalized and objectivized direction of power. It protects the status quo.

Silence, as we have seen, is often denial. It is the wilful or unconscious desire to avoid distressing material. Denial is a common psychological defence against trauma (APA, 2018; Ritter, 2014). And, like many responses to trauma, as previously discussed, it is not limited to individual survivors, their family members or direct witnesses. Social/cultural groups also share trauma and cultural wounds, which are two of the building blocks of the social unconscious (Volkan, 2001). Evidence of racial denial at the societal level may be found in the abysmal success rate of race discrimination complaints in court and in other public institutions, contrary to what privileged groups may believe (Renton, 2013), and/or in the aforementioned discursive devices used to describe, pathologize or culturally force people of colour into silence. We may argue that silencing is a potent form of social control which, together with the disavowal of our colonial/ imperial history and structural oppression, constitutes social defence systems (Brown, 2001). On the one hand, silence serves the avoidance of shame-based feelings in white people, which are projected onto people of colour who may introject them. And it is no coincidence that it is through shaming that silencing often operates.

What human beings cannot contain regarding their experience, what is overwhelming, unbearable, unthinkable, falls out of social discourses and tends to burden the next generations as an affective sensitivity (Fromm, 2014). On the other hand, silencing through interpersonal or discursive means may well support the transmission of intergenerational or historical racial trauma, and thus continue the circle of harm, impairing recognition, processing and integration. It is striking that the contemporary silencing of black people has strong echoes of the past. Evoked legacies include the belief, conscious or otherwise, that black pain is non-existent or inconsequential, the social expectation that black people must show white people socio-economic and thus psychic servitude, and that they/we must centre white feelings/experiences or protect white people's psychological comfort (DiAngelo, 2001). Ultimately, the sacrificial demands placed upon the black body are mirrored.

If internalized social schemas or relational patterns form part of our social, and thus biological, inheritance (Dalal, 1998; 2003) and, individuals like groups tend to recreate or repeat past situations, particularly those within which we have been traumatized (Hopper, 2003) then, silencing, it may be posited, recreates our oppressive,

colonial and imperial history. Analytic groups offer microcosms of society and a sample of power relations in the wider social world. As such the mind of a group is part of the mind of society (Hopper and Weinberg, 2011). Similarly, the mind of an individual silencer speaks something of the mind of the group. What becomes manifest in groups also finds its blueprint in individual psyches and indeed in the historico-material world.

Concluding thoughts

This article has attempted to grapple with the phenomenon of racial silencing and to illuminate dynamics seldom discussed within the group analytic scholarship, with a view of supporting the profession's goal to be more inclusive. It has been argued that, as a group specific process, silencing both originates from and transmits trauma. Further, it is fundamentally linked to power. Perhaps then, the anger or distress black people feel when shut down does not simply come about because white individuals, possibly unconsciously compelled to demand silence, represent or even embody figures from our personal matrix or proximal past. Also, perhaps, silencing and responses to it betray identification with the original silencer/colonizer and silenced/colonized, and thus the intersubjective reproduction or co-reconstruction of this shared traumatic history. If so, relevant group situations or configurations may not only reignite past cultural wounds and their corresponding affective states or motives buried in the social unconscious (Volkan, 2001), they may recreate a more distal and brutal past, which may be acted out interpersonally within groups. Envisaging silencing as a discursive act links the social unconscious to the political (Combe, 2017). If the ultimate power is the power to define, when black people are silenced in groups, they/we are not only stripped of their/our voice, they/we are stripped of power and kept in subservience. Many have posited that analysts often collude in the 'invisibilization' of social forces, which serve both ego and structural needs (Fromm, 1970; Gordon, 1993; Hopper, 2003). An awareness that silencing in groups may harm not only individual analysands, but also isolates entire social/marginalized groups by reproducing the unequal social order psychologically, epistemically and thus structurally, is crucial. Writing and reflecting on this silencing, however anxiety provoking or painful it may be for us all, is an important step in breaking the cycle of mutism and in stopping the reproduction of

racism-related intergenerational trauma. It is also a fundamental way of reclaiming our voice.

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